

THE STORY ABOUT WHAT IS UNQUESTIONABLE



APAṆṆAKAJĀTAKA, JA 1

TRANSLATED BY

ĀNANDAJOTI BHIKKHU

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Note

This is a complete translation of the first story in the Jātaka commentary, and includes a translation of the word commentary, a section that was omitted in all cases by the Cowell group of translators in the standard English translation. The text is more or less as in the Burmese tradition, and published on the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka 4.0.

The word commentary, which discusses the words in the verses of the Jātakas only, is an important part of the Jātaka Commentary, and comprises about 20% of the length of the work, but remains largely unknown owing to its omission from translations.

As will be seen below it often has important discussions of the meanings of the Jātaka verse(s), and, as I show in one of the footnotes, can also reveal information about the state of the Jātaka story prior to its present form, which was probably finalised in the 5th or 6th centuries CE.

In this case the word commentary discusses some words as though they applied to the story about the Bodhisatta, but in the Jātaka as we receive it the words are not used in that story, but only in the story about the foolish caravan merchant. This seems to imply that the story had changed from the time of the word commentary, and the compiling of the rest of the commentary.

The word commentary is also interesting in that it quotes nearly the whole of the *Apaṇṇakasutta* (AN 3.16) and shows how the teaching in that discourse is related to the *Jātaka* story. There are further quotations from the canon in a number of places in the commentary, which are brought in to illustrate the connection between the story and the teaching in the *Nikāyas*.

The commentary here presents the classical form of a *Jātaka*: first there is a story of the present, which leads up to the telling of the story of the past by the Buddha, which is the *Jātaka* proper. In this case the verse occurs in the conclusion which is outside of the story of the past, and is set at the time of the Buddha after he had Awakened.

What I call the conclusion (*pariyosāna*) is sometimes called the connection (*samodhāna*) in other works on the subject.¹ That, however, is an inadequate term, as it often does much more than state the connection between the characters in the present and past stories, and may, as here, include the verse, a summary of what further teachings were given, and the effects the teachings had, as well as identifying the characters.

This section includes the verse itself. Many times in the *Jātakas* the verse(s) occur within the story of the past, but fairly often the verse(s) will be spoken by the Buddha as a kind of summary of the story, or as moral reflection on the story, and occur in the conclusion.

¹ There are no section headings in the commentary, of course.

The verse is then followed by the Word Commentary, which in translation is around 1,500 words long. This is then followed by a resumption of the conclusion, in which the connection between the characters in the story and characters contemporary with the Buddha is made clear.²

In what follows I have distinguished the different parts of the Jātaka by text colour. The story of the present and the conclusion, which all take place at the time of the Buddha, are given in **dark red text**; the story of the past in **dark blue text**; the word commentary is in **purple coloured text**.

Throughout quotations from the canon are given in black text. I have occasionally reconstructed these to make the meaning and the illustration clearer. All such reconstructions are marked by being placed *in italic text*.

² Note that these characters do not necessarily appear in the Introduction, it is enough for them to be people living in the Buddha's present day. In the first and third Jātakas, for instance, we see Devadatta identified as one of the main characters in the story, even though he is not mentioned in either Introduction.

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Ānandajoti Bhikkhu

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Overview

In the present 500 friends of Anāthapiṇḍika convert to Buddhism, but later fall away. The Buddha reproves them for failing in their refuge, and tells a story of a wise and a foolish caravan merchant in the past. The foolish one listened to Yakkhas who led him astray, and he lost all his men and merchandise; the wise one safely guided his caravan across the desert.

The Bodhisatta = the wise caravan merchant

(paṇḍitasatthavāhaputta),

the Buddha's disciples = the wise caravan merchant's followers

(paṇḍitasatthavāhaputtaparisa),

Devadatta = the foolish caravan merchant (bālasatthavāhaputta),

Devadatta's followers = his followers.

Past Compare: DN 23 Pāyāsisutta [PTS 2.342].

Keywords: Caution, Prudence, Devas.

