

DN 32

Dīgha Nikāya The Long Discourses

Pāṭikaputta Vagga
The Section Starting with Pāṭikaputta

Āṭānāṭiya Sutta “Āṭānāṭiya: The Mighty Protection”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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This is what I personally heard.

At one time The Blessed One was residing in Rājagaha, at the Vulture’s Peak, when late one night, the Four Great Kings, while being accompanied by their armies of Devas, Yakkhas, *Gandhabbās*, *Kumbhaṇḍhas*, and Nāgas, having already established a defensive shield around the world, and its four quarters, approached The Blessed One, as they lit up the entirety of the Vulture’s Peak with their radiance. Thus, having saluted The Blessed One, they sat down to one side.

In the meantime, some yakkhas, having also saluted The Blessed One, also went and sat down to one side, while others exchanged respectful greetings with The Teacher before sitting down, and some others announced their name and clan, with raised joined palms in reverential salutation, whereas others just quietly sat down to one side.

While seated to one side, Vessavaṇa, the Great King, addressed The Blessed Lord and said:

“Venerable Sir, there exist certain high-ranking yakkhas that have faith and confidence in The Blessed Lord, while others lack faith and confidence in Him. Likewise, there are certain middle- and low-ranking yakkhas that have faith and confidence in The Blessed Lord, while others lack faith and confidence in Him.

“However, Venerable Sir, in most cases, the majority of yakkhas do not have faith and confidence in The Blessed Lord. And why is this so?

“It is because The Blessed One teaches them to abstain from harming and killing living beings; from taking what is not given freely; from false speech; from sexual misconduct; and from consuming intoxicants. But, Blessed Lord, the majority of these yakkhas do not refrain from these actions, and for them to abandon such habits is displeasing, hence they disapprove of the Lord’s Teachings.

“Venerable Sir, there are disciples of The Blessed Lord, who dwell in remote jungle lodgings, in forests and wilderness, as they escape the noise of the maddening crowds, seeking calm and quiet far from human habitations, that are suitable for striving in retreat.

“There, Venerable Sir, also reside prominent yakkhas who do not have faith or confidence in the Blessed Lord’s Dhamma. To help bring about confidence and trust in The Tathagata, may The Blessed One kindly remember the Āṭānāṭiya protective verses, so that his Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, male and female lay disciples may reside in peace, safety, and comfort, while remaining guarded against various dangers, unharmed and at ease.”

And The Blessed Lord consented through his silence.

Then, the Great King Vessavaṇa, in realizing that The Blessed One had consented, proceeded to recite the Āṭānāṭiya protective verses, thus:

Homage to The Seven Buddhas

*“I pay homage to Vipassī,
The Glorious Sage with mighty vision.*

*“I pay homage to Sikhī, too,
Compassionate to all beings, everywhere, one and all!*

*“I pay homage to Vessabhū,
Supremely Pure in His recluseship!*

*“I pay homage to Kakusandha,
Victorious against Māra’s armies, whom He crushed!*

*“I pay homage to Koṇāgamana,
The One who lived the Fully Perfect Brahmin life!*

*“I pay homage to Kassapa,
The One Liberated in every way!*

*“I pay homage to Aṅgīrasa,
The radiant son of the Sakyans;
Teacher of the Dhamma, dispelling all suffering!*

*“Those who, having been extinguished, are now freed,
Possessing the wisdom eye, with kindly speech,
Mightily discerning, radiating with loving hearts,*

*“It is to The Teacher of Gods and humans,
To Gautama, they respect and venerate,
Paying homage and offering worship;*

*“The Buddha Who is Living,
The One Accomplished in direct knowledge
And supremely pure conduct,
Mightily discerning,
Who always radiates with a loving heart, towards all beings.*

The Eastern Quarter

*“At the point where the Sun rises, Aditiya’s child, in his glorious arc,
Who by rising, dispels the darkness of the night,
And along with his manifestation,
Is accompanied with what’s called a ‘Day,’
There, the great waters come together, swelling deep in a mighty ocean,
Which beings know to be the place
Where the swelling great ocean waters flow.*

*“It is here, they call the Eastern Quarter boundary,
Guarded by a glorious King,
Dhataratṭha: The Lord of the Gandhabbās,
Whose songs and dances he enjoys, honored by his subjects,
And he has many mighty sons, all bearing the same name,
Eighty, ten, and one, all named Indra, lord of strength.*

