

Bakkula Thera

Introduction: -Here is a Thera Bakkula who was swallowed by the fish and later was adopted by a rich Brahmin family who bought the fish and found the baby inside the fish. He aspired to be the foremost in good health and longevity before the Buddha *Anomadassi*.(App/A_ He again aspired the same before the Buddha *Padumuttara Buddha*.(App.A)(*100,000 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha*) He received the Buddha prophecy to become the foremost in good health and longevity in Buddha Gotama time. He was more or less a Physician caring for the disciples of Gotama Buddha.

Bakkula Thera entered the noble order,at the age of eighty and led the life of a householder for eighty years and the life of a monk for 80 years. He was appointed by Gotama Buddha as the foremost in good health and longevity. He finally attained the Arahantshop.

Imagine with plenty of good meritorious deeds to realize his aspiration through the Samsara could support to his long time dream? Nibbana the precious of all one can dream of possessing in this Samsara.

Bakkula Thera

At the time of the Gotama Buddha, in the city of Kosabhe, there lived a wealthy, high-caste merchant and his wife. After some time the wife conceived and the couple was blessed with a beautiful baby son on whom they lavished all their love and affection. As they lived close to the river *Yamuna*, the baby was taken to the river by his nurse for his daily bath.

The river Yamuna was a deep, wide river with shallow banks and swiftly-flowing water. The nurse was bathing the young baby when she was terrified by a large fish that was swimming towards her. In her haste to get out of the water she lost the baby. Wading into the river she tried to swim after the precious child. The current, however, was swift. She watched in horror as the child was taken further and further from her reach, towards the large fish.

Many miles down the river was a fishing village. The men who fished in the Yamuna river were excited, for their nets had drawn a very large fish. Hauling in their nets with difficulty, they took the large fish, which was thrashing about to the home of the wealthiest resident, who had a large household with many servants. Knowing that only the rich could afford such a large fish they sold it to the merchant, who had no children. The fish was taken to the kitchen, but the cook was reluctant to cut the unusually large and beautiful fish. Deciding to serve it whole, he carefully opened it by inserting his knife along its side. The cook was greatly surprised to find a young baby, still alive, in the stomach of the fish. Running to his mistress, he handed the beautiful baby to her. The woman, who had no children, was filled with joy at the sight of the baby, and decided to bring him up as her own.

The unusual story of the child's beginning soon spread throughout the village. Many came to see the beautiful baby who was regarded as a miracle child. Before long the news spread upriver to the grieving parents who were still in deep sorrow due to the loss of their son. Suspecting that it could be their child, they visited the fishing village to examine the baby. Recognizing the baby as her own, the birth mother asked for the custody of her child. However, the new mother, who had brought up the child with love, was too attached to the baby to part with it. Unable to settle the dispute on their own, the two families took their grievance to the king. The king heard both sides of the story and gave both families joint custody of the child, who was **renamed Bakkula** meaning 'two castes'. Bakkula had the unique privilege of claiming lineage from two very wealthy, high-caste **Brahmin families**. He grew up in the midst of extreme luxury and love from both sets of parents. He had the best available education and took turns living with both sets of parents. As he came of age his parents arranged a marriage to a beautiful girl.

The aspiration made many aeons ago had to be fulfilled. As he grew older Bakkula was inspired by the teachings of the Gotama Buddha. He decided to join the Buddha's Noble Order. **Eight days later he attained the supreme bliss of Nibbána.**

The monks soon noticed a strange phenomenon regarding Bakkula. Not only was he as knowledgeable as any physician, he was also exceptionally healthy, never succumbing to sickness despite the fact that

he often tended the sick monks. Bakkula was also well-known for his **remarkable memory**. Similarly to the chief disciples of the Buddha, Shariputra and Moggallana and his former wife, Yashodhara, Bakkula could recall his past births over infinite periods of time.

The Buddha appointed Bakkula as the monk foremost in good health and longevity. Bakkula entered the noble order at the age of eighty and led the life of a householder for eighty years and the life of a monk for 80 years. To understand the cause of his remarkable memory and his longevity one needs to go back many, many years into the past.

