

AŚVAGHOṢA'S GOLD



TRANSLATIONS OF

BUDDHACARITA AND SAUNDARANANDA

BY MIKE CROSS

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Abbreviations:

BC: Buddha-carita

DN: Digha Nikāya (Collection of Long Discourses)

EBC: EB Cowell

EHJ: EH Johnston

LC: Linda Covill

MMK: Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā (“The Middle” of Nāgārjuna)

MN: Majjhima Nikāya (Collection of Middle-Length Discourses)

MW: The Monier-Williams Sanskrit Dictionary

PO: Patrick Olivelle

SN: Saundara-nanda

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– Introduction –

Convenient Fictions, Irreligious Irony, Golden Sitting

For the last seven years, at the therapeutic snail's pace of one verse per day, I have been translating two works of Aśvaghoṣa known in Sanskrit as *mahā-kāvya*, epic poems or epic tales. They are not exactly works of fiction; they are based on historical fact, but only loosely. In any case, they are not to be taken too literally, because they are so full of metaphor and – in the gap between their ostensible and hidden meanings – so full of irony.

Some teachings, like the Buddha's four noble truths, are well represented both on and below the surface.

Those four noble truths are:

1. the truth of suffering,
2. the truth of the arising of suffering,
3. the truth of cessation of suffering, and
4. the truth of a practical means leading in the direction of the cessation of suffering.

Aśvaghoṣa records the Buddha's statement of the four noble truths, in brief, like this:

iti duḥkham etad
 “This is suffering.
 iyam asya samudaya-latā pravartikā
 This is the tangled mass of causes producing it.
 śāntir iyam
 This is cessation.
 ayam upāya iti
 Here is a means.”¹

Here the fourth noble truth is not expressed in terms of a metaphor. *Upāya* means that by which one reaches one's aim, an expedient of any kind, a means-whereby.

At the same time, the Buddha did use for the fourth noble truth the metaphor of a path (*mārga*). Hence:

“This is suffering, which is constant and akin to trouble; this is the cause of suffering, akin to starting it; / This is cessation of suffering, akin to walking away. And this, akin to a refuge, is a peaceable path.” // SN16.4 //

The Noble Eightfold Path, also known as the Middle Way, is a metaphor for the threefold practice of ignorance-destroying wisdom (*prajñā*), backed by twofold practice of meditative balance (*samādhi*), backed by threefold practice of integrity (*śīla*).²

¹ See Saundara-nanda (SN) 3.12.

In reality there *is* such a thing as *practice* of threefold *śīla*, twofold *samādhi*, and threefold *prajñā*, leading in the direction of ending of ignorance, but there is no such path as a Noble Eightfold Path. The Path is a kind of fiction. In the real world, there are real, non-fictional paths that can be walked, like the ancient Ridgeway running across England from Salisbury Plain to East Anglia. There are real roads that can be travelled, like the Pan-American highway linking many nations in Northern, Central and South America. But no Noble Eightfold Path or Middle Way is marked on any map.

So even such a core teaching as the Noble Eightfold Path is a metaphor, a fiction. It is something akin to the dream which, if we are lucky, helps our tired bodies and minds to recuperate during the night.

But Zen masters from the time of the Buddha, though invariably steeped in actual practice, have shown themselves to be skilled in the use of such dreamlike fictions – using their fingers, metaphorically, to point at the moon. And none has been more skilled in using metaphors, similes, parodies, et cetera, than Aśvaghōṣa.

Convenient Fictions

Speaking of putting fictions to practical use, in 1906, in a book titled *The Integrative Action of the Nervous System*, Sir Charles Sherrington wrote of “*the convenient fiction of the simple reflex.*”

The convenient fiction of the simple reflex.

A lot of irrational, fearful, unconscious human behaviour can be explained with reference to a primitive fear reflex called (after the Austrian paediatrician Ernst Moro who identified it) “the Moro reflex.” As a simple reflex, a thing unto itself, the Moro reflex is a convenient but empty fiction. Any simple reflex is an empty fiction because the human organism and its environment all work unfathomably together, in an integrated way, as a whole. And yet the Moro reflex, though a fiction, is convenient. When in *Buddha-carita* Canto 8 Aśvaghōṣa describes arms being thrown up and out in grief,³ when in *Saundara-nanda* Canto 6 he describes Sundarī performing the same abduction of the arms while gasping and going red,⁴ and when indeed in *SN* Canto 12 he describes the shocked Nanda seeming to go white,⁵ I find it convenient to refer in my footnotes to the Moro reflex – as if there were such a thing, as a thing unto itself, as a Moro reflex.

² In the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*, the Buddha seems to emphasize this particular order – *śīla* (using voice and body well, making a clean living) supporting *samādhi* (true mindfulness, balanced stillness) supporting *prajñā* (seeing and thinking straight, true initiative) – while at the same time each element supports the others in a circular fashion. So it might be a case of “altogether, one after the other.”

³ BC8.24, 8.37.

⁴ SN6.27.

⁵ SN12.8.

