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Why Some Marriages Fail

Isi,dāsī (ThīA 260-271) • Uttarā and Sirimā (DhA 17.3) • Vijaya Sutta (Sn 1.11)

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I

ISI,DĀSĪ

ThīA 260-271

1 Failed marriages

1.1 **Isi,dāsī** (Skt Ṛṣi,dāsī) was the beautiful daughter of a good and wealthy merchant of Ujjenī (Skt Ujjainī), the capital of Avantī (modern-day Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh). She was given in marriage to the son of a merchant of Sāketa in Kosala (modern-day Sujankot on the Sail river, Unao district, Uttar Pradesh). For a month, she served him lovingly and conscientiously.

<i>Sayam eva odanaṃ sādhaṃyāmi sayam eva bhājanam dhovantī¹ mātā'va eka,puttakam tathā²bhattāram paricarāmi</i>	(Thī 412)	I myself cooked the rice, I myself washed the dishes. As a mother her only son, so did I serve my husband.
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<i>Evaṃ maṃ bhatti,katam³ anurattam kārikam nihata,mānam utthāyikam⁴ analasam sīlavatim dussate bhattā</i>	(Thī 413)	Thus I showed him devotion, who had shown him devotion, free of pride, who rises early, not lazy, virtuous was I—yet my husband wrongs me.
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1.2 When Isidāsī related her predicament to her parents-in-law, they praised her virtues and asked their bewildered son what was wrong. He could not give a good answer and replied that he simply could not stand the sight of her, even though she was an ideal wife, having done nothing wrong.

<i>Na pi'ham aparajham kiñci na'pi himsemi na bhaṇāmi⁵ dubbacanam kim sakkā kātuyye yam maṃ viddessate bhattā</i>	(Thī 418)	I have done nothing wrong, I have done him no harm, I have not spoken bad to him. What can be done when my husband hates me?
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1.3 He was tired of her for no apparent reason at all. In the end when her husband could not be brought to love her, they had no choice but to send Isidāsī back to her parents' house. Returning to her house as a rejected wife, everyone (except the husband) was devastated:

¹ Be Ce *dhovantī*; Ee Se *dhovim*.

² Ce *tadhā*; Be Ee Se *tathā*.

³ Ce *bhatikam*; Be Ee Se *bhatti,katam*.

⁴ Be Ee Se *utthāyikam*; Be:Ka *utthāhikam*.

⁵ Be Ce *na'pi himsemi na bhaṇāmi*; Ee Se *Na pi hims'eva na gaṇāmi*.

<i>Te maṃ pitu,gharaṃ paṭi nayiṃsu vimaṇā dukhena adhibhūtā⁶ puttam anurakkhamāṇā jitāmhase rūpinīṃ lakkhiṃ⁷</i>	(Thī 419)	Rejected, overcome by suffering, they led me back to my father's abode. "While caring for our son," (they exclaimed,) "We have lost the beautiful goddess of fortune!"	b A
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1.4 She was back in her father's protection, and he looked for a new husband for her, this time even asking for only half the usual dowry. When she finally found a new husband, again she served him with love and diligence but the same pattern repeated itself. Now both she and her father were totally at a loss.

Shortly thereafter, an ascetic visited them in quest of alms. It occurred to Isidāsī's father to offer her to this ascetic. When the ascetic was offered the hand of the beautiful Isidāsī and the comfort of her mansion, he readily accepted. But after only two weeks, he begged the father to return his robe and bowl. The ascetic would rather starve as the poorest of beggars than spend one more day in Isidāsī's company. Despite the pleas and offers from the family, the ascetic said that he simply could not live in the same house as Isidāsī, and with those words he left. (Thī 422-425)

2 Recalling her past lives

2.1 Isidāsī was now miserable and on the verge of suicide rather than continue to bear such suffering. Now on that same day, the nun **Jina,dattā** came to her house for alms. Seeing the nun's peaceful countenance, Isidāsī decided that she should be a nun herself. At first, her father refused to release her, but relented in the end after considering her pleas, exhorting her to gain awakening (Thī 432).

After seven days of spiritual striving, she gained the 3 knowledges (*te,vijjā*) (of the recollection of her past lives, of other's karma, and of the destruction of defilements). Looking into her past, she realized that eight lives ago, she was a man: a handsome and rich goldsmith, who was intoxicated with his youth, seduced the wives of others, treating them as objects to be won, used and then discarded.

2.2 For his evil deeds, the goldsmith was reborn in **a hell** where he was cut on all sides by razor-sharp blades as he ran towards the form of a beautiful woman before him. After that, he was reborn as **a monkey**. When he was only seven days old, the troop leader castrated him. After dying, he was reborn as **a goat**, the offspring of a one-eyed she-goat, and was made a gelding, unable to satisfy his sexual urges. His third animal birth was as **an ox**, castrated and forced to pull the plough and cart with hardly any rest (Thī 440 f), which was especially painful for him because he had always avoided hard work when he was a goldsmith. In fact, as an ox, he had to work so hard that he lost his eyesight.

After that, he was reborn as a human, a slave's child, as **a hermaphrodite**, with the sex organs of both male and female—because he was obsessed with them! After 30 unhappy years he died and was reborn as the object of his desire: **a woman**. This is how desire turns a man into the object of his own desire.⁸ The newborn girl was born into the lowest caste, the daughter of a very poor carter who failed in everything he did and ended up owing money to a lot of people.

⁶ Be Ce Se *adhibhūtā*; Ee *avibhūtā*.

⁷ Only Se *lacchīṃ*.

⁸ Nyanaponika & Hecker 1997:315. It should be noted here that, although the story seems to stress on Isidāsī's past karma, her sufferings are not all due to her past karma, but her present conditions of each birth are important factors, too, esp her last birth, when she meets the nun Jina,dattā, and becomes an arhat in due course. On the point that not everything that happens to us is due to past karma, see, eg, **Titth'āyatana S** (A 3.61/1:173-177), SD 6.8.

2.3 In order to discharge his debts, the poor carter had no choice but to give his 16-year-old daughter away as a slave to his creditor, a wealthy merchant. In due course, the merchant's son, **Giri,dāsa**, fell in love with her and took her as a minor wife. The first wife suffered as a result of this new intrusion. The slave girl secured her newly won position by sowing discord between Giridāsa and his first wife so that they broke up in the end. (Thī 443-446)

After her death this time, she was reborn as **Isidāsī**, whom, despite her love and labour, three successive husbands could not reciprocate her love. Since she did not react with anger or aggression, but endeavoured at all times to be a model wife, she cultivated a store of merit for herself. Finally, Isidāsī cleared the mystery of her strange fate, and was finally free.

<i>Tass'etaṃ kamma,phalaṃ yaṃ maṃ apakīritūna gacchanti dāsīva upaṭṭhahantiṃ tassa'pi anto kato mayā'ti</i>	(Thī 447)	This was the fruit of that past deed, that although I served them like a slave, they rejected me and went their way: of that, too, I had made an end.	c b
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3 Evaluation

3.1 Mrs C A F Rhys Davids is of the opinion that **the Isi,dāsī Therī,gāthā** (the above story) has a late style and suggests late literary creation. The scene is Pāṭalīputta, and not any of the usual towns mentioned in the Canon. According to her, the name of Isidāsī's sponsoring nun—Jina,dattā—suggests traces of Jain influence here. (Thī:R xxii f)

3.2 The Isi,dāsī story could easily be misread to affirm that it is our bad karma to be born as a woman or a hermaphrodite. The story however confirms that our habitual thought and actions will follow us in one form or another. As we think, so we act; as we thus act, so we reap the fruits. The point is very clear: we should take care what we desire for because ultimately we become what we desire, virtually or really.

II

SIRIMĀ & UTTARĀ

Sirimā Vatthu, DhA 11.2/3:104-109; Uttarā Upāsikā Vatthu, DhA 17.3/3:308-313

4 Uttarā Nanda,mātā (DhA 17.3/3:308-313)

LOVINGKINDNESS BENEFITS ALL

4.1 MARRIED INTO A NON-BUDDHIST FAMILY; SIRIMĀ

Sirimā was a courtesan of Rājagaha, daughter of Sāla,vatī and younger sister to Jīvaka the doctor.⁹ Her story is closely intertwined with that of **Uttarā Nanda,mātā**, the foremost of lay-women disciples who waited on the Buddha (B 36.20).¹⁰ Uttarā was married into a non-Buddhist family so that her husband, Sumana, forbade her from observing the fast (*uposatha*).

⁹ SnA 1:244; DhA 3:106.

¹⁰ Uttarā is the daughter of the seth (*setthi*) Puṇṇa or Puṇṇaka [5.2.1.1].

