

# **Buddhist Stories**

from the

## **Dhammapada Commentary**

**(Part IV)**

Translated from the Pāli by  
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### **Publisher's Note**

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## **PART I.**

### ***The Attainments of Monks***

#### **43. The Elder Nanda**

**EVEN AS RAIN PENETRATES A HOUSE BADLY THATCHED....**

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Jetavana with reference to the Elder Nanda.<sup>1</sup>

### **Nanda Becomes a Monk in Spite of Himself**

For after the Teacher had set in motion the glorious Wheel of Dhamma, he retired to Rājagaha and took up residence at Veluvana. Thereupon his father, the great king Suddhodana, sent ten ambassadors to him, one after the other, each with a retinue of a thousand men, saying to them, "Bring my son here and show him to me before my face."

After nine ambassadors had gone there, attained arahantship, and failed to return, the Elder Kāludāyī went and attained arahantship. And knowing that it was the proper time for the Teacher to go, he described the beauties of the journey and conducted the Teacher with his retinue of twenty thousand arahants to Kapilapura. And there, in the company of his kinsfolk, the Teacher, taking a shower of rain for his text, related the Vessantara Jātaka (Jāt. No. 547). On the following day he entered the city for alms. By the recitation of the stanza, “Be alert! Do not be negligent!” (Dhp.168) he established his father in the fruit of streamentry and by the recitation of the stanza: “Live by good and righteous conduct” (Dhp.169) he established Mahā Pajāpati in the fruit of stream-entry and his father in the fruit of the second path. And at the end of the meal, with reference to the praise bestowed on him by the Mother of Rāhula, he related the Canda Kinnara Jātaka (Jāt. No. 485).

On the following day, while the ceremonies of Prince Nanda’s sprinkling, housewarming, and marriage were in progress, the Teacher entered the house for alms, placed his bowl in Prince Nanda’s hands, and told him the things that bring true blessings. Then rising from his seat, he departed without taking his bowl from the hands of the prince. Out of reverence for the Tathāgata, Prince Nanda did not dare say, “Reverend sir, receive your bowl,” but thought within himself, “He will take his bowl at the head of the stairs.” But even when the Teacher reached the head of the stairs, he did not take his bowl. Thought Nanda, “He will take his bowl at the foot of the stairs.” But the Teacher did not take his bowl even there. Thought Nanda, “He will take his bowl in the palace court.” But the Teacher did not take his bowl even there. Prince Nanda desired greatly to return to his bride, and followed the Teacher much against his own will. But so great was his reverence for the Teacher that he did not dare say, “Receive your bowl,” but continued to follow the Teacher, thinking to himself, “He will take his bowl here! He will take his bowl there! He will take his bowl there!”

At that moment they brought word to his bride Belle-of-the-Country, Janapada-Kalyāṇī, “My lady, the Exalted One has taken Prince Nanda away with him; it is his purpose to deprive you of him.” Thereupon Janapada-Kalyāṇī, with tears streaming down her face and hair half-combed, ran after Prince Nanda as fast as she could and said to him, “Noble sir, please return immediately.” Her words caused a quaver in Nanda’s heart; but the Teacher, without so much as taking his bowl, led him to the monastery and said to him, “Nanda,

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This story is an elaboration of Udāna III,2.  
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would you like to become a monk?” So great was Prince Nanda’s reverence for the Buddha that he refrained from saying, “I do not wish to become a monk,” and said instead, “Yes, I should like to become a monk.” Said the Teacher, “Well then, make a monk of Nanda.” Thus it happened that on the third day after the Teacher’s arrival at Kapilapura he caused Nanda to be made a monk.

On the seventh day the Mother of Rāhula adorned Prince Rāhula and sent him to the Exalted One, saying, “Dear son, go look upon this monk, possessed of a retinue of twenty thousand monks, possessed of a body of the hue of gold, possessed of the beauty of form of Mahā Brahmā. This monk is your father. To him once belonged great stores of treasure. From the time of his Great Renunciation we have not seen him. Ask him for your inheritance, saying, ‘Dear father, I am a royal prince, and so soon as I shall receive the

ceremonial sprinkling I shall become a Universal Monarch. I have need of wealth; bestow wealth upon me; for to a son belongs the wealth which formerly belonged to his father.’ ” Accordingly Prince Rāhula went to the Exalted One. The moment he saw him he conceived a warm affection for his father, and his heart rejoiced within him. And he said, “Monk, pleasant is your shadow,” and said much else befitting his own station. When the Exalted One had finished his meal, he pronounced the words of rejoicing, arose from his seat, and departed. Prince Rāhula followed in the footsteps of the Exalted One, saying, “Monk, give me my inheritance; monk, give me my inheritance.” The Exalted One did not repel the prince; even the attendants were unable to prevent the prince from accompanying the Exalted One. In this manner the prince accompanied the Exalted One to the grove. Then the thought occurred to the Exalted One, “The paternal wealth which this youth seeks inevitably brings destruction in its train. Behold, I will bestow upon him the sevenfold noble wealth<sup>2</sup> which I received at the foot of the Bodhi Tree; I will make him master of a wealth which transcends the world.”

Therefore the Exalted One addressed the Venerable Sāriputta, “Well then, Sāriputta, make a monk of Prince Rāhula.” When, however, Prince Rāhula had gone forth into homelessness, the king, his grandfather, was afflicted with great sorrow. Unable to endure his sorrow, he made known his sorrow to the Exalted One and made the following request of him, “It would be good, reverend sir, that the noble monks do not give novice ordination to any youth without the permission of his mother and father.” The Exalted One granted him this request. Again one day, as the Exalted One sat in the royal palace after breakfast, the king, sitting respectfully at one side, said to the Exalted One, “Reverend sir, while you were practising your austerities, a certain deity approached me and said to me, ‘Your son is dead.’ But I refused to believe him and replied, ‘My son will not die until he attains Enlightenment.’ ” Said the Exalted One, “Now will you believe? In a previous existence also, when a brahmin showed you bones and said to you, ‘Your son is dead,’ you refused to believe.” And with reference to this incident he related the Mahā Dhammapāla Jātaka (Jāt. No. 447). At the conclusion of the story the king was established in the fruit of the third path.

### **Nanda and the Celestial Nymphs**

When the Exalted One had thus established his father in the three fruits, he returned once more to Rājagaha, accompanied by the Order of Monks. Now he had promised Anāthapiṇḍika to visit Sāvattthī as soon as the great monastery of Jetavana should be completed, and receiving word shortly afterwards that the monastery had been completed, he went to Jetavana and took up his residence there. While the Teacher was thus residing at Jetavana, the Venerable Nanda, becoming discontented, told his troubles to the monks,

<sup>2</sup> These seven are: faith, virtue, shame (of evil-doing), fear (of the consequences), learning, generosity, wisdom.

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saying, “Brethren, I am dissatisfied. I am now living the holy life, but I cannot endure to live it any longer. I intend to abandon the training and to return to the lower life, the life of a layman.”

The Exalted One, hearing of this incident, sent for the Venerable Nanda and said this to him, “Nanda, is the report true that you spoke as follows to a large company of monks, ‘Brethren, I am dissatisfied; I am now living the holy life, but I cannot endure to live it any longer; I intend to abandon the training and to return to the lower life, the life of a layman?’”

– “It is quite true, reverend sir.” – “But, Nanda, why are you dissatisfied with the holy life? Why cannot you endure to live the holy life any longer? Why do you intend to abandon the higher precepts and to return to the lower life, the life of a layman?” – “Reverend sir, when I left my house, my noble bride Janapada-Kalyāṇī, with hair half-combed, took leave of me, saying, ‘Noble sir, please return immediately!’ Reverend sir, it is because I keep remembering her that I am dissatisfied with the holy life; that I cannot endure to live the holy life any longer; that I intend to abandon the training and to return to the lower life, the life of a layman.”

Then the Exalted One took the Venerable Nanda by the arm, and by supernormal power conducted him to the heaven of the Thirty-three. On the way, the Exalted One pointed out to Nanda, in a certain burnt field, seated on a burnt stump, a greedy monkey which had lost her ears and nose and tail in a fire. When they reached the heaven of the Thirty-three, he pointed out five hundred pink-footed celestial nymphs who came to wait upon Sakka, king of the gods. And when the Exalted One had shown the Venerable Nanda these two sights, he asked him this question: “Nanda, which do you regard as being the more beautiful and fair to look upon and handsome, your noble bride Janapada-Kalyāṇī or these five hundred pink-footed celestial nymphs?”

“Reverend sir,” replied Nanda, “as far inferior as this greedy monkey which has lost her ears and nose and tail is to Janapada-Kalyāṇī, so is she to these five hundred pink-footed celestial nymphs. In comparison with these nymphs my noble bride does not count; she does not come within a fraction of them; she does not come within a fraction of a fraction of them; on the contrary, these five hundred pink-footed celestial nymphs are infinitely more beautiful and fair to look upon and handsome.”

“Cheer up, Nanda!” replied the Exalted One. “I guarantee that you will win these five hundred pink-footed celestial nymphs.” Said Venerable Nanda, “If, reverend sir, the Exalted One guarantees that I shall win these five hundred pink-footed celestial nymphs, in that case, reverend sir, I shall take the greatest pleasure in living the exalted life of a monk.” Then the Exalted One, taking Nanda with him, disappeared from the heaven of the Thirty-three and reappeared at Jetavana. Now it was not long before the monks heard the following report: “It appears that it is in the hope of winning celestial nymphs that the Venerable Nanda, half-brother of the Exalted One, son of his mother’s sister, is living the holy life; it appears that the Exalted One has guaranteed that he shall win five hundred pink-footed celestial nymphs.”

As a result the Venerable Nanda’s fellow-monks treated him as a hireling and as one bought with a price. And they addressed him accordingly, saying, “It appears that the Venerable Nanda is a hireling; it appears that the Venerable Nanda is one bought with a price. It appears that it is in the hope of winning celestial nymphs that he is living the religious life; it appears that the Exalted One has guaranteed that he shall win five hundred pink-footed celestial nymphs.”

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Now although his fellow-monks despised him, were ashamed of him, and tormented him by calling him “hireling” and “bought with a price,” the Venerable Nanda, living in solitude, withdrawn from the world, heedful, ardent, and resolute, in no long time, even in this life, arrived at the knowledge, realisation, and attainment of that supreme goal of the religious life for the sake of which good youths retire once and for all from the household

life to the homeless life. This did he know: “Birth is at an end, lived is the holy life, done is what should be done; there is no more of this to come.” And there was yet another venerable elder numbered among the arahants.