The use of convenient fictions as a means to convey the real gist of the Buddha's teaching, as evidenced in the first instance by the Noble Eightfold Path, goes back all the way to Gautama Buddha himself. The Lotus Sūtra emphasizes how skilled the Buddha was in the use of expedient means (*upāya-kauśalya*), including the kind of metaphors and parables with which the Lotus Sūtra abounds.⁶

The 14th Zen patriarch in India, Nāgārjuna, again, is known for the explicit distinction he makes between conventional truth (*loka-saṃvṛti-satyam*) and ultimate truth (*satyaṃ paramārthataḥ*):

The dharma-direction of the buddhas is grounded in two truths: conventional truth and ultimate truth. Those who do not know the distinction between these two truths, do not know how it is in the profound depths of the buddhas' teaching. Without relying on the conventional, the ultimate is not communicated. Without realizing the ultimate, nirvāṇa is not attained.⁷

In terms of the metaphor of the finger pointing at the moon, the conventional is the finger, the ultimate is the moon.

Convenient fictions, like the Noble Path, and like the pointing finger, belong to the conventional truth; practice itself, like the moon, is the ultimate.

Twelve generations after Gautama Buddha, and two generations before Nāgārjuna, sits the 12th Zen patriarch in India. His name, Aśvaghōṣa – Horse (*aśva*) Whinny (*ghoṣa*) – is so far less well known than the name of his Dharma-grandson Nāgārjuna. This is despite the sterling efforts of EH Johnston, the Oxford professor who laid the foundations of Aśvaghōṣa study with his Sanskrit texts and English translations of Aśvaghōṣa's two epic poems, Buddha-carita ("Acts of the Buddha"; 1936) and Saundara-nanda ("Nanda the Fair"; 1932).⁸

Another Oxford University academic, Linda Covill, has more recently demonstrated in her book A Metaphorical Study of Saundara-nanda (2009) how very adept Aśvaghōṣa was, as a poet on a par with Kālidāsa, at dealing in convenient fictions.

What so far has not been well recognized is

(1) the extent of the irony which resides in the gap between the ostensible and hidden meaning of Aśvaghōṣa's fictions; and

⁶ The 2nd chapter of the Lotus Sutra is titled "Expedient Means," and the 3rd chapter is titled "Parable" or "Metaphor."

⁷ *Mūla-madhyama-kārikā* (MMK) chapter 24, Investigation of the Noble Truths (verses 8 – 10).

⁸ Almost all of Aśvaghōṣa's original Sanskrit text of Saundara-nanda is extant, and largely for this reason I followed EHJ in translating it first. But I believe, for various reasons, that Aśvaghōṣa wrote Buddha-carita first. One reason is that Aśvaghōṣa covers the teaching of dependent arising in detail in BC Canto 14; then in Saundara-nanda he refers only lightly in passing to the 12-fold chain.

(2) the extent to which Aśvaghōṣa was steeped in the ultimate truth of sitting practice, as we might expect from a Zen master in the lineage of the Buddha, Nāgārjuna and Bodhidharma.⁹

Investigating Aśvaghōṣa's Irony – Being Caused Constantly to Mind the Gap

The first of Aśvaghōṣa's two poems, *Buddha-carita*, ostensibly means “Acts of the Buddha” or “Life of the Buddha.” Ostensibly – at the level of conventional truth – *Buddha-carita* is a biography, an epic poem that tells the life-story of Gautama Buddha. Below the surface, however, the Sanskrit word *buddha* is a past participle meaning “awakened.” And *carita* is also a participle meaning “gone” or “going,” and by extension “acting, action, practice.” Below the surface, then, *buddha-carita* can be understood to mean “awakened action.” Below the surface, *buddha-carita* is a word by which Aśvaghōṣa may have intended to point obliquely in the direction of the ultimate truth of sitting practice that is liberated from unconscious doing.

The second poem, *Saundara-nanda*, ostensibly means “Nanda the Fair,” as per EH Johnston, or “Handsome Nanda,” as per Linda Covill. Ostensibly, at the level of conventional truth, *Saundara-nanda* is another biography, a poem that tells the story of the Buddha's younger brother Nanda, who is notably good-looking (*saundara*) and whose name (*nanda*) means “Joy.” Below the surface, *saundara-nanda* can be understood to mean “beautiful joy” – in which case *saundara-nanda* is a word by which Aśvaghōṣa may have intended, again, to point to the ultimate truth and beauty of just sitting.

Not only the titles of the two poems, but also the title of every canto, and turning words within each verse, all seem to invite investigation along these lines. Ostensibly, the meaning is this. But below the surface, the meaning is this, or – digging deeper – the meaning might also be this, or this, or maybe even this.

Here are a few examples to illustrate the point. In square brackets in the translation, and in the footnotes to each canto, you will find many more examples highlighted.

- The one, the seven, the five, the three and the two

In BC Canto 2 Aśvaghōṣa praises the King as follows:

He gave direction to the one and guarded the seven; he shunned the seven and turned his attention to the five; / He experienced the three and minded the three; he knew the two and abandoned the two. //2.41//

This is a kind of riddle. I think it is designed to draw our attention to the fact that practically every verse can, like this one, be read on more than one level.

