Thig 13.1 — Ambapālī

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Text

Verses of the Senior Nuns 13.1

The Book of the Twenties

Ambapālī

My hair was as black as bees,

graced with curly tips;

now old, it has become like hemp bark—

the word of the truthful one is confirmed.

Crowned with flowers,

my head was as fragrant as a perfume box;

now old, it smells like dog fur—

the word of the truthful one is confirmed.

My hair was as thick as a well-planted forest,

it shone, parted with brush and pins;

now old, it's patchy and sparse—

the word of the truthful one is confirmed.

With plaits of black and ribbons of gold,

it was so pretty, graced with braids;

now old, my head's gone bald—

the word of the truthful one is confirmed.

My eyebrows used to look so nice,

like crescents painted by an artist;

now old, they droop with wrinkles—

the word of the truthful one is confirmed.

My eyes shone brilliant as gems,
wide and indigo;
ruined by age, they shine no more—
the word of the truthful one is confirmed.
My nose was like a perfect peak,
lovely in my bloom of youth;
now old, it’s shriveled like a pepper;
the word of the truthful one is confirmed.
My ear-lobes were so pretty,
like lovingly crafted bracelets;
now old, they droop with wrinkles—
the word of the truthful one is confirmed.
My teeth used to be so pretty,
bright as a jasmine flower;
now old, they’re broken and yellow—
the word of the truthful one is confirmed.
My singing was sweet as a cuckoo
wandering in the forest groves;
now old, it’s patchy and croaking—
the word of the truthful one is confirmed.
My neck used to be so pretty,
like a polished shell of conch;
now old, it’s bowed and bent—
the word of the truthful one is confirmed.
My arms used to be so pretty,
like rounded cross-bars;
with age, they wrinkle and sag as a patala tree—
the word of the truthful one is confirmed.
My hands used to be so pretty,

graced with lovely golden rings;
now old, they’re like red radishes—
the word of the truthful one is confirmed.
My breasts were both once so pretty,
swelling, round, close-set, and perky;
now they droop like water bags—
the word of the truthful one is confirmed.
My body used to be so pretty,
like a polished slab of lustrous gold;
now it’s covered with delicate wrinkles—
the word of the truthful one is confirmed.
Both my thighs used to be so pretty,
like an elephant’s trunk;
now old, they’re like bamboo—
the word of the truthful one is confirmed.
My calves used to be so pretty,
graced with cute golden anklets;
now old, they’re like sesame sticks—
the word of the truthful one is confirmed.
Both my feet used to be so pretty,
plump as if with cotton-wool;
now old, they’re cracked and wrinkly—
the word of the truthful one is confirmed.
This bag of bones once was such,
but now it’s withered, home to so much pain;
like a house in decay with plaster crumbling—
the word of the truthful one is confirmed.