Now a certain deity came by night to the Teacher, illuminating the whole Jetavana; and bowing to the Teacher, he thus addressed him, “Reverend sir, the Venerable Nanda, son of the sister of the mother of the Exalted One, by extinction of the taints, even in this life himself abides in the knowledge, realisation, and attainment of freedom from the taints, emancipation of the heart, emancipation by wisdom.” And there arose within the Exalted One also knowledge of the following: “By extinction of the taints, Nanda, even in this life, himself abides in the knowledge, realisation, and attainment of freedom from the taints, emancipation of the heart, emancipation by wisdom.”

At the end of the same night the Venerable Nanda also approached the Exalted One, bowed to him, and spoke as follows, “Reverend sir, I release the Exalted One from the promise which he made when he guaranteed that I should win five hundred pink-footed celestial nymphs.” The Exalted One replied, “Nanda, I myself grasped your mind with my own mind and saw, ‘By extinction of the taints, Nanda, even in this life, himself abides in the knowledge, realisation, and attainment of freedom from the taints, emancipation of the heart, emancipation by wisdom.’ Likewise a deity informed me of the fact, saying, ‘By extinction of the taints, Nanda, even in this life, himself abides in the knowledge, realisation, and attainment of freedom from the taints, emancipation of the heart, emancipation by wisdom.’ When, therefore, Nanda, you ceased to cling to the things of the world, and your heart was released from the taints, at that moment I was released from that promise.” Then the Exalted One, knowing the meaning of this matter, three times spoke this solemn utterance:

“He that has crossed the mud and crushed lust’s thorn,  
Attained delusion’s end, is unmoved in ease or pain.”

Now one day the monks approached the Venerable Nanda and asked him, “Friend Nanda, earlier you said, ‘I am dissatisfied.’ Do you say the same thing now?” – “Brethren, I am in no way inclined to the life of a layman.” When the monks heard his answer, they said

“Venerable Nanda says that which is not true, utters falsehood. On former days he used to say, ‘I am dissatisfied,’ but now he says, ‘I am in no way inclined to the life of a layman.’” And at once they went and reported the matter to the Exalted One. The Exalted One replied, “Monks, in former days Nanda’s personality was like an ill-thatched house, but now it has come to be like a well-thatched house. From the day he saw the celestial nymphs, he has striven to reach the goal of a monk’s practice, and now he has reached it.” So saying, he pronounced the following stanzas:

13. Even as rain penetrates  
A house badly thatched,  
So likewise lust penetrates  
An uncultivated mind.

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14. As rain does not penetrate  
A house well thatched,  
So lust does not penetrate  
A well-cultivated mind.

#### 44. A Certain Monk

HAVING RENOUNCED ALL FORCE....

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Jetavana with reference to a certain monk.

It appears that this monk, upon receiving a subject of meditation from the Teacher, retired to the forest, applied himself diligently to the practice of meditation, and attained arahantship. Thereupon he said to himself, "I will inform the Teacher of the great blessing which I have received," and set out from the forest.

Now a woman living in a certain village through which he passed had just had a quarrel with her husband, and as soon as her husband was out of the house, said to herself, "I will return to the house of my family." So saying, she set out on the road. As she went along the road, she saw the elder. "I'll keep not far from this elder," she thought, and followed close behind him. The elder never looked at her at all.

When her husband returned home and saw his wife nowhere about the house, he concluded to himself, "She must have gone to the village where her family lives," and followed after her. When he saw her, he thought to himself, "It cannot be that this woman would enter this forest all by herself; in whose company is she going?" All of a sudden he saw the elder. He thought, "This monk must have taken her away with him," and went up to the monk and threatened him. Said the woman, "This good monk never so much as looked at me or spoke to me; do not say anything to him." Her husband replied, "Do you mean to tell me that you took yourself off in this fashion? I will treat him as you alone deserve to be treated." And in a burst of rage, out of hatred for the woman, he beat the elder soundly, and having done so, took the woman with him and returned home.

The elder's whole body was covered with weals. After his return to the monastery the monks who massaged his body noticed the weals and asked him, "What does this mean?" He told them the whole story. Then the monks asked him, "Friend, but when this fellow struck you thus, what did you say? Did you get angry?"

"No, friends, I did not get angry." Thereupon the monks went to the Teacher and reported the matter to him, saying, "Reverend sir, when we asked this monk, 'Did you get angry?' he replied, 'No, friends. I did not get angry.' He does not speak the truth, he utters falsehood." The Teacher listened to what they had to say and then replied, "Monks, those who have rid themselves of the defilements have laid aside force; even for those that strike them, they cherish no anger." So saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

405. Having renounced all force  
Against creatures weak and strong,  
Who causes not to kill nor kills—  
That one I call a brāhmaṇa.

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#### 45. The Elder Cūḷa Panthaka

BY ENERGY AND HEEDFULNESS....

This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Veḷuvana with reference to Cūḷa Panthaka, Little Wayman the Elder.

##### The Birth of Cūḷa Panthaka

We are told that the daughter of a rich merchant of Rājagaha, upon reaching the age of

maturity, was provided by her mother and father with quarters on the topmost floor of a seven-storied palace and guarded with excessive care. But in spite of this, maddened with the madness of youth and lusting for a man, she had intercourse with her own slave.

Frightened to think that others also might find out about her misconduct, she said to him, “It is out of the question for us to live here any longer. If my mother and father discover my misconduct, they will tear me limb from limb. Let us go live elsewhere.”

So taking a few necessary things they could carry in the hand, they left the house by the principal door. “It matters little,” said they, “where we go, so long as we go and live where others will know nothing about us.” So saying, the two set out together. They took up their residence in a certain place and lived together, with the result that the young wife conceived a child in her womb. When her unborn child reached maturity, she took counsel with her husband, saying, “If I give birth to my child in a place far removed from my family, it will bring suffering to both of us. There is but one place for us to go, and that is home to my parents.” But her husband, fearing that if he himself went there he would be killed, kept postponing the day of their departure, saying, “We will go today; we will go tomorrow.”

The wife thought to herself, “This simpleton realises the enormity of his offence and therefore dares not go. After all, a mother and a father are one’s best friends. Let this fellow go or not; at any rate I intend to go.” So while her husband was out of the house, she put the household utensils away, and informing her next-door neighbours that she was going home to her parents, she started out on the road. When her husband returned to the house and failed to see her, he inquired of the neighbours where she had gone. Hearing that she had gone to her parents, he set out after her as fast as he could and overtook her on the road.

And right there she gave birth to her child. “What is it, wife?” asked the husband.

“Husband, it is a son.” – “What shall we do now?” – “That for which we intended to go home to my parents has happened by the way. Why, therefore, should we go there? Let us return to our own home.”

Agreeing that this was the best plan, husband and wife returned to their own home. Since their son had been born by the way, they gave him the name Panthaka, Wayman. In no long time the young wife conceived a second child in her womb. (All is to be related in detail precisely as before.) Since this child also was born by the way, they gave him the name Cūḷa Panthaka, Little Wayman, calling the older son Mahā Panthaka, Big Wayman. Taking their two sons, they returned to their own place of residence.

While they were living there, Mahā Panthaka heard other boys speak of their uncles and grandparents. So one day he asked his mother, “Mother, other boys speak of their grandfather and grandmother. Haven’t we any relatives?” – “Yes, my son. You have no relatives living here, but you have a grandfather, a rich merchant, living in Rājagaha, and we have many other relatives living there too.” – “Why don’t we go there, mother?” The mother evaded telling her son why she did not go there. But the children repeated the question time and again. Finally she said to her husband, “These children weary me excessively. Will my mother and father eat us alive when they see us? Come, why not let the children see the

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family of their grandparents?” – “I should not dare meet them face to face, but I will escort you there.” – “Very well; some means must be found by which the children can see their grandparents.”

So mother and father took the children, and arriving at Rājagaha in due course, took up



their residence in the hall of a certain woman near the gate of the city. Then the mother of the children sent word to her mother and father that she and her children had arrived. When her parents received this message, they said to each other, “As we have passed through the round of existences, perhaps we have not previously had a son or a daughter; but these two have grievously offended against us, and it is out of the question for them to stand in our sight. Let these two take as much money as they need and go and live in some pleasant place. However, let them send the children here.” So the two took the money which was sent to them, and giving their children into the hands of the messengers who came, sent them to their grandparents. Thus it happened that the children were brought up in the home of their grandparents.

Of the two children, Cūḷa Panthaka was still very young. Mahā Panthaka, however, used to accompany his grandfather to hear the Buddha teach the Dhamma. And as the result of his frequent visits to the Teacher, his heart inclined to going forth. Accordingly he said to his grandfather, “If you would give me your permission, I should like to go forth as a monk.” “What did you say, dear grandson? There is no one in the whole world whose going forth would give me so much pleasure as your own. If you are able to do so, by all means go forth.”

### **Cūḷa Panthaka as a Monk**

Accordingly the grandfather took Mahā Panthaka to the Teacher, who said, “Householder, you have got a boy?”

“Yes, reverend sir, this is a grandson of mine who desires to become a monk under you.”

The Teacher asked a certain monk to ordain the boy as a novice. The elder assigned to him as a subject of meditation the first five of the constituent parts of the body, and then ordained him. The youth learnt by heart a considerable portion of the Word of the Buddha, kept residence during the season of the rains, obtained acceptance as a monk, and by diligently applying himself to meditation attained arahantship.

As Mahā Panthaka passed his time in the bliss of deep meditation, in the bliss of the fruit of the path, he thought to himself, “Assuredly it is in the power of Cūḷa Panthaka to experience this same bliss.” Therefore he went to the treasurer his grandfather and said to him, “Great treasurer, if you will give your kind permission, I should like to let Cūḷa Panthaka go forth as a monk.”

“By all means let him go forth, reverend sir.” We are told that the treasurer was profoundly attached to the dispensation of the Buddha, and that when asked, “Of which daughter of yours are these two children the sons?” he felt ashamed to say, “Of my daughter who ran away,” and that for these two reasons he was only too glad to give them permission to go forth as monks.

So the Elder Mahā Panthaka let his brother Cūḷa Panthaka go forth and established him in the precepts. But Cūḷa Panthaka, when he had gone forth, proved a dullard. Indeed in four months he was unable to learn by heart this single stanza:

Even as the red lotus sweetly scented

Appears in the morn full blown, replete with scent,

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Behold the Buddha, Angīrasa, resplendent

Blazing like the sun in the sky.

It seems that in the dispensation of the Buddha Kassapa he had possessed great wisdom, but

that, after entering the religious life, he ridiculed and made fun of a certain monk who was a dullard while the latter was trying to learn the Sacred Word; and that this monk, embarrassed by the ridicule to which he was subjected, was unable either to learn the passage by heart or even to repeat it. As the result of that act, Cūḷa Panthaka was reborn as a dullard, and every sentence he learned put the preceding sentence out of his mind; indeed four months passed while he was striving to learn this one stanza.