Ostensibly the King in question is Prince Siddhārtha's father, King Śuddhodana, in which case *the one* would seem to refer to the person of the King himself, or else his kingdom. Below the

⁹ Much academic debate has been devoted to the question of whether Aśvaghōṣa was primarily a poet or a monk. But that is a stale debate. Discussion of what Buddhist school Aśvaghōṣa belonged to has even less to recommend it. Aśvaghōṣa is better revered as a person who defied categorization, a person who was – in his own terms – *anya*, different.

surface, *giving direction to the one* may be read as a suggestion of what Dogen calls the secret of sitting-meditation – naturally becoming one piece.¹⁰

EH Johnston notes that the sevens are the seven constituents of a kingdom and the seven vices of kings. Patrick Olivelle¹¹ identifies the seven constituents of a kingdom as king, minister, countryside, fort, treasury, army and ally; and the seven vices of a king as three vices springing from anger (verbal abuse, physical assault, and plunder of property) and four vices springing from passion (hunting, gambling, women, and drink). In the hidden meaning, however, the seven could be the seven limbs of awakening – as, in the first instance, virtues to be developed; and in the second instance, antithetically, as idealistic concepts to be negated.¹²

EHJ notes that five refers to the five *upāyas*, means of success against an enemy. Olivelle traces these five back to the Mahā-bhārata, which lists the five policies as conciliation, giving gifts, fomenting dissension, war, and staying quiet. In the hidden meaning, however, the five might be the five senses, which the Buddha so often compared to dangerous enemies.

Ostensibly the three are the triple set of dharma, wealth, and pleasure, the three aims of a king's life. In the hidden meaning, the three to experience and – in practising mindfulness of the mind – the three to mind, might be greed, anger and delusion.

Ostensibly, again, the two a king should know are good and bad policy. But in the hidden meaning the two to know, as a prelude to abandoning that duality, are body and mind.

Why did Aśvaghōṣa write a verse as ambiguous as this? I think because he wanted to cause us to consider more than one possible meaning of each element. He wanted to cause us to dig below the surface of his convenient fictions, not only in a verse like this one, which looks like a riddle, but also in all his other verses which don't look like riddles, but each of which is in fact a riddle.¹³

- the lord of the earth

The lord of the earth (*bhūmi-patiḥ*, BC1.7) – also called the protector of men (*nṛpaḥ*, BC4.22), the best of men (*narendraḥ*, BC8.17), the king (*rājā*, BC9.7), et cetera – ostensibly means King Śuddhodana, ruler of Kapilavāstu and father of Prince Sārvartha-siddhaḥ. In the hidden meaning, the King means a king of dharma. In the hidden meaning, every man and every woman who sits supported by the earth, dropping off body and mind in the earth's gravitational field, is a lord of the earth.

¹⁰ In the original edition of his instructions for sitting-meditation (*Fukan-zazengi-shinpitsu-bon*), Dogen expresses the secret of Zazen as 自成一片 (*ji-jo-ippen*), naturally/spontaneously becoming one piece.

¹¹ Life of Buddha (2008).

¹² The seven, mentioned in SN17.58, are investigation of things, energy, joy, confidence, equanimity, balanced stillness, and mindfulness.

¹³ There are said to be many instance in the Pāli Suttas (e.g Samyutta Nikaya 1) of the Buddha posing riddles in a similar way.

- the son of the best of men

The son of the best of men (*narendra-sūnuḥ*, BC3.60; *narendra-putraḥ*, BC8.10) – also called the self-begotten of a protector of men (*nṛpātmajaḥ*, BC3.29), the son of a protector of men (*nṛpa-sutaḥ*; BC12.4) et cetera – ostensibly means Prince Sārvartha-siddha, son of King Śuddhodana. In the hidden meaning, every recipient of the Buddha’s teaching – i.e. you and I who are endeavouring to get to the bottom of this teaching now – is a son or a daughter of the best of men.

- the royal seat of the best of men

The royal seat of the best of men (*narendra-sadmā*; BC3.47) – also called the palace (*bhavanam*, BC1.88) – ostensibly means King Śuddhodana’s fortified palace in Kapilavāstu. In the hidden meaning, the samādhi which is king of samādhis, i.e. sitting up in the full lotus posture, is just the royal seat of the best of men. Providing further potential for ironic wordplay, *bhavanam*, besides meaning a palace, has the secondary meanings of 1. coming into existence, and 2. the place where anything grows (BC3.88; BC12.5).

- the royal road

The royal road (*rāja-mārgaḥ*, BC3.4) – also called the road of the best of men (*narendra-mārgaḥ*; BC3.53) – ostensibly means the main street in the capital city, the royal highway, Kapilavāstu High St. In the hidden meaning the royal road is the process of practising the practice that leads in the direction of cessation of suffering.