The Story of the Present

The {1.95} Fortunate One taught this Dhamma discourse on the Unquestionable when in the vicinity of Sāvatti, while living in the Great Monastery at Jeta's Wood.

But what was the occasion for the teaching? The wealthy man Anāthapiṇḍika's five hundred friends, who were disciples of the sectarians.

One day the wealthy man Anāthapiṇḍika took his friends, the five hundred disciples of the outside sectarians,³ and having taken up a great deal of garlands, incense, ointments, and also ghee, oil, honey, molasses, and robe cloth, he went to Jeta's Wood, and paid respects to the Fortunate One. Then he worshipped him with incense, garlands and so on, and distributed the medicines and robe cloth to the monastic Saṅgha, and having put aside the six faults in sitting, he sat down on one side.

Also those disciples of the outside sectarians, having paid respects to the Realised One, sat down near to Anāthapiṇḍika, gazing meanwhile upon the face of the Teacher, which was glorious, like the full moon, and adorned with the signs and characteristics of a Buddha, having a supreme body, encircled by a radiant halo, that emitted dense rays in pairs from the Buddha.

³ The constructions in Pāḷi often come across as awkward in English, and in this English-only version I have adjusted the translation to give a more natural flow to the wording.

The Verse and Word Commentary – 6

Then the Teacher taught the sweet Dhamma teaching that has manifold and diverse meanings, roaring a lion's roar, like a young lion on the Red Arsenic Valley, like a rain cloud thundering, like one bringing down the river in the sky, {1.96} like one binding a wreath of jewels, with a supreme tone that is pleasant, worth hearing, and endowed with eight qualities.⁴

Having heard that Dhamma teaching, they established confidence in their hearts, paid respects to the One with Ten Powers, broke off their refuge in the outside sectarians, and went for refuge to the Buddha.

From there on they ceaselessly went to the monastery together with Anāthapiṇḍika, with incense, garlands and so on in their hands, and listened to the Dhamma, gave gifts, protected their virtuous practices, and maintained the Uposatha observance.

Now the Fortunate One went from Sāvatti to Rājagaha. As soon as the Realised One had gone, they broke off their refuge, went back to refuge in the outside sectarians, and re-established themselves in their original state.

After seven or eight months had passed the Fortunate One came again to Jeta's Wood. Then again did Anāthapiṇḍika take his friends into the presence of the Teacher, and after worshipping the Teacher

⁴ Defined in DN 18 Janavasabhasutta, as: “*distinct, intelligible, charming, worth hearing, rich, concise, deep and sonorous.*” Same at MN 91 Brahmāyusutta.

with incense, garlands and so on, and paying respects, he sat down on one side. They also paid respects and sat down on one side.

Then he informed the Fortunate One how, when the Realised One had departed on his journey, his friends had broken off their refuge, gone back to refuge in the outside sectarians, and re-established themselves in their original state.

The Fortunate One had continually, throughout a myriad of measureless aeons, maintained the splendour of right living and speaking, being, like the fragrance of the deities, full of manifold fragrance. So like one revealing a casket of jewels, having opened his lotus mouth, speaking with the essence of sweetness, he asked: “Is it true that you lay followers broke off the three refuges, and went back to refuge in the outside sectarians?”

Then they, being unable to conceal it, said: “It is true, Fortunate One.”

The Teacher said: “Lay followers, within the limits of the unending hell below and the heights of existence above, and across the measureless world-elements, there is nothing even similar to the practices and virtues and so on taught by the Buddha, so how can anything exceed it?

“Monastics,⁵ to the extent there are beings without feet, with two feet, with four feet, with many feet, the Realised One is declared the best of them...”

⁵ SN 45.139 *Tathāgatasutta*, AN 4.34 *Aggappasādasutta*.

“Whatever riches there are - here or elsewhere
Or in the heavens⁶ - that excellent treasure
Is not equal unto the Realised One...”

“They have confidence⁷ in the best, *understanding the best Dhamma,*
Having confidence in the Buddha who is best, who is
supremely worthy of gifts.” and so on.