*“On having seen The Awakened One, from afar,
The Blessed Buddha, Kinsman of the Sun,
They all quickly offer homage to the Lord of Wisdom, as they declare:*

*“Homage to You, Oh Thoroughbred!
Homage to You, O He who is Supreme among men!
Though not human, having looked upon us with kindness,
It is You, whom we honor and worship!*

*When often we are asked,
‘Do you bow down to Gautama the great Conqueror,
Accomplished in direct knowledge and supremely pure conduct?’
We reply,
‘Indeed, we bow down to Gautama, The Buddha!’*

The Southern Quarter

*“Wherever the hungry ghosts (Petas) go to dwell,
Those who slander, with harsh and abusive speech,
Along with the murderous and greedy tricksters, thieves, and frauds too,*

*“It is here, they call the Southern Quarter boundary, guarded by a glorious king,
Lord Virūḷha of the Kumbhaṇḍhas (the goblins),
Whose songs and dances he enjoys, honored by his subjects,
And he has many mighty sons, all bearing the same name,
Eighty, ten, and one, all named Indra, lord of strength.*

*“Having seen The Awakened One from afar, The Blessed Buddha,
Kinsman of the Sun, they quickly offer homage to The Lord of Wisdom by stating:*

*‘Homage to You, Oh Thoroughbred!
Homage to You, Oh One who is Supreme among men!
Though not human, having looked upon us with kindness,
It is You, whom we honor and worship!’
When often we are asked,
‘Do you bow down to Gautama the great Conqueror,
Accomplished in direct knowledge and supremely pure conduct?’
We reply,
‘Indeed, we bow down to Gautama, The Buddha!’*

The Western Quarter

*“At the point where the Sun disappears, Aditiya’s child, in his glorious arc,
Who in his setting, ends the day,
And along with his disappearance, is accompanied with what’s called a ‘Night,’
There, the great waters come together, swelling deep in a mighty ocean,
Which beings know to be the place
Where the swelling great ocean waters flow.*

*“It is here, they call the Western Quarter boundary, guarded by a glorious king,
Lord Virūpakḥa of the Nāgas (Dragons),
Whose songs and dances he enjoys, honored by his subjects,
And he has many mighty sons, all bearing the same name,
Eighty, ten, and one, all named Indra, lord of strength.*

*Having seen The Awakened One from afar, The Blessed Buddha,
Kinsman of the Sun, they quickly offer homage to The Lord of Wisdom:*

*'Homage to You, Oh Thoroughbred!
Homage to You, Oh One who is Supreme among men!
Though not human, having looked upon us with kindness,
It is You, whom we honor and worship!'
When often we are asked,
'Do you bow down to Gautama the great Conqueror,
Accomplished in direct knowledge and supremely pure conduct?'
We reply,
'Indeed, we bow down to Gautama, The Buddha!'*

The Northern Quarter

*"Where lovely Uttarakuru is found, under Mount Meru, so glorious yet serene,
There, one finds an unselfish human race, possession-less,
With no need to sow seeds nor draw the plough,
The rice they eat is from untilled soil, free from powder and from husk,
Sweet in scent, the finest of rice grain to taste after being cooked on hot stones,
Such is the food they do enjoy.*

*"With an ox-drawn carriage as their mount,
They move about from here to there,*

*With a beast-drawn carriage as their mount,
They move about from here to there,*

*With a woman-drawn carriage as their mount,
They move about from here to there,*

*With a man-drawn carriage as their mount,
They move about from here to there,*

*With a girl-drawn carriage as their mount,
They move about from here to there,*

*With a boy-drawn carriage as their mount,
They move about from here to there.*

*"Thus, carried by such carriages, they tour the land in service of the King,
Along with elephants, horses, and vehicles fit for gods, as well.
There are splendid mansions and palanquins too,
For the glorious and mighty King,
Who also has cities built way up in the sky:
The Āṭānāṭā, Kusināṭā, Parakusināṭā, Nāṭapuriyā, and Parakusitanāṭā.*

*“There’s Kapīvanta to the north,
With Janogha lying beyond,
Navanavutiya, Ambara-Ambaravatiya,
And the royal city of Ālakamandā.*

*“The Great King Kuvera, Venerable Sir,
Dwells in the capital city named Visāṇā,
The reason why we bear the name, ‘King Vessavaṇa.’*