- the one who is different

In many places where Aśvaghōṣa describes individuals within a group, but especially in connection with women, he will talk about some women and then about another woman (*anyā*, BC3.17) or about several others (*anyāḥ*, BC4.35). In the hidden meaning, *anyā* is one who is different. In Shobogenzo such a person is given the ironic epithet of 非仏, a non-buddha.¹⁴ A non-buddha means a real individual practising buddha, as opposed to the ideal generic saint that we tend to expect a buddha to be.¹⁵

- the being without virtue

One of the adornments of the one who is different is the being-without virtue (*nairgunyam*, BC6.24). When the Prince speaks of himself in terms of being without virtue, the hidden meaning has to do with the virtue of being without – for example, the virtue of being without anger, greed and delusion, or the virtue of being free of the doings which are born of ignorance.

¹⁴ See Master Dogen's Shobogenzo chap. 28., *Butsu-kojo-no-ji*, para [58]; trans. Gudo Nishijima, Chodo Cross.

¹⁵ In a similar way Dogen in his revised edition of his instructions for Zazen (*Fukan-zazengi-rufu-bon*) says that 非思量, non-thinking, is the secret of sitting-meditation. Non-thinking is usually understood to mean “what is different from thinking,” i.e. action itself, the action of just sitting. But 非思量 can also be understood to mean true mindfulness, mindfulness that we remember to direct where it ought to be directed – in other words, mindfulness, but not what people generally think mindfulness to be. So 非思量 ostensibly means “action which is different from thinking”; but below the surface 非思量 might mean thinking, but not what people understand by thinking.

- action in the zone of the gods

When the heavy gates barring the way out of Kapilavāstu spontaneously open up, the horse-master Chandaka describes it as *daivo vidhiḥ* (BC8.46), which ostensibly means something like “a divine accomplishment” or “an act of God.” On the surface, *daivo vidhiḥ* suggests a miracle in the religious sense of a happening, realized by divine intervention, that defies the law of cause and effect. But *vidhi* can mean any act or action, and *daivaḥ* means “coming from the gods” not only in a literal or religious sense, but also in the irreligious sense intended by a sportsman or an actor who speaks of the gods being on his or her side. In the hidden meaning, then, the seemingly miraculous happening is nothing more religious or supernatural – and nothing less valuable – than what happens when a performer is temporarily in the non-doing zone.

- the golden seat

The ostensible meaning of *kāñcanam āsanam* (BC5.44) is a golden seat, a seat made of gold – something solid and absolute. But *āsanam* is an *-na* neuter action noun whose original meaning is sitting. So the hidden meaning of *kāñcanam āsanam* is golden sitting. In which case, like the royal seat of the best of men, it suggests in its hidden meaning something less set, less weighty, and more fluid and relative than what it seems to mean on the surface.

These are a small sample of the convenient fictions that Aśvaghōṣa uses in Buddha-carita as he continues, verse by verse, to play with verbal irony, dramatic irony, and – under the smiling eyes of the gods – cosmic irony. I haven’t even mentioned Māra’s army of demon throngs (*bhūta-gaṇāḥ*) in BC Canto 13, or the fire-coloured molten metal (*agni-varṇam ayo-rasam*) that wrong-doers are caused to imbibe in BC Canto 14, or the fabulous birds and trees of Indra’s paradise described in SN Canto 10.

But perhaps the best indication of how far Aśvaghōṣa can go in his use of irony – and especially in the use of what I have called his irreligious irony – is seen in his treatment of women.

Sometimes when Aśvaghōṣa describes the behaviour of a group known collectively as “the women” or “the girls” or “these fine ladies,” he is simply parodying the behaviour – which he evidently sees as beautiful even in its unenlightened bargaining about – of a group of monks in a *vihāra*, or place of practice. Thus, for example, in BC Canto 3:

But some among these fine ladies, hurry though they might in their eagerness, /
Were stopped in their tracks, by the heft of the mighty chariots of their hips and their corpulent breasts.
//BC3.16//

This, I think, is a humorous parody of heavy-footed Friar Tuck types – monks who were unduly interested in their midday meals.

Another use of irony which I think is peculiar to Aśvaghōṣa appears in BC Canto 4. It is a kind of inverted double entendre whereby behaviour that is overtly sexual is understood by the knowing reader to represent some aspect of the Buddha’s teaching. For example:

One girl, whose mouth with copper-red lower lip betrayed a whiff of distilled nectar, /
Whispered in his ear, “Let the secret be revealed!” //4.31//

What is thus suggested, below the surface, might be a teacher’s effort to transmit the secret of true mindfulness.

But use of this technique is at its most wickedly subversive in a series of verses in BC Canto 5 where Āśvaghōṣa describes “different” (i.e. enlightened) ones who are manifesting all kinds of unconventional postures, having totally dropped off. In the verse which concludes the series, we can’t help worrying that Āśvaghōṣa might have gone too far, when he seems to paint a picture of a woman who is so deeply fallen into a drunken stupor that she is showing off her genitals:

With her oral cavity open and her legs spreading out, so that she sprayed saliva, and made visible what normally remains secret, / One very different one had dropped off; rocking somewhat in her intoxication, she did not make a pretty sight, but filled an irregular frame. //BC5.61//

In the hidden meaning, the individual in question has not dropped off in the sense of having fallen asleep, but has totally dropped off body and mind. In that sense, she, or he, is manifesting the real secret of sitting practice – not by trying to conform to somebody’s false conception of “correct posture,” but on the contrary by having let go of all of that.