When two and a half months of **the rains-retreat** had passed, and only a fortnight remains, Uttarā wished to give daily alms-offering to the Buddha and the sangha. She would invite them to her house for alms and she alone would make these alms-offerings to mark the end of the rains-retreat. (DhA 3:308)

Knowing her husband well enough, Uttarā came up with an idea. She hired the services of the courtesan Sirimā at the cost of 15,000 pieces of money (*kaḥāpaṇa*, Skt *kārṣāpaṇa*)¹¹ to look after her husband for a fortnight as a companion.¹² When her husband saw Sirimā's beauty, he immediately agreed to the arrangement.¹³

4.2 The 2 SMILES

On the night before the "invitation" (*pavāraṇā*),¹⁴ the last day of the rains-retreat, Uttarā was busy preparing alms for the Buddha. Her husband, who was walking nearby with Sirimā, saw Uttarā hard at work, smiled thinking what a fool she was not to enjoy her wealth. Uttarā smiled in return, thinking how foolish he was for not making proper use of his wealth. Sirimā, thinking that both husband and wife were smiling at each other to slight her, flew into a fury.

Seizing a pot of boiling oil, Sirimā threw it at Uttarā's head. Uttarā, at that moment, was full of loving-kindness for Sirimā. The oil, therefore, did not hurt her at all. Sirimā, realizing her grievous error, begged for forgiveness from Uttarā.

4.3 THE 2 FATHERS

Uttarā then said: "My father is still living. If he forgives you, so will I."

"I shall go to your father, **Puṇṇa** the seth [guildmaster],¹⁵ and ask him for forgiveness."

"Puṇṇa is my birth-father, the father who brought me into the cycle of suffering. When the father who brings me out of the cycle forgives you, then so will I."¹⁶

"But who is this father who is bringing you out of the cycle of suffering?"

"The Buddha, the fully self-awakened one."

"But I don't know him. What shall I do?"

"The Teacher will be coming here tomorrow, together with his monks. Come yourself, bringing whatever offering you can, and ask his forgiveness."

4.4 SIRIMĀ SEEKS THE BUDDHA'S FORGIVENESS

4.4.1 The following day, after the meal-offering was over, Sirimā went up to the Buddha and begged for forgiveness. "What for?" asked the Buddha. Sirimā then related the whole story. The Buddha then asked Uttarā to confirm the story.

¹¹ On the *kaḥāpaṇa*, see **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19 (1).

¹² "A companion," *pāda,paricārikā* (DhA 3:308,21). Elsewhere this late word means "a body-servant" or "wife": SD 54.8 (1.4.3).

¹³ It should be noted that a courtesan is what we would today call a high-class "social escort," like the geishas of Japan, but without any sexual services rendered in this case. This story, of course, reflects the culture of mediaeval India (and Sri Lanka) of the commentarial period, and does not reflect the moral ethics of the suttas. It should be taken as a story that both husband and wife be allowed to pursue their respective sources of happiness without harming or disadvantaging either party and in keeping with the precepts.

¹⁴ "The invitation" (*pavāraṇā*) is that of monastics inviting counsel from elders for the former's lapses. This highlights the end of the rains retreat: SD 4.18 (2.1.3).

¹⁵ DhA 3:312,1.

¹⁶ Cf Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī declaring the Buddha to be her "father": SD ***.

4.4.2 Uttarā said: “I suffused her with lovingkindness, and thought to myself: My friend Sirimā has done me a great service ...”

“Excellent, Uttarā, excellent!” said the Buddha, “That is the right way to overcome anger.” And he added this verse:

<p>4.4.3 <i>Akkodhena jine kodharṃ asādhurṃ sādhunā jine jine kadariyaṃ dānena¹⁷ saccena alika,vādinam¹⁸</i></p>	(Dh 223)	<p>Overcome anger with non-anger, conquer bad with goodness, conquer the miserly with generosity, and the liar with truth.</p>
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Then the Buddha delivered a discourse, at the end of which Uttarā won the fruit of non-returning. Her erstwhile unbelieving husband and parents-in-law all became streamwinners, as did Sirimā.

The story of Sirimā the streamwinner continues in **Section 5.2**.

III

THE 3 NANDĀS AND THE VIJAYA SUTTA

Sn 1.11 = Sn 193-206 (SnA 1:241-254); Vv 1.16 (VvA 77, 110-127); DhA 11.2, 17.3

5 Sutta origins

The Commentary tells us that **the Vijaya Sutta** (Sn 1.11) has dual origins, spoken by the Buddha on two occasions. The first is regarding Janapada,kaḷyāṇī Nandā [5.1] and the second regarding a certain monk who has fallen in love with the lady Sirimā [5.2]. In fact, the Buddha is recorded as having taught a similar body meditation to 3 women all named **Nandā**. We will here also examine the identities of these 3 women named Nandā, all of whom become arhats in the Buddha’s time.

5.1 NANDA AND JANAPADA KALYĀṆĪ NANDĀ

5.1.1 The 3 women-arhats named Nandā

5.1.1.1 During the 2nd year of the ministry, the Buddha visits Kapila,vatthu, the Sakya capital.¹⁹ There, he converts the Sakyas, gives the going-forth to his half-brother Nanda and others,²⁰ and allows women to go forth.²¹ [5.1.2.4]

5.1.1.2 The 3 women named Nandā. The suttas and Commentaries mention at least 3 women named **Nandā** who renounce the world. Their sources often overlap, that is, as follows:

¹⁷ The 5th syllable is resolved mc.

¹⁸ Be Ee Se *saccenālika,vādinam*; Dh:A (Anandajoti, 2005) *saccena alika,vādinam*.

¹⁹ J 1:86.

²⁰ DhA 1.9a/1:115-117; J 1:85-92.

²¹ On the acceptance of women into the order, see SD 1.9 (2).

- (1) **Rūpa,nandā** or Sundarī Nandā, the sister of the elder Nanda²³ Thī 82-84 (ThīA 80-86); **Abhirūpā Nandā**, ThīA 24 f²² (with ThīAp 25 = Ap 572-576);²⁴ **Khemā Thī** (ThīA 126-129); AA 1:363 f; DhA 11.5/3:113-119 ad Dh 150;²⁵ DhA 24.5/4:57-59.²⁶
- (2) **Abhirūpa,nandā**, the daughter of king Khemaka the Sakya Thī 19 f (ThīA 24-27);²⁷ SnA 1:241-244;²⁸ ThīAp 36 (Ap 2:608-610).²⁹
- (3) **Janapada,kalyāṇī³⁰ Nandā**,³¹ the Betrothed of Nanda, the Buddha's half-brother U 3.2/21-24; UA 170;³² J 1:90 f,³³ 394; **Rūpa,nandā** (DhA 11.5/3:113-119 ad Dh 150)³⁴; SnA 1:241-244,³⁵ 254, 273; ThīAp 25 = Ap 572-576.³⁶

It is likely these three are separate historical individuals, but their stories and sources are often conflated with one another. If our aim is a spiritual study (to understand the Dharma for our practice for awakening in this life), then we only need to reflect on their respective flows of narrative for the valuable lessons with which they are intended to inspire us.

5.1.2 Rūpa,nandā or Sundarī Nandā

5.1.2.1 While Buddhaghosa calls her **Janapada,kalyāṇī Rūpā Nandā** (or Rūpa,nandā for short) (DhA 11.5/3:113), Dhammapāla calls her **Sundarī Nandā** (ThīA 80). Clearly then such epithets were all after the fact: they were given by the commentators in their commentaries in an attempt to identify or disambiguate each of these 3 nuns named Nandā.

The story recounting Rūpa,nandā's attaining of arhathood—given in the Dhammapada Commentary (**DhA 11.5**) on Dh 150—is practically identical to that of Abhirūpa,nandā [5,1,3] as recorded in the Sutta

²² As Sundarī Nandā. Tr ThīA:P 107-114 (with ThīAp). On the wanderer Sundarī who maligns the Buddha, see **Sundarī S** (U 4.8), SD 49.23 & SD 49.12 (2.3).

²³ As the elder's Nanda's sister, she is also the Buddha's half-sister. She is declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of nuns who are meditators (A 1:25,23).

²⁴ Her Apadānā is tr ThīA:P 109-113.

²⁵ Entitled **Janapada,kalyāṇī Rūpā,nandā,therī Vatthu**, the story of the elder nun Janapada,kalyāṇī Rūpā,nandā. See SD 52.13 (1.3.5.2).

²⁶ Tr DhA:B 2:336-339. This ref is the source for both Nandā (the elder Nanda's sister) and Janapada,kalyāṇī Nandā (Nanda's beloved).

²⁷ Along with her ThīAp 36 (Ap 608-610).

²⁸ This source relates the stories of both Abhirūpa,nandā and Janapada,kalyāṇī, which is summarized below [5.1.4]

²⁹ For tr, see n under Thī 19 f comy (ThīA 24-27), with her Apadāna (ThīAp 36).

³⁰ It is uncertain whether Nandā (the elder Nanda's sister) and Janapada,kalyāṇī Nandā (whom Nanda is supposed to wed) are the same person, or that the stories refer to two separate individuals. The term *janapada,kalyāṇī* simply means "the country's beauty," the most beautiful woman of the nation; hence, it is only an epithet. See Thī 82-86; cf Thī 19 f; ThīA 81; SD 43.7 (1.1.1.1) n.

