Thig 13.4 — Sundarī

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Verses of the Senior Nuns 13.4

The Book of the Twenties

Sundarī

“Before, worthy lady, when feeding
your departed children,
you’d be racked with despair
all day and all night.
Today, brahmin lady, you have fed
all seven children.
Vāseṭṭhī, how do you explain why
you’re not so filled with despair?”

“Many hundreds of children,
hundreds of family circles,
both mine and yours, brahmin,
have been fed in the past.
Having known the escape
from rebirth and death
I neither grieve nor lament,
nor do I despair.”

“Wow, Vaseṭṭhī, the words you speak
really are amazing!
Whose teaching did you understand
that you say these things?”

“Brahmin, the Awakened One
back at the city of Mithilā,
teaches the Dhamma so that living creatures
may abandon all suffering.
After hearing the perfected one’s teaching,
brahmin, which is free of all attachments,
having understood the true teaching there,
I’ve cast aside grief for children.”
“I too shall go
to the city of Mithilā.
Hopefully the Buddha may release me
from all suffering.”
The brahmin saw the Buddha,
liberated, free of attachments.
He taught him the Dhamma,
the sage gone beyond suffering:
suffering, suffering’s origin,
suffering’s transcendence,
and the noble eightfold path
that leads to the stilling of suffering.
Having understood the true teaching there,
he chose to go forth.
Three days later
Sujāta realized the three knowledges.
“Please, charioteer, go;
take back this carriage.
Bidding my brahmin lady good health, say:
‘The brahmin has now gone forth.
After three days,

Sujāta realized the three knowledges.’”

Then taking the carriage,

along with a thousand coins, the charioteer

bade the brahmin lady good health, and said:

“The brahmin has now gone forth.

After three days,

Sujāta realized the three knowledges.”

Hearing that the brahmin had the three knowledges, the lady replied:

“I present to you this horse and carriage,

O charioteer, along with 1000 coins,

and a full bowl as a gift.”

“Keep the horse and carriage, lady,

along with the thousand coins.

I too shall go forth in his presence,

the one of such outstanding wisdom.”

“Elephants, cattle, jeweled earrings,

such opulent domestic worth:

having given it up, your father went forth,

enjoy these riches Sundarī,

you are the family heir.”

“Elephants, cattle, jeweled earrings,

such delightful domestic worth:

having given it up, my father went forth,

racked by grief for his son.

I too shall go forth,

racked by grief for my brother.”

“Sundarī, may the wish you desire

come true.

Leftovers as gleanings,

and cast-off rags as robes—
make do with these,
free of defilements regarding the next life.”
“Ma’am, while I am still a trainee nun,
my clairvoyance is clarified;
I know my past lives,
the places I used to live.
Relying on a fine lady like you,
a senior nun who graces the Saṅgha,
I’ve attained the three knowledges,
and fulfilled the Buddha’s instructions.
Give me permission ma’am,
I wish to go to Sāvatthī,
where I shall roar my lion’s roar
before the best of Buddhas.”
“Sundarī, see the Teacher!
Snow gold in tint, with sun-golden skin;
tamer of the untamed,
the Awakened One who fears nothing from any quarter.”
“See Sundarī coming,
liberated, free of attachments.
desireless, detached,
her task completed, without defilements.”
“Having set forth from Varanasi
and come to your presence, great hero,
your disciple Sundarī
bows at your feet.
You are the Buddha, you are the Teacher,
I am your bosom daughter, brahmin,

born of your mouth.

I’ve completed the task and am free of defilements.”

“Then welcome, good lady,

you’re by no means unwelcome.

For this is how the tamed come

bowing at the Teacher’s feet;

desireless, detached,

the task completed, without defilements.”