One hundred thousand world cycles and one infinite period ago, a Supreme Buddha named **Anomadassi** reigned over India. Having realized the timeless Four Noble Truths and the Doctrine of Dependent Origination, the Anomadassi Buddha, together with His Chief Disciples, Nisabha and Anoma, taught the Buddha Dhamma for the benefit of mankind and gods. The Anomadassi Buddha, who was traveling through villages and cities preaching the Dhamma, was in a monastery in a beautiful grove of flowering trees near a huge rock formation known as Sobitha when he was stricken with grave illness. Enduring His pain and discomfort with the strength of His mind, the Anomadassi Buddha continued His noble mission of helping mankind eradicate all suffering by showing them the path to emancipation.

At this time a young man who was skilled in his studies, not content with his education, turned to searching for truth. Giving up his household life he took to the life of an ascetic. Before long he attained the mental ecstasies (Jhana). Inspired by the teachings of the Anomadassi Buddha, he entered the Noble Order. However, despite his effort he did not attain enlightenment. Seeing the Buddha Anomadassi and diagnosing His illness, the young monk requested permission to treat His ailment. He then combed the area, obtained the necessary herbs and roots, and prepared the medicine required for treatment. *Offering the medicine to the Anomadassi Buddha with devotion and compassion, he tended to the Buddha's needs and restored Him back to health.* He then aspired for long life and good health in all his future births in samsara (cycle of birth and death). Realizing that he required more effort and **meritorious deeds** to attain emancipation, he continued to perform meritorious deeds.

The Anomadassi Buddha looked into the future and prophesied that the young monk would be reborn in the Brahma realms for many world cycles, after which he would return to the human world as a royal monarch. He would then enjoy the comforts of a royal monarch for many births. Throughout his birth in the celestial and human realms he would be blessed with long life and exceptionally good health.

Bakkula's next documented birth is during the reign of the **Padumuttara Buddha**. He was inspired by a monk on whom the Padumuttara Buddha had conferred the title of *monk foremost in long life and good health*. He performed many meritorious deeds and aspired to be foremost in long life and good health under a future Buddha. The Padumuttara Buddha prophesied that many eons into the future there would reign a Supreme Buddha of the Sakyan clan by the name of Gotama. At this time, Bakkula would be born into a wealthy Brahmin family, attain the supreme bliss of Nibbána, and be declared the monk foremost in good health and longevity.

The next documented birth story is at the time of the **Vipassi Buddha**, when Bakkula was born in the city of Bandumatti. On completing his education he decided to join the Noble Order. Before long he attained the **mental ecstasies**. During this time a contagious disease spread among the Vipassi Buddha's Noble Order. By using his supernormal powers Bakkula gathered the herbs and roots required and prepared the medicine that cured the Sangha. **He then renewed his aspiration**. At death he was reborn in the Brahma realms and had the opportunity to enjoy celestial bliss for a long period of time.

The next documented birth story is at the time of the **Kassapa Buddha**. After seeing a derelict monastery he repaired it and offered it to the Sangha. Taking refuge in the Kassapa Buddha he continued his efforts at emancipation. At death he was reborn in the heavens.

As prophesied, the aspiration made at the time of the Padumuttara Buddha was fulfilled during the reign of the Gotama Buddha. Bakkula, with his remarkable memory and the experience gained by attending the First Sangha Council was invaluable in teaching and assisting the Sangha in preserving the Word of the Buddha.

Bakkula Sutta

Thus have I heard:

On one occasion the venerable Bakkula was living at Rajagaha in the Bamboo Grove, at the Squirrels Sanctuary.

Then Acela Kassapa, a former companion of the venerable Bakkula in his lay life, went to the venerable Bakkula and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and amiable talk was finished, he sat down at one side and asked the venerable Bakkula: "Friend Bakkula, how long is it since you went forth?"

"It is eighty years since I went forth, friend."

"Friend Bakkula, in these eighty years how many times have you engaged in sexual intercourse?"

"Friend Kassapa, you should not ask me such a question as that. You should ask me a question as this: 'Friend Bakkula, in these eighty years how many times have perceptions of sensual desire arisen in you?'"

"Friend Bakkula, in these eighty years how many times have perceptions of sensual desire arisen in you?"