He explained it with these discourses. Having explained the virtue of the three jewels, he said: “Thus, being endowed with the ultimate virtues, and having gone to the three jewels for refuge, laymen and laywomen are never reborn in hell and so forth, are freed from rebirth in the downfall, and having been reborn in the Deva world, they achieve great good fortune. Therefore those who have broken off such refuges and gone for refuge with the outside sectarians, have done something unsuitable.”

Here, for those going for refuge in the three jewels, which are concerned with liberation, concerned with the ultimate, to explain the benefit that they do not get reborn in the downfall, these discourses should be shown: {1.97}

“Whoever has gone to the Buddha for refuge,⁸

⁶ What is in italics, is not quoted directly in the Jātaka commentary, but is needed to make the quotation clearer.

⁷ AN 4.34; Iti 90 *Aggappasādasutta*.

⁸ cf. DN 20, *Mahāsamayasuttanta*; SN 1.1.37, *Samayasutta*, where only the first verse is given, the other two being extrapolated.

The Verse and Word Commentary – 9

They do not go to a state of loss.
Having abandoned the human body,
They fill up the hosts of the Devas.

Whoever has gone to the Dhamma for refuge,
They do not go to a state of loss.
Having abandoned the human body,
They fill up the hosts of the Devas.

Whoever has gone to the Saṅgha for refuge,
They do not go to a state of loss.
Having abandoned the human body,
They fill up the hosts of the Devas.”

“Many people⁹ shaken by fear go for refuge
To woods and mountains, to tree shrines in pleasure parks.

That is not a secure refuge, that is not the ultimate refuge,
That is not the refuge to come to that liberates from all
suffering.

Whoever has gone for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma and
the Saṅgha,
And who sees with right wisdom the four noble truths:

Suffering, arising of suffering, and the overcoming of
suffering,
The eightfold noble path leading to the stilling of suffering.

⁹ Dhṛ 188-192.

That is a secure refuge, that is the ultimate refuge,
That is the refuge to come to that liberates from all suffering.”

The Teacher did not complete his Dhamma teaching when he had got this far, but also said: “Lay followers, what is called meditation on the recollection of the Buddha, meditation on the recollection of the Dhamma, meditation on the recollection of the Saṅgha, gives the path of Stream-Entry, gives the fruit of Stream-Entry, gives the path of Once-Returning, gives the fruit of Once-Returning, gives the path of Non-Returning, gives the fruit of Non-Returning, gives the path of Worthiness, gives the fruit of Worthiness.”

Having taught the Dhamma, in ways like this and so on, he said: “You, through breaking off the refuge, have done something unsuitable.”

Here, the meditation on the recollection of the Buddha and so on, the path of Stream-Entry and so on (can be taught thus) as illustrated through the discourses:

“There is one thing,¹⁰ monastics, when developed, made much off, lead to complete disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to deep knowledge, to Complete Awakening, and to Nibbāna. What is that one thing? The recollection of the Buddha.”

¹⁰ AN 1.296.

Thus the Fortunate One advised the lay followers in various ways, and said: “Lay followers, those who in the past grasped hold of what was not a refuge as a refuge, by grasping hold of foolishness, by grasping at what was failing, were captured by Amanussas¹¹ in the wilderness, eaten by Yakkhas, and came to complete destruction. While those people who took hold of the unquestionable, took hold of what was sure, took hold of what does not fail, and attained safety in that wilderness.”

Having said that, he fell silent.

Then the householder Anāthapiṇḍika rose from his seat, paid respects and applauded the Fortunate One, made a salutation with his hands on his head, and said this: “Venerable sir, how these lay followers, broke off the ultimate refuge, grasping hold of foolishness, this is clear to us. But before, how the foolish were captured by Amanussas in the wilderness and destroyed, and how those people who took hold of the unquestionable attained safety, that is concealed for us. {1.98} Make it clear to us, Fortunate One, like the full moon rising in the sky, make this thing clear to us.”