Golden Sitting, Revisited

**sabba-pāpassa akaraṇaṃ, kusalassa upasampadā /
sacitta-pariyodapanam etaṃ buddhāna’ sāsanaṃ //16**

**sarva-pāpasyākaraṇaṃ kuśalasyopasaṃpadaḥ /
svacitta-paryavadanam etad buddhasya śāsanam //17**

諸惡莫作 衆善奉行

自淨其意 是諸佛教 18

The not doing of any wrong, undertaking what is good,
Cleansing one’s own mind – this is the teaching of buddhas.

Here in four languages is one teaching that, we can all agree, was just the original teaching of the Buddha.

But what did the Buddha mean exactly by cleansing the mind? Cleansing one’s own mind of what?

¹⁶ Pāḷi. *Dhammapāda* 183.

¹⁷ Sanskrit. *Udānavarga* 28.1.

¹⁸ Chinese. Quoted from Master Dogen's Shogenzo chap. 10, *Shoaku-makusa*.

Aśvaghoṣa's writing, I am confident, can help us – whichever tradition we belong to – at least to begin to clarify our thinking about what it means to cleanse our own mind of doings born of ignorance.

In BC Canto 14, Aśvaghoṣa describes the Buddha's enlightenment in exactly these terms, saying that when the great seer understood that doings (*saṃskārāḥ*; the 2nd link in the 12-fold chain of dependent arising) are inhibited by the complete absence of ignorance, then the Buddha knew properly what was to be known and stood out before the world as the Awakened One.

But human ignorance (*avidyā*; the 1st link in the chain), Aśvaghoṣa makes clear in SN Canto 15, is a function of ideas. And so the Buddha taught the methodical abandonment of ideas, using mindfulness of breathing.

In the first place there are gross misconceptions, like the idea of me, in my ignorance, intervening to try and make my breathing how I think and feel it ought to be – for example, free, full and contented, like a buddha's breathing. This wrong idea is countered by letting a long in-breath be long and letting a long out-breath be long, and equally by letting a short in-breath be short and letting a short out-breath be short. In Aśvaghoṣa's gold-mining metaphor, this is like *letting* coarse grains of dirt be washed away by water – whereas if we *did* something directly to try and make our breathing better, we might be like an ignorant dirt-washer who tried, with his dirty fat fingers, directly to pick out grains of gold.

The next stage in mindfulness of breathing is the mindfulness that, when I breathe in, I will breathe in being conscious of *the whole* body; and when I breathe out, I will breathe out being conscious of *the whole* body. This mindfulness represents abandonment of more subtle conceptions, like the idea of the primacy of the head and neck, or the primacy of the spine, or the primacy of the diaphragm, or the primacy of what the Japanese call the *hara*, or of what the Chinese call the *dan tien*, et cetera. Such ideas, when they are associated with doings like trying to arrange the head on the spine by pulling in the chin, or with abdominal breathing, are akin to finer particles of dirt.

The ultimate stage in mindfulness of breathing is the mindfulness that, when I breathe in, causing bodily doings to cease,¹⁹ I will breathe in. And equally, when I breathe out, causing bodily doings to cease, I will breathe out. This mindfulness represents the giving up of all ideas that might trigger bodily doings, like water that washes away even the finest particles of dirt, leaving only the rudiments of gold. Hence:

A dirt-washer in pursuit of gold washes away first the coarse grains of dirt, / Then the finer granules, so that the material is cleansed; and by the cleansing he retains the rudiments of gold. // SN15.66 // In the same way, a man whose mind is poised, in pursuit of liberation, lets go first of the gross faults, / Then of the subtler ones, so that his mind is cleansed, and by the cleansing he retains the rudiments of dharma. // 15.67 // Just as gold, washed with water, is separated from

¹⁹ DN22 (in Pāli) has *passambhayaṃ kāya-saṅkhāraṃ assasissāmī*, “causing body-doings to cease, I will breathe in.” In Sanskrit *passambhayaṃ kāya-saṅkhāraṃ* is *praśamayan kāya-saṃskārān*. *Praśamayan* is causative of the present participle of *pra-śam*, to become calm or cease. But it needs to be clarified that bodily doings cannot be calmed directly. To try to calm bodily doings by doing something, does not work. Hence the title of SN Canto 15, Abandoning Ideas.

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dirt in this world, methodically, And just as the smith heats the gold in the fire and repeatedly turns it over, / Just so is the practitioner's mind, with delicacy and accuracy, separated from faults in this world, And just so, after cleansing it from afflictions, does the practitioner temper the mind and collect it. // 15.68 // Again, just as the smith brings gold to a state where he can work it easily in as many ways as he likes into all kinds of ornaments, / So too a beggar of cleansed mind tempers his mind, and directs his yielding mind among the powers of knowing, as he wishes and wherever he wishes. // SN15.69 //

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I would like here to express thanks and pay respects to teachers and fellow swimmers in four streams of practice – namely 1. the Zen/Mahāyāna tradition that spread from India in the west to Japan in the Far East, 2. the Theravāda tradition of Thailand, Sri Lanka, and South-east Asia, 3. the Nālandā tradition as preserved in Tibet, and 4. the more recent stream of non-doing practice which is the FM Alexander Technique.

