

# The *Pokkharanī Pond* in the *Jātakatthakathā*: A Treasure of Perfection<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This paper aims to study the *Pokkharanī Pond* as a metaphor which conveys the path to Nirvana in the *Jātakatthakathā*. The study reveals that the *Pokkharanī Pond*, which has many precious characteristics, appears in 35 *jātakas*. It is a beautiful place, peaceful, and full of pure water and blossoming lotuses. The pond, therefore, is a marvelous treasure of the virtuous in three realms, namely the human realm, the deity realm, and the naga realm. The pond symbolizes the worldly pleasure which is the result of wholesome deeds. Those who deserve to possess the *Pokkharanī Pond* are kings, deities, and nagas who practice dharma. Secondly, as the *Pokkharanī Pond* is a splendid treasure, pleasurable and desirable to all beings, it also symbolizes the defilements which bind individuals to *Samsara*. The only one who can liberate himself from this ephemeral pleasure is the Bodhisattva who is determined to

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renounce *Samsara* and becomes a Buddha. In many *jātakas*, the Bodhisattva resides at the *Pokkharanī Pond* where he practices contemplation.

In this context, the pond, which is peaceful, full of pure water and blossoming lotuses, symbolizes the serenity, wisdom and the fulfillment of perfection of the Bodhisattva. As a result, we may see clearly that the *Pokkharanī Pond*, as a metaphor of water, is a literary technique significantly used in the *Jātakatthakathā* to connote the process of dharma practice or, in other words, the path to Nirvana.

## Introduction

*Jātakas* are the stories of the Bodhisattva or the previous lives of the Buddha. The collection of *jātaka* verses is included in the *Tipitaka* as a text called '*Jātaka*' and regarded as the *Buddhavacana*. The commentary of the *Jātaka* was later composed in Lanka and called '*Jātakatthakathā*'. In the *Jātakatthakathā*, stories in prose were added to the verses in each *jātaka*. The stories are about the Bodhisattva who fulfills the perfection to attain buddhahood. The Bodhisattva is an intelligent and virtuous being who can use his wisdom to help others.<sup>3</sup> The life of the Bodhisattva is determined to fulfill the Ten Perfections in order to cross *Samsara* and become a Buddha. The fulfillment of perfection of the Bodhisattva portrayed in the *Jātakatthakathā* brings about the ultimate aim of Buddhism, Nirvana. Thus, the *Jātakatthakathā* conveys the path to liberate oneself through stories woven with literary techniques, especially metaphor, which make the teaching vivid and substantial to the audience.

<sup>3</sup> Prapod Assavavirulhakarn [ประพจน์ อัสววิรุฬหการ], *Bodhisattvacaryā: makkha su mahachon* [โพธิสัตตจริยา : มรรคาสุมหาชน] (Bodhisattvacaryā: the Path to All Beings). (Bangkok: Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 2003 [2546]) (in Thai).

This article is a case study of the *Pokkharanī Pond* as a metaphor of water significantly used in the *Jātakatthakathā* to symbolize the process of dharma practice which is aimed at Nirvana.

### The *Pokkharanī Pond* in Buddhist texts

The *Pāli-Thai Dictionary*, *Bhumibalo Bhikkhu Edition* (2004: 192) explains that the word '*Pokkharanī*' means lotus pond; a man-made pond or a lake for planting water crops.

In the *Thai Dictionary of the Royal Institute BE 2542*, the word is also explained as 'lotus pond'.

*The Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names* explains:

*Pokkharaniyā* – A *vihāra* in *Sāmagāma* where the Buddha is said once to have stayed.<sup>4</sup>

In the *Pokkharanī Sutta*, *Suttanta Piṭaka*, *Samyutta Nikāya*, *Nidāna-Vagga*,<sup>5</sup> the Buddha compares the amount of the water in the *Pokkharanī Pond* to the great wisdom of the noble disciple. The physical characteristic of the *Pokkharanī Pond*, translated as 'bathing-tank', is explained:

Suppose, brethren, there were a bathing-tank fifty yojanas in length, fifty yojanas in breadth, fifty yojanas in depth full of water brimming over so that a crow might drink...