Then the Fortunate One said: “Householder, through immeasurable time I fulfilled the ten perfections, in order to cut off doubt in the world, and penetrated the knowledge of omniscience. Like one filling a golden tube with lion’s marrow, give ear and listen carefully.”

¹¹ *Amanussa* literally means *non-human beings*. Yakkhas have the ability to appear as humans, disguising the fact they are Yakkhas, therefore the word came to be defined as: *Yakkhas disguised in human form*.

Having made the wealthy man's mindfulness arise, he cleaved through the snow-store, like one who driving away the brightness of the full moon, and made clear the deeds that had been concealed by the gap between existences.

The Story of the Past

In the past, in Benares, in the Kāsi kingdom, there was a king called Brahmadata. At that time the Bodhisatta took rebirth in a family of caravan merchants. After exiting from his mother's womb after ten months, and by and by maturing, he travelled around as a caravan merchant with five hundred carts, going sometimes from east to west, and sometimes from west to east.

In Benares there was another caravan merchant's son, who was a fool, incompetent, who lacked skilful ways.

Then the Bodhisatta, after taking valuable wares from Benares, and filling the five hundred carts, set them up ready for the journey.

The foolish caravan merchant's son also, filling up five hundred carts, set them up for the journey.

Then the Bodhisatta thought: "If this foolish caravan merchant's son goes together with me, and the one thousand carts travel along the same path, the path will not be able to bear it, and wood and water for the people, and grass for the oxen, will be difficult to find, either he or I have to go first."

The Verse and Word Commentary – 13

He called him and informed him of this, saying: “The two of us are not able to travel together, will you go first or come later?”

The foolish caravan merchant thought: “If I go ahead there will be many advantages, I will go along a path that is not broken up, the oxen will eat untouched grass, the men will have curry leaves that are untouched, there will be clear water, and I will be able to fix the price as I like, and sell my wares.”

He said: “My dear, I will go first.” {1.99}

The Bodhisatta saw many advantages of going on the journey later. This is how he thought: “Those traveling first along the path will make the rough places smooth, and I will go along the path that has been well-travelled. The oxen of those going first will chew off the hard, old grass, but my oxen will eat the fresh grass that springs up. In that place where the old leaves have been taken my men will find fresh curry leaves. Having dug a well in the places where there is no water they will find water, where they have dug wells we shall drink the water. Fixing the price is like depriving people of life, coming along later I will sell my wares at the price already fixed.”

Then seeing these advantages, he said: “My dear, you can go first.”

“Very well, my dear,” and the foolish caravan merchant, after yoking his carts up, departed gradually and went beyond human habitations and reached the outskirts of the wilderness.

Wildernesses are known as of these five kinds: a wilderness having thieves, a wilderness having wild animals, a wilderness lacking

water, a wilderness having Amanussas, a wilderness having little food.

Herein, when the path is beset by thieves, that is called a wilderness having thieves. When the path is beset by lions and so on, that is called a wilderness having wild animals. Wherever there is no water for bathing or for drinking, that is called a wilderness lacking water. When beset by Amanussas, that is called a wilderness having Amanussas. Being deprived of roots to eat and so on that is called a wilderness having little food.

Amongst these five kinds of wildernesses this wilderness was a wilderness lacking water, and a wilderness having Amanussas.

Therefore the foolish caravan merchant, having placed very large pots on his carts, and filled them with water, set off across the sixty league wilderness.

Then when he had reached the centre of the wilderness the Yakkha who lived there, thought: “I will make these men throw away the water they are carrying, and when they are weakened, I will eat them all.”

So he made a delightful vehicle yoked by two all-white oxen, {1.100} surrounded by ten or twelve Amanussas who had swords, shields and bows and quivers in their hands, and ornamented with water-lilies and lotuses, having wet hair, and wet clothes.

Like a mighty lord sitting right there in his vehicle, which had wheels smeared with mud, he came along the path.

Surrounded by Amanussas before and behind they went along having wet hair, and wet clothes, ornamented with water-lilies and lotuses, taking bunches of various lotuses, chewing on lotus stalks, they proceeded dripping with mud and dripping with water.

