Ud 3.2 — Nanda Sutta: About Nanda

English translation by Thanissaro 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

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Nanda — the Blessed One's brother, son of his maternal aunt — announced to a large number of monks: "I don't enjoy leading the holy life, my friends. I can't keep up the holy life. Giving up the training, I will return to the common life."

Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he told the Blessed One: "Lord, Ven. Nanda — the Blessed One's brother, son of his maternal aunt — has announced to a large number of monks: 'I don't enjoy leading the holy life, my friends. I can't keep up the holy life. Giving up the training, I will return to the common life.'"

Then the Blessed One told a certain monk, "Come, monk. In my name, call Nanda, saying, 'The Teacher calls you, friend Nanda.'"

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, the monk went to Ven. Nanda, on arrival he said, "The Teacher calls you, friend Nanda."

Responding, "As you say, my friend," to the monk, Ven. Nanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Is it true, Nanda, that you have announced to a large number of monks: 'I don't enjoy leading the holy life, my friends. I can't keep up the holy life. Giving up the training, I will return to the common life'?"

"Yes, lord."

"But why, Nanda, don't you enjoy leading the holy life? Why can't you keep up the holy life? Why, giving up the training, will you return to the common life?"

"Lord, as I was leaving home, a Sakyan girl — the envy of the countryside — glanced up at me, with her hair half-combed, and said, 'Hurry back, master.' Recollecting that, I don't enjoy leading the holy life. I can't keep up the holy life. Giving up the training, I will return to the common life."

Then, taking Ven. Nanda by the arm — as a strong man might flex his extended arm or extend his flexed arm — the Blessed One disappeared from Jeta's Grove and reappeared among the devas of the heaven of the Thirty-three [Tāvatiṃsa]. Now on that occasion about 500 dove-footed nymphs had come to wait upon Sakka, the ruler of the devas. The Blessed One said to Ven. Nanda, "Nanda, do you see these 500 dove-footed nymphs?"

"Yes, lord."

"What do you think, Nanda? Which is lovelier, better looking, more charming: the Sakyan girl, the envy of the countryside, or these 500 dove-footed nymphs?"

"Lord, compared to these 500 dove-footed nymphs, the Sakyan girl, the envy of the countryside, is like a cauterized monkey with its ears & nose cut off. She doesn't count. She's not even a small fraction. There's no comparison. The 500 dove-footed nymphs are lovelier, better looking, more charming."

"Then take joy, Nanda. Take joy! I am your guarantor for getting 500 dove-footed nymphs."

"If the Blessed One is my guarantor for getting 500 dove-footed nymphs, I will enjoy leading the holy life under the Blessed One."

Then, taking Ven. Nanda by the arm — as a strong man might flex his extended arm or extend his flexed arm — the Blessed One disappeared from among the devas of the heaven of the Thirty-three and reappeared at Jeta's Grove. The monks heard, "They say that Ven. Nanda — the Blessed One's brother, son of his maternal aunt — is leading the holy life for the sake of nymphs. They say that the Blessed One is his guarantor for getting 500 dove-footed nymphs."

Then the monks who were companions of Ven. Nanda went around addressing him as they would a hired hand & a person who had been bought: "Venerable Nanda, they say,

has been hired. Venerable Nanda, they say, has been bought.[1] He's leading the holy life for the sake of nymphs. The Blessed One is his guarantor for getting 500 dove-footed nymphs."

Then Ven. Nanda — humiliated, ashamed, & disgusted that the monks who were his companions were addressing him as they would a hired hand & a person who had been bought — went to dwell alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute. He in no long time entered & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself right in the here-&-now. He knew, "Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world." And thus Ven. Nanda became another one of the arahants.

Then a certain devatā, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta's Grove, approached the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, she stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to the Blessed One, "Lord, Ven. Nanda — the Blessed One's brother, son of his maternal aunt — through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, directly knowing & realizing them for himself right in the here-&-now." And within the Blessed One, the knowledge arose: "Nanda, through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, directly knowing & realizing them for himself right in the here-&-now."

Then, when the night had passed, Ven. Nanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Lord, about the Blessed One's being my guarantor for getting 500 dove-footed nymphs: I hereby release the Blessed One from that promise."

"Nanda, having comprehended your awareness with my own awareness, I realized that 'Nanda, through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, directly knowing & realizing them for himself right in the here-&-now.' And a devatā informed me that 'Ven. Nanda, through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, directly knowing & realizing them for himself right in the here-&-now.' When your mind, through lack of clinging, was released from the effluents, I was thereby released from that promise."

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

In whom the mire of sensuality is crossed over,[2] the thorn of sensuality crushed, the ending of delusion reached: He doesn't quiver from pleasures & pains : a monk.

Note

1.

The monks here address Ven. Nanda as "āyasmant." According to DN 16, they did not normally address one another in this formal way while the Buddha was still alive. Thus there is an element of sarcasm in the way they use the term here.

2.

Reading yassa tiṇṇo kāmapaṅko with the Thai edition. The Burmese, Sri Lankan, and PTS editions read, yassa nittiṇṇo paṅko: "In whom the mire is crossed over." The parallel passage in the Udānavarga (32.2) essentially agrees with this latter version.