Thig 14.1 — Verses of the Elder Subhā of Jīvaka’s Mango Grove

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Text

Verses of the Elder Bhikkhunis

Chapter of the Thirties

Verses of the Elder Subhā of Jīvaka’s Mango Grove

Bhikkhunī Subhā was going

to Jīvaka’s charming mango grove.

A rogue obstructed her,

so Subhā said this to him:

“Have I done something to offend you,

that you stand there holding me back?

Because it is not proper, friend,

for a layperson to touch one who has gone forth.

This is serious, according to my teacher’s instructions.

The One Faring Well has made the trainings clear.

I am on the path of complete purity, I am flawless,

why do you stand there holding me back?

Your mind is turbulent, mine is not,

your mind is dirty, mine is not.

My mind is flawless and liberated in every way,

why do you stand there holding me back?”

“Young and innocent girl,

what can going forth do for you?

Put down that ochre robe,

come enjoy yourself in this flowering forest.

Sweet winds blow everywhere,
from trees full of flower-pollen.
Early Spring is a pleasant season—
come enjoy yourself in this flowering forest.
Trees tipped with flowers
murmur in the wind.
But how can you enjoy yourself,
if you descend into the forest alone?
Surrounded by a multitude of beasts and snakes,
wild and agitated elephants;
you want to go without a companion
into this lonely, dreadful, and immense forest?
Like a shiny golden doll,
like a nymph amongst beautiful vines,
you will stand out
wearing the finest linen from Kāsi.
I will be under your control,
if we live together in the forest.
Because there is no one more dear to me than you,
creature with the soft eyes of a dryad.
If you were to say to me:
‘Come, let’s live a pleasant household life!’
you would live in a sheltered palace
and have women attending you.
You would wear the finest linen from Kāsi,
as well as garlands and makeup.
I would adorn you
with lots of gold, jewels, and pearls.
You would rest on a fabulous bed with a beautiful blanket,

freshly washed and dyed,
on a brand-new mattress upholstered with wool and
scented with sandalwood.
But if you live the chaste and holy life,
then like a blue lotus that rises above the water
but is not touched by anyone,
you will wither away all alone."
"What do you consider of value here,
in this carcass—full of corpses,
bound for the cemetery, destined to break apart?
What have you seen that makes you so deranged?"
"Your eyes are like a symphony,
like a dryad in the mountains.
Seeing your eyes
fills me with sensual desire.
Your eyes are like lotus flowers
in a face that shines like pure gold.
Seeing your eyes,
my excitement grows ever more.
Even when we are far apart,
I will remember your long lashes and pure eyes,
because there is no one more dear than you,
with the soft eyes of a dryad."
"You want to walk where there is no path,
you want to take the moon as a toy,
you want to jump over Mount Meru,
you chase after a disciple of the Buddha.
There is nothing in this world, even with all its devas
which I could now have craving for.

I do not know what it could be like,
since it has been completely uprooted by the path.
Cast away like burning coal,
destroyed like a worthless bowl of poison.
I do not see what it could be like,
since it has been completely uprooted by the path.
One who has not contemplated,
or has not been close to the Teacher,
may be enticed by you,
but I am one who knows, so you are wasting your time here.
Whether I am reviled or respected,
whether there is pleasure or pain, my mindfulness is stable.
Knowing that conditioned things are not beautiful,
my mind is never stained.
I am a female disciple of the one faring well,
I travel with the Eightfold Path as my vehicle.
Free from influences, with darts removed,
I enjoy going to an empty dwelling.
I have seen well-painted
wooden puppets of children,
bound with sticks and strings
like a group of little dancers.
But when those sticks and strings are removed,
when everything is untied, non-functional, splayed out,
one could not find anything in its parts,
so where could the mind settle?
Likewise my body parts
do not function without those mindstates;
this being the case,

where could the mind settle?
It’s like seeing a painting on a wall
made with orpiment;
if your vision of it is distorted,
you misperceive it as a human being.
It is like a supreme illusion,
like a golden tree in a dream.
Blind one, you are getting close to something as meaningless
as a marionette amidst a group of people.
Spinning in a blood-red hole,
engulfed in pus and tears,
here watery tumors are born,
various eye-components balled up together.”
She pulled out that charming eye,
and with a mind of non-attachment, she said:
“Well then, take your eye,”
and she gave it to that man.
In that moment his lust dissipated,
and he apologized:
“May you be well living the holy life,
this will not happen again.
Assailing such a person,
is like embracing a blazing fire,
or picking up a poisonous snake.
May you be well, forgive me.”
The bhikkhunī was let go, and from there
she went to the excellent Buddha.
Seeing the characteristic of excellent merit,
her eye was restored.

... The Elder Subhā of Jīvaka's Mango Grove

The Chapter of the Thirties is finished.