Now caravan merchants, whenever the wind blows from the fore, having sat down in their vehicle, being surrounded by attendants, go along at the front evading the dust. When the wind blows from behind, then they go along at the rear in the same way.

But in this case the wind was from the fore, therefore the caravan merchant's son went along at the front.

The Yakkha, seeing him coming, made his own vehicle descend from the path, and made a kindly greeting to him, saying: "Where are you going?"

The caravan merchant also made his own vehicle descend from the path, and gave way for his carts to proceed, and while stood on one side he said this to the Yakkha: "Sir, we are on our way from Benares. But you, ornamented with water-lilies and lotuses, with various lotuses in your hands, chewing on lotus stalks, proceed dripping with mud and dripping with water. Did the Deva rain down as you came along the road, and were there lakes covered over with lotuses?" he asked.

Hearing this the Yakkha said: "Friend, what did you say? It is well known that starting from the line of trees in the dark forest the whole forest is full of water, and the Deva constantly rains down,

and the valleys are full of water, and right there in that place there are lakes covered over with lotuses.”

Having said that, while the carts proceeded {1.101} along the path, he asked: “What do you carry in these carts that are going along?”

“Such and such wares from the country.”

“And what wares do you have in this cart?”

“Such and such,” he said.

“In the cart that goes along at the rear, which seems to be weighed down, what wares are there?”

“There is water.”

“You did well to bring water from afar, but beginning from here there is no need for water, in front there is a lot of water – break the pots, throw away the water, and proceed with ease,” he said.

But having said that, he said: “You should go, we have delayed enough,” and after going a little further, when out of sight of them, he went back to his own Yakkha city.

That foolish caravan merchant, because of his folly, accepted the Yakkha’s word, broke his pots, and threw away the rest, every last handful of water.

He drove his carts onwards, but in front there was not even a little water, and his men grew weary from not finding drinking water. As the sun was going down, they unyoked the carts, placed them in a circle, binding the oxen to the wheels. For the oxen there was no water, neither could the men make rice gruel, and the weakened men lay down right there and fell asleep.

Later that night the Yakkhas having left their Yakkha city, fell upon and cut off the life of all those men and oxen, ate their flesh, and went back leaving the bones.

In this way, because of the foolish caravan merchant, they all came to destruction, and the bones of their hands and so on were scattered in every direction, while the five hundred carts which were so full were left standing.

Then the Bodhisatta, a month and a half after the day the foolish caravan merchant had departed, left with five hundred carts from the city, and gradually reached the outskirts of the wilderness.

There he filled the water pots, taking along a great deal of water, and summoned his men in the camp with a drum, and when they gathered round, he said this: {1.102} “Without asking me first let no one use even a handful of water. In this wilderness there are poisonous trees, amongst you let no one eat even a leaf, a flower or a fruit which has not been eaten before, without asking me first.” Having advised his men in this way, they entered the wilderness with their five hundred carts. When they got to the centre of the wilderness, the Yakkha, just like earlier, showed himself on the Bodhisatta’s path.

The Bodhisatta, having seen him, knew: “In this wilderness there is no water, it is known as a wilderness lacking water. This fearless person with red eyes, whose shadow cannot be discerned, without a doubt persuaded the foolish caravan merchant who went in front to throw away all his water, and when his company were weary he will have eaten them – but he doesn’t think about or know my wisdom and skilful ways.”

Therefore he said to him: “You should go away, we are tradesmen, and without seeing water we do not throw away the water we have. Having seen such a place we will throw it away, and will proceed after lightening our carts.”

The Yakkha, after going a little further, when he was out of sight, returned to his own Yakkha city.

When the Yakkhas had gone his men said to the Bodhisatta: “Master, these men said: ‘It is well known that starting from the line of trees in the dark forest the whole forest is full of water, and the Deva constantly rains down.’ Having said that, we saw they had garlands of water-lilies and lotuses, carried bunches of various lotuses, and were chewing on lotus stalks, had wet hair, and wet clothes, and proceeded along dripping with mud and dripping with water. Let us throw away the water, and we can go quickly with lightened carts.”