*“There are the special informants always on mission;
Each reporting to the mighty King, bearing the names
Tatolā, Tattalā, Tatotalā, Ojasi, Tejasi, Tatojasi, Sūra, Rājā, Ariṭṭha, and Nemi.*

*“There is the mighty lake called Dharaṇī,
The source of rain-clouds pouring down when it is time.
There is also the Sālavatī Hall,
Where the yakkhas enjoy meeting each other and assemble,
Which has around it many trees that are always in season, always bearing fruit,
Full of many flocks of birds,
Where peacocks call and herons cry out, and the cuckoo sings.*

*“While the jīva-bird cries out: ‘Live, live!’
While another sings: ‘Lift your heart up!’
There roam the pheasant rooster and the kuliraka,
Along with the forest crane and rice bird as well,
Not to mention the mynah-birds and parrots that mimic man’s voice, and the one called ‘man-on-stilts.’
It is there that Kuvera’s lotus pond is found,
So lovely and colorful all year round.*

*“Here, it is called the Northern Quarter Boundary,
Guarded by a glorious King,
Lord Kuvera of all the Yakkhas (the goblins),
Whose songs and dances he enjoys.
He is honored and revered by all his subjects;
And he has many mighty sons, all bearing the same name,
Eighty, ten, and one, all named Indra, lord of strength.*

*“Having seen The Awakened One from afar, The Blessed Buddha,
Kinsman of the Sun, they quickly offer homage to The Lord of Wisdom:*

*‘Homage to You, Oh Thoroughbred!
Homage to You, Oh One who is Supreme among men!
Though not human, having looked upon us with kindness,
It is You, whom we honor and worship!’
When often we are asked,*

*‘Do you bow down to Gautama the great Conqueror,
Accomplished in direct knowledge and supremely pure conduct?’
We reply,
‘Indeed, we bow down to Gautama, The Buddha!’*

“These, Venerable Sir, are the Āṭānāṭiya protective verses that when recited, serve to protect Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, as well as male and female lay disciples, so that they may reside in peace, safety, and comfort, while remaining guarded against various dangers.

“Blessed Lord, the Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, male and female lay disciples should learn these Āṭānāṭiya protective verses well, and fully memorize them.

“This because, Blessed Lord, if it ever happens that *any* non-human, whether male or female Yakkha, or Yakkha’s offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the Yakkhas; any male or female Gandhabbā, or a Gandhabbā’s offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the Gandhabbās; any male or female Kumbhaṇḍha, or a Kumbhaṇḍha’s offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the Kumbhaṇḍhas; any male or female Nāga, or a Nāga’s offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the Nāgas, should ever approach that person with hostile intentions, while he or she is beginning to walk or is in the process of walking; rising to stand or already standing; about to sit down or already seated; starting to lie down, or already lying down and resting, then that menacing non-human being will, indeed, face severe consequences, as well as lose all his/her privileges in the non-human world, for that non-human will immediately be rejected and thus not be admitted to my royal city of Ālakamandā!

“Similarly, whoever that non-human being is, he or she will also not be allowed inside any Yakkha assembly, nor would that non-human being be allowed to marry or be given in marriage to anyone, at all!

“Furthermore, all the non-human beings, on finding out about the behavior of that non-human, will immediately become enraged at that being, and actively and severely overwhelm them in various painful ways, whereby the head will become bent inward like an empty bowl, and they would split that non-human being’s head into seven pieces, as an adequate punishment for their evil behavior.

“After all, Blessed Lord, there are non-human beings who are fierce, violent, and cruel, who do not obey the Four Great Kings, nor answer to their officers, nor to their subordinates. They are known to be in rebellion against the Four Great Kings, operating much like those human bandits, the outlaws, that have been captured and eliminated within the Magadhan kingdom, where they would hide about, disobeying the king’s rules, his officers, and their attendants.

“Blessed Lord, these non-human beings mentioned work in the same way.

“Therefore, if it ever happens that *any* non-human, whether male or female Yakkha, or Yakkha’s offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the Yakkhas; any male or female Gandhabbā, or a Gandhabbā’s offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the Gandhabbās; any male or female Kumbhaṇḍha, or a Kumbhaṇḍha’s offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the

Kumbhaṇḍhas; any male or female Nāga, or a Nāga's offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the Nāgas, should ever approach that person with hostile intentions, that individual should immediately sound the alarm, by calling out for those great Yakkhas, the chief Yakkhas, their commanders, and their great generals, exclaiming:

'This non-human has grabbed hold of me! This non-human is harassing and terrorizing me! This non-human has entered into me! This non-human has harmed and injured me! This non-human is not letting me go!'

