

Legends of the Buddhist Saints

Apadānapāli

TRANSLATED BY
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Abhirūpanandā

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[36. Abhirūpanandā¹]

Ninety-one aeons ago the
Leader, whose name was Vipassi,
arose, the One Good to Look At,²
the One with Eyes for Everything. (1) [1246]

I was then in Bandhumatī,
born in a large clan, prosperous
[and] rich; beautiful and held dear,
I am worshipped³ by⁴ the people. (2) [1247]

Having approached the Great Hero,
Vipassi, Leader of the World,
hearing the Teaching, I went for
refuge [in] the Leader of Men. (3) [1248]

Having been restrained in morals,
when the Best Man⁵ reached nirvana,
I offered⁶ a gold umbrella
on top of the relic-stupa. (4) [1249]

I'm freely generous, moral
as long as life; fallen from there,
discarding [my] human body,
I went to Tāvātimsa [then]. (5) [1250]

In ten ways I was outshining
[all the] other [gods who lived there]:
through shapes [and] sounds [and] fragrances,
through tastes and the [things that I] touch, (6) [1251]

in terms of lifespan, complexion,
happiness and famousness too
[and] likewise through supreme power
I shone, having attained [those ten]. (7) [1252]

¹"Very Beautiful Joy," an historical nun, DPPN I:143. On these various "Joys" (of whom Malalasekera's designations may need further work) see above, the first note to *Therī-apadāna* #25.

²*ccharunayano*

³reading *pūjanīyā* with BJTS for PTS *sajanassā*

⁴lit., of (gen. pl.), lit., "the people's object to be worshipped"

⁵*nibbute ccha naruttame*

⁶lit., "did *pūjā*"

And now, in [my] final rebirth,
I'm born in Kapilavastu.⁷
I'm well-known [by the] name Nandā,
the Śākya Khemaka's daughter. (8) [1253]

The nickname⁸ "Very Beautiful"⁹
indicated my loveliness;¹⁰
when I had attained discretion,
[I'm] adorned with gorgeous beauty.¹¹ (9) [1254]

Then there was a very big fight¹²
over me¹³ among the Śākyas.
Then [my] father had me ordained,
"don't let the Śākyas be destroyed."¹⁴ (10) [1255]

Going forth like that, having heard
that the Supreme Man hates¹⁵ beauty,
I did not approach [the Buddha,]
bring proud about my beauty. (11) [1256]

Not even going for advice,
I'm afraid to see the Buddha.
Then the Victor had me led to
his presence by means of a trick. (12) [1257]

Clever in the Path, [the Buddha]
made three [different] women appear
with forms like celestial nymphs:
[one] young, [one] diseased, [the third] dead. (13) [1258]

Seeing them, very moved, I was
freed from delighting in bodies.

⁷*kapilavhaye*, lit., "in the [city] named for Kapila"

⁸ reading *upapadam* (in the sense of "epithet") with BJTS for PTS *uppādaṇ* ("birth" "omen"), which breaks meter.

⁹ *abhirūpaṇ*

¹⁰ reading *me kantisūcchakaṃ* with BJTS for PTS *m' ekaṇ ti sūcchakaṇ* (?)

¹¹ reading *rūpalāvaññābhusitā* with BJTS for PTS *rūpavaṇṇavibhusitā*, which however has much the same meaning.

¹² or debate: *vivādo*

¹³ reading *tadā mamatthaṃ* ("for my sake," i.e., over who will marry me) with BJTS for PTS *Idaṇ me-m' atthe* ("this for the sake of me"?)

¹⁴ i.e., everyone wants Nandā so badly that the end result will be the ruin of the whole clan; her father takes her out of the competition to avoid the conflict it will generate

¹⁵ reading *rūpadessiṇ naruttamaṃ* with BJTS for PTS *rūpadassiṇ* (alt. *dassana*), "beautiful looking supreme man"

I stood [there,] weary of being,
then the Leader said [this] to me: (14) [1259]

“Nandā, see this complex heap¹⁶ as
diseased, disgusting [and] putrid.
It is oozing and it’s dripping,
the delight of foolish people. (15) [1260]

With one-pointed focus, steadfast,
fix your mind on impurity.
Just as is this, so too is that;
just as is that, so too is this. (16) [1261]

Considering that in this way,
industrious by night and day,
you will see with your own wisdom,
having turned away in disgust.” (17) [1262]

Not delaying in that [purpose,]
thinking¹⁷ [it all] through thoroughly,
I saw this body as it is,
on the inside and the outside. (18) [1263]

Then I’m disgusted with bodies,
and inwardly free of passion;
not negligent, no longer yoked,
at peace, and [I’ve reached] nirvana. (19) [1264]

I’ve mastered the superpowers
[like] the “divine ear” element.
I’m also a master, Great Sage,¹⁸
of the knowledge in others’ hearts. (20) [1265]

I remember [my] former lives;
[my] “divine eye” is purified.
All the defilements are destroyed;
[I] will not be reborn again. (21) [1266]

In meaning and in the Teaching,
etymology and preaching,

¹⁶samussayaṃ, “conglomeration,” i.e., the body

¹⁷or “dwelling” “practicing” “living” (BJTS: viharantya’dha yoniso)

¹⁸reading mahāmune (voc.) with BJTS for PTS tadā muni (“Then the Sage [nom.];”
PTS alt. tadā mune, “Then, O Sage”)

[this] knowledge of mine was produced
in your presence, O Great Hero. (22) [1267]

My defilements are [now] burnt up;
all [new] existence is destroyed.
Like elephants with broken chains,
I am living without constraint. (23) [1268]

Being in Best Buddha's presence
was a very good thing for me.
The three knowledges are attained;
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (24) [1269]

The four analytical modes,
and these eight deliverances,
six special knowledges mastered,
[I have] done what the Buddha taught! (25) [1270]

Thus indeed the bhikkhunī Abhirūpanandā spoke these verses.

The legend of Abhirūpanandā Therī¹⁹ is finished

¹⁹this is the BJTS reading for PTS *bhikkhunī Abhirūpanandā*