Thereupon Mahā Panthaka said to his brother, “Cūḷa Panthaka, it is not in your power to master this religion. In four months you have not been able to learn a single stanza. How can you ever hope to reach the goal of the religious life? Leave the monastery at once.” So saying he expelled him. But Cūḷa Panthaka was sincerely attached to the dispensation of the Buddha, and the last thing in the world he wished to do was to leave the Order and return to the life of a householder.

Now at that time Jīvaka Komārabhacca, taking an abundant supply of garlands and of various kinds of perfumes, went to his own mango grove, rendered honour to the Teacher, listened to the Dhamma, and then rising from his seat and paying obeisance to the Teacher, approached Mahā Panthaka, who was steward of the Order, and asked him, “Reverend sir, how many monks are living with the Teacher?” – “Five hundred.” – “Tomorrow, reverend sir, bring the five hundred monks presided over by the Buddha and take a meal in our house.” – “Lay disciple, the bhikkhu Cūḷa Panthaka is a dullard and has made no progress in the Dhamma. I accept the invitation for all except him.”

When Cūḷa Panthaka heard that, he thought to himself, “The elder accepts an invitation for all these monks, but in accepting it, deliberately leaves me out. Beyond a doubt my brother’s affection for me is gone. Of what profit to me any longer is this religion? I will return to the life of a householder and spend my days giving alms and doing other works of merit.” So on the following day, very early in the morning, he set out with the intention of returning to the life of a householder. Very early in the morning also the Teacher surveyed the world, and seeing this incident, preceded Cūḷa Panthaka to the gate and walked back and forth on the same road Cūḷa Panthaka would take.

As Cūḷa Panthaka came along, he saw the Teacher, and approaching him, paid obeisance to him. Said the Teacher, “But, Cūḷa Panthaka, where are you going at this hour of the day?” – “Reverend sir, my brother has expelled me, and therefore I intend to return to the householder’s life.” – “Cūḷa Panthaka, it was at my hands that you went forth. Therefore when your brother expelled you, why did you not come to me? Come now, what have you to do with the life of a householder? You shall remain with me.” So saying, the Teacher stroked him on the head with his hand, the palm of which was marked with the wheel, and taking him with him, went and seated him over against the Perfumed Chamber. And creating by his supernatural power a perfectly clean cloth, he gave it to him, saying, “Cūḷa Panthaka, remain right here, face towards the east, rub this cloth, and say as you do so, ‘Dirt-remover! Dirt-remover!’ ” Just then meal-time was announced, whereupon the Teacher, accompanied by the Order of Monks, went to the house of Jīvaka and sat down on the seat prepared for him.

Cūḷa Panthaka sat down, facing the sun, and rubbed the cloth, saying as he did so, “Dirtremover!

Dirt-remover!” As he rubbed the piece of cloth, it became soiled. Thereupon he thought, “This piece of cloth was perfectly clean before. But through this body of mine it has

lost its original character and has become soiled. Impermanent, indeed, are all conditioned things!” And grasping the thought of decay and death, he developed insight. The Teacher, knowing that Cūḷa Panthaka’s mind had attained insight, said, “Cūḷa Panthaka, think not that only a piece of cloth has become soiled and dyed with impurity. Indeed within you are lust, impurity, and other defilements; remove them.” And sending forth a luminous image of himself, the Teacher, sitting before him, present in bodily form as it were, pronounced the following stanzas:

“Lust, not dust, is dirt truly called,  
To lust is the term ‘dirt’ truly given;  
Having abandoned this dirt, O monks,  
Live in the Teaching of one free from dirt.  
Hate, not dust, is dirt truly called,  
To hate is the term ‘dirt’ truly given;  
Having abandoned this dirt, O monks,  
Live in the Teaching of one free from dirt.  
Delusion, not dust, is dirt truly called,  
To delusion is the term ‘dirt’ truly given;  
Having abandoned this dirt, O monks,  
Live in the Teaching of one free from dirt.”

At the conclusion of the stanzas, Cūḷa Panthaka attained arahantship together with the supernormal powers, and with the analytical knowledges also a knowledge of the Tipiṭaka.<sup>3</sup> It appears that in a previous state of existence he had been a king. Once, while making a ceremonial circuit of the city, with sweat pouring down his forehead, he wiped his forehead with a clean cloth, whereupon the cloth became soiled. Thought he: “By reason of this body of mine a cloth so clean as this has lost its former character and become soiled. Impermanent, indeed, are all conditioned things!” Thus did he acquire the concept of impermanence. In consequence of this, in a later existence, a “dirt-remover” became his salvation.

Jīvaka Komārabhacca offered water of donation to the Buddha. The Teacher, covering the bowl with his hand, said, “Jīvaka, are there no monks in the monastery?” Mahā Panthaka replied, “No, reverend sir, there are no monks in the monastery.” Said the Teacher, “But, Jīvaka, there are!”

“Very well,” said Jīvaka, and sent a man to find out. Said he, “Go to the monastery and find out whether or not there are any monks there.” At that moment Cūḷa Panthaka said to himself, “My brother says, ‘There are no monks in the monastery.’ I will show him that there are monks in the monastery.” And forthwith he filled the whole mango grove with monks. Some of them were making robes, others were dyeing robes, others were repeating the sacred texts. Thus did Cūḷa Panthaka create by supernormal power a thousand monks, each different from every other. So when Jīvaka’s messenger saw the numerous monks, he returned and told Jīvaka, “Noble sir, the entire mango grove is full of monks.” And right there the Elder Cūḷa Panthaka did as follows:

Panthaka, multiplying himself a thousandfold,  
Sat in the charming mango grove until he was sent for.

<sup>3</sup> The supernormal powers (*iddhi*) include such powers as the ability to become invisible, to

walk on water, to fly through the sky, etc. The Tipiṭaka is the collection of Buddhist scriptures consisting of the three “baskets”: Vinaya, Suttanta, and Abhidhamma.

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The Teacher said to the man, “Go to the monastery and say, ‘The Teacher summons Cūḷa Panthaka.’” The man went and said what he was told to say. Thereupon the cry went up from a thousand throats, “I am Cūḷa Panthaka! I am Cūḷa Panthaka!” The man returned and said, “Reverend sir, they all say they are Cūḷa Panthaka.” Said the Teacher, “Well then, go and take by the hand the first monk that says, ‘I am Cūḷa Panthaka,’ and the rest will disappear.” The man did so. Immediately the thousand monks disappeared. The Elder Cūḷa Panthaka returned with the man who came for him.

At the end of the meal the Teacher addressed Jīvaka, “Jīvaka take Cūḷa Panthaka’s bowl, and he will pronounce the words of thanksgiving for you.” Jīvaka took his bowl. The Elder Cūḷa Panthaka, like a young lion roaring a lion’s roar, pronounced the words of thanksgiving, ranging through the whole of the Tipiṭaka. The Teacher arose from his seat, and surrounded by the Order of Monks, went to the monastery. After the monks had shown the Teacher the customary attentions, the Teacher, in front of the Perfumed Chamber, admonished the Order of Monks with an admonition of the Happy One, assigned a subject of meditation, dismissed the Order of Monks, and entered the Perfumed Chamber.

One day in the Hall of Truth the monks began a discussion: “Friends, in four months Cūḷa Panthaka was unable to learn by heart a stanza of four verses; but because he never relaxed his effort he became established in arahantship and has just now become master of the family of Dhamma transcending all worlds.” The Teacher came in and asked, “Monks, what is it that you are sitting here now talking about?” When they told him, he said, “Monks, a monk of roused up effort in my Teaching cannot fail to make himself master of the Dhamma that transcends all worlds.” So saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

25. By energy and heedfulness,  
By taming and by self-control,  
The wise man should make an isle  
That no flood can overwhelm.

#### **46. Two Fellow-monks**

THOUGH OFTEN HE RECITE THE SACRED TEXTS.... This instruction was given by the Teacher while he

was in residence at Jetavana with reference to two fellow-monks.

For at Sāvattḥī lived two men of good families who were inseparable friends. On a certain occasion they went to the monastery, heard the Teacher teach the Dhamma, renounced the pleasures of the world, gave their hearts to the dispensation of the Buddha, and went forth. When they had kept residence for five years with preceptors and teachers, they approached the Teacher and asked about the duties in his religion. After listening to a detailed description of the duty of meditation and the duty of study, one of them said, “Reverend sir, since I became a monk in old age, I shall not be able to fulfil the duty of study, but I can fulfil the duty of meditation.” So he had the Teacher instruct him in the duty of meditation as far as arahantship, and after striving and struggling attained arahantship together with the analytical knowledges. But the other said, “I will fulfil the duty of study.” He acquired by

degrees the Tipiṭaka, the Word of the Buddha, and wherever he went, taught the Dhamma and chanted it. He went from place to place reciting the Dhamma to five hundred monks and was preceptor of eighteen large communities of monks.

Now a company of monks, having obtained a meditation subject from the Teacher, went to the place of residence of the older monk, and by faithful observance of his admonitions attained arahantship. Thereupon they paid obeisance to the elder and said, “We desire to see  
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the Teacher.” Said the elder, “Go, friends, greet the Teacher in my name, and likewise greet the eighty chief elders, and greet my fellow-elder, saying, ‘Our teacher greets you.’” So those monks went to the monastery and greeted the Buddha and the elders, saying, “Reverend sir, our teacher greets you.” When they greeted their teacher’s fellow-elder, he replied, “Who is he?” Said the monks, “He is your fellow-monk, reverend sir.”

Said the younger monk, “But what have you learned from him? Of the Dīgha Nikāya (Long Collection) and the other Nikāyas, have you learned a single Nikāya? Of the Three Piṭakas, have you learned a single Piṭaka?” And he thought to himself, “This monk does not know a single stanza containing four verses. Soon after he went forth, he took rags from a dust heap, entered the forest, and gathered a great many pupils about him. When he returns, it behoves me to ask him some questions.” Now somewhat later the older monk came to see the Teacher, and leaving his bowl and robe with his fellow-elder, went and greeted the Teacher and the eighty chief elders, afterwards returning to the place of residence of his fellow-elder. The younger monk showed him the customary attentions, provided him with a seat of the same size as his own, and then sat down, thinking to himself, “I will ask him a question.”

At that moment the Teacher thought to himself, “Should this monk annoy my son, he is likely to be reborn in hell.” So out of compassion for him, pretending to be going the rounds of the monastery, he went to the place where the two monks were sitting and sat down on the seat of the Buddha already prepared. (For wherever the monks sit down, they first prepare the seat of the Buddha, and not until they have so done do they themselves sit down. Therefore the Teacher sat down on a seat already prepared for him.) And when he had sat down, he asked the monk who had taken upon himself the duty of study a question on the first concentration. When the younger monk had answered this question correctly, the Teacher, beginning with the second concentration, asked him questions about the eight attainments and about the form and formless worlds, all of which he answered correctly. Then the Teacher asked him a question about the path of stream-entry, and he was unable to answer it. Thereupon the Teacher asked the monk who was an arahant, and the latter immediately gave the correct answer.