The *Pokkharanī Pond* also appears in other Buddhist texts, such as the *Vessantara Dīpanī*, in which the words and contents from the

<sup>4</sup> A. iii. 309; AA. Ii. 660. The translator (G.S. iii.220) calls it a lotus pond; the Commentary definitely calls it a *Vihāra*. G.R. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, Vol II (London: The Pali Text Society, 1974) 246.

<sup>5</sup> C. A. F. Rhys Davids, trans., *The Book of the Kindred Sayings (Samyutta-Nikaya) or Grouped Suttas Part II. The Nidāna Book (Nidāna-Vagga)*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London and Boston: The Pali Text Society, 1972). [First published in 1922] 95-96.

verses and the commentary of the Vessantara Jātaka are explained.<sup>6</sup> In this text, the *Pokkharanī Pond* is a treasure of Sakka. It is a squared pond, full of pure water and lotuses.

In the *Traibhūmi Lokavinicchaya Kathā* (*The Royal Edition of Traibhūmi*) Vol. 3, the *Pokkharanī Pond* is a pond made of bricks.<sup>7</sup> The pond is full of lotuses, silver boats, golden boats, and crystal boats. It is a bath surrounded with trees which bear golden, silver, crystal, and sapphire fruits. The *Pokkharanī Pond*, therefore, is a blissful place for all deities.

### **The *Pokkharanī Pond* in the *Jātakatthakathā***

In the *Jātakatthakathā*, the *Pokkharanī Pond* is, likewise, a pleasurable and desirable place for humans and all beings. Mention of the pond appears in 35 *jātakas*. In these 35 *jātakas*, the *Pokkharanī Pond* has three meanings, which are all related to each other, and conveys the process of dharma practice, the development of the mind on the path to enlightenment.

Firstly, the *Pokkharanī Pond*, as a splendid place, is a ‘divine treasure’ of the virtuous, men of merit, namely kings, deities, and nagas, who practice only wholesome deeds. The *Pokkharanī Pond*, in this context, therefore, symbolizes the worldly pleasure caused by wholesome deeds. It reflects that dharma practice brings one to happiness. However, this happiness is still *samsaric*; it is not the utmost aim in Buddhist belief.

Secondly, since the *Pokkharanī Pond* is a beautiful and pleasant place, desirable to all beings, its seductive power symbolizes craving and defilements which bind individuals to *Samsara*, except the

<sup>6</sup> *Vessantaradīpanī (Thai Version)* [เวสสันดรทีปนี (ภาคภาษาไทย)] (Bangkok: Office of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary, 1997 [2540]) 318-319, (in Thai).

<sup>7</sup> Phraya Thammapricha (Kaew) [พระธรรมปริชา (แก้ว)], *Traibhūmi Lokavinicchaya Kathā* [ไตรภูมิโลกวินิจจยกาถา ฉบับที่ 3 (ไตรภูมิฉบับหลวง)] (*The Royal Edition of Traibhūmi*, Vol. 3) (Bangkok: The Fine Arts Department, 1977 [2520]) 119-120, (in Thai).

Bodhisattva who, in many *jātakas*, is wise and can detach from this 'divine treasure'.

The determination and strong intention of the Bodhisattva to liberate himself from worldly pleasure and all defilements leads to the third meaning. In many *jātakas*, the *Pokkharanī Pond*, as a peaceful place, becomes the hermitage of the Bodhisattva. He dwells at the tranquil pond to practice contemplation and fulfill the perfection which is aimed at liberation. The pond, which is always peaceful and full of pure water, symbolizes the serenity and great perfection of the Bodhisattva. In addition, the *Pokkharanī Pond*, which means 'lotus pond', can be associated with the symbol of the lotus widely used in Buddhism to convey the perfect wisdom and liberation.