“And who, Blessed Lord, are those great Yakkhas, the chief Yakkhas, their commanders, and their great generals? They are: Inda, Soma, along with Varuna, Bhāradvāja, Pajāpati, Candana, Kāmasaṭṭha, Kinnughaṇḍu, and Nighaṇḍu, as well as Panāda, Opamañña, along with Devasuta, Mātali, Cittasena the Gandhabbā, Nala, Rājā, Janesabha, Sātāgiri, Hemavata, Puṇṇaka, Karatiya, Guḷa, Sivaka, as well as Mucalinda, Vessāmitta, Yugandhara, Gopāla, and Suppagedha; also, Hiri, Netti, Mandiya, Pañcālacaṇḍa, Ālavaka, Pajunna, Sumana, Sumukha, and Dadimukha, along with Maṇi, Māṇivara, Dīgha, together with Serīsaka.

“These are the great Yakkhas, the chief Yakkhas, their commanders, and their great generals, who should be called in the case of such an attack by a hostile entity.

“These, therefore, Bhante, are the Āṭānāṭiya protective verses that are to be recited, so that Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, as well as male and female lay disciples may reside in peace, safety, and comfort, while remaining guarded against various dangers, unharmed and at ease.

“And now, Venerable Sir, we must depart, for there are many duties that we have to attend to.”

“Do now, Great Kings, what you think is fit to do.”

At this, the Four Great Kings got up, and after saluting The Blessed One, and respectfully circling and keeping Him on their right, they vanished right then and there.

This was followed by the other attending Yakkhas, some of whom stood up, saluting The Blessed One with respect and circling Him, and while keeping Him on their right, they vanished as well; while others exchanged greetings and polite conversations with Him; and still others, by holding up their joined palms in reverential salutation to The Blessed One, announced their name and clan, while others, by keeping silent, simply vanished.

Then, when the night had ended, The Blessed One recounted to the Bhikkhus what had taken place that night, while adding:

END OF THE FIRST RECITATION

“Bhikkhus, last night, the Four Great Kings, while being accompanied by their armies of Devas, Yakkhas, *Gandhabbās*, *Kumbhaṇḍhas*, and Nāgas, having already established a defensive shield around the world and its four quarters, approached me, as they lit up the entirety of the Vulture’s Peak with their radiance. Thus, having saluted The Tathāgata, they sat down to one side.

In the meantime, some yakkhas, having also saluted Me, went and sat down to one side, while others exchanged respectful greetings with Me, before sitting down, and some others announced their name and clan, with raised joined palms in reverential salutation, whereas others, just sat down to one side, quietly.

While seated to one side, Vessavaṇa, the Great King, addressed Me and said:

‘Venerable Sir, there exist certain high-ranking yakkhas that have faith and confidence in The Blessed Lord, while others lack faith and confidence in Him; likewise, there are certain middle- and low-ranking yakkhas that have faith and confidence in The Blessed Lord, while others lack faith and confidence in Him.

‘However, Venerable Sir, in most cases, the majority of yakkhas do not have faith and confidence in The Blessed Lord. And why is this so?

‘It is because The Blessed One teaches them to abstain from harming and killing living beings; from taking what is not given freely; from false speech; from sexual misconduct; and from consuming intoxicants. But, Blessed Lord, the majority of these yakkhas do not refrain from these actions, and for them to abandon such habits is displeasing, hence they disapprove of The Lord’s Teachings.

‘Venerable Sir, there are disciples of The Blessed Lord, who dwell in remote jungle lodgings, in forests and wilderness, as they escape the noise of the maddening crowds, seeking calm and quiet far from human habitations, suitable for striving in retreat.

‘There, Venerable Sir, also reside prominent yakkhas who do not have faith or confidence in The Blessed Lord’s Dhamma. To help bring about confidence and trust in The Tathagata, may The Blessed One kindly remember the *Āṭānāṭiya* protective verses, so that his Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, male and female lay disciples may reside in peace, safety, and comfort, while remaining guarded against various dangers, unharmed and at ease.”