“Well done, well done, monk!” said the Teacher, greatly pleased. The Teacher then asked questions about the remaining paths in order. The monk who had taken upon himself the duty of study was unable to answer a single question, while the monk who had attained to arahantship answered every question he asked. On each of four occasions the Teacher bestowed applause on him. Hearing this, all the deities, from the gods of earth to the gods of the world of Brahmā, including the nāgas and the garuḍas, shouted their applause. Hearing this applause, the pupils and fellow-residents of the younger monk were offended at the Teacher and said, “Why did the Teacher do this? He bestowed applause on each of four occasions on the old monk who knows nothing at all. But to our own teacher,

who has thoroughly learnt everything by heart and is at the head of five hundred monks, he gave no praise at all.” The Teacher asked them, “Monks, what is it you are talking about?” When they told him, he said, “Monks, your own teacher is in my dispensation like a man who tends cows for hire. But my son is like a master who enjoys the five products of the cow at his own good pleasure.” So saying, he pronounced the following stanzas:

19. Though often he recite the sacred texts,  
The heedless man who does not practise  
Is like a cowherd counting other’s cattle:  
He has no share of the holy life.

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20. Though little he recite the sacred texts,  
If he practises in accordance with Dhamma,  
Rid of delusion, lust, and hate,  
In wisdom perfect, a heart well-freed,  
One who clings not here or hereafter—  
He has a share of the holy life.

#### **47. The Elder Sappadāsa**

THOUGH ONE SHOULD LIVE A HUNDRED YEARS.... This instruction was given by the Teacher while he

was in residence at Jetavana with reference to the Elder Sappadāsa.

At Sāvattihī we are told, the son of a good family, after hearing the Teacher teach the Dhamma, went forth and obtained acceptance as a monk. Becoming discontented after a time, he thought to himself, “The life of a layman is not suited to a youth of station like me; but even death would be preferable to remaining a monk.” So he went about considering ways of killing himself.

Now one day, very early in the morning, the monks went to the monastery after breakfast, and seeing a snake in the hall where the fire was kept, put it into a jar, closed the jar, and carried it out of the monastery. The discontented monk, after eating his breakfast, drew near, and seeing the monks, asked them, “What’s that you’ve got, friend?” – “A snake, friend.” – “What are you going to do with it?” – “Throw it away.” The monk thought to himself, “I will commit suicide by letting the snake bite me.” So he said to the monks, “Let me take it; I’ll throw it away.”

He took the jar from their hands, sat down in a certain place, and tried to make the snake bite him. But the snake refused to bite him. Then he put his hand into the jar, waved it this way and that, opened the snake’s mouth and stuck his finger in, but the snake still refused to bite him. So he said to himself, “It’s not a poisonous snake, but a house-snake,” threw it away, and returned to the monastery. The monks asked him, “Did you throw away the snake, friend?” – “Friends, that was not a poisonous snake; it was only a house-snake.” – “Friend, that was a poisonous snake all the same; it spread its hood wide, hissed at us, and gave us much trouble to catch. Why do you talk thus?” – “Friends, I tried to make it bite me, and even stuck my finger into its mouth, but I couldn’t make it bite.” When the monks heard this, they were silent.

Now the discontented monk acted as barber of the monastery; and one day he went to the monastery with two or three razors, and laying one razor on the floor, cut the hair of the monks with the other. When he removed the razor from the floor, the thought occurred to

him, “I will cut my throat with this razor and so put myself out of the way.” So he went to a certain tree, leaned his neck against a branch, and applied the blade of the razor to his windpipe. Remaining in this position, he reflected upon his conduct from the time of his acceptance as a monk, and perceived that his conduct was flawless, even as the spotless disc of the moon or a cluster of transparent jewels. As he surveyed his conduct, a thrill of joy suffused his whole body. Subduing the feeling of joy and developing insight, he attained arahantship together with the analytical knowledges. Then he took his razor and entered the monastery enclosure.

The monks asked him, “Where did you go, friend?” – “Friends, I went out thinking to myself, ‘I will cut my windpipe with this razor and so put myself out of the way.’” – “How did you escape death?” – “I can no longer commit suicide. For I said to myself, ‘With this

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razor I will sever my windpipe.’ But instead of so doing, I severed the taints with the razor of knowledge.” The monks said to themselves, “This monk speaks falsely, says what is untrue,” and reported the matter to the Exalted One. The Exalted One listened to their words and replied, “Monks, those that have rid themselves of the taints are incapable of taking their own life.”

“Reverend Sir, you speak of this monk as one who has rid himself of the taints. But how did it come about that this monk, possessed of the faculties requisite for the attainment of arahantship, became discontented? How did he come to possess those faculties? Why didn’t that snake bite him?”

“Monks, the simple fact is that snake was his slave in a past life, his third previous existence, and therefore did not dare to bite the body of his own master.” Thus briefly did the Teacher explain this cause to them. Thereafter that monk was known as Sappadāsa (“having a snake as his slave”).

The monks, after hearing the Exalted One explain the matter, asked him a further question: “Reverend sir, this monk says that he attained arahantship even as he stood with the blade of his razor pressed against his windpipe. Is it possible to gain the path of arahantship in so short a period of time?”

“Yes, monks, a monk who strives with all his might may gain the path of arahantship in raising his foot, in setting his foot on the ground, or even before his foot touches the ground. For it is better for a man who strives with all his might to live but a single instant than for an idle man to live a hundred years.” So saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

112. Though one should live a hundred years

Lazy, of little effort,

Yet better is life for a single day

For one who makes a steady effort.

#### **48. The Elder Pūtigatta Tissa**

NOT LONG, ALAS, AND IT WILL LIE.... This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in

residence at Sāvattthī with reference to the Elder Pūtigatta Tissa, Tissa with the Putrid Body.

A certain youth of good family who lived at Sāvattthī heard the Teacher teach the Dhamma, gave his heart to the dispensation, and went forth as a monk. After his acceptance into the Order he became known as the Elder Tissa. As time went on, an eruption broke out on his body. At first appeared pustules no bigger than mustard seeds, but as the disease

progressed they assumed successively the size of kidney beans, chickpeas, jujube seeds, emblic myrobalans, and vilva fruits. Finally they burst open, and his body became covered with open sores. In this way he came to be called the Elder Pūtigatta Tissa. After a time his bones began to disintegrate, and no one was willing to take care of him. His under and upper robes, which were stained with dried blood, looked like net cakes. His fellowresidents, unable to care for him, cast him out, and he lay down on the ground without a protector.

Now the Buddhas never fail to survey the world twice a day. At dawn they survey the world, looking through the extent of the galaxy towards the Perfumed Chamber, taking cognizance of all they see. In the evening they survey the world, looking from the Perfumed Chamber and taking cognizance of all that is without. Now at this time the Elder Pūtigatta Tissa appeared within the net of the Exalted One's knowledge. The Teacher, knowing that

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the monk Tissa was ripe for arahantship, thought to himself, "This monk has been abandoned by his associates; at the present time he has no other refuge than me." Accordingly the Teacher departed from the Perfumed Chamber, and pretending to be making the rounds of the monastery, went to the hall where the fire was kept. He washed the boiler, placed it on the brazier, waited in the fire-room for the water to boil, and when he knew it was hot, went and took hold of the end of the bed where that monk was lying. At that time the monks said to the Teacher, "Please depart, reverend sir; we will carry him in for you." So saying, they took up the bed and carried Tissa into the fire-room. The Teacher caused a measure to be brought and sprinkled hot water. He caused the monks to take Tissa's upper garment, wash it thoroughly in hot water, and lay it in the sunshine to dry. Then he went, and taking his stand near Tissa, moistened his body with hot water and rubbed and bathed him. At the end of his bath his upper robe was dry. The Teacher caused him to be clothed in his upper robe and caused his under robe to be washed thoroughly in hot water and laid in the sun to dry. As soon as the water had evaporated from his body, his under robe was dry. Thereupon Tissa put on one of the yellow robes as an under garment and the other as an upper robe, and with his body refreshed and mind tranquil lay down on the bed. The Teacher took his stand at Tissa's pillow and said to him, "Monk, consciousness will depart from you, your body will become useless and, like a log, will lie on the ground." So saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

41. Not long, alas, and it will lie—  
This body here upon the earth,  
Rejected, void of consciousness,  
And useless as a rotten log.

At the conclusion of the lesson the Elder Pūtigatta Tissa attained arahantship and reached final Nibbāna. The Teacher performed the funeral rites over his body, and taking the relics, caused a shrine to be erected.

The monks asked the Teacher, "Reverend sir, where was the Elder Pūtigatta Tissa reborn?" – "He has reached final Nibbāna, monks." – "Reverend sir, how did it happen that such a monk, having the supporting tendencies to attain arahantship, came to have a diseased body? Why did his bones disintegrate? Through what deed in a former birth did he obtain the dispositions requisite for the attainment of arahantship?" – "Monks, all these things happened solely because of deeds he committed in a previous existence." – "But,



reverend sir, what did he do?” – “Well then, monks, listen.

### ***Story of the Past: The Cruel Fowler***

In the dispensation of the Buddha Kassapa, Tissa was a fowler. He used to catch birds in large number, and most of these he served to royalty. Most of those he did not give to royalty he used to sell. Fearing that if he killed and kept the birds he did not sell, they would rot, and desiring to prevent his captive birds from taking flight, he used to break their legbones and wing-bones and lay them aside, piling them in a heap. On the following day he would sell them. When he had too many, he would have some cooked also for himself.

One day, when well-flavoured food had been cooked for him, a monk who was an arahant stopped at the door of his house on his round for alms. When Tissa saw the elder, he made his mind serene and thought, “I have killed and eaten many living creatures. A noble elder stands at my door, and an abundance of well-flavoured food is in my house. I will therefore give him alms.” So he took the monk’s bowl and filled it, and having given him well-flavoured food, saluted the monk respectfully and said: “Reverend sir, may I obtain the

16 highest fruit of the Dhamma you have seen.” Said the elder in his words of rejoicing, “So be it.” (*End of Story of the Past.*)

“Monks, it was through the meritorious deed Tissa then did that this fruit accrued to him. It was because he broke the bones of birds that his body became diseased and his bones disintegrated. It was because he gave well-flavoured food to the arahant that he attained arahantship.”

### **49. The Elder Vangīsa**

WHO, OF BEINGS, KNOWS THEIR DEATH.... This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was

in residence at Jetavana with reference to the Elder Vangīsa.<sup>4</sup>

It seems that there lived at Rājagaha a brahmin named Vangīsa who could tell in which of the states of existence men were reborn after death. He would rap on their skulls and say, “This is the skull of a man who has been reborn in hell; this man has been reborn as an animal; this man has been reborn as a ghost; this is the skull of a man who has been reborn in the human world.”