### **The *Pokkharanī Pond* as a treasure of the virtuous**

In 35 *jātakas*, the *Pokkharanī Pond* is found as a treasure of the virtuous kings, deities, and nagas in three realms, namely the human realm, the deity realm, and the naga realm. In the human realm, the *Pokkharanī Pond* is a treasure of kings. For example, King Ekarāja in the Candakumāra Jātaka, King Videharāja in the Brahmanarda Jātaka, and King Sutasoma in the Cullasutasoma Jātaka. The pond is located in the royal palace. The pond is also a treasure in the naga realm, as found in the Campeyya Jātaka.

In the Nimi Jātaka, the pond is a divine treasure of deities as the result of wholesome deeds, such as gift-giving and morality, which are fundamental practices for all Buddhists:

As the king went towards heaven he beheld [117] in the air the mansion of a goddess, Bīramī, with pinnacles of jewels and gold, ornamented in great magnificence, having a park and a lake covered with lilies, and surrounded with trees worthy of the place: and there was this goddess seated upon a divan in a gabled

chamber towards the front, and attended by a thousand nymphs, looking out through an open window.<sup>8</sup>

In the Bhūridatta Jātaka, the *Pokkharanī Pond* is a treasure of nagas, such as Dhataratha, the righteous naga king, father of the Bodhisattva, and also Bhūridatta himself. He can possess the *Pokkharanī Pond* because of his merit and virtue:

Level the ground on every side, with tayara blossoms whitened o'er,  
Red with the cochineal insect-swarms, the brightest verdure for its floor,

With sacred shrines in every wood, and swan-filled lakes which charm the eye,  
While strewn the fallen lotus leaves as carpets on the surface lie, –

The thousand-columned palaces with halls where heavenly maidens dance.  
Their columns all of jewels wrought, whose angles in the sunshine glance; –

[174] Thou hast indeed a glorious home, won by thy merits as thine own,  
When all desires are gratified as soon as each new wish is known ; –

Thou enviest not great Sakka's halls, – what are his stateliest courts to thine?

Thy palaces more glorious are and with more dazzling splendours shine.<sup>9</sup>

However, the story shows that the *Pokkharanī Pond* is not desirable to all nagas. Some nagas, especially the Bodhisattva, do not attach to it as they are not content with animal embodiment. They wish to become human, which is an appropriate state to fulfill the perfection and attain liberation. Therefore, the *Pokkharanī Pond*, in this context, at the same time, symbolizes the worldly pleasure which one should detach for the progress in practicing dharma. This can be related to the

<sup>8</sup> E. B. Cowell, ed., *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, Vol. VI, Trans. E. B. Cowell and W. H. D. Rouse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907) 62.

<sup>9</sup> Cowell, Vol VI, 90.

second meaning of the *Pokkharanī Pond*, which will be explained further.

### **The *Pokkharanī Pond* as the defilements binding individuals to *Samsara***

The beauty and pleasure of the *Pokkharanī Pond* attract all beings. Many beings are overcome by it and crave for it. The pond in many *jātakas*, thus, symbolizes craving and defilements which bind individuals to *Samsara*. For example, in the Mahāhamṣa Jātaka, Queen Khemā of Banares dreams of the great swan (*mahāhamṣa*). She wishes to see him and listen to a sermon from him. After declaring her wish to the king, the brāhmins suggest to him to construct a *Pokkharanī Pond*, called '*Khema*', in order to lure the great swan. The swan is trapped and utters these stanzas to the king:

At brahmins' bidding thou didst make this Khema, lake of fame,  
And didst to birds at twice five points immunity proclaim.

Within this peaceful pool thus fed with streams serene and pure,  
Birds ever found abundant food and lived a life secure.  
Hearing this noised abroad we came to visit that fair scene,  
And snared by thee we found alas! thy promise had been.

But under cover of a lie each act of sinful greed  
Forfeits rebirth as man or god, and straight to hell must lead.<sup>10</sup>

It is clear that the great swan in this *jātaka* is seduced by this *Khema* pond or the *Pokkharanī Pond*. He is informed that the pond is a splendid, secure and pleasurable place; located at the north of Banares, full of water, lotuses, birds, plants, fruits, and insects flying around, far

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<sup>10</sup> E. B. Cowell, ed., *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, Vol. V, Trans. H.T. Francis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905) 198.

and safe from humans. He is fascinated by all these characteristics and does come to the pond, and is finally caught.