The Bodhisatta, having heard their talk, stopped the carts, gathered the people around him, and asked: “In this wilderness have you previously heard of there being any lakes or ponds?”

“No, Master, we never heard before.” They said: “This is known as a waterless wilderness, but just now some men said: ‘In front the Deva is raining from the line of trees in the dark forest.’ ”

“How far does a shower storm {1.103} blow?” “At least a league, Master.” “But has anyone felt a shower storm on their bodies?” “No, Master.”

“How far can the top of a cloud be discerned on the plains?” “Three leagues, Master.” “But has anyone seen the top of the clouds?” “No, Master.”

“How far can lightning be discerned on the plains?” “At least four or five leagues, Master.” “But has anyone seen the lightning flash?” “No, Master.”

“How far can thunder be heard on the plains?” “At least one or two leagues, Master.” “But has anyone heard the thunder?” “No, Master.”

“These were not men, they were Yakkhas, having made us throw away the water, after weakening us, they will return with the desire to eat us. The foolish caravan merchant who went before does not have skilful ways. Having thrown his water away along the journey, and become wearied, he will have been eaten, while the five hundred carts which were so full were left standing, today we will see them.” And he pressed them saying: “Without throwing away even a handful of water, press on with all speed.”

Going along the way he saw the five hundred carts which were so full, and the hand bones and so on of the men and oxen scattered in

every direction, and having unyoked his carts, bound them in a circle in the camp, at the right time he had his men and oxen fed. He had the oxen lay down in the middle of the men, and with the leaders of his force he took up the guard through the three watches of the night with sword in hand, and stood waiting for the dawn.

But on the following day in the morning having completed everything that needed to be done, he fed his oxen, discarded the weak carts, took the strong ones, discarded the wares of little worth, and mounted the wares of great worth, and went on to his intended destination, and sold his wares at two or three times their base value, and took his whole company back again to his own city.

The Conclusion 1

Having {1.104} told this Dhamma story the Teacher said: “Thus, householder, those who grasped at foolishness came to complete destruction, but those who took hold of what is unquestionable, escaped from the hands of the Amanussas, went back to the places they had hoped for in safety, and returned once more to their own abodes.”

Having said this he connected the two stories together in this Unquestionable Dhamma teaching.

After becoming Fully Awakened, he spoke this verse:

The Verse and Word Commentary

1. “Apañṇakaṃ ṭhānam-eke, dutiyaṃ āhu takkikā,

1. “Some have an unquestionable basis, (while) the foolish speak of another way,

Etad-aññāya medhāvī, taṃ gaṇhe yad-apañṇakan.”-ti

The intelligent one, understanding it, takes hold of that which is unquestionable.”

Herein *unquestionable*¹² means being sure, unfailing, leading to deliverance. *Basis* means cause. Whatever has a cause has a fruit as a dependent condition, therefore: “*Basis*” is said. “A basis comes from having a basis, lacking a basis comes from lacking a basis,”¹³ and so on, this is how its application should be seen.

Thus with the two words: “Unquestionable basis,” whatever absolutely brings benefit and happiness when practiced by the wise, that is a cause for being sure, a cause for unfailing, a cause that leads to deliverance – that explains it.

¹² I base this translation on Weber Ind. Str. iii.150 & Kuhn, Beitr. p. 53, as reported in PED: **a-praśna-ka*. In the word commentary italics indicate the word of the verse being commented on.

¹³ Vibh. 809.

Herein, this is the summary from the linguistic analysis, but the three goings for refuge, the five virtuous practices, the ten virtuous practices, the restraint according to the regulations, the restraint of the senses, the purity of livelihood, the correct use of the requisites, every virtuous practice in the four purities, the guarding of the sense doors, knowing the measure in food, being devoted to wakefulness, the absorptions, insights, deep knowledges, attainments, noble path, noble fruit – all of these form an unquestionable basis, an unquestionable practice, a practice that leads out, is the meaning.

