AN 3.80 — Cūḷanikā (Abhibhu) Sutta (Minor World Systems)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Text

80. Cūḷanikā (Abhibhu) Sutta (Minor World Systems) Once, having approached The Blessed One and after paying homage to Him, the Venerable Ānanda sat to one side and said to The Blessed One:

“Bhante, these words I have heard from The Blessed One, in His presence. It is a statement that I personally know The Blessed One has made, as well as acknowledged Himself, by saying to me:

‘Ānanda, long ago, Abhibhu, a Disciple of The Buddha Sikhi, while standing in the Brahmā world, sounded his voice by letting it spread and vibrate throughout, in all directions, which was immediately heard by beings in an entire galactic system (cluster).’

“I am curious to know, Bhante, how far can the voice of The Blessed One, The Arahant, The Perfectly Awakened Buddha, vibrate and thus expand and be spread throughout, in all directions, for it to be heard immediately by others, in so many different and far off places?”

And The Blessed One said:

“Ānanda, the one you speak of happened to be the Noble Disciple of an immeasurable Tathāgata!”

Then, for a second time, the Venerable Ānanda asked:

“Bhante, these words I have heard from The Blessed One, in His presence. It is a statement that I personally know The Blessed One has made, as well as acknowledged Himself, by saying to me:

‘Ānanda, long ago, Abhibhu, a Disciple of The Buddha Sikhi, while standing in the Brahmā world, sounded his voice by letting it spread and vibrate throughout, in all directions, which was immediately heard by beings in an entire galactic system (cluster).’

“I am curious to know, Bhante, how far can the voice of The Blessed One, The Arahant, The Perfectly Awakened Buddha, vibrate and thus expand and be spread throughout, in all directions, for it to be heard immediately by others, in so many different and far off places?”

Again, The Blessed One replied by saying:

“Ānanda, the one you speak of happened to be the Noble Disciple of an immeasurable Tathāgata!”

And for a third time, the Venerable Ānanda asked:

“Bhante, these words I have heard from The Blessed One, in His presence. It is a statement that I personally know The Blessed One has made, as well as acknowledged Himself, by saying to me:

‘Ānanda, long ago, Abhibhu, a Disciple of The Buddha Sikhi, while standing in the Brahmā world, sounded his voice by letting it spread and vibrate throughout, in all directions, which was immediately heard by beings in an entire galactic system (cluster).’

“I am curious to know, Bhante, how far can the voice of The Blessed One, The Arahant, The Perfectly Awakened Buddha, vibrate and thus expand and be spread throughout, in all directions, for it to be heard immediately by others, in so many different and far off places?”

And The Blessed One said:

“Ānanda, have you ever heard of a Cūḷanikā (minor galaxy)?”

“Bhante, this is the time! Now happens to be the perfect occasion, O Tathāgata, for The Blessed One to speak and for all to hear. For, hearing and carefully listening to it from The Blessed One Himself, the Bhikkhus will memorize and retain it in their hearts, which will be for the benefit of the many!”

“Then, Ānanda, listen and pay close attention. I will now speak.”

“Yes, Bhante!” replied the Venerable Ānanda.

And The Blessed One continued instructing:

“Ānanda, a thousand times the mass of space within which the moon and the sun illuminate in all directions with their brightness, is called Cūḷanikā or a minor galaxy (a thousand-fold world system). Here, there are to be found a thousand moons, a thousand suns, a thousand Mahā Meru mountains, a thousand Jambudīpas, a thousand Aparagoyānas, a thousand Uttarakurus, a thousand Pubbavidehas, a thousand fourfold oceans, a thousand fourfold rulers, a thousand fourfold Guardian Kings, a thousand

Tāvatiṁsā heavens of the Thirty-three, a thousand Yāma heavens, a thousand heavens of Tusita, a thousand Nimmānaratī heavens of the Devas of creation, a thousand Paranimmita heavens of the Devas who control the creation of other Devas, and a thousand Brahmā worlds.

“This, Ānanda, is what is called Cūḷanikā (a minor galaxy) or a thousand-fold world system.

“Ānanda, a thousand times the size of the Cūḷanikā or the thousand-fold world system, is the million-fold world system, which still happens to be only a middle-sized world system, or a big galactic cluster.

“But further than that, Ānanda, is the giant cluster that is even bigger, where you have a giant galactic cluster that is a thousand times the size of the middle-sized galactic cluster, which includes more than a billion world systems within it.

“Now, Ānanda, if The Tathāgata so wishes, He can sound His voice by letting it spread and vibrate throughout, in all directions, resounding and reaching far and wide, while at the same time being immediately heard by beings in the various planes of existence, within these giant galactic clusters, containing more than a billion world systems.”

“But in what way, Bhante, could The Blessed One, if He so wishes, let His voice spread and vibrate throughout, in all directions, resounding and reaching far and wide, while at the same time being immediately heard by beings in the various planes of existence, within these giant galactic clusters, containing more than a billion world systems?”

“Here, Ānanda, The Tathāgata pervades the entire super galactic cluster of a billion world systems with His effulgent light, so that those sentient beings living in them could clearly see it. Then, The Tathāgata lets His voice resound, reaching far and wide, while being heard in all directions, throughout the billion world systems.

“It is in this manner, therefore, Ānanda, that if The Tathāgata so wishes, He can sound His voice by having it spread and vibrate throughout, in all directions, resounding and reaching far and wide, while at the same time being immediately heard by beings in the various planes of existence within these giant galactic clusters, containing more than billion world systems.”

When this was said, the Venerable Ānanda stated to The Blessed One:

“It is indeed my great fortune! I am truly fortunate that My Teacher possesses such unimaginable power and might!”

Then, when this was said, the Venerable Udāyī said to the Venerable Ānanda:

“Friend Ānanda, and what difference does it make to you, or how would it affect you, anyhow, that your Teacher possesses such unimaginable power and might?”

At this, The Blessed One said:

“Udāyī, do not say so. Do not say so!

“For, if Ānanda were to die right now, albeit while still having the stains of passion and greed in his heart for not having fully released it from greed, then because of his very faith and confidence in The Tathāgata and His unimaginable power and might, giving him that sense of comfort and a pleasant state of safety in the mind, Ānanda will be immediately reborn as the King of the Devas! A position which he would take for no less than seven times over, after his death, and even later, he will similarly rule as the sovereign King of this entire peninsula of Jambudīpa (India), for seven different lifetimes, one after the other!

“But, Udāyī, there is no need to be concerned about such things, for they will not be necessary, since Ānanda will attain Full Release before the end of this very life!”