In the Vidhūra Jātaka, King Dhanañjaya is lured by Puṇṇaka Yakkha. He shows the king the picture of heaven with the *Pokkharanī Pond* through a magic gem. The king is attracted and greatly desires it.

In the Cullasutasoma Jātaka, Somakumāra Bodhisattva wishes to renounce his kingship and royal treasure and becomes a monk. After he has gone to the forest, his royal wives and the people are overcome with grief and mourn. They run to all the places frequented by him, and, not finding the king, they wander to and fro, uttering their lament in these stanzas:

Here are his golden palace-towers  
All hung with wreaths of scented flowers,  
Where girt with many a lady fair  
Our king would oftentimes repair.

Here wreathed with flowers and wrought of gold  
His gabled-hall one may behold,  
Where, all his kinsfolk by his side,  
Our king would range in all his pride.  
His lake o'erspread with lotus blue,  
Haunt of wild birds, here comes in view,  
Where, all his kinsfolk, &c.<sup>11</sup>

We may see from the lament that the *Pokkharanī Pond* is mentioned and clearly demonstrates the pride of kingship and the attachment to worldly pleasure. The wise king, however, finds the pond 'worthless' and easily detaches from it. This meaning of the *Pokkharanī Pond* also appears in the Mahājanaka Jātaka and leads to the third meaning.

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<sup>11</sup> Cowell, Vol. V, 97-98.



## The *Pokkharanī Pond* and the perfection of the Bodhisattva

In many *jātakas*, especially the *dasajāti*, or the last ten lives, the *Pokkharanī Pond* becomes a 'hermitage' for the Bodhisattva who practices dharma and fulfills the perfection. In the Mahosatha Jātaka, Mahosatha builds a pavilion as a public rest place for all people. Beside the well decorated pavilion is the *Pokkharanī Pond*, which is as huge as a lake, full of five kinds of lotuses, surrounded with flowers and trees. The pavilion is also a tranquil 'hermitage' for the Bodhisattva and other ascetics who come to practice dharma. People come from all directions to rest and enjoy themselves there. After refreshing their physical bodies with the enjoyable atmosphere, the Bodhisattva will give sermons to the people and give judgment to cases. The *Pokkharanī Pond* of Mahosatha, therefore, is a place which brings peace to all people.

In the Sīvirāja Jātaka, King Sīvi is a generous king. He even gives his eyes to Sakka, who comes in the guise of a blind brāhmin. After giving away his eyes, he renounces his kingship and resides in the royal garden by the *Pokkharanī Pond*:

The Great Being remained in the palace a few days. Then he thought, "What has a blind man to do with ruling? I will hand over my kingdom to the courtiers, and go into my park, and become an ascetic, and live as a holy man." He summoned his courtiers, and told them what he intended to do. "One man," said he, "shall be with me, to wash my face, and so forth, and to do all that is proper, and you must fasten a cord to guide me to the retiring places." Then calling for his charioteer, he bade him prepare the chariot. But the courtiers would not allow him to go in the chariot; they brought him out in a golden litter, and set him down by the lake side, and then, guarding him all around, returned. The king sat in the litter thinking of his gift.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> E. B. Cowell, ed., *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, Vol. IV, Trans. W. H. D. Rouse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901) 254.

Although the king is blind, he can feel the peaceful atmosphere of the *Pokkharanī Pond*. He resides there as an ascetic and practices contemplation. His great merit arouses Sakka to come down from *Tāvatisa* and presents the 'divine eyes of truth' to King Sīvi. It is clear that the *Pokkharanī Pond*, as the hermitage of the king ascetic in this context, conveys the advanced progress of dharma practice, since the Bodhisattva comes to dwell at the *Pokkharanī Pond* to live an ascetic life after giving gifts and renouncing his throne. The Bodhisattva's career parallels the process of dharma practice in Buddhism, which fundamentally starts with gift-giving followed by renunciation and contemplation.