³¹ On the story of the elder Nanda, whom she is to wed, see DhA 1.9/1:115-132 (see DhA:B 1:217 for sources and cross-refs of his story): tr DhA:B 1:217-225. Further see SD 43.7 (1.1.1; 1.2.1.2).

³² Tr UA:M 1:451 f.

³³ Tr J:J (Jātaka Nidāna) 122 f.

³⁴ Tr DhA:B 2:336-339. This ref is the source for both Nandā (the elder Nanda's sister) and Janapada,kalyāṇī Nandā (Nanda's beloved).

³⁵ This source relates the stories of both Rūpa,nandā [5.1.2] and Janapada,kalyāṇī, which is given abridged below [5.1.4].

³⁶ This is titled as Rūpa,nandā's Apadānā: tr ThīA:P 109-113.

Nipāta Commentary (SnA 1:241 f), including all their verses. The only difference seems to be the time and manner in which each of them attains arhathood [5.3].

5.1.2.2 It is said that Rūpa,nandā was reborn in a good family of Hamsa,vatī in the time of the Buddha Padum’uttara.³⁷ Later, on hearing the Teacher teach the Dharma, and seeing him assign a certain nun to the position of the foremost of nuns who meditate, she resolved to aspire to the same distinction.

Then, after wandering (being reborn) in the worlds of the devas³⁸ and humans for 100,000 aeons, accumulating merits,³⁹ she was reborn here before our Teacher arose (in the world).⁴⁰

5.1.2.3 Rūpa,nandā was born into the kshatriya Sakya family of Suddh’odana by his co-wife, Mahā Pajā,patī Gotamī, sister of Mahā Māyā (who died a week after Siddhattha’s birth). Pajāpatī then acted as Siddhattha’s biological mother, suckling him herself, while wet nurses suckled her own son Nanda (younger half-brother to Siddhattha).

According to **the Aṅguttara Nikāya Commentary**, Rūpa,nandā was the daughter of Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī and named Nandā.⁴¹ She was also called Rūpa,nandā (beautiful Nandā).⁴² In due course, she was given the title Janapada,kalyāṇī, “the belle of the land,” on account of her supreme beauty⁴³ (AA 1:363). She was said to be the most beautiful woman, except for Yasodharā, in all Kapilavatthu (Rāhula,mātā) (ThīAp 25,22).⁴⁴

5.1.2.4 When the Blessed One returned to Kapila,vatthu (during the 2nd year of the ministry) [5.1.1.1], both Nanda (Nandā’s brother) and Rāhula (Siddhattha’s only son and her nephew) went forth into the order. After he left Kapilavatthu, when Suddhodana passed away into nirvana, and with the renunciation of her own mother, Pajāpatī, and Rāhula,mātā (Siddhattha’s erstwhile wife), she thought: “After their going-forth, what is there for me to do here?” So, she approached Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī and went forth.⁴⁵

5.1.2.5 However, even from the day of her going forth, she thought, “The Teacher finds fault with beauty!” **The Dhammapada Commentary** reports that once she heard the teacher said:

“Form	is impermanent,	suffering,	non-self.
Feelings	<i>are impermanent,</i>	<i>suffering,</i>	<i>non-self.</i>
Perception	<i>is impermanent,</i>	<i>suffering,</i>	<i>non-self.</i>
Formations	<i>are impermanent,</i>	<i>suffering,</i>	<i>non-self.</i>
Consciousness	<i>is impermanent,</i>	<i>suffering,</i>	<i>non-self.”</i> ⁴⁶

³⁷ Padum’uttara was the 15th past buddha from our Gotama, and the 13th of the 28 past buddhas: SD 36.2 (3.4.3).

³⁸ She was reborn in Tāvatiṃsa, then the Yāma realm, then Tusita, then the Nimmāṇa,ratī, then amongst humans as the chief queen to a world-monarch and of kings, and finally amongst the Sakyas (ThīAp 51.15-20), tr Thī:P 111.

³⁹ ThīA 81.

⁴⁰ *Amhakaṃ satthu nibbattito puretaram eva*. It is best to understand this as meaning that Rūpa,nandā was reborn amongst us before Gotama’s awakening, ie, before he taught the Dharma. The vb *nibbattito* should be tr to mean “had arisen” or “was reborn,” rather than “was born.”

⁴¹ She was sister to Nanda, and hence, half-sister to our Buddha.

⁴² On the word *rūpa*, see (5.1.4.1) n on “form.”

⁴³ She was titled *janapada,kalyāṇī*, “the belle of the land,” in Ap 25/572.

⁴⁴ Tr ThīA:P 111.

⁴⁵ *Mahā,pajāpatī,gotamī ca rāhula,mātā ca nikkhamitvā satthu santike pabbajitā’ti ñātvā “Imāsaṃ pabbajita,kālato paṭṭhāya mayhaṃ idha kiṃ kamman’ti. mahā,pajāpatiyā santikaṃ gantvā pabbaji.* (AA:Be 17:280; AA 1:363)

⁴⁶ For details on how the 3 characteristics work with the 5 aggregates, see **Anatta Lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59), SD 1.2.

She thought: “In that case, he would find fault even with my own form, so beautiful to look at, so fair to see!” So, she avoided meeting the Teacher.

Hence, Rūpa,nandā did not minister to the Teacher. When her turn came for instructions, she would send a proxy. Understanding her intoxication with her own beauty (*rūpa,mada,matta,bhāva*), the Blessed One instructed that she should come herself. Seeing no other way out, she unwillingly went for her instruction. (AA 1:363)⁴⁷

5.1.2.6 On account of Rūpā Nandā’s character (*carita*), the Blessed One psychically projected an image of a girl holding a palm-leaf fan, as if fanning him. On seeing this vision, Nandā thought: “I was unreasonably negligent and did not come! See, women like this go about confidently before the Teacher! My beauty is not worth an iota (a sixteenth) part of theirs! Yet, ignorant of this, I have not come here all this time!” And she stood there gazing at the vision.⁴⁸

The Dhammapada Commentary account of this psychic vision of a beautiful young woman in progressive decay is the longest and most dramatic of the 3 stories of the women named Nandā. It is here related in full:

5.1.2.7 The nuns said, “Now, it has taken a long time to arouse in Rūpa,nandā the desire to minister to the Teacher. Today, on her account, the Teacher will teach the Dharma in a manner in diverse ways. With joyful hearts, taking her along, they set out. From the moment Rūpa,nandā left, she determined, “I will not show myself!”

The Teacher thought, “Today Rūpa,nandā will come to minister to me. How can I teach her Dharma for her benefit?” After some thought, he concluded, “This woman has strong lust for herself by way of great attachment to her beauty. For her benefit, I will subdue her intoxication with beauty by way of beauty itself, even as one draws out one thorn with another!”

5.1.2.8 At the moment of her arrival at the vihara (monastery), the Teacher psychically projected **the image of a young girl**, 15 or 16 years old. She was of supreme beauty, dressed in crimson, beautifully adorned in all her ornaments. She stood near the Teacher, with a palm-leaf in hand, fanning him. Only Rūpa,nandā and the Teacher saw the young girl.

Rūpa,nandā entered the vihara with the nuns and then stood behind them. Having together prostrated to the teacher, she sat down with them. She then surveyed from head to foot the Teacher’s person with all its marks of the great man and his fathom-wide aura [5.1.5.2].

Then, she saw the young girl standing near the Teacher, and surveyed her face, glorious as the full moon. She surveyed her own person and compared herself to a crow before a royal golden swan. From the moment she saw on the vision, her eyes darted back and forth (between the vision and her person). “What beautiful hair! What beautiful forehead!” Fascinated by the glorious beauty of all her body, she was herself filled with a strong desire for the same beauty herself.

⁴⁷ **Dh Comy** account of Rūpa,nandā inserts here the section of the “4 measures” (*pamāṇa*)—as in the case of Janapada,kalyāṇi Nandā [5.1.5]. Hearing the nuns praise the Buddha according to his looks, voice, austerity and teachings, she is fascinated and decided to see the Buddha—but not letting him see her by sitting behind the nuns. (DhA 3:225)

⁴⁸ *Rūpa,nandā taṃ disvā cintesi “ahaṃ akāraṇeṇ’eva pamattā hutvā n’āgacchāmi, eva,rūpāpi itthiyo satthu santike vissatthā caranti. Mama rūpaṃ etāsaṃ rūpassa kalaṃ nāgghati soḷasiṃ ajānitvā’va ettakaṃ kālaṃ na āgatamhīti tam eva itthi,nimittaṃ gaṇhitvā oloketi aṭṭhāsi.* (AA:Be 17:281; AA 1:364)

5.1.2.9 The Teacher, noticing that she was fascinated by the girl's beauty, went on to teach her the Dharma. First, he transformed the teenaged girl into a woman about 20 years old. Rūpa,nandā surveyed the woman. Suddenly, she felt disappointed, "This form is no more as it was before!"

