Thig 13.1 — Thig 13:1 Ambapālī

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

Thig 13:1 Ambapālī

Black was my hair

—the color of bees—

& curled at the tips;

with age, it looked like coarse hemp.

The Truth-speaker’s word

doesn’t change.

Fragrant, like a perfumed basket

filled with flowers: my coiffure.
With age it smelled musty,
like animal fur.
The Truth-speaker’s word
doesn’t change.

Thick & lush, like a well-tended grove,
made splendid, the tips elaborate
with comb & pin.
With age, it grew thin
& bald here & there.
The Truth-speaker’s word
doesn’t change.

Adorned with gold & delicate pins,1
it was splendid, ornamented with braids.
Now, with age,
that head has gone bald.
The Truth-speaker’s word
doesn’t change.

Curved, as if well-drawn by an artist,
my brows were once splendid.
With age, they droop down in folds.
The Truth-speaker’s word
doesn’t change.

Radiant, brilliant like jewels,
my eyes: elongated, black—deep black.
With age, they’re no longer splendid.
The Truth-speaker’s word
doesn’t change.

Like a delicate peak, my nose
was splendid in the prime of my youth.
With age, it’s like a long pepper.
The Truth-speaker’s word
doesn’t change.

Like bracelets—well-fashioned, well-finished—
my ears were once splendid.
With age, they droop down in folds.
The Truth-speaker’s word
doesn’t change.

Like plantain buds in their color,
my teeth were once splendid.
With age, they’re broken & yellowed.
The Truth-speaker’s word
doesn’t change.

Like that of a cuckoo in the dense jungle,
flitting through deep forest thickets:
sweet was the tone of my voice.
With age, it cracks here & there.
The Truth-speaker’s word
doesn’t change.

Smooth2—like a conch shell well-polished—
my neck was once splendid.
With age, it’s broken down, bent.
The Truth-speaker’s word
doesn’t change.

Like rounded door-bars—both of them—
my arms were once splendid.

With age, they’re like dried up pāṭalī trees.
The Truth-speaker’s word
doesn’t change.

Adorned with gold & delicate rings,
my hands were once splendid.
With age, they’re like onions & tubers.
The Truth-speaker’s word
doesn’t change.

Swelling, round, firm, & high,
both my breasts were once splendid.
In the drought of old age, they dangle
like empty old water bags.3
The Truth-speaker’s word
doesn’t change.

Like a sheet of gold, well-burnished,
my body was splendid.
Now it’s covered with very fine wrinkles.
The Truth-speaker’s word
doesn’t change.

Smooth in their lines, like an elephant’s trunk,
both my thighs were once splendid.
With age, they’re like knotted bamboo.
The Truth-speaker’s word
doesn’t change.

Adorned with gold & delicate anklets,
my calves were once splendid.
With age, they’re like sesame sticks.
The Truth-speaker’s word

doesn’t change.

As if they were stuffed with soft cotton,

both my feet were once splendid.

With age, they’re shriveled & cracked.

The Truth-speaker’s word

doesn’t change.

Such was this physical heap,

now: decrepit, the home of pains, many pains.

A house with its plaster all fallen off.

The Truth-speaker’s word

doesn’t change.

Notes

1. Reading saṇha-kaṇḍaka.

2. Reading saṇha-kamburiva with the Burmese and Sinhalese editions.

3. Reading thevikīva with the Burmese and Sinhalese editions.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: DN 16; Thag 1:118