Top of the list of teachers to whom I am indebted has to be the Zen teacher Gudo Nishijima, whom I met in Tokyo in June 1982, when I was 22 and he was 62. He firmly established all his students on the way of daily sitting-practice. At the same time he very much emphasized the importance of going back to ancient texts and, like archaeologists with spades and brushes, excavating their lost meanings. Always painting with broad and unworried strokes, he taught that sitting-meditation is something we practice for our own benefit, whereas translation work is to benefit others. That is not strictly accurate, of course, but as a starting point, it is not a bad approximation of the truth.

Gudo Nishijima practised and taught “just sitting” as championed by the 13th century Japanese Zen master Dogen in his great work Shobogenzo. This practice of just sitting, it is clear from Shobogenzo, Dogen regarded as thoroughly conducive to the cultivation of wisdom. Still, when from the age of 48 I began to read descriptions in Aśvaghōṣa’s writing of the Buddha’s teaching of *bhāvanā*, I seriously lacked wisdom in regard to what *bhāvanā* might really mean. As a word, *bhāvanā* means cultivation, or development of the mind, or mind training, or meditation. But what did it mean as a practice?

One could argue – especially with the benefit of hindsight – that the “just” of “just sitting” expresses the absence of doings (*saṃskārān*) born of ignorance (*avidyā*); therefore, truly just to sit is already to be cultivating the wisdom that puts an end to all doings born of ignorance. In which case, who needs other kinds of *bhāvanā*, beyond the cultivation of just this wisdom?

In Canto 16 of Saundarananda, however, the Buddha teaches Nanda to cultivate, when occasion demands it, not only wisdom in general but also, for example, friendliness (*maitrī*) as the particular antidote to ill-will (*vyāpāda*).

This kind of developing of the mind in certain directions, as a meditative practice, is not something I had become familiar with, during my years in Japan translating Shobogenzo into English and purporting to practise “just sitting.” So translating Aśvaghōṣa forced me to turn to (a) the descriptions of different kinds of *bhāvanā* in original Pāli texts, like for example the Rāhula Sutta, translated in exemplary fashion by Ānandajoti Bhikkhu; and (b) the first-person testimony of Tibetan monks like the 14th Dalai Lama, as elucidated in particular by Matthieu Ricard, the French monk who has been famously burdened – through no fault of his own, but because of the measurable benefits of his own mind-training – with the title “the happiest man in the world.”

Second on my list of teachers to acknowledge here, then, is the Theravāda monk Ānandajoti Bhikkhu. To him I am indebted not only for his exemplary translations from Pāli, all of which are made freely available at his website (www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net), but also for his unstinting guidance and encouragement along the way. The publication of this translation in its

present form is very largely due to his example of how to go about making an ancient text one's own, through painstaking study of the variants (different ways in which an ancient manuscript can be read) and of the metre, and how then to go about making the ancient text, together with an English translation of it, easily and freely available.

Though I have not met Matthieu Ricard in person, thanks to the internet I almost feel as if I have met him, along with the Dalai Lama whose teaching of mind-training Matthieu Ricard has done so much to clarify. So I would like to express a sincere debt of gratitude to all those many generations of teachers who kept the Nālandā tradition alive in Tibet, even after it had died out in its Indian birthplace. I see Āsvaghoṣa as very much belonging to that Nālandā tradition, as also to the Zen/Mahāyana tradition, and to the Theravāda tradition.

Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that these various traditions all belong originally to nobody but the Buddha, to whose non-sectarian teaching Āsvaghoṣa was entirely devoted.

In his efforts to establish the Zen tradition in Japan, Dogen wrote at the very beginning of Shobogenzo that the buddha-tathāgatas possess a subtle method which is supreme and *free of doing* (無為). This *freedom from doing* (無為, Chinese: *wu-wei*; Japanese: *mu-i*) is a truth that seems to have emerged in China thousands of years ago, more or less independently from the Buddha's teaching. This same truth of freedom from doing emerged again, at the end of 19th century, in Tasmania when a young actor named FM Alexander stumbled upon it in his detailed investigations, using a three-way mirror, of how he was using himself. And so I have come to be indebted also to many teachers of the FM Alexander Technique who have given me glimpses of what freedom from doing might really be. Among these many Alexander teachers, I would like to express my gratitude to four teachers in particular, two men and two women.

I ended up training as an Alexander teacher at a school in Aylesbury run by Ray Evans and Ron Colyer. My family set up home in Aylesbury in order to be close to the training school, and my wife Chie trained as an Alexander teacher with Ray and Ron after I finished my three-year training.

The core principle of Alexander work is that if we stop doing the wrong thing, the right thing does itself. Sadly, how the right thing does itself remains a mystery beyond the greedy grasping of the intellect. But how, in spite of our best intentions, we end up doing the wrong thing, is something that our minds can become clearer about. That being so, I am indebted to Ray Evans for his singular insights into how, when a person goes directly for an end, wrong doing emerges out of what Alexander called “faulty sensory appreciation.”