Then, gradually, the Teacher showed her progressively **decay**: he transformed her into a woman who had had her first child; then, one middle-aged; finally, into a decrepit old hag.⁴⁹ As Rūpa,nandā watched, she thought, "Now this is gone! Now that is gone!" Even as the old hag stood there, she saw her teeth broken, her hair grey, her body bent and crooked like a rafter, leaning on a stick, with trembling limbs⁵⁰— she felt utter disgust!

5.1.2.10 Then, the Teacher made her look ridden with by **disease**. She dropped her fan, screamed loudly, fell to the ground and rolled about, wallowing in her own urine and dung.⁵¹ Rūpa,nandā felt utter disgust.

Then, the Teacher showed the woman **dead**. Her body became rigid and bloated up. From the 9 wound-like openings⁵² oozed pus like lamp-wicks and worms. Crows and dogs fell on her and tore at her. As Rūpa,nandā looked on, she thought, "Right here, this woman has come to decay, to disease and to death. Even so, to this very body of mine will come decay, disease and death!"⁵³

Thus, she saw her own body in its impermanence, and on this account, further saw it to be suffering and non-self.⁵⁴ At once, **the 3 kinds of existence** [5.1.6.3] appeared before her like a burning house, like carrion tied to her neck. Her mind at once turned to meditation.⁵⁵

5.1.2.11 The Teacher understanding that she had seen her own body in its impermanence, thought, "Will she, or will she not, find her own support?" He realized that she was unable to do so but needed external support. For her benefit, he taught her the Dharma, thus (as for Janapada,kalyāṇī Nandā): [5.1.6.3]

<p><i>Āturam asucim pūtim passa nande samussayam uggharantam paggharantam bālānam abhipatthitam</i>⁵⁶</p>	[SnA 242] ⁵⁷	<p>Nandā, see these body-parts, afflicted, impure, rotten. flowing, oozing, the delight of fools.</p>	<p><i>b</i> <i>a</i></p>
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⁴⁹ Interestingly, these first 4 stages of womanhood parallel the 6 kinds of women that Māra's daughters conjure before the Buddha to seduce him, as recorded in **Māra,dhītu S** (S 4.25), SD 36.6.

⁵⁰ For similar images in the suttas, see **Mahā'padāna S** (D 14,2.2), SD 49.8a + SD 49.8b (1.0.4.4+1.0.4.5); (**Majjhima**) **Deva,dūta S** (M 130,5) + SD 2.23 (2).

⁵¹ For similar images in the suttas, see **Mahā'padāna S** (D 14,2.6), SD 49.8a + SD 49.8b (1.0.4.4+1.0.4.5); (**Majjhima**) **Deva,dūta S** (M 130,6) + SD 2.23 (2).

⁵² See **Sn 197ab** + n in **Vijaya S** below [6.5].

⁵³ For similar images in the suttas, see **Mahā'padāna S** (D 14,2.6), SD 49.8a + SD 49.8b (1.0.4.4+1.0.4.5); (**Majjhima**) **Deva,dūta S** (M 130,6) + SD 2.23 (2).

⁵⁴ These are the 3 universal characteristics (*sāmañña,lakkhaṇa*): see SD 1.2 (2).

⁵⁵ Rūpa,nandā is here experiencing an intense level of spiritual urgency (*samvega*), the kind that the Bodhisattva himself experiences as recorded in **Mada S** (A 3.39), SD 42.13.

⁵⁶ Both here and above [5.1.4.3] Be *abhipatthitam*. "desired, coveted" (cf M 2:143,14*; Tha 514; J 6:522,16*); Ce *abhinanditam* both places; Ee *abhinanditam* above, *abhipatthitam* here; Se *abhipatthitam* both places. See foll n.

⁵⁷ This quatrain (SnA 242) is addressed to the elder Kulla in **Kulla Tha** (Tha 394), and to the nun Khemā in **Khemā ThīAp 354** (Ap 2:546). Be *abhinanditam* in both places. See prec n.

*Yathā idaṃ tathā etaṃ⁵⁸
yathā etaṃ tathā idaṃ
dhātuyo suññato passa
ma lokaṃ punar-āgamā
bhava chandaṃ virājetvā
upasantā carissasi*

[DhA 3:117]

“As this (body) is, so was that;⁵⁹
as that is, so will this be.”
See it as empty by way of the elements.
Do not return to this world again.
Having removed the desire for existence,
you will live in peace.

The Blessed One pronounced these verses in reference to Rūpā Nandā.

5.1.2.12 Directing her understanding in conformity with the teaching, Nandā gained streamwinning. Then, the Teacher taught her **the meditation on emptiness** (*suññatā kammaṭṭhāna*) so that she would have the insight for the attaining the 3 paths and 3 fruits, saying, “Nandā, think not that there is any essence (*sāra*) in this body. There is not even a bit of essence here. It is made to rise as a city of 300 bones.”

Having said that, the Teacher, noticing the arising of right past conditions for her,⁶⁰ uttered this verse:

*Aṭṭhīnaṃ nagaraṃ kataṃ
maṃsa,lohita’alepanaṃ
yattha jarā ca maccu⁶¹ ca
māno makkho ca ohito*

(Dh 150)

Of bones is the city made,
wrapped in flesh and blood,
wherein are decay and death,
conceit and scorn⁶² stored.

5.1.2.13 The Dhammapada Commentary says that at the conclusion of this lesson, the nun attained arhathood, and benefitting the multitude, too (DhA 3:119). As we have noted [5.3.1], Dh 150 is a kind of Vijaya Sutta [6] in brief. It is likely that immediately after uttering this verse, the Buddha went on to teach her the whole of the Vijaya Sutta. [5.1.6.3]

The Aṅguttara Commentary, in fact, says just that: after Dh 150 had been uttered, the Buddha spoke **the Vijaya Sutta** (Sn 1.11) beginning with the words, “When walking or standing still, | sitting or lying down, ...” [6.5]. Right then, establishing herself on the passing away and ending of form (*rupe khaya,-vayaṃ*), she attained arhathood. (AA 1:364)

5.1.3 The stories of Rūpa,nandā and of Khemā

5.1.3.1 The Aṅguttara Commentary then tell us that this story of **Rūpa,nandā** is given only in brief. Further details, it adds, can be found in the story of the elder nun Khemā.⁶³ However, it is difficult to see how Khemā’s story applies here.

5.1.3.2 Khemā’s story is the 2nd one in the Commentary (AA 1:342-344). Khemā, too, was converted by the Buddha through a psychic vision—of a beautiful celestial nymph (*dev’accharā*). The vision then went through the stages of bodily decay, and reflecting on this, Khemā attained arhathood as a laywoman, and only later went forth. Rūpa,nandā, however, attained arhathood as a nun.

⁵⁸ This and the next lines as at **Sn 203ab**.

⁵⁹ On the significance of this and the next line, see n at Sn 203 ad loc.

⁶⁰ This phrase—*satthā tassā pubba,hetu,sampannatāya*—is from AA 1:364.

⁶¹ Be Ce Dh:A *Se maccu*; Ee *maccū*.

⁶² On conceit and scorn, see **Vatthūpama S** (M 7.3) + SD 28.12; SD 41.8 (Table 2.1.1).

⁶³ Khemā was erstwhile chief consort of king Bimbisāra: SD 27.5a (7.1.1); **Khemā Thī S** (S 44.1), SD 63.6.

5.1.3.3 Thenceforth, the Blessed One, seated in Jeta’s grove, assigning places for the nuns, declared Rūpa,nandā as the foremost of nuns who practised meditation (*Jhāyīnam*, A 1:25,23).

5.1.4 Abhirūpa,nandā’s arhathood (SnA 1:241 f)

5.1.4.1 At one time, according to the Sutta Nipāta Commentary, the Buddha was residing at Sāvattthī. Abhirūpa,nandā was extremely beautiful (*abhirūpa*); hence, her name. Janapada,kalyāṇī Nandā, too, was unsurpassed in beauty. Infatuated by their own beauty, neither attended to the Buddha, nor even wish to see him. They both thought: “The Blessed One dispraises and faults form, and shows the danger in form in various ways.”⁶⁴

5.1.4.2 When they lacked faith thus why did they go forth?⁶⁵ They actually had no choice. When Abhirūpa,nandā’s husband, a Sakya youth, died, her parents made her go forth against her will. In the case of Janapada,kalyāṇī Nandā, she lost all hope (*nirāsā hutvā*) when the venerable Nandā attained arhathood. She thought, “My husband, and also my mother, and Mahā Pajāpatī (the elder Nanda’s mother), and other relatives, have all gone forth. Without them the household life is suffering.” Hence, she renounced, not out of faith, but because she saw no satisfaction (*assāda*) in the household life.