“Then, in response to the request that was made, I consented, Bhikkhus, through My silence.

“In realizing that The Blessed One had consented, the Great King Vessavaṇa proceeded to recite the *Āṭānāṭiya* protective verses, thus:

Homage to The Seven Buddhas

*“I pay homage to Vipassī,
The Glorious Sage with mighty vision.*

*“I pay homage to Sikhī, too,
Compassionate to all beings, everywhere, one and all!*

*“I pay homage to Vessabhū,
Supremely Pure in His recluseship!*

*“I pay homage to Kakusandha,
Victorious against Māra’s armies, whom He crushed!*

*“I pay homage to Koṇāgamana,
The One who lived the Fully Perfect Brahmin life!*

*“I pay homage to Kassapa,
The One Liberated in every way!*

*“I pay homage to Aṅgīrasa,
The radiant son of the Sakyans;
Teacher of The Dhamma, dispelling all suffering!*

*“Those who, having been extinguished, are now freed,
Possessing the wisdom eye, with kindly speech,
Mightily discerning, radiating with loving hearts,*

*“It is to The Teacher of Gods and humans,
To Gautama, they respect and venerate,
Paying homage and offering worship.*

*“The Buddha Who is Living,
The One Accomplished in direct knowledge
And supremely pure conduct,
Mightily discerning,
Who always radiates with a loving heart, towards all beings.*

The Eastern Quarter

*“At the point where the Sun rises, Aditiya’s child, in his glorious arc,
Who by rising, dispels the darkness of the night,
And along with his manifestation,
Is accompanied with what’s called a ‘Day,’
There, the great waters come together, swelling deep in a mighty ocean,
Which beings know to be the place
Where the swelling great ocean waters flow.*

*“It is here, they call the Eastern Quarter boundary,
Guarded by a glorious King,
Dhatarat̥ṭha: The Lord of the Gandhabbās,
Whose songs and dances he enjoys, honored by his subjects,
And he has many mighty sons, all bearing the same name,
Eighty, ten, and one, all named Indra, lord of strength.*

*“On having seen The Awakened One, from afar,
The Blessed Buddha, Kinsman of the Sun,
They all quickly offer homage to the Lord of Wisdom, as they declare:*

*“Homage to You, Oh Thoroughbred!
Homage to You, O He who is Supreme among men!
Though not human, having looked upon us with kindness,
It is You, whom we honor and worship!*

*When often we are asked,
‘Do you bow down to Gautama the great Conqueror,
Accomplished in direct knowledge and supremely pure conduct?’
We reply,
‘Indeed, we bow down to Gautama, The Buddha!’*

The Southern Quarter

*“Wherever the hungry ghosts (Petas) go to dwell,
Those who slander, with harsh and abusive speech,
Along with the murderous and greedy tricksters, thieves, and frauds too,*

*“It is here, they call the Southern Quarter boundary, guarded by a glorious king,
Lord Virūḷha of the Kumbhaṇḍhas (the goblins),
Whose songs and dances he enjoys, honored by his subjects,
And he has many mighty sons, all bearing the same name,*

Eighty, ten, and one, all named Indra, lord of strength.

*“Having seen The Awakened One from afar, The Blessed Buddha,
Kinsman of the Sun, they quickly offer homage to The Lord of Wisdom by stating:*

*‘Homage to You, Oh Thoroughbred!
Homage to You, Oh One who is Supreme among men!
Though not human, having looked upon us with kindness,
It is You, whom we honor and worship!’
When often we are asked,
‘Do you bow down to Gautama the great Conqueror,
Accomplished in direct knowledge and supremely pure conduct?’
We reply,
‘Indeed, we bow down to Gautama, The Buddha!’*

The Western Quarter

*“At the point where the Sun disappears, Aditiya’s child, in his glorious arc,
Who in his setting, ends the day,
And along with his disappearance, is accompanied with what’s called a ‘Night,’
There, the great waters come together, swelling deep in a mighty ocean,
Which beings know to be the place
Where the swelling great ocean waters flow.*

*“It is here, they call the Western Quarter boundary, guarded by a glorious king,
Lord Virūpakkha of the Nāgas (Dragons),
Whose songs and dances he enjoys, honored by his subjects,
And he has many mighty sons, all bearing the same name,
Eighty, ten, and one, all named Indra, lord of strength.*