The brahmins thought to themselves, “We can use this man to prey upon the world.” So clothing him in two red robes, they took him about the country with them, saying to everyone they met, “This brahmin Vangīsa can tell by rapping on the skulls of dead men in which of the states of existence they have been reborn; ask him to tell you in which of the states of existence your own kinsmen have been reborn.” People would give him ten pieces of money or twenty or a hundred according to their several means, and would ask him in which of the states of existence their kinsmen had been reborn.

After travelling from place to place, they finally reached Sāvattthī and took up their abode near the Jetavana. After breakfast they saw throngs of people going with perfumes, garlands, and the like in their hands to hear the Dhamma. “Where are you going?” they asked. “To the monastery to hear the Dhamma,” was the reply. “What will you gain by going there?” asked the brahmins, “There is nobody like our fellow-brahmin Vangīsa. He can tell by rapping on the skulls of dead men in which of the states of existence they have been reborn. Just ask him in which of the states of existence your own kinsmen have been reborn.”

“What does Vangīsa know!” replied the disciples, “There is no one like our teacher.” But the brahmins retorted, “There is no one like Vangīsa,” and the dispute waxed hot. Finally the disciples said, “Come now, let us go find out which of the two knows the more, your Vangīsa or our teacher.” So taking the brahmins with them, they went to the monastery. The Teacher, knowing that they were on their way, procured and placed in a row five skulls, one each of men who had been reborn in the four states of existence: hell, the animal world, the human world, and the worlds of the gods; and one skull belonging to a man who had attained arahantship. When they arrived, he asked Vangīsa, “Are you the man of whom it is said that by rapping on the skulls of dead men you can tell in which of the states of existence they have been reborn?” – “Yes,” said Vangīsa. “Then whose is this skull?” Vangīsa rapped on the skull and said, “This is the skull of a man who has been reborn in hell.” – “Good, good!” exclaimed the Teacher, applauding him. Then the Teacher asked him

4 He was the foremost poet in the Sangha. A collection of his verses is found in the Saṃyutta Nikāya, Chap. 8, and Theragāthā, 1209–79.

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about the next three skulls, and Vangīsa answered without making a mistake. The Teacher applauded him for each answer he gave and finally showed him the fifth skull. “Whose skull is this?” he asked. Vangīsa rapped on the fifth skull as he had on the others, but confessed that he did not know in which of the states of existence the man had been reborn. Then said the Teacher, “Vangīsa, don’t you know?” – “No,” replied Vangīsa, “I don’t know.” – “I know,” said the Teacher. Thereupon Vangīsa asked him, “Teach me this charm.” – “I cannot teach it to one who has not gone forth.” Thought the brahmin to himself, “If I only knew this charm I should be the foremost man in all India.” Accordingly he dismissed his fellow-brahmins, saying, “Remain right here for a few days; I intend to go forth.” And he went forth in the presence of the Teacher, obtained acceptance as a monk, and was thereafter known as Elder Vangīsa.

They gave him as his subject of meditation the thirty-two constituent parts of the body and said to him, “Repeat the preliminary words of the formula.” He followed their instructions and repeated the preliminary words of the formula. From time to time the brahmins would ask him, “Have you learned the formula?” and the elder would answer, “Just wait a little! I am learning it.” In but a few days he attained arahantship. When the brahmins asked him again, he replied, “Friends, I am now unable to learn it.” When the monks heard his reply, they said to the Teacher, “Reverend sir, this monk utters what is not true and is guilty of falsehood.” The Teacher replied, “Monks, do not say so. Monks, my son now knows all about the passing away and rebirth of beings.” So saying, he pronounced the following stanzas:

419. Who, of beings, knows their death,  
Their being born in every way,  
Detached, well-faring, enlightened too—  
That one I call a brāhmaṇa.

420. Him whose bourn men do not know,  
Neither devas nor minstrels divine,  
Pollutions destroyed, an arahant—  
That one I call a brāhmaṇa.

**PART II.*****The Attainments of Nuns*****50. Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī**

IN WHOM IS NO WRONG-DOING.... This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Jetavana with reference to Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī (the Buddha's aunt and fostermother).

When the circumstances requiring the eight important conditions (for admitting nuns) had arisen, the Exalted One proclaimed them and Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī accepted them by bowing her head, just as a person accustomed to the wearing of ornaments accepts a garland of fragrant flowers by bowing his head. So likewise did all the members of her retinue. She had no preceptor or teacher other than the Exalted One himself. Thus she received acceptance as a nun.

On a subsequent occasion the members of her retinue commented on the manner in which this nun was admitted to full membership in the Order, saying, "Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī has no teacher or preceptor; by herself alone and with her own hand she received the yellow robes." On hearing this, other nuns were dissatisfied and from then on refused to keep Uposatha day or to celebrate the Pavāraṇā ceremony with her.<sup>5</sup> And going to the Tathāgata, they reported the matter to him. The Teacher listened to what they had to say and then replied, "I myself conferred the eight important conditions on Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī. I alone am her teacher; I alone am her preceptor. Those who have renounced bad conduct by way of body, speech, and mind, those who have rid themselves of the evil passions, should never entertain feelings of dissatisfaction." And teaching the Dhamma, he pronounced the following stanza:

391. In whom is no wrongdoing  
By body, speech, or mind,  
In these three ways restrained—  
That one I call a brāhmaṇa.

**51. The Elder Nun Uppalavaṇṇā**

'AS SWEET AS HONEY' THINKS THE FOOL.... This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was

in residence at Jetavana with reference to the nun Uppalavaṇṇā.

We are told that Uppalavaṇṇā made her earnest wish at the feet of the Buddha Padumuttara, and that after performing works of merit for a hundred thousand cycles of time, as she passed from birth to birth among gods and humans, she passed from the world of the gods in the dispensation of the present Buddha and was reborn in Sāvattihī as the daughter of a rich merchant. The hue of her skin was like the hue of the calyx of the blue lotus, and therefore they gave her the name Uppalavaṇṇā. When she reached marriageable age, all the princes and merchants in India, without a single exception, sent gifts to the merchant her father, asking him to give them his daughter in marriage.

<sup>5</sup> The ceremony for inviting mutual admonition, held at the end of the rains residence.

Thereupon the merchant thought to himself, "I shall not be able to satisfy the wishes of all, but I shall find some way out of the difficulty." So he summoned his daughter and said

to her, “You might become a nun.” Now she was in her last existence before attaining Nibbāna, and therefore his words were to her, as it were, oil a hundred times refined, sprinkled on her head. Therefore she replied, “Dear father, I will become a nun.” So he prepared rich gifts in her honour, and conducting her to the Order of Nuns, had her go forth.

Not long after she had gone forth, her turn came to unlock the Uposatha hall. After she had lighted the lamp and swept the hall, her attention was attracted to the flame of the lamp. And standing there, she looked repeatedly at the flame; and concentrating her attention on the element of fire, she entered into a state of deep concentration. Consummating the deep concentration, she attained arahantship together with the analytical knowledges.

Some time later she went on a pilgrimage for alms in the country, and on her return entered the Dark Forest. At that time it was not forbidden to nuns to reside in a forest. There they built her a hut, set up a bed, and hung curtains round. From the forest she went to Sāvattthī to receive alms, and then set out to return to her hut. Now a cousin of hers, a young brahmin named Ānanda, had been in love with her ever since she lived the household life; and when he heard where she had gone, he went to the forest ahead of the nun, entered the hut, and hid under the bed.

On her return the nun entered the hut, closed the door, and sat down on the bed, unable to see in the dark, because she had just come in out of the sunlight. As soon as she sat down on the bed the youth crawled out from under and climbed on top. The nun cried out, “Fool, do not ruin me! Fool, do not ruin me!” But the youth overcame her resistance, worked his will on her, and went his way. As if unable to endure his wickedness, the great earth burst asunder, and he was swallowed up and reborn in the great hell of Avīci.

The nun told the other nuns what had happened, and the nuns told the monks, and the monks told the Exalted One. Having heard this the Teacher addressed the monks as follows, “Monks, the fool, whoever he may be, whether monk or nun, or lay disciple male or female, who commits an evil act, acts with as much joy and happiness, with as much pleasure and delight, as though he were eating honey or sugar or some other sweet-tasting substance.” And joining the connection and instructing them in the Dhamma, he pronounced the following stanza:

69. “As sweet as honey” thinks the fool  
So long as the evil is unripe,  
But when the evil deed ripens,  
Then to the fool comes suffering.

Some time later the throng assembled in the Dhamma hall and began to discuss the incident: “Even those that have rid themselves of taints like the pleasures of love and gratify their passions. Why should they not? They are not kolapa-trees or ant-hills, but are living creatures with bodies of moist flesh. Therefore they also like the pleasures of love and gratify their passions.” The Teacher drew near and asked them, “Monks, what are you sitting here now talking about?” They told him. Then he said, “Monks, they that have rid themselves of the taints neither like the pleasures of love nor gratify their passions. For even as a drop of water which has fallen upon a lotus leaf does not cling to it or remain there, but rolls over and falls off; even as a grain of mustard seed does not cling to the point of an awl or remain there, but rolls over and falls off; precisely so sensual love does not cling to the heart of one who has rid himself of the taints nor remain there.” And joining the connection,

he instructed them in the Dhamma by pronouncing the following stanza, found in the Chapter on the Brāhmaṇa:

401. Who, like water drops on a lotus leaf,  
Or mustard seed on a needle point,  
Clings not to sensual pleasures—  
That one I call a brāhmaṇa.

Now the Teacher summoned King Pasenadi Kosala and said to him, “Your majesty, in this religion young women of good family, as well as young men of good family, renounce many kinsfolk and much wealth, go forth and take up residence in the forest. In case women reside in the forest, it is possible that evil-minded men, inflamed by lust, may conduct themselves towards them with disrespect and arrogance, do them violence, and bring their religious life to naught. Therefore a place of residence for the Order of Nuns should be erected within the city.” The king agreed to this and had a place of residence for the Order of Nuns erected on one side of the city. From that time on the nuns resided only within the city.

### **52. The Elder Nun Kisā Gotamī**

THOUGH ONE SHOULD LIVE A HUNDRED YEARS.... This instruction was given by the Teacher at Jetavana, with reference to Kisā Gotamī.

#### **Kisā Gotamī Marries a Rich Merchant’s Son**

Once upon a time, the story goes, a merchant worth four hundred millions lived at Sāvattthī. Suddenly all of his wealth turned into charcoal. The merchant, overwhelmed with grief, refused to eat and took to his bed. One day a certain friend of his came to see him and asked him, “Sir, why are you so sorrowful?” The merchant told him what had happened. Said his friend, “Sir, do not give yourself over to sorrow. I know a way out of the difficulty, if you will but make use of it.”