Wherefore what is called the practice that leads out, that the Fortunate One shows in this discourse about the Unquestionable Practice:

Apaṇṇakasutta **The Discourse about the Unquestionable¹⁴**

“Endowed with three things, monastics, a monastic’s practice is an unquestionable practice, that is the reason for his success in the destruction of the pollutants.

What three?

Here, monastics, a monastic is one who guards the doors of the senses, who knows the measure in food, and is devoted to wakefulness.

¹⁴ AN. 3.16, *Apaṇṇakasutta*.

1. And how, monastics, is a monastic one who guards the doors of the senses? Here, monastics, a monastic, having seen a form with the eye, does not grasp at the sign, *nor does he grasp at the details,*¹⁵ *for this reason: were he to live with the eye sense faculty unrestrained, wicked, unskilful thoughts like greed and aversion might flood in. He therefore practices restraint, guards the eye sense faculty, and achieves the restraint of the eye sense faculty.*

Having heard a sound with the ear, he does not grasp at the sign, nor does he grasp at the details, for this reason: were he to live with the ear sense faculty unrestrained, wicked, unskilful thoughts like greed and aversion might flood in. He therefore practices restraint, guards the ear sense faculty, and achieves the restraint of the ear sense faculty.

Having smelt an odour with the nose, he does not grasp at the sign, nor does he grasp at the details, for this reason: were he to live with the nose sense faculty unrestrained, wicked, unskilful thoughts like greed and aversion might flood in. He therefore practices restraint, guards the nose sense faculty, and achieves the restraint of the nose sense faculty.

Having savoured a taste with the tongue, he does not grasp at the sign, nor does he grasp at the details, for this reason: were he to live with the tongue sense faculty unrestrained, wicked, unskilful thoughts like greed and aversion might flood

¹⁵ What follows in italics, is not quoted directly in the Jātaka commentary, but has to be inferred from the abbreviation markers.

in. He therefore practices restraint, guards the tongue sense faculty, and achieves the restraint of the tongue sense faculty.

Having felt a touch with the body, he does not grasp at the sign, nor does he grasp at the details, for this reason: were he to live with the body sense faculty unrestrained, wicked, unskillful thoughts like greed and aversion might flood in. He therefore practices restraint, guards the body sense faculty, and achieves the restraint of the body sense faculty.

Having cognised a thought with the mind, he does not grasp at the sign, nor does he grasp at the details, for this reason: were he to live with the mind sense faculty unrestrained, wicked, unskillful thoughts like greed and aversion might flood in. He therefore practices restraint, guards the mind sense faculty, and achieves the restraint of the mind sense faculty.

Thus, monastics, a monastic is one who guards the doors of the senses.

2. And how, monastics, is a monastic one who knows the measure in food? Here, monastics, a monastic takes his food after making reflection: “Not for sport, not for showing off, not for ornament, *not for adornment, but only to maintain this body, and to carry on, to inhibit annoyance, and to assist in the spiritual life, and so I will get rid of any old feeling, and not produce any new feeling, and I will carry on, being blameless, and living comfortably.*”

Thus, monastics, a monastic takes his food after making reflection.

3. And how, monastics, is a monastic one who is devoted to wakefulness? Here, monastics, a monastic is one who by day, whether walking or sitting, *purifies his mind from thoughts which are obstacles.*

In the first watch of the night, whether walking or sitting, he purifies his mind from thoughts which are obstacles. In the middle watch of the night, he lies down in the lion posture on his right side, placing one foot on top of the other, with mindfulness and full awareness, having fixed his mind on the time for waking. In the last watch of the night, having risen, whether walking or sitting, he purifies his mind from thoughts which are obstacles.

Thus, monastics, a monastic is one who is devoted to wakefulness.”

These are the three things spoken of in the discourse. This is the unquestionable practice that leads to the attainment of the fruit of Worthiness. {1.105}

Herein, the fruit of Worthiness, for one dwelling in fruit attainment, for one having complete emancipation without attachment, this is known as the practice.

Some means some wise people.

