Tha Ap 534 — 529. {532.} Vakkali

English translation by Jonathan S. Walters.

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Text

Therāpadāna

The Legends of the Theras

529. {532.} Vakkali

Walt 5689 One hundred thousand aeons hence

a Leader arose in the world,

Superior-Named, Boundless One,

whose name was Padumuttara. Verse 1

Walt 5690 His speech had lotus-attributes,

skin was stainless like a lotus;

Buddha was Unsoiled by the World,

like a pink lotus by water. Verse 2

Walt 5691 Wise One, with eyes like lotus leaves,

Beloved as is a lotus,

he had a superb lotus scent;

therefore his name was “Best Lotus.” Verse 3

Walt 5692 The World’s Best One, Free of Conceit,
proverbial Eyes for the Blind,
Virtue-Treasure, the Mask of Peace,
Ocean of Compassionate Thoughts, Verse 4

Walt 5693 Praised by Brahmā, titans and gods,
the Great Hero, the Best Person,
Crowded by Men Along with Gods,
once, dwelling among people, he Verse 5

Walt 5694 delighted the whole multitude
with his very fragrant speaking
and with his voice, sweet as honey,
while praising his own follower: Verse 6

Walt 5695 “Intent on faith, with a good mind,
and greedy for my appearance,
there’s no other as much like that
as is this monk named Vakkali.” Verse 7

Walt 5696 Back then I was a brahmin’s son,
in the city, Haṁsavatī.
After hearing the Buddha’s speech,
I longed to have that place myself. Verse 8

Walt 5697 Inviting the Stainless One, the
Thus-Gone-One, with his followers,
after feeding them for a week,
I covered them with new cloth robes. Verse 9

Walt 5698 Bowing my head to the Buddha,
sunk in his limitless ocean
of virtue, overflowing with joy,
I spoke these words to him just then: Verse 10

Walt 5699 “O Great Sage, seven days ago,
you praised the one who is foremost
among the monks possessing faith;
I’ll someday be the same as him.” Verse 11

Walt 5700 When that was said, the Great Hero,
whose Vision is Unobstructed,
the Sage So Great uttered this speech
to the assembled multitude: Verse 12

Walt 5701 “All of you, look at this young man,
clothed in polished gold-colored clothes,
gold brahmin’s cord on his torso,
transporting people’s eyes and minds. Verse 13

Walt 5702 Very far into the future,
this one will be the follower
of Gotama Buddha, Great Sage,
foremost of those intent on faith. Verse 14

Walt 5703 Whether born human or divine,
avoiding every torment there,
furnished with every possession,
he will transmigrate happily. Verse 15

Walt 5704 In one hundred thousand aeons,
arising in Okkāka’s clan,
the one whose name is Gotama
will be the Teacher in the world. Verse 16

Walt 5705 Worthy heir to that one’s Dhamma,
Dhamma’s legitimate offspring,
the one whose name is Vakkali
will be the Teacher’s follower. Verse 17

Walt 5706 Due to that karma’s excellence,
and my intention and resolve,
discarding my human body,
I went to Tāvatiṁsa then. Verse 18

Walt 5707 Transmigrating from birth to birth,
being happy in every place,
I was born in a certain clan,
in the city of Śrāvasti. Verse 19

Walt 5708-5709 At the feet of the Great Sage,
my parents, frightened by goblin-fears,
wretched-minded laid me down there,
sleeping stretched out flat on my back,
as tender as fresh butter is,
soft like a new-born lotus sprout.
“O Lord, we’re giving you this boy;
please support him, O World-Leader.” Verse 20-21

Walt 5710 Refuge for those who are frightened,
the Great Sage then accepted me
with his hand, soft as a lotus,
which was webbed and marked with conch shells. Verse 22

Walt 5711 Since that time I was then guarded
by him who’s Guarded by No One;
freed from all grounds for rebirth, I
am reared up with great happiness. Verse 23

Walt 5712 Each moment I’m deprived of him,
the Well-Gone-One, I long for him;
being only seven years old,
I went forth into homelessness. Verse 24

Walt 5713 Dissatisfied, I’m longing for
his form possessing all good traits,
produced by all the perfections,
the highest home of good fortune. Verse 25

Walt 5714 Knowing my love for Buddha’s form,
the Victor then admonished me:
“Enough, Vakkali! Why delight
in form, rejoiced over by fools? Verse 26

Walt 5715 The one who sees the great Teaching,
that man who’s wise is seeing me;
but not seeing the great Teaching,
he also is not seeing me. Verse 27

Walt 5716 Endless danger is the body,
likened to a poisonous tree;
the abode of every disease,
it’s just a heap of suffering. Verse 28

Walt 5717 Tiring of form, seeing it as
the rising and falling of parts,
happily, one is going to reach
the end of all the defilements.” Verse 29

Walt 5718 Being thus instructed by him,
by the Leader, the Friendly Sage,
having ascended Vulture’s Peak,
I meditated in a cave. Verse 30

Walt 5719-5720 The Great Sage, standing at the foot
of the mountain, then said to me,
“O Vakkali,” and being thrilled,
hearing the word of the Victor,

I leapt right off that mountainside,
varied hundreds of man-lengths high,
then through the Buddha's majesty,
I reached the ground, comfortably. Verse 31-32

Walt 5721 Once again he preached the Dhamma,
the rising and falling of parts;
and this time, grasping the Teaching,
I attained my arahantship. Verse 33

Walt 5722 Then amidst a great multitude,
the One Gone to the End of Death,
Great-Minded One, appointed me
foremost of those intent on faith. Verse 34

Walt 5723 In the hundred thousand aeons
since I did that good karma then,
I've come to know no bad rebirth:
that's the fruit of Buddha-pūjā. Verse 35

Walt 5724 My defilements are now burnt up;
all new existence is destroyed.
Like elephants with broken chains,
I am living without constraint. Verse 36

Walt 5725 Being in Best Buddha's presence
was a very good thing for me.
The three knowledges are attained;
I have done what the Buddha taught! Verse 37

Walt 5726 The four analytical modes,
and these eight deliverances,
six special knowledges mastered,
I have done what the Buddha taught! Verse 38

Thus indeed Venerable Vakkali Thera spoke these verses.

The legend of Vakkali Thera is finished.

Translated by Jonathan S. Walters.

Whitman College, 2017

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