5.1.4.3 When the Blessed One saw that they were spiritually ready, she told Mahā Pajāpatī to ask the nuns to come to him in turn for instruction. When their turns came, they sent proxies. The Buddha then instructed that they each personally come to see him.

When **Abhirūpa,nandā**⁶⁶ came, the Blessed One inspired spiritual urgency (*sarṁvega*)⁶⁷ in her by means of a mind-made projection, and pronouncing this verse from **the Dhammapada**:

<p><i>Aṭṭhīnam nagaram katam maṁsa,lohita’alepanam yattha jarā ca maccū ca māno makkho ca ohito</i></p>	(Dh 150)	<p>Of bones is the city made, wrapped in flesh and blood, wherein are decay and death, conceit and scorn⁶⁸ stored.</p>
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Then, the Blessed One uttered these verses recorded in **the Therī,gathā**:

<p><i>Āturam asucim pūtim passa nande samussayam uggharantam paggharantam bālānam abhinanditam</i>⁶⁹</p>	[SnA 242] ⁷⁰	<p>Nandā, see these body-parts, afflicted, impure, rotten. flowing, oozing, the delight of fools.</p>	<p><i>b</i> <i>a</i></p>
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⁶⁴ *Bhagavā rūpam vivaṇṇeti garahati aneka,pariyāyena rūpe ādīnavam dasseti*. **Form** (*rūpa*) has 3 senses: (1) as “material form,” ie, the 1st aggregate (*khandha*): see **Rūpa** (SD 17.2a); (2) as “visible form,” ie, the object of seeing: see **Pañc’indriya** (SD 10.4); and (3) as an adj, “beautiful.” This is an example of Pali polysemy, where a word has more than one sense, and all these senses may apply simultaneously: see SD 1.1 (4.4.5); SD 10.16 (1.3.1-1.3.2). Hence, when the Buddha “shows the danger in form,” he may speak in terms of any or all these senses, depending on the state of the audience.

⁶⁵ *Evam appasannā kasmā pabbajitā’ti*. “Go forth” means to “renounce the world” and move on to higher things.

⁶⁶ Comy says that she was still a **trainee** or probationer (*sikkhamānā*) then (ThīA 24), ie, a female novice (*sāmaṇerī*) undergoing a 2-year probation before her ordination as a nun (*bhikkhuni*). She must keep to the 6 precepts of abstaining from killing, from stealing, from incelibacy, from lying, from intoxicants, and from meals at the wrong times (Bhī Pāc 63 @ 4:318 f; Bhī Pāc 59.2.1 @ V 4:122).

⁶⁷ On spiritual urgency (*sarṁvega*), see SD 1.11 (3); SD 9 (7.6).

⁶⁸ On conceit and scorn, see **Vatthūpama S** (M 7,3) + SD 28.12; SD 41.8 (Table 2.1.1).

<p>[<i>asubhāya cittaṃ bhāvehi ek’aggam̐ susamāhitam̐</i>] (Thī 19)</p>	<p>[Cultivate the mind on the impurities, one-pointed, well-concentrated.]⁷¹</p>
<p><i>Animittañ ca bhāvehi mānānusayam̐ ujjaha tato mānābhisamayā upasantā carissasi</i> (Thī 20)⁷²</p>	<p>And cultivate the signless, cast out the latent tendency that is conceit. Then, breaking through conceit, you will live in peace.</p>

Having heard these verse, Abhirūpa, nandā gained arhathood. (SnA 1:241 f)

5.1.5 The 4 measures (SnA 1:242 f)

5.1.5.1 Here, we examine the story behind **Janapada, kalyāṇī Nandā’s** attaining of arhathood [5.1.6]. The Sutta Nipāta Commentary (**SnA 1:242 f**) uses the same story of Rūpa Nandā’s attaining of arhathood as given in the Dhammapada Commentary (DhA 11.5) [5.1.2.2].

One day, the inhabitants of Sāvattihī, having given alms in the forenoon, observed the uposatha.⁷³ Properly dressed, they brought incense, flowers and so on to Jeta’s grove as offerings, and then listened to the Dharma. When it was over, they returned to the city. The community of nuns, too, having heard the teaching, returned to their quarters. On that occasion, the people and the nuns spoke in various ways in praise of the Blessed One.

5.1.5.2 It is said that people in the world rely on the 4 measures (*catu, pamāṇa*)—or the 4 characteristics of **charisma**—as taught in **the Rūpa Sutta** (A 4.65), thus:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| (1) One who measures by looks (<i>rūpa</i>) [form] | and has faith in looks. |
| (2) One who measures by voice (<i>ghosa</i>) | and has faith in voice. |
| (3) One who measures by austerity (<i>līkha</i>) [external holiness] | and has faith in austerity. |
| (4) One who measures by teachings [doctrine] (<i>dhamma</i>) | and has faith in teaching. |
- (A 4.65/2:71) + SD 19.2a(6.5)⁷⁴

It is said that those who rely on these 4 measures, upon seeing the Blessed One would have faith in him. Those who measure others by looks show faith in the Blessed One on account of his physical excellence, his bodily marks (of the great man),⁷⁵ and his radiant aura.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ Both here and below [5.1.6.3] Be *abhipatthitam̐*. “desired, coveted” (cf M 2:143,14*; Tha 514; J 6:522,16*); Ce *abhinanditam̐* both places; Ee *abhinanditam̐* here, *abhipatthitam̐* below; Se *abhipatthitam̐* both places. See foll n.

⁷⁰ This quatrain (SnA 242) is addressed to the elder Kulla in **Kulla Tha** (Tha 394), and to the nun Khemā in **Khemā ThīAp 354** (Ap 2:546). Be *abhinanditam̐* in both places. See prec n.

⁷¹ These 2 lines recur in **Rāhula S** (Sn 2.11) as **Sn 341cd**.

⁷² This whole verse recurs in **Rāhula S** (Sn 2.11) as **Sn 342**, but where line d reads *upasanto carissasi* (where *upasanto* is masc), since it is addressed to Rahula.

⁷³ The uposatha is a fortnightly “observance day” following the 4 phases of the moon, esp the full moon and the new moon. While the monastics make the confessions before joining the conclave recital of the Pātimokkha, the laity will normally observe the 8 precepts [SD 4.18]; hence, it is also called “precept day.” See SD 48.18 (1+2); **Tad-ah’uposatha S** (A 3.70), SD 4.18; **Dhammika S** (A 4:254 f = Sn 400 f) SD 27.3(2.1).

⁷⁴ On “the 4 measures of charisma,” see **Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya Tha** (Tha 469-472), SD 3.14(7); cf Pug 7, 53 f; Tha 469-472; DhA 1:114; SnA 242. Further see **The Teacher of the Teaching?** SD 3.14(7). On the relationship of measures (*pamāṇa*) to conceit (*māna*), see **Pubba Sambodha S 1** (S 35.13), SD 14.9 (3).

⁷⁵ These refer to the Buddha’s 32 marks of the great man (*mahā, purisa, lakkhaṇa*) and their 80 lesser tokens: see **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 3) SD 36.9 esp (4); SD 36.9 (3+4).

Those who measure others by voice show their faith in the Blessed One when they hear of his fame related in the various Jātakas, and when they hear his voice that is perfect like Brahma's,⁷⁷ endowed with the 8 qualities,⁷⁸ and sweet like the sound of an Indian cuckoo (*karavīka*).⁷⁹

Those who measure others by austerity (or external holiness) show faith in the Blessed One when they see his plain alms-bowl and learn of the difficult austerities that he had undergone.⁸⁰

Those who measure others by teachings (Dharma) show faith in the Blessed One when they hear of his aggregate of qualities (*dhamma-k,khandha*), such as his moral conduct and so on.⁸¹

Hence, they speak in praise of the Blessed One in all such cases. (SnA 1:242 f)

5.1.6 Janapada,kalyāṇī Nandā's arhathood (SnA 1:242-244)

5.1.6.1 When **Janapada,kalyāṇī Nandā** reached her quarters and heard the nuns speaking in praise of the Blessed One in various ways, she told the nuns that she wished to see the Blessed One. The Blessed One knew in advance of Nandā's coming. Like a person wishing to remove a thorn from another, the Blessed One decided to remove Nanda's infatuation with her own beauty by means of beauty itself. With his own psychic powers, he created **a phantom or hologram of an extremely beautiful young woman**, 15 or 16 years old, standing beside him fanning him.

5.1.6.2 Nandā arrived with the nuns, saluted the Blessed One and sat amongst the nuns. When she saw the beautiful young woman, she forgot her own beauty and was simply captivated by the beauty of the young girl. Then, the Blessed One changed the woman to look 20. Noticing how the woman had aged significantly, Nandā lost her fascination with her own beauty.

Then, the Blessed One made the projected woman look as a mature woman; then, as one who had given birth once; as a middle-aged woman; and as an old woman. Then, she progressively looked aged until she was 100 years old, with blotched limbs, leaning on a stick. As Nandā looked on, he made the woman die. Her body then bloated up and passed through the various stages of bodily decomposition, surrounded by carrion birds devouring the carcass that was truly foul and repulsive.