"Friend Kassapa, in the eighty years since I went forth I do not recall any perception of sensual desire to have ever arisen in me."

[That in the eighty years since he went forth the venerable Bakkula did not recall any perception of sensual desire to have ever arisen in him—this we remember as a wonderful and marvelous quality of the venerable Bakkula.]

"Friend, in the eighty years since I went forth I do not recall any perception of ill will...any perception of cruelty to have ever arisen in me."

[That in the eighty years since he went forth the venerable Bakkula did not recall any perception of ill will...any perception of cruelty to have ever

arisen in him—this we remember as a wonderful and marvelous quality of the venerable Bakkula.]

"Friend, in the eighty years since I went forth I do not recall ever having accepted a robe from a householder...ever having cut a robe with a cutter...ever having sewn a robe with a needle...ever having colored a robe with dye...ever having sewn a robe at the kathina time...ever having worked on making robes for my companions in the holy life."

[...This too we remember as a wonderful and marvelous quality of the venerable Bakkula.]

"Friend, in the eighty years since I went forth I do not recall ever having accepted an invitation to a meal...ever having given rise to the thought: 'Oh, may someone invite me to a meal!'...Ever having sat down inside a house...ever having eaten inside a house."

[...This too we remember as a wonderful and marvelous quality of the venerable Bakkula.]

"Friend, in the eighty years since I went forth I do not recall having grasped at the signs and features of a woman...ever having taught the Dhamma to a woman, even as much as a four-line stanza...ever having gone to the Bhikkhunís quarters...ever having taught the Dhamma to a Bhikkhuní...ever having taught the Dhamma to a female probationer...ever having taught the Dhamma to a female novice."

[...This too we remember as a wonderful and marvelous quality of the venerable Bakkula.]

"Friend, in the eighty years since I went forth I do not recall ever having given the going forth...ever having given the full admission...ever having had a novice wait on me."

[...This too we remember as a wonderful and marvelous quality of the venerable Bakkula.]

"Friend, in the eighty years since I went forth I do not recall ever having bathed in a bath house...ever having bathed with bath powder...ever having undertaking the work of massaging the limbs of my companions in the holy life...ever having had an affliction arise in me for as long as it takes to milk

a cow...ever having taken medicine, even as much as a piece of gallnut...ever having used a bolster...ever having made up a bed...ever having entered upon residence for the rains in a resting place inside a village."

[...This too we remember as a wonderful and marvelous quality of the venerable Bakkula.]

"Friend, for seven days after going forth I ate the country's alms-food as a debtor; on the eighth day final knowledge arose."

[That for seven days the venerable Bakkula ate the country's alms-food as a debtor, and on the eighth day final knowledge arose—this too we remember as a wonderful and marvelous quality of the venerable Bakkula.]

Then Acela Kassapa said: "I would receive the going forth in this Dhamma and Discipline, I would receive the full admission."

And Acela Kassapa received the going forth in this Dhamma and Discipline he received the full admission. And soon, not long after his full admission, dwelling alone, withdrawn, diligent, ardent, and resolute, the venerable Kassapa, by realizing for himself with direct knowledge, here and now entered upon and abided in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness. He knew directly: "Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being." And the venerable Kassapa became one of the Arahants.

Then, on a later occasion, the venerable Bakkula took a key and went from cell to cell, saying, "come forth, venerable sirs; come forth, venerable sirs. Today I shall attain final Nibbána.

[That the venerable Bakkula took a key and went from cell to cell saying: "come forth, venerable sirs; come forth, venerable sirs. Today I shall attain final Nibbána—this too we remember as a wonderful and marvelous quality of the venerable Bakkula.]

Then, seated in the midst of the Sangha of Bhikkhus, the venerable Bakkula attained final Nibbána.

[That seated in the midst of the Sangha of Bhikkhus, the venerable Bakkula attained final Nibbána—this too we remember as a wonderful and marvelous quality of the venerable Bakkula.]

Bakkulasuttam

The Wonderful Things About Venerable Bakkula

I heard thus:

At one time venerable Bakkula lived in the squirrels' sanctuary in the bamboo grove in Rajagaha. Then Acela-Kassapa a friend of venerable Bakkula when he was a householder approached him, exchanged friendly greetings, sat on a side and said.