Herein, although: “Being called such and such,” is not certain, but when referring to the Bodhisatta and his company it is said, this is how it should be understood.¹⁶

The foolish speak of another way. Another way means a way apart from the first, apart from the unquestionable basis, apart from the cause for leading to deliverance, those who grasp at foolishness have another way as a cause, which is not a cause that leads to deliverance.

The foolish speak, herein this is the interpretation together with the first line: *the unquestionable basis*, the cause for being sure, the cause for unailing, the cause for leading to deliverance, *some* wise people, with the Bodhisatta at the head, take hold of it.

But the foolish say, with the foolish son of the caravan leader at the head, they have *another* and offending way, that is not a cause for being sure, that is a cause for failing, that is not a cause that leads to deliverance – and this they grasp at.

For those who take hold of an unquestionable basis, their practice is a pure practice.

¹⁶ In the story as we have it, this is not said of the Bodhisatta and his company, but of the foolish caravan merchant’s wares. Perhaps the story has changed since the Word Commentary was written, and originally it had a repetition of the discussion between the Yakkha and the foolish caravan merchant, which is now abbreviated in the encounter with the Bodhisatta. See the Introduction for a discussion.

They who have *another way* say: “In front there should be water,” the so-called fools grasp at a cause that does not lead to deliverance. They practice a dark practice.

Herein, the pure practice is a practice that does not regress, the dark practice is a practice that does regress.

Therefore those who practice a pure practice, do not regress and they attain safety. Those who practice a dark path, regress and fall into misfortune.

This was the Fortunate One’s meaning when speaking to the householder Anāthapiṇḍika, and further he said this: “*The intelligent one, understanding it, takes a hold of that which is unquestionable.*”

Herein, *the intelligent one, understanding it. The intelligent one*, the one so-called, being endowed with vast, purified, ultimate wisdom. The son of a good family knows what is unquestionable and what is questionable, while out of the two bases the so-called foolish ones grasp at what is illogical.¹⁷ He knows what is virtuous and what is faulty, what develops and what destroys, is the meaning.

¹⁷ It is hard to get this over in English. *Takka* means reason, logic, but in Buddhism it usually means it in a derogative manner, implying someone who has no direct experience, but merely thinks for himself, and is in fact behaving foolishly. Here we have the second meaning coupled with the first. *The fools who are illogical.*

Takes a hold of that which is unquestionable means that which is unquestionable, sure, the pure practice, the practice that is reckoned not to regress, that is a cause leading to deliverance, that should be taken hold of. Why? It has the nature of being sure and so on.

But the other should not be taken hold of. Why? It has the nature of being unsure and so on.

This for everyone is known as the unquestionable practice, the practice of Buddhas, Independent Buddhas and the Buddha's children.

Therefore all the Buddhas are established on this unquestionable practice, firmly, energetically, having fulfilled the perfections at the root of the Bodhi tree and having the name of Buddhas. Also the Independent Buddhas who have generated Independent Awakening, and the Buddha's children who have comprehended the disciples' perfections.

The Conclusion 2

So said the Fortunate One to those lay followers. Having taught the three achievements for supporters,¹⁸ the six sensual heavens and the Brahmā Realm attainments, which culminates in the giving of the path and fruit of Worthiness, this is called the unquestionable practice. That which leads to the four downfalls and rebirth in inferior families, is called the questionable practice.

¹⁸ Defined in the Aṅguttara-aṭṭhakathā (on AN 3.58) as: *being born as a human in a noble, brahmin or merchant family.*

Having shown the teaching of the Dhamma about the Unquestionable, he further shone light on the four noble truths in their sixteen modes. At the conclusion of the four truths all five hundred lay followers attained the fruit of Stream-Entry.

The Teacher delivered and presented this Dhamma teaching, and having told the two stories, he joined them together, and showed the connection of the Jātaka: “At that time Devadatta was the foolish caravan leader, his followers were Devadatta’s followers, the followers of the wise caravan leader were the Buddha’s followers, and I indeed was the wise caravan leader,” and so he concluded the teaching.

The Story about what is Unquestionable, the First