

Buddha Visit to Shwesettaw

Central Myanmar



Buddha Left a Footprint at Shwesettaw

Introduction – *The story of the Buddha footprint left at the Shwesettaw location might not be what it claimed to be, because at the time of Buddha, there were no inhabitants in this area, In any event, Samatha practitioner could easily found out the truth of the story. Samatha practitioner could check out the truth of the story through Sakka*

The area near Magwe up in the mountain the legend has it that there lived a Naga king with his subject in the mountain area and use the Irrawaddy water route to go into the bay of Tennaserim (Thanitayyi) where their primary abode is located. Their treasures are kept mostly in the Ocean. The Buddha foot print is known to be guarded by the Naga King and his spouse a Naga ma to this day. Once a while, the two appear to some natives.

According to the *Sasanavamsa*, the city of **Aparanta** is situated on the western shore of the Irrawaddy River at the latitude of **Magwe**. The *Sasanavamsa* gives only a very brief summary of the events surrounding the Buddha's visit to **Aparanta**, presumably because these were well known and could be read in the Tipitaka and the commentaries.[1]

Punna, a merchant from **Sunaparanta**, went to Savatthi on business and there heard a discourse of the Buddha.[2] Having won faith in the Buddha and the Teachings, he took ordination as a bhikkhu. After sometime, he asked the Buddha to teach him a short lesson so that he could return to **Sunaparanta** and strive for arahatship. The Buddha warned him that **the people of Sunaparanta were fierce and violent**, but Punna replied that he would not allow anger to arise, even if they should kill him. In the **Punnovada Sutta**, the Buddha instructed him not to be enticed by that which is pleasant, and Punna returned and attained **arahatship** in his country. He won over many disciples and built a monastery of red sandalwood for the Buddha (according to some chronicles of Myanmar, the Buddha made the prediction that at the location

where the red sandalwood monastery was, the great king *Alaungsithu of Pagan* would build a shrine). He then sent flowers as an invitation to the Buddha and the Buddha came accompanied by five hundred arahats, spent the night in the monastery, and left again before dawn.[3]

Sakka, the king of the thirty-three devas living in the *Tavatimsa* plane, provided five hundred palanquins for the bhikkhus accompanying the Buddha on the journey to Sunaparanta. But only 499 of the palanquins were occupied. One of them remained empty until the ascetic *Saccabandha*, who lived on the Saccabandha mountain in central Myanmar, joined the Buddha and the 499 bhikkhus accompanying him. On the way to Sunaparanta, the Buddha stopped in order to teach the ascetic Saccabandha. When Saccabandha attained arahatship, he then joined the Buddha and completed the total of 500 bhikkhus who usually traveled with the Master.

On the return journey, the Buddha stopped at the river *Nammada* close to the Saccabandha mountain. Here, the Blessed One was invited by the *Naga king, Nammada*, to visit and preach to the Nagas, later accepting food from them. The tradition of Myanmar relates that he left behind a footprint for veneration near this river, which would last as long as the Sasana (i.e. 5000 years). Another footprint was left in the rock of the *Saccabandha mountain*.^[4] These footprints, still visible today, were worshipped by the Mon, Pyu, and Myanmar kings alike and have remained among the holiest places of pilgrimage in Myanmar. In the fifteenth century, after the decimation of the population through the Siamese campaigns, knowledge of the footprints was lost. Then, in the year 1638, *King Thalun* sent learned bhikkhus to the region; fortuitously, they were able to relocate the Buddha's footprints. Since then *Shwesettaw*, the place where the footprints are found has once again become an important place of pilgrimage in Myanmar. And in the dry season thousands of devout Buddhists travel there to pay respects.

1. Punnovada Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya I,267ff.; Theragatha, v. 70, Theragatha Atthakatha I,156ff.
2. See entry 'Punna' in G.P. Malalasekera, *A Dictionary of Pali Proper Names* (PTS 1937-38).
3. The *Sasanavamsa* says the Buddha stayed for seven weeks and converted eighty-four thousand beings to the Dhamma.
4. Ashin Dhammacara, *Kyaungdawya zedidaw thamain* (Yangon 1978), pp. 28, 29.

Appendix - A

MAJJHIMA NIKAAYA III

Pu.n.novaadasutta.m
Advice to Venerable Punna

I heard thus.

At one time the Blessed One was living in Anathapindika's monastery, in Jeta's grove in Savatthi. Then venerable Punna getting up from his seclusion in the evening, approached the Blessed One, worshipped sat on a side and said. 'Venerable sir, it is good, if I'm advised in short, so that I could abide alone and secluded, zealous to dispel diligently.' 'Then Punna, listen, I will advice you.' Venerable Punna agreed and the Blessed said.