The *Pokkharanī Pond* also appears in the Vessantara Jātaka. It is described four times as a peaceful and pleasant place. In the Dāna episode, there is a *Pokkharanī Pond* located on the way to the forest. It is portrayed 'a squared pond, full of pure water with various kinds of water crops and fish'.

In the Cullavana and Mahāvana episodes, the splendid atmosphere of the pond is elaborated. It is the perfect hermitage of Vessantara who lives there as an ascetic. Cetaputta describes the *Pokkharanī Pond* to Jūjaka when he explains where Vessantara lives:

[530] Ebony, aloe, trumpet- flower, and many another tree.  
Acacias, berries, nuts, and all as thick as thick can be.

Hard by there is a lake bespread with lilies blue and white.  
As in the garden of the gods, the Garden of Delight.

And there the cuckoos make the hills re-echo as they sing,  
Intoxicated with the flowers which in their season spring.

See on the lilies drop by drop the honey-nectar fall.  
And feel the breezes blowing free from out the south and west,  
Until the pollen of the flowers is wafted over all.

Plenty of rice and berries ripe about the lake do fall,  
Which fish and crabs and tortoises dart seeking with a zest,  
And honey drips like milk or ghee from the flowers one and all.

A frequent breeze blows through the trees where every scent is found,  
And seems to intoxicate with flowers the forest all around.

The bees about the scented flowers fly thronging with their hum,  
There fly the many-coloured birds together, all and some,  
Cooing and chirping in delight, each with his mate they come.  
'O pretty chicky, happy chap!' they twitter and they tweet —  
lovey dovey, deary dear, my pretty little sweet!"

Festoons of flowers garlanded as when the banners fly,  
Blossoms of every hue and tint, sweet odours wafted by,  
Where with his children now abides Vessantara the king.  
With brahmin's dress, with hook and spoon, the ascetic's matted hair,  
Skinclad he lies upon the ground and tends the fire with care.<sup>13</sup>

The *Pokkharanī Pond*, which is a fair and peaceful hermitage and is full of pure water, also symbolizes the perfect generosity and perfection of the Bodhisattva as explicitly found in the stanzas uttered by Jūjaka. He compares Vessantara to 'a safe and pleasant lake' or the *Pokkharanī Pond*:

[526] Who'll tell me of Vessantara, the prince all conquering,  
Giver of peace in time of fear, the great and mighty king?

Refuge of suitors, as the earth to all that living be,  
Who'll tell me of Vessantara, the great and mighty king?

All who seek favours go to him as rivers to the sea:  
Who'll tell me of Vessantara, the great and mighty king?

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<sup>13</sup> Cowell, Vol VI, 274-275.

Like to a safe and pleasant lake, with water fresh and cool.  
 With lilies spread, whose filaments cover the quiet pool:  
 Who'll tell me of Vessantara, the great and mighty king?

Like a great fig-tree on the road, which growing there has made  
 A rest for weary wayfarers who hasten to its shade:  
 Who'll tell me of Vessantara, the great and mighty king?

Like banyan, sal, or mango-tree, which on the road has made  
 A rest for weary wayfarers that hasten to its shade:  
 Who'll tell me of Vessantara, the great and mighty king?  
 Who will give ear to my complaint, the forest all around?  
 Glad I should be, could anyone tell where he may be found!

Who will give ear to my complaint, the forest all around?  
 Great blessing it would be, if one could tell where he may be found.<sup>14</sup>

This argument is clear if we also consider that the Vessantara Jātaka is the last embodiment before the Bodhisattva becomes the Buddha; he has fulfilled all perfections, especially the perfection of generosity by deliberately giving away his children and wife.

