Thig 14.1 — Subhā of Jīvaka’s Mango Grove

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Text

Verses of the Senior Nuns 14.1

The Book of the Thirties

Subhā of Jīvaka’s Mango Grove

Going to the lovely mango grove
of Jīvaka, the nun Subhā
was held up by a rascal.
Subhā said this to him:
“What harm have I done to you,
that you stand in my way?
Respectable sir, it’s not proper that a man
should touch a woman gone forth.
This training was taught by the Holy One,
it is a serious matter in my teacher’s instructions.
I am pure and rid of blemishes,
so why do you stand in my way?
One whose mind is clouded against one unclouded;
one who is lustful against one free of lust;
unblemished, my heart is freed in every respect,
so why do you stand in my way?”
“You’re young and flawless—
what will going-forth do for you?
Throw away the ocher robe,
come and play in the blossom grove.

Everywhere, the scent of pollen wafts sweet,
born of the flowering woods.
The start of spring is a happy time—
come and play in the blossom grove.
And trees crested with flowers
cry out, as it were, in the gale.
But what kind of fun will you have
if you plunge into the woods all alone?
Frequented by packs of predators,
and cow elephants aroused by rutting bulls;
you wish to go without a friend
to the deserted, awe-inspiring forest.
Like a doll made of glittering gold,
like a nymph wandering the park of bright vines,
your matchless beauty will shine
in graceful clothes of delicate Kāsian cloth.
I'll be under your sway,
if we are to stay in the forest.
I love no creature more than you,
O pixie with such captivating eyes.
Were you to take up my invitation—
'Come, be happy, and live in a house'—
you'll stay in a longhouse sheltered from wind;
let the ladies look to your needs.
Dressed in delicate Kāsian cloth,
put on your garlands and your cosmetics.
I'll make all sorts of adornments for you,
of lustrous gold and gems and pearls.
Climb onto a costly bed,

its coverlet so clean and nice,
with a new woolen mattress,
so fragrant, sprinkled with sandalwood.
As a blue lily risen from the water
remains untouched by men,
so too, O chaste and holy lady,
your limbs grow old unshared."
"This carcass is full of putrefaction, it swells
the charnel ground, for its nature is to fall apart.
What do you think is so essential in it
that you stare at me so crazily?"
"Your eyes are like those of a doe,
or a pixie in the mountains;
seeing them, erotic delight
swells in me all the more.
Your eyes are like a blue lily's bud
in your flawless face shining like coruscant gold.
Seeing them, sensual excitement
swells in me all the more.
Though you may wander far, I'll still think of you,
with lashes so long and eyes so bright.
I love no eyes more than yours,
O pixie with such bashful eyes."
"You're setting out on the wrong road!
You're looking to take the moon for your toy!
You're trying to leap over Mount Meru!
You, who are hunting a child of the Buddha!
For in this world with all its gods,
there will be no more lust anywhere in me.

I don’t even know what kind it could be,
it’s been smashed root and all by the path.
Cast out like sparks from fiery coals,
it’s worth no more than a bowl of poison.
I don’t even see what kind it could be,
it’s been smashed root and all by the path.
Well may you try to seduce the type of lady
who has not reflected on these things,
or who has never attended the Teacher:
but this is a lady who knows—now you’re in trouble!
No matter if I am reviled or praised,
or feel pleasure or pain: I stay mindful.
Knowing that conditions are ugly,
my mind clings to nothing.
I am a disciple of the Holy One,
riding in the carriage of the eightfold path.
The dart pulled out, free of defilements,
I’m happy to have reached an empty place.
I’ve seen brightly painted
dolls and wooden puppets,
tied to sticks and strings,
and made to dance in many ways.
But when the sticks and strings are taken off—
loosed, disassembled, dismantled,
irrecoverable, stripped to parts—
on what could the mind be fixed?
That’s what my body is really like,
without those things it can’t go on.
This being so,

on what could the mind be fixed?
It’s like when you saw a mural made
by painting yellow orpiment on a wall,
and your vision was deceived by that—
the perception ‘human’ is pointless.
Like an illusion cast before you,
or a golden tree in a dream,
you chase what is hollow, blind one,
like a painted doll among the people.
Like a ball in a socket,
with a pupil in the middle, and tears,
and mucus comes from there as well,
different eye-parts are lumped together.”
Having plucked it out, the fair-eyed lady
was undismayed, unchained in mind.
“Come now, take this eye,”
she said, and gave it to the man right then.
And right then he lost his lust,
and asked for her forgiveness:
“May you be well, O chaste and holy lady;
such a thing will not happen again.
Attacking a person such as this
is like holding on to a blazing fire,
or grabbing a deadly viper!
May you be well, please forgive me.”
When that nun was released
she went to the presence of the excellent Buddha.
Seeing the one with excellent marks of merit,
her eye became just as it was before.