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Kinsman of the Sun, they quickly offer homage to The Lord of Wisdom:*

*‘Homage to You, Oh Thoroughbred!
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Though not human, having looked upon us with kindness,
It is You, whom we honor and worship!’
When often we are asked,
‘Do you bow down to Gautama the great Conqueror,
Accomplished in direct knowledge and supremely pure conduct?’
We reply,
‘Indeed, we bow down to Gautama, The Buddha!’*

The Northern Quarter

*“Where lovely Uttarakuru is found, under Mount Meru, so glorious yet serene,
There, one finds an unselfish human race, possession-less,
With no need to sow seeds nor draw the plough,
The rice they eat is from untilled soil, free from powder and from husk,
Sweet in scent, the finest of rice grain to taste after being cooked on hot stones,
Such is the food they do enjoy.*

*“With an ox-drawn carriage as their mount,
They move about from here to there,*

*With a beast-drawn carriage as their mount,
They move about from here to there,*

*With a woman-drawn carriage as their mount,
They move about from here to there,*

*With a man-drawn carriage as their mount,
They move about from here to there,*

*With a girl-drawn carriage as their mount,
They move about from here to there,*

*With a boy-drawn carriage as their mount,
They move about from here to there.*

*“Thus, carried by such carriages, they tour the land in service of the King,
Along with elephants, horses, and vehicles fit for gods, as well.
There are splendid mansions and palanquins too,
For the glorious and mighty King,
Who also has cities built way up in the sky:
The Āṭānāṭā, Kusināṭā, Parakusināṭā, Nāṭapuriyā, and Parakusitanāṭā.*

*“There’s Kapīvanta to the north,
With Janogha lying beyond,
Navanavutiya, Ambara-Ambaravatiya,
And the royal city of Ālakamandā.*

*“The Great King Kuvera, Venerable Sir,
Dwells in the capital city named Visāṇā,
The reason why we bear the name, ‘King Vessavaṇa.’*

*“There are the special informants always on mission;
Each reporting to the mighty King, bearing the names
Tatolā, Tattalā, Tatotalā, Ojasi, Tejasi, Tatojasi, Sūra, Rājā, Ariṭṭha, and Nemi.*

*“There is the mighty lake called Dharaṇī,
The source of rainclouds pouring down when it is time.
There is also the Sālavatī Hall,
Where the yakkhas enjoy meeting each other and assemble,
Which has around it many trees that are always in season, always bearing fruit,
Full of many flocks of birds,
Where peacocks call and herons cry out, and the cuckoo sings.*

*“While the jīva-bird cries out: ‘Live, live!’
While another sings: ‘Lift your heart up!’
There roam the pheasant rooster and the kuliraka,
Along with the forest crane and rice bird as well,
Not to mention the mynah-birds and parrots that mimic man’s voice, and the one called ‘man-
on-stilts.’
It is there that Kuvera’s lotus pond is found,
So lovely and colorful all year round.*

*“Here, it is called the Northern Quarter Boundary,
Guarded by a glorious King,
Lord Kuvera of all the Yakkhas (the goblins),
Whose songs and dances he enjoys.
He is honored and revered by all his subjects;
And he has many mighty sons, all bearing the same name,
Eighty, ten, and one, all named Indra, lord of strength.*

*“Having seen The Awakened One from afar, The Blessed Buddha,
Kinsman of the Sun, they quickly offer homage to The Lord of Wisdom:*

*‘Homage to You, Oh Thoroughbred!
Homage to You, Oh One who is Supreme among men!
Though not human, having looked upon us with kindness,
It is You, whom we honor and worship!’
When often we are asked,
‘Do you bow down to Gautama the great Conqueror,
Accomplished in direct knowledge and supremely pure conduct?’
We reply,
‘Indeed, we bow down to Gautama, The Buddha!’*

“These, Venerable Sir, are the Āṭānāṭiya protective verses that when recited, serve to protect Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, as well as male and female lay disciples, so that they may reside in peace, safety, and comfort, while remaining guarded against various dangers.

“Blessed Lord, the Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, male and female lay disciples should learn these Āṭānāṭiya protective verses well and fully memorize them.