In addition, in the Kumāra episode, the meaning of the *Pokkharanī Pond* as worldly pleasure, or *Samsara* in the second meaning, can be interestingly interpreted since it is the place where Jalī and Kaṇhājinā, Vessantara's children, hide themselves in the water underneath the lotus leaves. They try to escape from Jūjaka who comes to ask for them. Here the pond clearly symbolizes worldly thought and *Samsara* which Jalī and Kaṇhājinā are still attached to. The two children consent to leave the pond and let their father give them away after Vessantara rhetorically persuades them. He compares the children to water which can refresh his heart and to a great ship which can cross the ocean of *Samsara*, brings all beings to the shore of Nirvana.

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<sup>14</sup> Cowell, Vol. VI, 273.

## The *Pokkharanī Pond* and the meaning of the 'lotus' in Buddhism

The use of the *Pokkharanī Pond* as a metaphor does not only relatively convey the progress of dharma practice as previously explained, but can also be related to the symbol of the lotus, which is a very significant symbol in Buddhism. In India, the Stupa in Bhārhut, Sāñci, and Amarāvātī depict scenes from the life of the Buddha. The blossoming lotus is used to symbolize the birth and the awakening of the Buddha. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu<sup>15</sup> and Snodgrass<sup>16</sup> also explain that the blossoming of a lotus symbolizes the attainment of buddhahood.

Also, the lotus is commonly associated with sentient beings and their potential to awakening. For example, in the Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga the Brahmā asks the Buddha to graciously teach all beings. The Buddha compares them to lotuses:

Then the Lord, having understood Brahma's entreaty and, out of compassion for beings, surveyed the world with the eye of an awakened one. As the Lord was surveying the world with the eye of an awakened one, he saw beings with little dust in their eyes, with much dust in their eyes, with acute faculties, with dull faculties, of good dispositions, of bad dispositions, docile, indocile, few seeing fear in sins and the worlds beyond.

Even as in a pond of blue lotuses or in a pond of red lotuses or in a pond of white lotuses, a few blue or red or white lotuses are born in the water, grow in the water, do not rise above the water but thrive while altogether immersed; a few blue or red or white lotuses are born in the water, grow in the water and reach to the surface of the water; a few blue or red or white lotuses are born in

<sup>15</sup> Buddhadasa Bhikkhu [พุทธทาสภิกขุ], *Phap Phuttha Prawat Hin Salak* [ภาพพุทธประวัติ หินสลัก] (Bangkok: Thammasapha), (in Thai).

<sup>16</sup> Adrian Snodgrass [สนอดกราส เอเดรียน]. *The Symbolism of the Stupa*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (สัญลักษณ์แห่งพระสถูป) (Bangkok: Amarín Vichakarn, 1998) 44.

the water, grow in the water, and stand up rising out of the water, undefiled by the water.

Even so, did the Lord, surveying the world with the eye of an awakened one, see beings with little dust in their eyes, with much dust in their eyes, [6] with acute faculties, with dull faculties, of good dispositions, of bad dispositions, docile, indocile, few seeing fear in sins and the worlds beyond.<sup>17</sup>

In the commentaries, individuals are compared to four kinds of lotuses :

*Ugghatitaññū* – those who have fulfilled their merit and perfection and attain awakening after listening to a sermon for the first time. They can be compared to the first kind of lotus which is uncovered with dirt but gracefully blossoms over water at dawn.

*Vipacitaññū* – those whose mind is still covered with some defilements and attain awakening after listening to a sermon with elaborate explanation. They can be compared to the second kind of lotus which is at the surface of water and will blossom the following day.

*Neyya* – those whose mind is much covered by the defilements and attain awakening after practicing contemplation and insight. They can be compared to the third kind of lotus which is under the surface of water and will blossom on the third day.

*Padaparama* – those whose mind is massively covered by the defilements and cannot attain awakening though they have tried heavily to train themselves. They can be compared to the fourth kind of lotus which is full of disease, sinking underneath

<sup>17</sup> I.B. Horner, trans., *The Book of the Discipline (Vinaya-Piṭaka)*, Vol. IV (Mahāvagga) (London: The Pali Text Society, 1982) [First Published in 1951] 9.

water, has no chance to blossom and finally becomes food for fish and tortoises.<sup>18</sup>

The lotus is born in dirt and mud, but can finally blossom over water. In Buddhist tradition, it is associated with all beings who are born of *Samsara* but devoutly practice dharma and can finally attain awakening.