5.1.6.3 Seeing the images of progressive decay, Nandā thought: "This process is common to all, to others as well as to me!" The perception of impermanence arose in her, and consequently, too, the perception of suffering and of nonself. **The 3 kinds of existence**⁸² then appeared to her as no refuge at all, like a burning house. [5.1.2.10]

The Blessed One, knowing that Nandā's mind had settled in a meditative state, pronounced these verses which are conducive to her state, thus:

<i>Āturam asucim pūtim</i>	Nandā, see these body-parts,	<i>b</i>
<i>passa nande samussayam</i>	afflicted, impure, rotten.	<i>a</i>

⁷⁶ On the Buddha's aura (*raṁsi*), see SD 36.9 (4.5.2).

⁷⁷ Brahmā is the supreme God of the ancient Indians. Hence, the Buddha's voice is God-like.

⁷⁸ **Jana,vasabha S** (D 18) & **Mahā Govinda S** (D 19) give the 8 qualities of his voice (and speech) (*aṭṭha,samannā-gata sara*), thus: distinct (*vissatṭha*), intelligible (*viññeyya*), gentle (*mañju*), pleasant (*savanīya*), full (*bindu*), concise [not diffuse] (*avisarī*), deep (*gambhīra*) and resonant (*ninnādī*). (D 18,19/2:211), SD 62.3 = D 19,8/2:227), SD 63.4.

⁷⁹ See **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30,1.2.2(28)), SD 36.9.

⁸⁰ On the Buddha's austerities, see eg **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,19-33) SD SD 49.4.

⁸¹ The Commentary takes dhamma as meaning "qualities" rather than simply "teaching, doctrine," ie, as an "intellectual measure" of a person's knowledge of the Dharma—which will better fit the set of measures.

⁸² The 3 kinds of existence (*bhava*): the sense-world, the form world and the formless world.

<i>uggharantaṃ paggharantaṃ bālānaṃ abhipatthitaṃ</i> ⁸³	[SnA 242] ⁸⁴	flowing, oozing, the delight of fools.
<i>Yathā idaṃ tathā etaṃ</i> ⁸⁵ <i>yathā etaṃ tathā idaṃ dhātuyo suññato passa</i>		“As this (body) is, so was that; ⁸⁶ as that is, so will this be.” See it as empty by way of the elements.
<i>ma lokam punar-āgamā bhava chandaṃ virājetvā upasantā carissasi</i>	[DhA 3:117]	Do not return to this world again. Having removed the desire for existence, you will live in peace.

At the close of these verses, Janapada, kalyāṇī Nandā was established in the fruit of streamwinning. To elevate her to attain the higher paths, the Blessed One spoke **the Vijaya Sutta** (Sn 1.11) [6], explaining it as a subject of insight accompanied by emptiness. [5.1.2.13] (SnA 1:243 f)

5.1.6.4 At the end of the sutta teaching, the nun Nandā, moved by a sense of spiritual urgency (*sam-vega*), thought: “Alas! I have indeed been so foolish not to have attended to the Blessed One, who, for my sake, has taught the Dharma in various ways!” Thus moved by spiritual urgency, within a few days, by means of the same meditation, attained arhathood. This is the first origin of the discourse. (SnA 1:253 f)

5.2 SIRIMĀ AND THE LOVE-SICK MONK

(Vv 1.16; SnA 1:244 f; DhA 11.2/3:104-109)

5.2.1 Rājagaha’s courtesan⁸⁷

5.2.1.1 The second origin of **the Vijaya Sutta** (Sn 1.11) was in Rājagaha. This story was told in connection with **Sirimā**, daughter of the courtesan Sāla, vatī⁸⁸ and the younger sister of Jīvaka.⁸⁹ After her mother Sāla, vatī passed away, Sirimā took over the position of the chief courtesan of Rājagaha. According to the story behind the verse, which begins with “Conquer anger with non-anger” (**Dh 223**), Sirimā insults the daughter of the seth **Puṇṇaka** [4.3], apologizes to the Blessed One, listens to the Dharma, and becomes a streamwinner. She then provides regular meals (*nicca, bhatta*) for 8 monks. (SnA 1:244)

5.2.1.2 According to **the Sirimā Vatthu** (DhA 11.2),⁹⁰ ever since the Dharma-eye (streamwinning) arose in her [4], Sirimā gave up her life as a courtesan and devoted herself to looking after the order. Through meal-tickets, she invited the order to send 8 monks daily to her house for a meal-offering. One

⁸³ Both here and above [5.1.4.3] Be *abhipatthitaṃ*. “desired, coveted” (cf M 2:143,14*; Tha 514; J 6:522,16*); Ce *abhinanditaṃ* both places; Ee *abhinanditaṃ* above, *abhipatthitaṃ* here; Se *abhipatthitaṃ* both places. See foll n.

⁸⁴ This quatrain (SnA 242) is addressed to the elder Kulla in **Kulla Tha** (Tha 394), and to the nun Khemā in **Khemā ThīAp 354** (Ap 2:546). Be *abhinanditaṃ* in both places. See prec n.

⁸⁵ This and the next lines as at **Sn 203ab**.

⁸⁶ On the significance of this and the next line, see n at Sn 203 ad loc.

⁸⁷ The foll account is based on **Sirimā Vimāna.vatthu** (Vv 1.16/17 f); VvA 110-127; **Uttarā Upāsikā Vatthu** (DhA 17.3/3:302-315; tr DhA:B 3:99-107) & **SnA 1:244**, comy on Vijaya S (Sn 1.11).

⁸⁸ For details on Sāla, vatī, see V 1:268 f/

⁸⁹ Jīvaka is the most famous doctor in Buddhist history and in traditional Indian medicine: see SD 43.4 (2).

⁹⁰ DhA 11.2/3:104-109 ad **Dh 147** (tr DhA:B 2:330-334).

day, one of the 8 monks returned to his monastery and when asked about the meal, he replied that the food was indescribably good, but Sirimā's looks were even better.

As the monk described Sirimā's beauty, another monk, who was listening, at once fell in love with her without ever having seen her. It so happened that on the following day, Sirimā fell sick and could not serve the monks, including the lovesick monk. So, her servant served the monks.

At the end of the meal, Sirima made an effort to get out to pay her respects to the monks. Even without her adornments and simply dressed, the lovesick monk thought that Sirimā looked extremely beautiful. "Imagine how beautiful she would look when she is well and wears her jewelry!" he thought. (DhA 11.2)

5.2.2 Sirimā's death

5.2.2.1 That same evening, Sirimā died and was reborn as a queen of **Suyāma**, lord of the Yāma heavens. King Bimbisāra relayed the news of Sirimā's death to the Buddha, who then instructed that the body should not be cremated but left in the charnel ground and guarded against carrion crows and other animals. After three days, Sirimā's corpse was swollen and festering with worms, so that it looked like a pot of rice over a hot fire, bubbling over on the surface.

Bimbisāra then decreed, under pain of a fine of eight gold coins, that all adult residents of Rājagaha should file past the body, to see Sirimā in her present condition. As for the lovesick monk who had not eaten for four days, the food in his bowl, too, was, by then, crawling with maggots. His friends then told him that the Buddha was going to see Sirimā. At the word "Sirimā," the monk was galvanized. He emptied his bowl and rinsed it, and then joined the others to see Sirimā.

When the crowd had gathered, the Buddha instructed rajah Bimbisāra, "Let it be proclaimed with the beating of drums that whoever pays the sum of 1000 coins may have Sirima." But no man wanted her now, so the price was lowered; but no man wanted her even for free. (DhA 11.2; SnA 1:245)

5.2.2.2 Then, the Buddha spoke to the monks:

Here, monks, you see a woman who was loved by the world. In this same city, in the past, men would gladly pay a thousand gold coins to enjoy her for just one night. Now, however, no one will have her, even for nothing. This is what the body comes to, perishable and fragile, made attractive only through ornaments, a heap of wounds with 9 openings, held together with 300 bones, a continuing burden. Only fools attach fancies and illusion to such an impermanent thing.⁹¹ (VvA 77,22-26)

*Passa citta, katam bimban
arukāyaṃ samussitam
āturaṃ bahu. saṅkappaṃ
yassa n'atthi dhuvaṃ thiti*

(Dh 147)

See this painted image,
a heaped up mass of sores.
Diseased, much thought about.
It has nothing stable or lasting.

5.2.2.3 Seeing the Buddha, the monks and the crowd around her corpse, **the deva maiden** (*deva, dhītā*) **Sirimā** descended to earth in a glorious blaze accompanied by 500 celestial maidens in 500 chariots. Then, she dismounted and saluted the Buddha.