'For how long was venerable Bakkula a homeless one?'

'Friend, I was homeless for eighty years.'

'Friend Bakkula, during these eighty years, how many times did you indulge in sexual things?'

'Friend, Kassapa, I should not be questioned in that manner, as during these eighty years, how many times did you indulge in sexual things? Friend Kassapa, you should question me thus, during these eighty years, how many times did sexual perceptions arise to you?'

'Friend Bakkula, during these eighty years, how many times did sexual perceptions arise to you?'

'Friend, Kassapa, during these eighty years of homeless life, I do not know of a single sexual perception that has arisen to me'

'That venerable Bakkula does not know of a single sexual perception during these eighty years. I bear this as a wonderful and surprising thing of venerable Bakkula'

'Friend, Kassapa, during these eighty years of homeless life, I do not know of a single angry, hurting perception that has arisen to me'

‘That venerable Bakkula does not know of a single angry, hurting perception during these eighty years. I bear this as a wonderful and surprising thing of venerable Bakkula.’

‘Friend, Kassapa, during these eighty years of homeless life, I do not know of a single sensual thought that has arisen to me’

‘That venerable Bakkula does not know of a single sensual thought during these eighty years. I bear this as a wonderful and surprising thing of venerable Bakkula’

‘Friend, Kassapa, during these eighty years of homeless life, I do not know of a single angry, hurting thought that has arisen to me’

‘That venerable Bakkula does not know of a single angry, hurting thought during these eighty years. I bear this as a wonderful and surprising thing of venerable Bakkula.’

‘Friend, Kassapa, during these eighty years of homeless life, I do not know of accepting a robe from a householder.’

‘That venerable Bakkula does not know of accepting a robe from a householder during these eighty years. I bear this as a wonderful and surprising thing of venerable Bakkula.’

‘Friend, Kassapa, during these eighty years of homeless life, I do not know of cutting the robe with an instrument.’

‘That venerable Bakkula does not know of cutting the robe with an instrument during these eighty years. I bear this as a wonderful and surprising thing of venerable Bakkula.’

‘Friend, Kassapa, during these eighty years of homeless life, I do not know of sewing the robe with a needle.’

‘That venerable Bakkula does not know of sewing the robe with a needle during these eighty years. I bear this as a wonderful and surprising thing of venerable Bakkula.’

‘Friend, Kassapa, during these eighty years of homeless life, I do not know of dyeing the robe with dye.’

‘That venerable Bakkula does not know of dyeing the robe with dye during these eighty years. I bear this as a wonderful and surprising thing of venerable Bakkula.’

‘Friend, Kassapa, during these eighty years of homeless life, I do not know of sewing the katina robe.’

‘That venerable Bakkula does not know of sewing the katina robe, during these eighty years. I bear this as a wonderful and surprising thing of venerable Bakkula.’

‘Friend, Kassapa, during these eighty years of homeless life, I do not know of employing co-associates to sew the robe...re...accepting an invitation...re...even the arising of the thought. O! Someone should invite me!’

‘That venerable Bakkula does not know of employing co-associates to sew the robe...re... accepting an invitation...re...even the arising of the thought. O! Someone should invite me! During these eighty years. I bear this as a wonderful and surprising thing of venerable Bakkula.’

‘Friend, Kassapa, during these eighty years of homeless life, I do not know of sitting inside a house...re...partaking food inside a house...re...observing even the minor sign of a woman...re...teaching a woman at least the four lines of a verse...re...approaching the attendance hall of the Bhikkhunis...re...teaching the Bhikkhunis...re...teaching the trainee novices female or male...re....’

‘That venerable Bakkula does not know of sitting inside a house...re.... teaching the trainee novices female or male, during these eighty years. I bear this as a wonderful and surprising thing of venerable Bakkula.’