Ray led his trainees to understand how immature primitive reflexes (and especially a primitive fear reflex called the Moro reflex) can cause anybody (but especially a Zen practitioner with an emotional investment in sitting well) to become a slave to the feeling that he is sitting in the right posture. The feeling is delusory, because in fact there is no such thing as a right posture. As FM Alexander truly said, echoing Nāgārjuna, “There is no such thing as a right position... but there is such a thing as a right direction.”

If the late Ray Evans was a genius in this matter of unreliable feeling or “faulty sensory appreciation,” Ray's fellow teacher-trainer Ron Colyer has remained in my eyes a master of

allowing others to experience freedom from what Alexander called “end-gaining” – the emotional habit of going directly for a desired end.

End-gaining involves going for a desired end without paying due attention to intermediate steps in the process. Trying to be right – as one is invariably prone to try, as a would-be Alexander teacher (or, worse still, as a would-be Zen master) – is end-gaining itself. And stopping this end-gaining, it turns out, is not so easy.

On an Alexander teacher training course, then, as an antidote to end-gaining, it is vital that work is done in an atmosphere in which it is perfectly OK not to be right, where it is OK to be as wrong as ever one is. An Alexander lesson from Ron Colyer, everybody who has ever had such a lesson agrees, is an experience in being given limitless such freedom to go wrong. Nobody can keep taking himself too seriously in a room filled with the deep, warm, resonant laughter of a teacher who never fails to encourage the individual to be the individual he or she is, and who never fails to put the Constructive into *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual*.²⁰

After I finished Alexander teacher training with Ray and Ron, I continued for a number of years to have one-to-one Alexander lessons from two very experienced women teachers of the technique. One of these teachers was Nelly Ben-Or, who once described her efforts to teach me as costing her half her life! Nelly’s teaching demands on a deep level “the giving up of what ordinarily governs us.” I am afraid that, despite Nelly’s best efforts, I have continued to hold on tightly – and sometimes incredibly aggressively – to what ordinarily governs me. So, to Nelly, both heartfelt thanks and shame-faced apologies. I am sorry Nelly, for being such a terrible student, and for being so rude and aggressive while you were only trying to help me! Please forgive me.

Next, my undying gratitude goes out to the late Marjory Barlow, the niece of FM Alexander, who taught me, while I was lying on her teaching table with my knees bent, to give up three ideas: (1) the idea of being right; (2) the idea of doing the process of undoing which is described by words like “back to lengthen and widen”; and (3) the idea of moving a leg – in order to be truly free to go ahead and move the leg.

Last but by no means least I would like to say thank you to two staunch supporters I met while living in Japan. First, thank you to my wife Chie who has put up with me for more than 25 years now, and made many sacrifices along the way to allow me to continue tap, tap, tapping away on this keyboard. Second, I would like to thank for his generous support over many years, a wise and kind Japanese economist named Tadashi Nakamae. After working fairly unhappily for four years in Japan as an English teacher and then as a copy editor, I decided in the summer of 1986 to give up work, shave my head, and devote myself whole-heartedly to just sitting. This needless to say, had perilous financial implications. But a few weeks into the 90-day sitting retreat that I had decided to practise in my Tokyo flat, I got a phone call quite out of the blue. An independent research company called Nakamae International Economic Research had just been established in the city. Would I be interested in attending an interview for a part-time job

²⁰ *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual* is the title of the 2nd of FM Alexander's four books. When simply “Constructive Conscious Control” was suggested as an alternative title, for a saving of three words, Alexander is said to have replied, “But don't you see? That would be to omit the most important part!”

as English editor of the NIER Quarterly Report? I ended up working for NIER for the next 25 years, in Tokyo, where I was enabled not only to survive but actually to save some money, and when I returned to England, working remotely via the internet. The Zen gods were clearly on my side in the summer of 1986 when that phone call came in – as seemed to be confirmed when Mr Nakamae turned out to have a strong connection with the late Japanese Zen teacher Tsunemasa Abe. Tsunemasa Abe in turn, from an early age, was like a grandson to perhaps the most famous Zen teacher in Japan in the 20th century, Kodo Sawaki.

In conclusion, then, in writing these acknowledgments I am conscious of how much this translation owes itself, in countless unfathomable dependently-arisen ways, to the wisdom and compassion of many others. Since I received financial support from the Japan Foundation for the Shobogenzo translation, I feel in some sense indebted to the whole of Japanese society. Again, since my two sons received excellent educations at the expense of the British tax-payer, I feel similarly indebted to everybody in this great free country where I was born and to which I returned twenty years ago.

Over the course of those twenty years, the last seven of which have been spent with Ásvaghoṣa as guide and travelling companion, this translator has not had the smoothest of rides. This is largely due, I am sure, to the influence of what FM Alexander called “unduly excited fear reflexes and emotions.” And yet somehow – even in spite of the translator continuing to carry with him his heavy baggage of fear and ignorance – this translation of two truly wonderful epic poems now seems, with the gods on its side, to have been allowed to arrive at its end. So thank you to all the many people not mentioned here by name who have allowed this work to come to what, I feel, is a satisfactory conclusion.

There again, feeling is ever prone to be unreliable.