The venerable **Vaṅgīsa**, the foremost poet in the order, asked her from where she had come and what meritorious deeds she had done to obtain such glory, and Sirimā told her story, as recorded in **the Vimāna, vatthu** (Vv 137-148).⁹²

⁹¹ Cf Raṭṭhapāla's similar reflection on the body in **Raṭṭha, pāla S** (M 82/2:64 f), SD 92.5

⁹² Vv 16/137*-149*/17 f.

5.2.2.4 To mark the significance of the occasion, the Buddha gave **the Vijaya Sutta** (Sn 1.11). At the end of the discourse, the lovesick monk was healed and became a streamwinner.⁹³

After the contemplation of the body, he developed insight and became an arhat.

(DhA 11.2; SnA 1:245)

5.3 Narrative unity of the 3 Nandā stories

5.3.1 All the 3 nuns named **Nandā**—Rūpa,nandā, Abhirūpa,nandā and Janapada,kalyāṇī Nandā [5.1.1.2]—share a common key verse on which the Buddha centres his teachings to them. It is likely that they are all taught the same Dhammapada verse—**Dh 150**—either all at the same time or each individually. Dh 150 is, in fact, a kind of summary of **the Vijaya Sutta** (Sn 1.11) [6]. It is likely, too, that all the 3 nuns named Nandā hear the teaching of the Vijaya Sutta.

Besides these two common teachings—Dh 150 and the Vijaya Sutta—these nuns also hear a number of other verses and instructions from the Buddha. He has skillfully selected these teachings and methods—based on the nuns’ past good actions and present conditions—so that in the end, they all attain arhat-hood.

5.3.2 The summary recounts that all the 3 nuns named Nandā listen to **Dh 150** and **the Vijaya Sutta**, along with various other verses and teachings given by the Buddha to them, either at the same time, or at different times. As such, we can surmise that they each attain arhat-hood in the following ways:

Rūpā Nandā: attains arhat-hood at the end of the Buddha’s teaching on **Dh 150** (DhA 11.5/3:118).

Abhirūpā Nandā: attains arhat-hood after hearing Dh 150, and then **Thī 19-20** (SnA 1:241 f).

Janapada,kalyāṇī Nandā: after listening to **the Vijaya Sutta**, she meditates and gains arhat-hood (SnA 2:253 f).

6 Vijaya Sutta (Sn 1.11)

SD 3.8(6)

Vijaya Sutta

The Victory Discourse

or **Kāya,vicchandanika Sutta**, the Discourse on Disenchantment with the Body

Sn 1.11/34 f = Sn 193-206

Theme: How to remove desire for the body

6.1 On this special occasion, the Buddha gives **the Vijaya Sutta** (the Victory Discourse), also known as **the Kāya,vicchandanika Sutta** (The Discourse on Disenchantment with the Body, Sn 1.11): **Sn 193-206**.

At this point, you may go straight into a study of the Sutta itself. After completing a round of reading, go back to Sn 202 and review it again before studying these notes [6.2-6.4].

6.2 THE 3 KINDS OF FULL UNDERSTANDING (SnA 1:251)

6.2.1 The Commentary on **Sn 202** explains it in terms of the perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*). A learner (*sekha*) or a worldling (*puthujjana*).⁹⁴ By **wisdom** (*paññā*) is meant the wisdom of insight that

⁹³ DhA 11.2/3:104 f; VvA 74 ff.

arises in connection with impermanence and so on. This training is found only **here** (*idha*), in the Buddha’s teaching. “**He fully understands it**” (*so ... naṃ parijānāti*) means that he fully understands the body through the 3 kinds of full understanding (*pariññā*). (SnA 1:251,4)

6.2.2 How do we fully understand the body through the 3 kinds of full understanding? Just as a skilled merchant examines his goods, thinking, “There is this; there is that,” and then calculates, “When they are sold for such and such prices, there will be such and such profits.” Then, he disposes of his goods, gaining his capital along with the profits.

In the same way, we examine the body with the eye of knowledge, thus: “There are these bones, sinews, and so on. These are head-hair, body-hair, and so on” In this way, we fully understand the body with **the full understanding of the known** (*ñāta,pariññā*).

Then, examining thus, “These things are impermanent, suffering and non-self,” we understand it with **the full understanding by scrutiny** (*tīraṇa,pariññā*).

Having scrutinized it thus, we abandon desire and lust for the body and attain the noble path—this is **the full understanding that is abandonment** (*pahāna,pariññā*). (SnA 1:251,2-13)

6.2.3 Alternatively, when we see a body—whether sentient or non-sentient—by way of its unattractive nature, there is the understanding of the known. Then, knowing it to be impermanent and so on, we see it by the full understanding by scrutiny. And when we abandon all ties to the body and lust for it by the path of arhathood, we have the full understanding that is abandonment. (SnA 1:251,14-17)

6.3 THE 3 KINDS OF FULL UNDERSTANDING (Nm 1:52 f ad Sn 778), SD 85.6

6.3.1 The above commentarial explanation of the 3 kinds of full understanding as the basis for our practice of the perception of impermanence is based on teachings such as those given in **the Mahā Niddesa** (Nm 1:52 f) commenting on **Sn 778** of the Guh’atṭhaka Sutta (Sn 4.2), thus:

<p><i>Ubhosu antesu vineyya chandaṃ phassaṃ pariññāya anānugiddho yad atta,garahī tad akubbamāno na limpātī diṭṭha,sutesu dhīro</i></p>	Sn 778	<p>Having given up desire for both ends, having fully understood contact, free from greed, not doing anything for which one will blame oneself, the wise clings to neither the seen nor the heard.</p>
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By “**both ends**” (*ubho antā*) is meant the extremes, such as contact at one end and the arising of contact at the other; the past at one end and the future at the other; the pleasant at one end and the unpleasant at the other; and so on.

By “**contact**” (*phassa*) is meant sense-contacts, that is, those of each of the 6 senses, contacts felt as pleasant, unpleasant or as neutral; and past contact, future contact and present contact; and so on. (Nm 1:52)⁹⁵

6.3.2 A full understanding of sense-contact (SnA 1:251)

6.3.2.1 “**Having fully understood contact**” (*phassa pariññāya*) means having understood them with the 3 kinds of full understanding, that is, the full understanding of the known, the full understanding of scrutiny, and the full understanding that is abandonment regarding sense-contact (or sense-experience) [6.2.2].

⁹⁴ The arhat—or “adept” (*asekha*)—is excluded because he is awakened; hence, has completed his “training.”

⁹⁵ Summary given at NmA 83. For details, see SD 85.6.

6.3.2.2 (1) What is **the full understanding of the known**? One knows contact. One knows and sees: “This is eye-contact ... this is present contact.”

6.3.2.3 (2) What is **the full understanding by way of scrutiny**? Having known contact thus, one scrutinizes it. One scrutinizes contact as impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a boil, as a dart, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating;⁹⁶ as adversity, as a misfortune, as peril, as a disaster, as quaking, as fragile, as unstable, as not a shelter, as not a cave, as not a refuge, as hollow, as void, as empty, as non-self, as a disadvantage, as subject to change, as without essence, as the root of misery, as a murderer, as extermination, as subject to the influxes, as conditioned, as Māra’s bait, as subject to birth, to decay, to disease, to death, to sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, anguish, as subject to defilements; by way of arising, passing away, gratification and the escape from it.⁹⁷

6.3.2.4 (3) What is **the full understanding that is abandonment**? Having scrutinized contact in such a manner, one abandons, removes, gets rid of, eliminates desire and lust regarding contact. (SnA 1:251)

6.4 THE 3 KINDS OF FULL UNDERSTANDING (Vism 20.3/606 f)

6.4.1 Buddhaghosa gives a doctrinal explanation of the 3 kinds of full understanding in his **Visuddhi-magga**. He explains **the full understanding of the known** as the understanding that arises by observing the specific characteristics of a certain state, thus: “**Form** (*rūpa*) has the characteristic of being molested (*ruppana*); **feeling** (*vedanā*) has the characteristic of being felt. In other words, this is the seeing of the distinct characteristics of each of the 5 aggregates, the 12 sense-bases, and so on. More broadly, this is a vision of all “name-and-form,” along with their conditions.

6.4.2 **The full understanding by way of scrutiny** in the understanding by way of insight into the universal characteristics (that is, impermanence, suffering and non-self) of the same states, beginning with “Form is impermanent. Feeling is impermanent.”

6.4.3 Finally, **the full understanding that is abandonment** is the insight with the universal characteristic as its object by way of the abandoning of the perception of permanence, of pleasure, and of self in those same states. (Vism 20.3/606 f)

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⁹⁶ These qualities up to here are as at D 2,83 f; M 23,4, 109,13; S 35.105; A 9.15, 55.21; J 12: see SD 29.6a (3.4.3).