‘Friend, Kassapa, during these eighty years of homeless life, I do not know of ordaining someone...re... conferring the higher ordination to someone...re... providing requisites to someone or attending to a novice...re...taking a steam bath ...re...using bathing powder to bathe...re...employing a co-associate to massage the body...re...the arising of an ailment even for a short while...re...’Partaking of some medicine for a sickness, at least some green porridge...re....sleeping turned to the wrong side...re...sleeping...re...observing rains at the end of the village

‘That venerable Bakkula does not know of ordaining someone...re.... observing the rains at the end of the village, during these eighty years. I bear this as a wonderful and surprising thing of venerable Bakkula.’

‘Friend, it was only for seven days that I partook the countryman’s morsels with a debt, on the eighth day I realized extinction

‘It was only for seven days that venerable Bakkula partook the countryman’s morsels with a debt, on the eighth day he realized extinction. I bear this as a wonderful and surprising thing of venerable Bakkula.’

‘Friend, Bakkula, may I obtain the going forth and the higher ordination in this Dispensation.’ There upon Acela Kassapa obtained the going forth and the higher ordination, in that Dispensation Not long after the higher ordination of venerable Kassapa, he withdrew from the crowd, abode zealous for dispelling and attained the noble end of the holy life here and now, for which sons of clansmen rightfully go forth homeless. He knew that birth was destroyed, the holy life was lived, what should be done was done, knew there was nothing more to wish. Venerable Kassapa became one of the perfect.

Not long afterwards venerable Bakkula took a bunch of keys and went from one dwelling to the other saying, ‘Friends, come! Today will be my final extinction.

That, venerable Bakkula took a bunch of keys and went from one dwelling to the other saying, ‘Friends, come! Today will be my final extinction. I bear this too, as a wonderful and surprising thing of venerable Bakkula.’

Venerable Bakkula attained final extinction in the midst of the Community of Bhikkhus seated.

That, venerable Bakkula attained final extinction in the midst of the Community of Bhikkhus seated. I bear this too, as a wonderful and surprising thing of venerable Bakkula.’

Appendix – A. Twenty Four Buddhas. Starting from the time our Buddisatta received a definite prophecy from Buddha Dipankara.

1. *Dipankara Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was born as the ascetic *Sumedha* and received the **definite proclamation**

After a period of one Asankheyya there appeared:

2. *Kondanna Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *Cakkavatti King* named **Vijitavi**

After a period of one Asankheyya there appeared:

3. *Mangala Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *Brahmin* named **Suruci**

4. *Sumana Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *Naga king* named **Atula**

5. *Revata Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a **Brahmin** named **Atideva**

6. *Sobhita Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a **Brahmin** named **Ajita**

After a period of one Asankheyya there appeared:

7. *Anomadassi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was *a leader of demons*

8. *Paduma Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was *a lion*

9. *Narada Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was *an ascetic*

After a period of one Asankheyya there appeared:

10. *Padumuttara Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a man named **Jatila** (This period was 100,000 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

After a period of 70,000 Maha kappas there appeared:

11. *Sumedha Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a young man named **Uttara** (This period was 30,000 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

After a period of 12,000 Maha kappas there appeared:

12. *Sujata Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was *a chakkavatti king* (This period was 18,000 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

13. *Piyadassi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a young **Brahmin** named **Kassapa**

14. *Atthadassi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was an **ascetic** by the name of **Susima**

15. *Dhammadassi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was the *God Sakka*
16. *Siddhata Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was an ascetic by the name of *Mangala*
17. *Tissa Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a king named *Sujata* who later became an ascetic (This period was 92 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)
18. *Phussa Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a king by the name of *Vijitavi* who later became a monk
19. *Vipassi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was the *Naga king, Atula* (This period was 91 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)
20. *Sikhi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a king named *Arindama* (This period was 31 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)
21. *Vessabhu Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was the *king Sudassana* who later became a monk (This period was one Maha kappa before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)
22. *Kakusandha Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *king named Sema* (This period was in the same Maha kappa as that of the Gotama Buddha)
23. *Konagamana Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a king named *Pabbata* who later became a monk (This period was in the same Maha kappa as that of the Gotama Buddha)
24. *Kassapa Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *Brahmin* named *Jotipala* (This period was in the same Maha Kappa as that of the Gotama Buddha)

Reference: Relatives and Disciples of the Buddha - By Radhika Abeysekera

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1. Relatives and Disciples of the Buddha by Radhika Abeysekera