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THE PACCEKABUDDHA
A BUDDHIST ASCETIC



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THE PACCEKABUDDHA A BUDDHIST ASCETIC

*A study of the concept of the paccekabuddha in
Pali canonical and commentarial literature*

BY

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V14, 135

beard, puts on yellow robes and leaves home for homelessness. Undertaking the state of possessing nothing (*ākiñcanabhāva*) he goes on alone.

2. How is a *paccekabuddha* alone in having no companion? Thus having entered upon religious life (he retires in) the forest and goes on alone.

3. How is a *paccekabuddha* alone in the annihilation of thirst? Thus being alone, without companion, remaining zealous, ardent, of resolute will, ... exerting himself in the great exertion, having destroyed Māra and his army, Namuci, kinsman of the careless, he annihilates thirst, which is ensnaring, sets into motion, (and is) attachment....

4. How is a *paccekabuddha* alone, being absolutely free from passion? By means of the destruction of passion being absolutely free from passion he is alone; by means of the destruction of hatred being absolutely free from hatred he is alone; (by means of the destruction of) delusion ... (free) from delusion; (by means of the destruction of) (faults) ... free from faults).

5. How is a *paccekabuddha* alone having gone the way which is to be gone alone? The way which is to be gone alone means ... the noble eightfold Way.⁵

6. How is a *paccekabuddha* alone being perfectly enlightened with regard to the highest unique self-enlightenment? Enlightenment (*bodhi*) means the knowledge (*ñāṇa*) of the four Ways and wisdom (*paññā*). The *paccekabuddha* realizes by this knowledge of enlightenment: 'All conditionings (*saṅkhāra*) are impermanent'.⁶

householder's life and feed upon means of subsistence which are stored, i.e. not begged.

⁵ Ap.A. 132: "... means the four bases of mindfulness, the four right exertions (*sammappadhāna*), the four bases of supernatural power (*iddhipāda*), the five faculties (*pañcendriya*), the five powers (*pañcabala*), the seven constituents of enlightenment (*sattabojjhaṅga*), the noble eightfold Way."

⁶ Ap.A. 132-133: "Enlightenment means the knowledge of the four Ways. Wisdom (consists of) the five faculties, the power of wisdom, the constituent of enlightenment which consists of the investigation of the dhamma (*dhammavicaya*), consideration (*vimamsā*), insight, right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*). The *paccekabuddha* understands by means of this knowledge of *paccekabodhi*: 'All conditionings are impermanent', he understands: 'All conditionings are suffering', he understands: 'All conditionings are non-self', he understands: 'Dependent on ignorance are the psychic conformations' ... "Etc., the whole of the *pañccasamuppāda*, in the normal and the reverse order. "He understands: 'This is suffering ... this is the origin of suffering ... this is the elimination of suffering ... this is the Way leading to the elimination of suffering'. He understands: 'This is the origin of the evil influences (*āsava*)

The stories of the lives of *paccekabuddhas*, especially those found in the Sn.A. again and again stress the importance of solitariness for the attainment of *bodhi*. This need to retire from the world and from men is well known in the Indian religious tradition, but contrary to the practice adopted by many of the Hindu and Buddhist ascetics, who leave the world but not necessarily their fellow-ascetics, the *paccekabodhisatta* strives for insight in isolation. A community of fellow-ascetics is felt by him as an obstruction to his goal.⁷

In connection with his solitariness the *paccekabuddha* is called 'like the horn of a rhinoceros' (*khaggavisāṇakappa*),⁸ comparing the one horn of the rhinoceros to the solitariness of the *paccekabuddha* and the animal's solitary way of life to the way of life of the *paccekabuddha*.

This comparison is explained Nd. 2⁹ as follows: "As the horn of the rhinoceros is alone (*eka*) and without a second (*adutiya*), so is also the *paccekabuddha*, resembling this, equal to this, the counterpart of this; like that which is like salt is called very salt, which is like bitter very bitter, which is like sweet very sweet, which is like fire very hot, which is like snow very cold, which is like the ocean a great mass of water, which is like a teacher (*sattihā*) a disciple who attained the great power (*bala*) of the higher knowledges (*abhiññā*), so also what is like that (viz. the horn of the rhinoceros) (is called) the *paccekabuddha* who, solitary, without a second goes on in the world being completely released from fetters".

The Vism.¹⁰ says: "who resemble the horn of the rhinoceros

... (this) the Way'. He understands: 'These elements (*dhamma*) must be known, these elements must be recognized, these elements must be abandoned, these elements must be realized, these elements must be cultivated'. He understands origin, disappearance, enjoyment, danger, and salvation of the six organs of contact. He understands origin ... and salvation of the five aggregates (*khandha*) which are the bases of clinging to existence. He understands the origin, disappearance, enjoyment, danger and salvation of the four great elements. He understands that everything that has an origin, has an elimination."

⁷ Cf. Sn. verses 43, 45, 46, 49 and 65.

⁸ The Indian rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*).

⁹ Nd.2, 129; Ap.A. 133-134. Cf. Kośa III, 194 f. and Mahāvīyutpatti 1006-1007, where two kinds of *pratyekabuddhas* are enumerated (cf. PBB, p. 128 f.), viz. the *khaggavisāṇakappa* and the *vargacārīn* ('who lives in a group'). The last is not specified.