⁹⁷ *Phassaṃ ... aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato itito upaddavato bhavyato upasaggato calato pabhaṅguto addhuvato atāṇato aleṇato asaraṇato rittato tucchato suñṇato anattato ādīnavato vipariṇāma, dhammato asārakato agha, mūlato vadha, gato vibhavato sāsavato saṅkhatato mārāmisato jāti, dhammato jarā, dhammato vyādhī, dhammato maraṇa. dhammato soka, parideva, dukkha, domanass’upāyāsa, dhammato saṅkilesika, dhammato samudayato atthaṅ, gamato assādato ādīnavato nissaraṇato tīreti.*

6.5 The Victory Discourse (Sn 1.11)

Vijaya Sutta

The Victory Discourse

(Sn 1.11 = Sn 193-206)

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|
| <p>1 <i>Caram vā yadi vā
tiṭṭham nisinno uda vā sayam
sammiñjeti⁹⁸ pasāreti
esā kāyassa iñjanā</i></p> | [193] | <p>When walking or standing still,
sitting or lying down,
one bends, one stretches—
this is the movement of the body.</p> |
| <p>2 <i>Aṭṭhi,nahāru,saññutto⁹⁹
taca,maṃsāvalepano
chaviyā kayo paṭicchanno
yathā,bhūtaṃ na dissati</i></p> | [194] ¹⁰⁰ | <p>Joined together with bones and sinews,
laid over with skin and flesh,
covered by the outer skin—
one does not see it as it really is—</p> |
| <p>3 <i>anta,puro udara,pūro
yaka,peḷassa¹⁰¹ vatthino
hadayassa papphāsassa¹⁰²
vakkassa pihakassa ca</i></p> | [195] | <p>filled with gut, filled with the belly,
with the lobe of the liver, the bladder,
the heart, the lungs,
the kidneys and the spleen;¹⁰³</p> |
| <p>4 <i>siṅghānikāya khelassa
sedassa [ca]¹⁰⁴ medassa ca
lohitassa lasikāya
pittassa ca vasāya ca</i></p> | [196] | <p>with nasal mucus, saliva,
sweat and lymph,
blood, fluid of the joints,
bile and fat.</p> |
| <p>5 <i>Ath'assa navahi sotehi
asuci¹⁰⁶ savati sabbadā
akkhimhā akkhi,gūthako
kaṇṇamhā kaṇṇa,gūthako</i></p> | [197] | <p>And through the 9 openings¹⁰⁵
impurities ever flow:
eye secretions from the eyes;
ear-wax from the ears,</p> |

⁹⁸ Be *samiñjeti*; Ce Ee Se *sammiñjeti*. On *sammiñjeti*, see BHSD & J Brough, *Gāndhārī Dharmapada*, 1962:249 f, sv *sammiñjayati*.

⁹⁹ Be *aṭṭhi,nahāru,samṃutto*; Ce Se *aṭṭhi,nhārūhi samṃutto*; Ee *aṭṭhi,nahāru,saññutto*. For philological n, see Sn:N 205 n194.

¹⁰⁰ Sn 194-199 recur in intro to **Nigrodha.miga J** (J 12/1:146,15*-26*).

¹⁰¹ Be *yakana,peḷassa*; Ce Ee Se *yaka,peḷassa*. Comy: *pūro'ti adhiḅkaro, tasmā "yaka,peḷassa puro, vatthino puro'ti evaṃ yojetabbam, "Puro is the keyword, as in yaka,peḷassa puro, vatthino puro—thus it should be applied" (SnA 248,1-2). This means that the words in Sn 195-196 are abbreviated cpds—we are to understand that puro is extracted from anta,puro and udara,puro, with them. For philological n on this, see Sn:N 205 n195. See PED: yaka-peḷa.*

¹⁰² For *pa[p]phāsassa* mc, see SnA 724.

¹⁰³ These are solid body-organs. A list of liquids follow. Cf the 32 body-parts: see **Dva-t,tiṃs'ākāra**, Khp 3 & **Giri-m-ānanda S** (A 10.60,6), SD 19.16.

¹⁰⁴ The metre of this line is defective: this should be added mc. For the metre of *medassa ca*, see SnA 750.

¹⁰⁵ Sn 197. The 9 openings (*navahi sotehi*) are the body's 2 eyes, 2 ear-openings, 2 nostrils, mouth, anus and urethra (**navahi sotehīti ubho,akkhi-c,chidda,kaṇṇa-c,chidda,nāsa-c,chidda,mukha,vacca.magga,passāva.maggehi**, SnA 1:248).

¹⁰⁶ *Asuci* is mc: notice the foll vb is sg.

- 6 *siṅghānikā ca nāsāto
mukhena vamat'ekadā¹⁰⁷
pittam semhañ ca vamatī
kāyamhā seda,jallikā¹⁰⁸* [198] and mucus from the nose;
through the mouth at once
pukes bile and pukes phlegm;
from the body, sweat and dirt;
- 7 *Ath'assa susiram sīsām
mattha,luṅgassa¹⁰⁹ pūritam
subhato nam maññatī¹¹⁰
bālo avijjāya purakkhato¹¹¹* [199] and the hollow of its head
is filled with the brain.
“It’s beautiful!” so thinks
the fool, led by ignorance.
- 8 *Yadā ca so mato seti
uddhumāto vinīlako
apaviddho susānasmim
anapekho honti ñātayo* [200] But when it lies dead,
bloated and blue-black,
cast away in the cemetery,
relatives care not for it.
- 9 *khādanti nam suvāṇā¹¹² ca
sigālā¹¹³ ca vakā kimī
kākā gijjhā ca khādanti
ye c'aññe santi pāṇino¹¹⁴* [201] Dogs devour it, and
jackals, wolves and worms,
crows and vultures, too, devour it,
and what other living beings there are.
- 10 *Sutvāna buddha,vacanam
bhikkhu paññāṇavā idha
so kho nam parijānātī¹¹⁵
yathā,bhūtam hi¹¹⁶ passati* [202] Having heard the Buddha Word,
the monk is wise here—
indeed, he fully understands it.
For, he sees it (the body) as it really is.
- 11 *Yathā idam tathā etam
yathā etam tathā idam
ajjhattañ ca bahiddhā ca
kāye chandam virājaye* [203] “As this (body) is, so was that;¹¹⁷
as that is, so will this be.”
(Understanding this,) let one discard desire *d*
for the body, both within and without. *c*
- 12 *Chanda,raga,viratto
so bhikkhu paññāṇavā idha
ajjhagā amatañ santim
nibbāna,padam accutam¹¹⁸* [204] Having discarded desire and lust,
the monk who is wise here
reaches the death-free, the peace,
nirvana, the unchangeable state.¹¹⁹

¹⁰⁷ (Sn:Ee 34) Cb *mukhen'evam anekadā*, “thus often through the mouth”: Ee notes “perhaps the true reading.”

¹⁰⁸ On *jallikā*, see PED & SnA:N 205 n198.

¹⁰⁹ For *-luṅgassa*, J 12/1:146,25* reads *-luṅgena*.

¹¹⁰ Be Se *maññatī*; Ce Ee *maññatī* (mc).

¹¹¹ For *purakkhata*, cf *apurakkhato* at Tha 37 (Tha:N 130 n37).

¹¹² Be *suvāṇā*; Ce Se *suvāṇā*; Ee *supāṇā*. Both *suvāṇa* = *supāṇa*, “a dog.” *Supāṇa* is hyper-Palism for *suvāna*: see Sn:N 206 n201.

¹¹³ Be Se *siṅgālā*; Ce Ee *sigālā*.

¹¹⁴ Be Ce Se *pāṇino*; Ee *pāṇayo*.

¹¹⁵ On the perception of impermanence here, see (6.1).

¹¹⁶ Be Se *yathā,bhūtañ hi*; Ce Ee *yathā,bhūtam hi*.

¹¹⁷ Comy: By identifying oneself with the dead body, reflecting, “As this (body) is, so was that” (reflecting that the body was once alive), we abandon external aversion. By identifying the dead body oneself, reflecting, “As that is, so will this be” (I will be dead in no time), we abandon internal lust. (SnA 1:252)

¹¹⁸ Be *nibbānam padam accutam*; Ce Ee Se *nibbāna,padam accutam*.

- 13** *Di,pādako'yaṃ asuci
duggandho parihīraṭi¹²⁰
nānā,kuṇapa,paripūro
vissa,vanto tato tato* [205] This two-legged (body) is impure,
foul-smelling, that we attend to:
full of many dead things,
trickling from here and there.
- 14** *Etādisena kāyena
yo maññe uṇnametave
paraṃ vā avajāneyya
kiṃ aññatra adassanā'ti* [206] Whoever, such a body
would think to exalt
or should despise another—
what else is this but lack of vision.

At the end of the discourse, the nun Janapada, kalyāṇī Nandā became an arhat, and Sirimā a non-
returner. (SnA 1:244 f, 253 f)

— evaṃ —

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¹¹⁹ Although *pada* usually means “step, state,” it is used only in a *descriptive* manner for linguistic convenience. Nirvana is neither a thing nor nothing, neither a state nor a non-state, certainly not a place. Alt tr: “that unchangeable nirvana.”

¹²⁰ All so except Be Ka *pariharati*.