“Well, sir, what am I to do?”

Said his friend, “Spread matting in your shop, and pile the charcoal on it, and sit down as if you were selling it. People will come along and say to you, ‘Most merchants sell such things as clothing and oil and honey and molasses; but you are sitting here selling charcoal.’ Then you must say to them, ‘If I can’t sell what belongs to me, what am I to do?’ But again someone may say, ‘Most merchants sell such things as clothing and oil and honey and molasses, but you are sitting here selling yellow gold.’ Then you must say, ‘Where’s any yellow gold?’ Your customer will say, ‘There it is!’ Then say, ‘Let me have it.’ Your customer will bring you a handful of charcoal. Take it, cover it with your hands, and presto! It will turn into yellow gold. Now if your customer should be a maiden, marry her to your son, turn over your four hundred millions to her, and live on what she gives you. But if your customer should be a youth, marry your daughter to him as soon as she reaches marriageable age, turn over your four hundred millions to him, and live on what he gives you.”

“A fine plan indeed!” said the merchant. So he piled the charcoal up in his shop, and sat down as if he were selling it. People came along and said to him, “Most merchants sell things such as clothing and oil and honey and molasses; but you are sitting here selling

charcoal.” To such as asked this question, he replied as follows, “If I can’t sell what belongs to me, what am I to do?”

There came one day to the door of his shop a certain maiden, the daughter of a povertystricken house. Her name was Gotamī, but by reason of the leanness of her body she was generally known as Kisā Gotamī. She came to buy something for herself; but when she saw the merchant, she said to him, “My good sir, most merchants sell such things as clothing and oil and honey and molasses; but you are sitting here selling yellow gold.” – “Maiden, where is there any yellow gold?” – “Right there where you are sitting.” – “Let me have some of it, maiden.” She took a handful of the charcoal and placed it in his hands. No sooner had it touched his hands than presto! It turned into yellow gold.

Then said the merchant to her, “Which is your house, maiden?” Said she, “Such and such, sir.” The merchant, perceiving that she was unmarried, married her to his own son. He then gathered up his wealth (what was previously charcoal turning into yellow gold at his touch), and gave the four hundred millions into her charge. In time she became pregnant, and, after ten lunar months, gave birth to a son. But the child died as soon as he was able to walk.

### **Kisā Gotamī Seeks Mustard Seed for Her Child**

Now Kisā Gotamī had never seen death before. Therefore, when they came to remove the body for burning, she forbade them to do so. She said to herself, “I will seek medicine for my son.” Placing the dead child on her hip, she went from house to house inquiring, “Do you know anything that will cure my son?” Everyone said to her, “Woman, you are stark mad that you go from house to house seeking medicine for your dead child.” But she went her way, thinking, “Surely I shall find someone who knows medicine for my child.”

Now a certain wise man saw her and thought to himself, “This young woman has no doubt borne and lost her first and only child, nor has she seen death before; I must help her.” So he said to her, “Woman, I myself do not know how to cure your child, but I know of one who has this knowledge.” – “Sir, who is it that knows?” – “Woman, the Teacher knows; go and ask him.” – “Good sir, I will go and ask him.”

So she went to the Teacher, paid obeisance to him, stood at his side, and asked him, “Venerable sir, is it true, as men say, that you know how to cure my child?” – “Yes, I know that.” – “What shall I get?” – “A pinch of white mustard seed.” – “I will get that, venerable sir. But in whose house shall I get it?” – “In whose house neither son nor daughter nor any other has yet died.” – “Very well, venerable sir,” said she, and paid obeisance to him.

Then she placed the dead child on her hip, entered the village, stopped at the door of the very first house, and asked, “Have you here any white mustard seed? They say it will cure my child.” – “Yes.” – “Well then, give it to me.” They brought some grains of white mustard seed and gave them to her. She asked, “Friends, in the house where you dwell has son or daughter yet died?” – “What are you saying, woman? As for the living they are few; only the dead are many.” – “Well then, take back your mustard seed; that is no medicine for my child.” So saying, she gave back the mustard seed.

After this manner, going from house to house, she plied her quest. There was not a single house where she found the mustard seed she sought; and when the evening came, she thought, “Ah! It’s a heavy task I took upon myself. I thought that I alone had lost a child, but in every village the dead are more in number than the living.” While she reflected thus her heart, which until then was soft with mother’s love, became firm. She took the child and discarded him in the forest. Then she went to the Teacher, paid homage to him, and stood to

one side.

22

Said the Teacher, “Did you get the pinch of mustard seed?” – “No, I did not, venerable sir. In every village the dead are more in number than the living.” Said the Teacher, “You imagined vainly that you alone had lost a child. But all living beings are subject to an unchanging law, and it is this: The Prince of Death, like a raging torrent, sweeps away into the sea of ruin all living beings, but still their longings are unfulfilled.” And instructing her in the Dhamma, he pronounced the following stanza:

287. In flocks and children finding delight

With a mind clinging – just such a man

Death seizes and carries away,

As a great flood a sleeping village.

As the Teacher uttered the last part of the stanza, Kisā Gotamī was established in the fruit of stream-entry. Likewise did many others also obtain the fruit of stream-entry, and the fruits of the second and third paths. Kisā Gotamī requested the Teacher to let her go forth; accordingly he sent her to the Order of Nuns and directed that they let her go forth.

Afterwards she obtained acceptance as a nun and came to be known as the nun Kisā Gotamī. One day it was her turn to light the lamp in the Uposatha hall. Having lighted the lamp, she sat down and watched the tongues of flame. Some flared up and others flickered out. She took this for her subject of meditation and meditated as follows: “Even as it is with these flames, so also is it with living beings here in the world: some flare up, while others flicker out; only those who have reached Nibbāna are no more seen.”

The Teacher, seated in the Perfumed Chamber, sent forth a radiant image of himself, and standing as it were face to face with her, spoke and said: “Even as it is with these flames, so also is it with living beings here in the world: some flare up, while others flicker out; only those who have reached Nibbāna are no more seen. Therefore, better is the life of one who sees Nibbāna, though living but for an instant, than the lives of those who endure for a hundred years and yet do not see Nibbāna.” And joining the connection, he instructed her in the Dhamma by pronouncing the following stanza:

114. Though one should live a hundred years,

Not seeing the Deathless State,

Yet better is life for a single day

For one who sees the Deathless State.

At the conclusion of the discourse Kisā Gotamī, even as she sat there, attained arahantship together with the analytical knowledges.

### **53. The Elder Nun Paṭācārā**

THOUGH ONE SHOULD LIVE A HUNDRED YEARS.... This instruction was given by the Teacher, while in

residence at Jetavana, with reference to the nun Paṭācārā.

Paṭācārā, we are told, was the daughter of a wealthy merchant of Sāvattihī. Her father was worth four hundred million, and she was exceedingly beautiful. When she was about sixteen years old, her parents provided quarters for her in a palace seven storeys high, and there they kept her, on the topmost floor, surrounded by guards. But in spite of these precautions, she misconducted herself, and it was with her own page.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The opening portion of this story closes resembles the opening of story No. 45.

Now it so happened that her father and mother had promised her in marriage to a certain young man who was her social equal, and finally they set the wedding day. When the day was close at hand, she said to the page, "My parents tell me that they intend to give me in marriage to a young man who comes of such and such a family. Now you know very well that when I am once inside my husband's house, you may bring me presents and come to see me all you like, but you will never, never get in. Therefore, if you really love me, don't delay an instant, but find some way or other of getting me out of this place."

"Very well, my love, this is what I will do: tomorrow, early in the morning, I will go to the city gate and wait for you at such and such a spot; you manage, somehow or other, to get out of this place and meet me there."

On the following day he went to the appointed place and waited. Paṭācārā got up very early in the morning, put on soiled garments, dishevelled her hair, and smeared her body with red powder. Then, in order to outwit her keepers, she took a waterpot in her hand, surrounded herself with slave-maidens, and set out as if she intended to fetch water. Escaping from the palace, she went to the appointed place and met her lover. Together they went a long way off, and took up their abode in a certain village. The husband tilled the soiled, and gathered firewood and leaves in the forest. The wife fetched water in her waterpot, and with her own hand pounded the rice, did the cooking, and performed the other household duties. Thus did Paṭācārā reap the fruit of her own wrongdoing.

By and by, she became pregnant, and when the time for her delivery was near at hand, she made the following request to her husband, "Here I have no one to help me. But a mother and father always have a soft spot in their heart for their child. Therefore take me home to them, that I may give birth to my child in their house." But her husband refused her request, saying to her, "My dear wife, what are you saying? If your mother and father were to see me, they would subject me to all manner of tortures. It is out of the question for me to go." Over and over again she begged him, and each time he refused her.

One day when her husband was away in the forest, she went to the neighbours and said, "Should my husband ask you where I have gone when he returns, tell him that I have gone home to my parents." And having said this she closed the door of her house and went away. When her husband returned and observed that she was not there he inquired of the neighbours and they told him what had happened. "I must persuade her to return," thought he, and set out after her. Finally he caught sight of her, and overtaking her, begged her to return with him. But try as he might, he was unable to persuade her to do so.

When they reached a certain place, the birth pains came upon her. She said to her husband, "Husband, the birth pains have come upon me." So saying, she made her way into a clump of bushes, laid herself upon the ground, and there, with much tossing about and pain, she gave birth to a son. Then she said, "What I set out to go home for is over." So back again to their house she went with him, and once more they lived together.

After a time she became pregnant again. When the time for her delivery was at hand, she made the same request of her husband as before and received the same answer. So she took her child upon her hip and went away just as she had before. Her husband followed her, overtook her, and asked her to return with him. This she refused to do. Now as they went on their way, a fearful storm arose, out of due season. The sky was ablaze with flashes of lightning, and rent asunder, as it were, with thunder claps, and there was an incessant



downpour of rain. At that moment the birth pains came upon her. She said to her husband, “Husband, the birth pains are come upon me; I cannot stand it; find me a place out of the rain.”

24

Her husband went here and there, axe in hand, seeking materials for a shelter. Seeing some brushwood growing on the top of an ant-hill, he set about to chop it down. Hardly had he begun his work when a poisonous snake slipped out of the ant-hill and bit him. Instantly his body was burned up, as it were, by flames of fire shooting up within him, his flesh turned purple, and right on the spot he fell down dead.

Paṭācārā, suffering intense pain, watched for her husband to return, but in vain. Finally she gave birth to a second son. The two children, unable to withstand the buffeting of the wind and the rain, screamed at the top of their lungs. The mother took them to her bosom, and crouching upon the ground with her hands and knees pressed together, remained in this posture all night long. Her whole body looked as though there were no blood left in it, and her flesh had the appearance of a sere and yellow leaf.