“This because, Blessed Lord, if it ever happens that *any* non-human, whether male or female Yakkha, or Yakkha’s offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the Yakkhas; any male or female Gandhabbā, or a Gandhabbā’s offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the Gandhabbās; any male or female Kumbhaṇḍha, or a Kumbhaṇḍha’s offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the Kumbhaṇḍhas; any male or female Nāga, or a Nāga’s offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the Nāgas, should ever approach that person with hostile intentions, while he or she is beginning to walk or is in the process of walking; rising to stand or already standing; about to sit down or already seated; starting to lie down, or already lying down and resting, then that menacing non-human being will, indeed, face severe consequences, as well as lose all his/her privileges in the non-human world, for that non-human will immediately be rejected and thus not be admitted to my royal city of Ālakamandā!

“Similarly, whoever that non-human being is, he or she will also not be allowed inside any Yakkha assembly, nor would that non-human being be allowed to marry or be given in marriage to anyone, at all!

“Furthermore, all the non-human beings, on finding out about the behavior of that non-human, will immediately become enraged at that being, and actively and severely overwhelm them in various painful ways, whereby the head will become bent inward like an empty bowl, and they would split that non-human being’s head into seven pieces, as an adequate punishment for their evil behavior.

“After all, Blessed Lord, there are non-human beings who are fierce, violent, and cruel, who do not obey the Four Great Kings, nor answer to their officers, nor to their subordinates. They are known to be in rebellion against the Four Great Kings, operating much like those human bandits, the outlaws, that have been captured and eliminated within the Magadhan kingdom, where they would hide about, disobeying the king’s rules, his officers, and their attendants.

“Blessed Lord, these non-human beings mentioned work in the same way.

“Therefore, if it ever happens that *any* non-human, whether male or female Yakkha, or Yakkha’s offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the Yakkhas; any male or female Gandhabbā, or a Gandhabbā’s offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the Gandhabbās; any male or female Kumbhaṇḍha, or a Kumbhaṇḍha’s offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the Kumbhaṇḍhas; any male or female Nāga, or a Nāga’s offspring, or their chief attendant, or a servant of the Nāgas, should ever approach that person with hostile intentions, that individual should immediately sound the alarm, by calling out for those great Yakkhas, the chief Yakkhas, their commanders, and their great generals, exclaiming:

‘This non-human has grabbed hold of me! This non-human is harassing and terrorizing me! This non-human has entered into me! This non-human has harmed and injured me! This non-human is not letting me go!’

“And who, Blessed Lord, are those great Yakkhas, the chief Yakkhas, their commanders, and their great generals? They are: Inda, Soma, along with Varuna, Bhāradvāja, Pajāpati, Candana, Kāmasetṭha, Kinnughaṇḍu, and Nighaṇḍu, as well as Panāda, Opamañña, along with Devasuta,

Mātali, Cittasena the Gandhabbā, Nala, Rājā, Janesabha, Sātāgiri, Hemavata, Puṇṇaka, Karatiya, Guḷa, Sivaka, as well as Mucalinda, Vessāmitta, Yugandhara, Gopāla, and Suppagedha; also, Hiri, Netti, Mandiya, Pañcālacaṇḍa, Ālavaka, Pajunna, Sumana, Sumukha, and Dadimukha, along with Maṇi, Māṇivara, Dīgha, together with Serīsaka.

“These are the great Yakkhas, the chief Yakkhas, their commanders, and their great generals, who should be called in the case of such an attack by a hostile entity.

“These, therefore, Bhante, are the Āṭānāṭiya protective verses that are to be recited, so that Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, as well as male and female lay disciples may reside in peace, safety, and comfort, while remaining guarded against various dangers, unharmed and at ease.

“And now, Venerable Sir, we must depart, for there are many duties that we have to attend to.”

“Then Bhikkhus, I replied by saying:

‘Do now, Great Kings, what you think is fit to do.’”

“At this, the Four Great Kings got up, and after saluting The Blessed One, and respectfully circling and keeping Him on their right, they vanished right then and there.

“Therefore Bhikkhus, you should learn these Āṭānāṭiya protective verses well, mastering them fully and memorizing them.

“They are for your own benefit and gain, because through remembering them, Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, male and female lay disciples of The Tathagata may reside in peace, safety, and comfort, while remaining guarded against various dangers, unharmed and at ease.”

This is what The Blessed One said, and the Bhikkhus were delighted and rejoiced in The Blessed One’s words.

Sādhū Sādhū Sādhū