In the *Milindapañhā*,<sup>19</sup> Nāgasena compares three characteristics of a good monk to the quality of the lotus. Firstly, a good monk is not seduced by worldly pleasures, respect from others, and gifts. His mind is uncovered by the defilements. He can be compared to a pure lotus that even water cannot cling to. Secondly, a good monk overcomes all defilements like a lotus that always floats over the surface of water. Thirdly, a good monk is sensitive to the defilements. He cannot commit even small, unwholesome deeds. He is, therefore, like a lotus which trembles because of the wind.

We may see that the lotus conveys several meanings in Buddhist tradition. It is associated with beings who have different levels of wisdom and potential to attain awakening, namely *Ugghatitaññū*, *Vipacitaññū*, *Neyya*, and *Padaparama*. The lotus also symbolizes purity since it is born of dirt and mud, but gracefully blossoms over water. It can be compared to those who purify their mind with dharma and attain the perfect wisdom.

As a result, the *Pokkharanī Pond*, which means 'lotus pond', conveys the ultimate wisdom of the Bodhisattva. A blossoming lotus over water can be compared to the Bodhisattva's pure mind, uncovered by the defilements. In addition, the metaphor of the four kinds of lotuses can be paralleled to the meanings of the *Pokkharanī*

<sup>18</sup> P. A. Payutto [พระพรหมคุณาภรณ์ ป.อ.ปยุตฺโต], *Dictionary of Buddhism*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (พจนานุกรมพุทธศาสตร์) (Bangkok: Maha Chulalongkorn Rajavidyalai, 1995) 137-138.

<sup>19</sup> *Milindapañhā*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [มิลินทปปัญหา] (Bangkok: Silapabannakharn, 2549 [2006]) 668-669, (in Thai).

*Pond*, which convey the process of dharma practice and the development of mind as discussed earlier.

## Conclusion

The *Pokkharanī Pond* is a metaphor of water significantly used in the *Jātakatthakathā*. It is found in 35 *jātakas* with three meanings that relatively convey the process of dharma practice, from the basic level to the advanced progress. Firstly, it is a 'divine treasure' of the virtuous in the human realm, the deity realm, and the naga realm who train themselves with fundamental practices, such as gift-giving and morality, which are the very first steps on the path to Nirvana.

At the same time, this divine treasure is so splendid and pleasurable that many beings desire it. In many *jātakas*, the pond, therefore, is the symbol of worldly pleasure and defilements which bind beings to *Samsara*, except the Bodhisattva who is distinctively wise and can detach from it. He realizes that one should not cling to this ephemeral pleasure, but should wholeheartedly continue the dharma practice which is ultimately aimed at Nirvana.

Finally, the *Pokkharanī Pond* appears in *jātakas*, especially the last ten *jātakas*, as the peaceful hermitage of the Bodhisattva. The pond is transparent and full of pure water that can be compared to the wisdom and perfection of the Bodhisattva. Moreover, the pond is also a peaceful shelter for all beings, like the Bodhisattva who is the great savior. Thus, the pond symbolizes the successful progress of the dharma practice; when one attains the *Pokkharanī Pond* as the result of wholesome deeds, and then can detach from it meaning they are free from all worldly pleasure, they can finally attain awakening and become the refuge of the world.

The *Pokkharanī Pond* as a metaphor found in 35 *jātakas* from the *Jātakatthakathā*, therefore, means the divine treasure caused by wholesome deeds, defilements binding one to *Samsara*, and the fulfillment of perfection, pure mind, and ultimate wisdom of the Bodhisattva. The pond can bind individuals to *Samsara* and can help



one attain Nirvana at the same time. If one delicately considers these relative meanings of this metaphor, one will understand the message of dharma implicitly expressed through the beautiful literary techniques.

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