When the dawn rose, she took her newborn son, his flesh as red as a piece of meat, and placed him on her hip. Then she gave the older boy one of her fingers to hold, and with the words, “Come, dear child, your father has left us,” set out along the same path her husband had taken. When she came to the ant-hill, there on top of it she saw her husband lying dead, his flesh purple, his body rigid. “All on account of me,” said she, “my husband has died upon the road,” and wailing and lamenting, she continued her journey.

When she came to the river Aciravatī, she observed that by reason of the rain, which had lasted all night long, the river was swollen knee-deep, and in places waist-deep. She was too weak to wade across the stream with the two children; therefore she left the older boy on the near bank and carried the younger across to the far side. Breaking off a branch of a tree and spreading it out, she laid the child on it. Then thinking to herself, “I must return to my other child,” she took leave of the younger boy and turned to recross the stream. But she could hardly bring herself to leave the little one, and again and again she turned around to look at him.

She had barely reached midstream when a hawk caught sight of the child, and mistaking him for a piece of hawk, swooped down from the sky after him. The mother, seeing the eagle swoop down after her child, raised both her hands and screamed with a loud voice, “Begone, begone!” Three times she screamed, but the hawk was so far away that he failed to hear her, and seizing the boy, flew up into the air with him.

When the older boy, who had been left on the near bank, saw his mother stop in the middle of the river and raise her hands, and heard her scream with a loud voice, he thought to himself, “She is calling me.” And in his haste he fell into the water. In this way her younger son was carried off by a hawk, and her older son swept away by the river. And she wailed and lamented, saying, “One of my sons has been carried off by a hawk, the other swept away by the water; by the roadside my husband lies dead.” And thus wailing and lamenting, she went on her way.

As she proceeded on her way, she met a certain man coming from Sāvattthī. She asked him, “Sir, where do you live?” – “In Sāvattthī, my good woman.” – “In the city of Sāvattthī, in such and such a street, lives such and such a family. Do you know them, sir?” – “Yes, my good woman, I know them. But please don’t ask me about that family. Ask me about any

other family you know.” – “Sir, I have no occasion to ask about any other. This is the only family I wish to ask about.” – “Woman, you give me no opportunity to avoid telling you. Did you observe that it rained all last night?”

“Indeed I did, sir. In fact, I am the only person the rain fell on all night long. How it came to rain on me, I will tell you by and by. But just tell me what has happened to the family of this wealthy merchant, and I will ask you no further questions.”

25

“My good woman, last night the storm overturned that house, and it fell on the merchant and his wife and his son, and they perished, all three, and their neighbours and kinsmen are even now burning their bodies on one funeral pyre. Look there, my good woman. You can see the smoke now.”

Instantly she went mad. Her clothing fell off from her body, but she did not know that she was naked. And naked as at her birth she wandered round and round, weeping and wailing and lamenting, “Both my sons are dead; my husband on the road lies dead; my mother and father and brother burn on one funeral pyre.”

Those who saw her yelled, “Crazy fool! Crazy fool!” Some flung rubbish at her, others showered dust on her head, others pelted her with clods of earth.

It so happened that at this time the Teacher was in residence at Jetavana monastery. As he sat there in the midst of his disciples teaching the Dhamma, he saw Paṭācārā approach from afar, and he recognised in her one who for a hundred thousand cycles of time had fulfilled the Perfections, one who had made her earnest wish and attained it.

We are told that in the dispensation of the Buddha Padumuttara she had seen the Teacher Padumuttara assign to an elder nun, an expert in the Vinaya, pre-eminence among those who are versed in the Vinaya. It seemed as if the Teacher were taking her by the arm and admitting the nun to the Garden of Delight. So she formed her resolve and made this aspiration, “May I also obtain from a Buddha like you pre-eminence among nuns versed in the Vinaya.” The Buddha Padumuttara, extending his consciousness into the future and perceiving that her aspiration would be fulfilled, made the following prophecy: “In the dispensation of a Buddha to be known as Gotama, this woman will bear the name Paṭācārā, and will obtain pre-eminence among nuns versed in the Vinaya.”

So when the Teacher beheld Paṭācārā approaching from afar, her aspiration fulfilled, her earnest wish attained, he said, “There is none other that can be a refuge to this woman, but only I.” And he caused her to draw near to the monastery. The moment his disciples saw her, they cried out, “Do not let that crazy woman come here.” But he said to them, “Do not hinder her.” And when she had come near, he said to her, “Sister, regain your mindfulness!” Instantly, through the power of the Buddha, she regained her mindfulness. At the same moment she became aware that her clothing had fallen off from her body; and recovering at once her shame and fear of wrongdoing, she crouched upon the ground.

A certain man threw her his outer cloak. She put it on, and approaching the Teacher, prostrated herself before his golden feet. Having so done, she said, “Venerable sir, be my refuge, be my support. One of my sons has been carried off by a hawk, the other swept away by the water; by the roadside my husband lies dead; my father’s house has been wrecked by the wind, and in it have perished my mother and father and brother, and even now their bodies are burning on one funeral pyre.”

The Teacher listened to what she had to say and replied, “Paṭācārā, be troubled no more.

You have come to one who is able to be your shelter, your refuge. What you have said is true. One of your sons has been carried off by a hawk, the other swept away by the water; by the roadside your husband lies dead; your father's house has been wrecked by the wind, and in it have perished your mother and father and brother. But just as today, so also all through this round of existences, you have wept over the loss of sons and others dear to you, shedding tears more abundant than the waters of the four oceans." And he uttered the following stanza:

But little water do the four oceans contain,  
Compared with all the tears that man has shed,  
26

By sorrow smitten and by suffering distraught.  
Woman, why heedless do you still remain?

In this way the Teacher discoursed on the round of existences without conceivable beginning. As he spoke, the grief which pervaded her body became less intense. Perceiving that her grief had become less intense, he continued his discourse as follows: "Paṭācārā, to one who is on his way to the world beyond, neither sons nor other relatives can ever be a shelter or a refuge. How much less can you expect them to be such to you in this present life! One who is wise should clarify his conduct, and so make clear the path that leads to Nibbāna." So saying, he instructed her in the Dhamma by pronouncing the following stanzas:

288. No sons are there for shelter,  
Nor father, nor related folk;  
For one seized by the Ender  
Kinsmen provide no shelter.

289. Having well understood this fact,  
The wise man well restrained by virtues  
Quickly indeed should clear  
The path going to Nibbāna.

At the conclusion of the discourse, Paṭācārā obtained the fruit of stream-entry and the taints within her, as numerous as the particles of dust on the whole wide earth, were burnt away. Many others likewise obtained the fruit of stream-entry and the fruits of the second and third paths. Paṭācārā, having obtained the fruit of stream-entry, requested the Teacher to let her go forth. The Teacher sent her to the Order of Nuns and directed that she go forth. Afterwards she obtained acceptance as a nun and by reason of her happy demeanour (*paṭitācārattā*) came to be known as Paṭācārā.

One day she filled her waterpot with water, and pouring out water, bathed her feet. As she poured out the water, she spilled some on the ground. The water ran a little way and disappeared. The second time it went a little farther. The third time a little farther yet. So she took this very incident for her subject of meditation, and fixing accurately in her mind the three occurrences, she meditated thus: "Even as the water I spilled the first time ran a little way and disappeared, so also living beings here in the world are dying in youth. Even as the water I spilled the second time ran a little farther, so also living beings here in the world are dying in the prime of life. Even as the water I spilled the third time ran a little farther yet, so also living beings here in the world are dying in old age."

The Teacher, seated in his Perfumed Chamber, sent forth a radiant image of himself, and

standing as it were face to face with her, spoke and said: “Paṭācāra, it would be far better to live but a single day, even but a single moment, and see the rise and fall of the five aggregates, than to live a hundred years and not see.” And joining the connection, he instructed her in the Dhamma by pronouncing the following stanza:

113. Though one should live a hundred years

Not seeing rise and fall,

Yet better is life for a single day

For one who sees rise and fall.

At the conclusion of the discourse Paṭācāra attained arahantship together with the analytical knowledges.

27

#### **54. The Elder Nun Bahuputtikā**

THOUGH ONE SHOULD LIVE A HUNDRED YEARS.... This instruction was given by the Teacher while he

was in residence at Jetavana with reference to Bahuputtikā.

In a certain household at Sāvattthī, we are told, were seven sons and seven daughters. All of them married as soon as they were old enough, and were happy, as was indeed their nature. After a time their father died. But the mother, the eminent female lay disciple, even after the death of her husband, did not relinquish control of his property for some time. One day her sons said to her, “Mother, now that our father is dead, what is the use of your retaining his property? Can we not support you?” She listened to their words, but said nothing. After they had spoken to her several times about the matter, she thought to herself, “My sons will look after me; why do I need to I keep the property separate for myself?” So she divided the estate into two parts and distributed them among the children.

After a few days had passed, the wife of her eldest son said to her, “Apparently this is the only house our excellent mother visits; she acts as though she had given both parts of her estate to her eldest son.” In like manner did the wives of her other sons address her. So likewise did her daughters address her whenever she entered their houses, from the eldest to the youngest. With such disrespect was she treated that finally she said to herself, “Why should I live with them any longer? I will go forth and live the life of a nun.” So she went to the nuns’ convent and asked to go forth. They let her go forth and when she had obtained acceptance she went by the name of Bahuputtikā the nun.<sup>7</sup>

“Since I have gone forth in old age,” she thought, as she performed the major and minor duties assigned to nuns, “it behoves me to be heedful; I will therefore spend the whole night in meditation. On the lower terrace, putting her hand on a pillar, she guided her steps thereby and meditated. Even as she walked back and forth, fearful that in the dark places she might strike her head against a tree or against some other object, she put her hand on a tree and guided her steps thereby and meditated. Resolved to observe only the Dhamma taught by the Teacher, she considered the Dhamma and pondered the Dhamma and meditated.

The Teacher, seated in the Perfumed Chamber, sent forth a radiant image of himself, and sitting as it were face to face with her, talked with her, saying: “Bahuputtikā, though one should live a hundred years, were one not to behold the Dhamma I have taught and meditate thereon, it would be better for one to live but a moment and behold the Dhamma I have taught.” And joining the connection and teaching the Dhamma, he pronounced the

following stanza:

115. Though one should live a hundred years  
Not seeing the supreme Dhamma,  
Yet better is life for a single day  
For one who sees the supreme Dhamma.

At the conclusion of the stanza, Bahuputtikā became an arahant possessed of the analytical knowledges.

7 The name means “one with many children.”

28

### **55. The Elder Nun Dhammadinnā**

FOR WHOM THERE IS NO OWNERSHIP.... This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in

residence at Veḷuvana with reference to the nun Dhammadinnā.