¹⁰ Vism. 234. Nyanatiloka's translation of the term *khaggavisāṇakappa* and *khaggasīgasamūpama* (*Visuddhimagga* oder *Der Weg zur Reinheit*, Konstanz 1952, 273) as 'die dem Nashorn Gleichenden' and 'wie's Nashorn'

(*khaggasiṅgasamūpama*) because of their solitary way of life". The comparison is made in all but one of the Sn. verses and Sn.A.¹¹ gives the following commentary: "*khaggavisāṇakappa*: of this (the word) *khaggavisāṇa* means the horn of a rhinoceros (*khaggami-gasiṅga*), the meaning of the word *kappa* we shall explain in detail in the commentary on the Maṅgala-sutta¹²; here some resemblance should be recognized such as 'taking counsel with a disciple as if he were (*kappa*) a teacher'¹³ etc., so *khaggavisāṇakappa* means like the horn of a rhinoceros (*khaggavisāṇasadiṣa*)". And Ap.A.¹⁴ (133) "as the horn of a rhinoceros is solitary and without a second, so is the *paccekabuddha*..."; (204) "*khaggavisāṇakappa* means like the horn of a rhinoceros (*khaggavisāṇamigasiṅgasadiṣa*), because of (his) not being in contact with a crowd (*gaṇasaṅgaṇikābhāva*)."

Although all commentaries take this comparison with reference to the horn of a rhinoceros, they combine this with the *paccekabuddha*'s way of life. In view of the fact that the rhino's way of life can equally be called solitary it seems that in the comparison both aspects are emphasized, the one horn as well as the solitary life, compared to the way of life of the *paccekabuddha*.

III. 2. The *paccekabuddha*'s way of life: places of residence.

Mount Gandhamādana¹⁵ and the Nandamūlaka-slope—situated in the northern Himālayas—are mentioned as favourite places of residence for *paccekabuddhas*. Buddhaghosa says about them:¹⁶ "One should know that the Gandhamādana¹⁷ lies beyond the seven

is not supported by the commentary as he himself admits in note 14 on p. 273. However, most translators prefer the rendering 'like a rhinoceros', e.g. Sn. tr. Fausbøll and Hare. The commentaries do not support this, see e.g. also Jā. V, 406, where *khagga* has been explained as the equivalent of *palāsāda* 'rhinoceros'. See also EB, 61.

¹¹ Sn.A. 65.

¹² Which can be found Kh.A. 115-119.

¹³ M. I, 150: *sathukappena vata kira bho sāvakena saddhiṃ mantrayamāṇā na jānimha*.

¹⁴ Ap.A. 133; 204.

¹⁵ Av.ś. 71 (no. 28) gives Gandhamādana as a personal name of a *paccekabuddha*, as does MMK. I, 64.

¹⁶ Sn.A. 66-67. See also EB, 58-59.

¹⁷ DPPN, I, 746 ff.: it is crowned with a plateau, green in colour and covered with medicinal plants. It shines from afar. Kinnaras and Nāgas are said to live on its slopes as well. Its name is explained (Jā. VI, 79) as: 'the mountain which intoxicates because of its perfume' (*gandhena madakaro pabbato*).

mountains, the Cullakāḷa, the Mahākāḷa, the Nāgapaliveṭhana, the Candagabbha, the Suriyagabbha, the Suvanṇapassa and the Himavanta. There is the slope called Nandamūlaka, the dwelling place of the *paccekabuddhas* and three caves: the Gold-Cave (Suvanṇaguḥā), the Jewel-Cave (Maṇiguḥā) and the Silver-Cave (Rajata-guḥā). There in the opening of the Jewel-Cave is the tree called Mañjūsaka,¹⁸ which is one *yojana* high and one *yojana* wide. Whatever flowers there are in the water or on the ground, he makes them all flower altogether on the day of the arrival of a *paccekabuddha*. Around it there is 'Mud consisting of all sorts of jewels'.¹⁹ There the Sweeping-wind throws away the rubbish, the Even-making-wind levels the sand, which is made of all sorts of jewels, the Sprinkling-wind sprinkles water brought from lake Anotatta,²⁰ the Sweet-fragrance-bringing-wind brings fragrances from all fragrant trees in the Himālayas, the Gathering-wind gathers and strews flowers, (67) the Spreading-wind spreads (them) to all sides. There are always seats prepared, on which on the day of the arrival of a *paccekabuddha* and on the day of *uposatha* all *paccekabuddhas*, having gathered, sit down. When a *paccekabuddha* just after attaining enlightenment arrives there he seats himself on the prepared seat. Then, if at that time other *paccekabuddhas* exist, they also assemble at that same moment and sit down on the prepared seats. Having seated themselves they enter some attainment or other and come out of (it again). Then, in order to satisfy all (of them), the eldest of the community inquires after the newly arrived *paccekabuddha*'s object of reflection (*kammaṭṭhāna*): 'How is (this enlightenment of yours) attained?' And then he speaks his own verse, the solemn utterance (*udāna*) and the explanation (*vyākaraṇa*); later the Lord said that same verse after being questioned by the reverend Ānanda, and Ānanda said it during the (first) Council as well; each verse that was spoken in the place of those who are enlightened to self-enlightenment under the Mañjūsaka-tree, was

¹⁸ Mañjūsaka, see DPPN, II, 420.

¹⁹ Sabbaratanamāla, see DPPN, II, 712 (Ratanamāla), where it is explained as a platform. The place is also called Mañjūsakamāla, see Sn.A. 67.

²⁰ Anotatta, Sanskrit: Anavatapta. For a description of this lake and its proprietor, the *nāgarāja* Anavatapta, see Kośa III, 147-148; see also Hōbō-girin, s.v. Anokudatsu, p. 33; DPPN, I, 96 ff. The waters of this lake are thought to have a purifying and curing power.