'Punna, there are pleasing, agreeable, forms cognizable by eye-consciousness, arousing fondness, attachment and sensual desires. The bhikkhu, delights, welcomes and clings to them, and interest arises. Punna, I say, **the arising of interest is the arising of unpleasantness**. There are pleasing agreeable sounds cognizable by ear-consciousness, scents cognizable by nose-consciousness, tastes cognizable by tongue consciousness, touches cognizable by body consciousness and ideas cognizable by mind consciousness, arousing fondness, attachment and sensual desires. The bhikkhu, delights, welcomes and clings to them, and interest arises. Punna, I say, the arising of interest is the arising of unpleasantness.

Punna, there are pleasing, agreeable, forms, cognizable by eye-consciousness, arousing fondness, attachment and sensual desires. The bhikkhu, does not delight welcome and cling to them, and the interest ceases. Punna, I say, **the cessation of interest is the cessation of unpleasantness**. There are pleasing, agreeable, sounds cognizable by ear-consciousness, scents cognizable by nose-consciousness, tastes cognizable by tongue consciousness, touches cognizable by body consciousness and ideas cognizable by mind consciousness, arousing fondness, attachment and sensual desires. The bhikkhu, does not delight, welcome and cling to them, and so the interest ceases. Punna, I say, **the cessation of interest is the cessation of unpleasantness**.

Punna, I have advised you in short. Now in which state will you abide?'

'Venerable sir, now that I'm advised in short, I will abide in the **Sunaparanta state**.'

'Punna, **the people of Sunaparanta are rough, if they scold and abuse you, what will you do?**'

'Venerable sir, if the people of Sunaparanta scold and abuse me. It will occur to me, indeed the people of Sunaparanta are good, they do not hurt me with their hands.'

'Punna, if the people of Sunaparanta hurt you with their hands, what will you do?'

‘Venerable sir, if the people of Sunaparanta hurt me with their hands, it will occur to me, indeed the people of Sunaparanta are good, they do not hurt me with clods.’

‘Punna, if the people of Sunaparanta hurt you with clods, what will you do?’

‘Venerable sir, if the people of Sunaparanta hurt me with clods, it will occur to me, indeed the people of Sunaparanta are good, they do not hurt me with a stick.’

‘Punna, if the people of Sunaparanta hurt you with a stick, what will you do?’

‘Venerable sir, if the people of Sunaparanta hurt me with a stick, it will occur to me, indeed the people of Sunaparanta are good, they do not hurt me with a weapon’

‘Punna, if the people of Sunaparanta hurt you with a weapon, what will you do?’

‘Venerable sir, if the people of Sunaparanta hurt me with a weapon, it will occur to me, indeed the people of Sunaparanta are good, they do not end my life with a sharp weapon’

‘Punna, if the people of Sunaparanta put an end to your life with a sharp weapon, what will you do?’

‘Venerable sir, if the people of Sunaparanta would put an end to my life, it will occur to me thus. There are disciples of the Blessed One, who loathing the body and life search for an assassin. Here I have got an assassin even without a search.’

‘Good! Punna, it is possible for you to abide in Sunaparanta endowed with that appeasement in the Teaching. You may do the fit now.’

Venerable Punna, delighting in the words of the Blessed One, got up from his seat, worshipped the Blessed One, and moving with his right side towards the Blessed One showed reverence. Putting his dwelling in order and taking bowl and robes, he left on a tour to Sunaparanta and arrived there in due order. Then he abode in that state. Venerable Punna, during that same rains, brought forth about five hundred male disciples and about five hundred female disciples and realized the three knowledges and venerable Punna attained final extinction.

Then many bhikkhus, approached the Blessed One, worshipped, sat on a side and said. ‘Venerable sir, the clansman who was advised by the Blessed One in short has passed away. What are his movements after death.?’

‘Bhikkhus, the clansman Punna is wise. He stood on his own in the Teaching. (*1) He did not worry me about questions in the Teaching. He has attained final extinction.’

The Blessed One said thus and those bhikkhus delighted in the words of the Blessed One.

Notes.

1. He stood on his own in the Teaching. *'paccapaadii dhammaassanudhamma.m'* That means, when advising he was on his own in the Teaching and did not need a Teacher. **This is a special feature of one who had entered the stream of the Teaching.** *'sotaapattiphalasaccikiriyaa'*.