For one day, while she was living the household life, her husband Visākha, a lay disciple, heard the Teacher preach the Dhamma and attained the fruit of the third path. Thereupon he thought to himself, “I must now turn over all of my property to Dhammadinnā.”<sup>8</sup> Now it had previously been his custom on returning home, in case he saw Dhammadinnā looking out of the window, to smile pleasantly at her. But on this particular day, although she was standing at the window, he passed by without so much as looking at her. “What can this mean?” she thought. “Never mind, when it is meal-time, I shall find out.” So when mealtime came, she offered him the usual portion of boiled rice. Now on previous days it had been his custom to say, “Come, let us eat together.” But on this particular day he ate in silence, uttering not a word. “He must be angry about something,” thought Dhammadinnā. After the meal Visākha settled himself in a comfortable place, and summoning Dhammadinnā to his side, said to her, “Dhammadinnā, all the wealth that is in this house is yours. Take it!” Thought Dhammadinnā, “Persons who are angry do not offer their property and say, ‘Take it!’ What can this mean?” After a time, however, she said to her husband, “But, husband, what about you?” – “From this day forth, I shall engage no more in worldly affairs.” – “Who will take the spittle you have rejected? In that case permit me also to become a nun.” – “Very well, dear wife,” replied Visākha, giving her the desired permission. And with rich offerings he escorted her to the nuns’ convent and had her go forth. After she had obtained acceptance as a nun she was known as the nun Dhammadinnā.

Dhammadinnā yearned for the life of solitude and so accompanied the nuns to the country. Residing there, in no long time she attained arahantship together with the analytical knowledges. Thereupon she thought to herself, “Now, by reason of me, my kinsfolk will perform works of merit.” Accordingly she returned once more to Rājagaha. When the lay disciple Visākha heard that she had returned, he thought to himself, “What can be her reason for returning?” And going to the nuns’ convent and seeing the nun, his former wife, he saluted her and seated himself respectfully on one side.

Thought he, “It would be highly improper for me to say to her, ‘Noble sister, are you discontented?’<sup>9</sup> I will therefore ask her this question.” So he asked her a question about the path of stream-entry, and she immediately answered it correctly. Continuing this line of questioning, the lay disciple asked about the remaining paths also. He did not stop, however, at this point, but continuing his questions, asked her about arahantship.

“Wonderful, brother Visākha!” exclaimed Dhammadinnā. “But if you desire to know about

arahantship, you should approach the Teacher and ask him this question.”<sup>10</sup>

Visākha saluted the nun, his former wife, and rising from his seat and going to the Teacher, repeated to the Exalted One their talk and conversation. Said the Teacher, “What my daughter Dhammadinnā said was well said. In answering these questions I also should answer it in the very same way.” And expounding the Dhamma, he pronounced the following stanza:

421. For whom there is no ownership

Before or after or midway,

8 A non-returner has abandoned all greed and possessiveness.

9 Discontented with the holy life of celibacy, implying a desire to return to lay status.

10 Their conversation is recorded in Majjhima Nikāya No. 44.

29

Owing nothing and unattached—

That one I call a brāhmaṇa.

### **56. The Elder Nun Rūpanandā**

THIS IS A CITY MADE OF BONES.... This instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in

residence at Jetavana with reference to the nun Janapada-Kalyāṇī Rūpanandā.

The story goes that one day Janapada-Kalyāṇī thought to herself, “My eldest brother has renounced the glory of dominion, has become a monk, and has now become the foremost being in the world, even the Buddha; his son, Rāhula Kumāra, has become a monk; my husband has become a monk; so also has my mother become a nun. Seeing that all these kinsfolk of mine have adopted the holy life, why should I continue any longer to live the household life? I, too, will become a nun.” Accordingly she went to the Order of Nuns and became a nun, not at all because of faith, but solely because of love for her kinsfolk. Because of her wondrous beauty, she became known as Rūpanandā (“Beautiful Delight”).

One day she heard that the Teacher had said, “Beauty of form is impermanent, involved in suffering, and non-self; so likewise are feeling, perception, the aggregate of mental states, and consciousness, impermanent, involved in suffering, and non-self.” Thereupon she said to herself, “In that case he would find fault even with my own form, so beautiful to look upon and so fair to see.” Therefore she avoided meeting the Teacher face to face.

Now the residents of Sāvattihī, having given alms early in the morning, took upon themselves the Uposatha precepts. In the evening, clad in spotless upper garments and bearing garlands and flowers in their hands, they assembled at Jetavana to hear the Dhamma. And the Order of Nuns also, desiring to hear the Dhamma, went to the monastery and heard the Dhamma. And having heard the Dhamma, they entered the city, praising the virtues of the Teacher as they entered.

(For there are four standards of judgement prevailing among persons who dwell together in the world. However, there are very few persons in whom the sight of the Tathāgata does not arouse a feeling of satisfaction. Those who judge by what they see, look upon the golden-hued body of the Tathāgata, adorned with the major marks and the minor marks, and are satisfied with what they see. *Those who judge by what they hear*, listen to the report of the Teacher’s virtues through many hundreds of births, and to his voice, endowed with the eight excellences, in the preaching of the Dhamma, and are satisfied with what they hear. *Those who judge by austerities* are satisfied with his austere robes and so forth. *Those whose*

*standard of judgement is the Dhamma* reflect: “Such is the virtue of the Master, such is his meditation, such is his wisdom; in virtue and meditation and wisdom the Exalted One is without an equal, is without a peer.” Thus they also are satisfied. Indeed those who praise the virtues of the Tathāgata lack words with which to tell their praises.)

Rūpanandā listened to the nuns and the female lay disciples as they recited the praises of the Tathāgata, and having listened, said to herself, “In extravagant terms do they tell the praises of my brother. Suppose he were to find fault with my beauty of form during one single day. How much could he say in that length of time? Suppose I were to go with the nuns, and without letting myself be seen, look upon the Tathāgata, hear him preach the Dhamma, and then return?” So she said to the nuns, “Today I too will go and hear the Dhamma.” Said the nuns, “It has taken a long time to arouse in Rūpanandā a desire to wait upon the Teacher. Today, by reason of her, the Teacher will preach the Dhamma with many and various details.” And with delighted hearts, taking her with them, they set out.

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From the moment Rūpanandā started out, she kept thinking to herself, “I will not let him see who I am.” The Teacher thought to himself, “Today Rūpanandā will come to pay her respects to me; what manner of lesson will do her the most good?” As he considered the matter further, he came to the following conclusion: “This woman thinks a great deal of her beauty of form and is deeply attached to her own person. It will therefore be of advantage to her if I crush out the pride she feels in her beauty of form by means of beauty of form itself, even as one draws out one thorn with another thorn.” Accordingly, when it was time for her to enter the monastery, the Teacher put forth his power and created a young woman about sixteen years of age. Surpassing beauty did she possess; she wore crimson garments; she was adorned with all her ornaments, and stood before the Teacher with fan in hand, swinging the fan back and forth.

Now both the Teacher and Rūpanandā beheld this woman. As Rūpanandā entered the monastery with the nuns, she took her place behind the nuns, saluted the Teacher respectfully, and sat down among the nuns. Having done so, she surveyed from head to foot the person of the Teacher, richly brilliant with the major marks, resplendent with the minor marks, surrounded by a halo a fathom in extent. Then she saw the phantom of a woman standing near the Teacher and surveyed her face, glorious as the full moon. Having surveyed this woman, she surveyed her own person and compared herself to a crow standing before a royal goose of golden hue. For from the moment she looked upon this phantom, created by supernatural power, her eyes rolled back and forth. “Oh, how beautiful is her hair! Oh, how beautiful is her forehead!” she exclaimed. She was fascinated by the glorious beauty of every part of her body, and she became possessed with intense desire for equal beauty herself. The Teacher, observing that she was fascinated by the beauty of the woman, proceeded to teach her the Dhamma.

First he transformed the woman from a maiden about sixteen years of age to a woman about twenty years of age. Rūpanandā surveyed her form again, was quickly filled with a feeling of disappointment, and said to herself, “This form is by no means the same as it was before.” Gradually the Teacher transformed her, first into a woman who had given birth to one child, then into a woman of middle life, finally into a decrepit old woman. Rūpanandā watched every stage of the transformation saying to herself, “Now this has disappeared, now that has disappeared.” When, however, she saw her transformed into a decrepit old

woman, and surveyed her standing there, teeth broken, hair grey, body bent, crooked as a curved beam, forced to lean on a cane, trembling in every limb, she was filled with great dispassion.

Then the Teacher caused disease to overmaster the woman. Casting away her cane and her palm-leaf fan, she screamed aloud, fell upon the ground, and rolled over and over, wallowing in her own urine and excrement. Rūpanandā looked upon her and was filled with great dispassion. Then the Teacher showed the death of that woman. Straightaway her body began to bloat. From its nine wound-like openings oozed pus and worms like lampwicks. Crows and dogs fell on her and tore her. Rūpanandā looked and thought, “In this very place this woman has come to old age, has come to disease, has come to death. Even so, this body of mine will come to old age, disease, and death.” Thus she came to behold her own body in its impermanence; and as a result of doing so, she also saw her body as suffering and as devoid of self.

Straightaway the three modes of existence<sup>11</sup> appeared to her like houses set on fire, or like carrion tied to her neck, and her mind sprang forth to the meditation subject. The Teacher, perceiving that she had beheld her own body in its impermanence, considered within

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himself, “Will she, or will she not, by herself be able to get a firm footing?” Straightaway he became aware of the following: “She will not be able; she must have support from without.” Accordingly, out of consideration for her welfare, he taught her the Dhamma by pronouncing the following stanzas:

Behold, Nandā, this assemblage of elements  
called the body;  
It is diseased, impure, putrid; it oozes and leaks;  
yet it is desired of simpletons.  
As is this body, so also was that; as is that body,  
so also will this body be.  
Behold the elements in their emptiness;  
go not back to the world;  
Cast away desire for existence  
and you shall go to perfect peace.

Thus, with reference to the nun Nandā, did the Exalted One pronounce these stanzas. Directing her thought in a way conformable to his teaching, Nandā attained the fruit of stream-entry. Thereupon the Teacher, desiring that she should dwell with insight upon the three paths and the three fruits, and desiring to teach her to meditate upon the void, said to her, “Nandā, think not that there is an essence in this body; for there is not the least essence in this body. This body is but a city of bones, made by building up three hundred bones.” So saying, he pronounced the following stanza:

150. This is a city made of bones  
Plastered with flesh and blood,  
In it are stored decay and death  
As well as pride and detraction.



At the conclusion of the lesson the nun Nandā attained arahantship; the multitude also profited by the lesson.<sup>32</sup>

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