

Ānanda's Seven Dreams Sūtra

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Translated into Chinese by Dharmaratna (c. 381–395)
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Ānanda was staying in Śrāvastī when he had seven dreams. He came to inquire about them with the Buddha:

In the first, flames blazed up to the sky from a pond.

In the second, I dreamt that the sun and moon sank, and the stars and constellations also sank.

In the third, I dreamt that a bhikṣu who had gone forth from home rolled into a filthy pit, and then a white-robed householder climbed out of his head.

In the fourth, I dreamt that a herd of boars came and crashed into a monastery and people were horrified.

In the fifth, I dreamt that I was carrying Mount Sumeru on my head, but it was not heavy.

In the sixth, I dreamt that a large elephant abandoned a small elephant.

In the seventh, I dreamt that a king of lions, called “Scattered Flowers,” had seven hairs on his head. When he died, he was on the ground, and all the birds and beasts saw him and were afraid. Later, when they saw worms emerging from his body, they ate them.

After having these awful dreams, I came to inquire about them with the Buddha.

Later, the Buddha was in the large teaching pavilion at Śrāvastī teaching the Dharma to King Prasenajit:

This is suffering, this is the cause, this is the cessation, and this is the path to attain bliss.

Seeing Ānanda's dejected face and unspeakable anxiety, the Buddha addressed Ānanda:

All your dreams are about the future degenerate age of the five turbidities.¹ They will not harm you, so why have a dejected face?

Your first dream was that flames blazed up to the sky from a pond. This means that in the future, bhikṣus with wholesome thoughts will gradually decrease, heinous treachery will increase, and an incalculable number will kill one another.

Your second dream was that the sun and moon sank, and the stars and constellations also sank. This means that after the Buddha's nirvāṇa, when all the śrāvakas who were direct disciples of the Buddha after his nirvāṇa are no longer in the world, sentient beings will lose their vision.

Your third dream was that a bhikṣu who had gone forth from home rolled into a filthy pit, and then a white-robed householder climbed out of his head. This means that in the future bhikṣus will have fierce jealousy, will mutually kill one another, cutting off the heads of fellow practitioners. White-robed laypeople will see this and will remonstrate and scold them, but the bhikṣus will not pay attention and after death will enter hell. The white-robed laypeople will be diligent, and after death they will be born as devas.

Your fourth dream was that a herd of boars came and crashed into a monastery and people were horrified. This means that in the future, white-robed laypeople will enter temples, denigrate the saṅgha, seek out good and bad, destroy stūpas, and harm the saṅgha.

Your fifth dream was that you were carrying Mount Sumeru on your head, but it was not heavy. This means that after the Buddha's nirvāṇa, you, Ānanda, will become the teacher who recites the sūtras for a thousand arhats, not forgetting a single phrase. You will experience and awaken to many things, but you will not consider them to be burdensome.

Your sixth dream was that a large elephant abandoned a small elephant. This means that in the future, if wrong views prevail, and my Buddha-Dharma deteriorates, all virtuous people will hide and not be seen.

Your seventh dream was about the death of a lion. This means that after the Buddha's nirvāṇa, for one thousand four hundred and seventy years, all my disciples who cultivate a meritorious mind will not be able to be harassed by all the māras. As for the seven hairs, they refer to affairs occurring after seven hundred years.

¹ Skt. pañcakaṣāya. The turbidity of deterioration of the kalpa, the turbidity of wrong views, the turbidity of afflictions, the turbidity of the miseries of beings increasing, and the turbidity of the diminishment of lifespan.