Buddhacarita
of
Aśvaghoṣa

Canto 1: bhagavat prasūtiḥ The Birth of Something Beautiful

Introduction

In the title of the present Canto *bhagavat* is ostensibly a term of reverence applied to gods and saints – Lord, Glorious One, Divine One, Adorable One, Venerable One, Holy One. But *-vat* is a possessive suffix, and *bhaga* is from the root *√bhaj*, which means to share out, or to obtain as one’s share, to enjoy. Meanings of *bhaga* given in the dictionary include *good fortune, happiness, welfare, prosperity; dignity, majesty, distinction, excellence, beauty; love, sexual passion, amorous pleasure*. So not all of these words necessarily carry a spiritual connotation.

The star of the present Canto is a sage who stands apart from the run-of-the-mill brahmins – spiritual materialists – who were eager to receive the king’s gifts of gold and cows. This singular sage’s name was Asita, which means “the Not-White One” – the one who, unlike the others, did not purport to be so spiritual, but who was rather devoted to sitting (*āsana-stham*, verse 52). Asita’s intuition, as events unfold, proves to be real. He hits the target.

Ostensibly, then, the present Canto describes a birth that was miraculous in the religious sense. But in its subversive subtext the Canto describes a birth that was miraculous in an irreligious sense. Hence in this translation, not “The Birth of the Holy One” but rather “The Birth of Something Beautiful.”

**aikṣvāka ikṣvāku-sama-prabhāvaḥ śākyeṣv aśakyeṣu viśuddha-vṛttaḥ /
priyaḥ śarac-candra iva prajābhyaḥ śuddhodano nāma babhūva rājā // 1.1 //**

Among the unshakable²¹ Śākya there was a king, a descendant of Ikṣvāku who in might was the equal of Ikṣvāku, a man of well-cleansed conduct / Who was loved by those below him, like the autumn moon: Śuddhodana was his name – ‘Possessed of Well-Cleansed Rice.’ //1.1//

**tasyendra-kalpasya babhūva patnī * * * * * /
padmeva lakṣmīḥ pṛthivīva dhīrā māyeti nāmnānupameva māyā // 1.2 //**

That Indra-like king had a queen: - - - - - / Like lotus-hued Padmā in her beauty and self-possessed as Mother Earth, she was Māyā by name and was like Māyā, the peerless goddess of beauty.²² //1.2//

²¹ *Aśakya*, lit. “not to be overcome, invincible” – a play on the clan name Śākya.

²² *Māyā* (“Art”) and *Padmā* (“The Lotus-Hued One”) are aliases of the goddess of fortune and beauty most commonly known as *Lakṣmī* (“Beauty”).

***** /

tataś ca vidyeva samādhi-yuktā garbhaṁ dadhe pāpa-vivarjitā sā // 1.3 //

...Like knowledge conjoined with balance, she who was far removed from evil conceived a child. //1.3//

***** /

******* na tan-nimittaṁ samavāpa tāpam // 1.4 //**

[Before she conceived, she saw in her sleep a white lord of elephants entering her body, but] she did not on that account incur any pain. //1.4//²³

sā tasya deva-pratimasya devī garbheṇa vaṁśa-śriyam udvahantī /

***** vīta-śrama-śoka-māyā *****] // 1.5 //**

She, the queen of that god-like king, bearing in her womb the light of his royal line, / And being devoid of weariness, sorrow, and the *māyā* which is deceit,²⁴ [set her mind on the pristine forest.²⁵] //1.5//

sā lumbinīm nāma vanānta-bhūmiṁ citra-drumāṁ caitrarathābhirāmām /

*******] // 1.6 //**

For the grove called Lumbinī, which, with its manifold trees, would have pleased Citra-ratha,²⁶ / [She left the King, there to brood, in the wooded solitude].²⁷ //1.6//

āryāśayām tām *** vijñāya kautūhala-harṣa-pūrṇaḥ**

śivāt purād bhūmi-patir jagāma tat-prītaye nāpi vihāra-hetoḥ // 1.7 //

Appreciating the nobility of her instinct..., and filled with joyful anticipation, / The master of the earth²⁸ departed from the blessed city at her pleasure – and not for the pleasure of an excursion.²⁹ //1.7//

²³ The Sanskrit in these opening verses was reconstituted by EH Johnston from the Tibetan. Text in square brackets is based on EH Johnston's English translation, which he based mainly on Weller's Tibetan text and German translation but also partly on Beal's Chinese text and English translation. The Chinese 於彼象天后 降神而處胎, though it led Beal to a different reading (in which he translated 象 as “likeness” rather than as “elephant”), at least corroborates the reference to an elephant.

²⁴ *Māyā* means “art,” and by extension, “illusion, unreality, deception, fraud, trick, sorcery, witchcraft, magic.”

²⁵ Chinese: 樂處空閑林, “enjoying the empty forest.”

²⁶ Citra-ratha, “He of the Bright Chariot,” is the king of the gandharvas who, along with the celestial nymphs, beautify Indra's heaven. *Citra* means bright or multifarious, manifold; hence the reference to manifold trees.

²⁷ Chinese: 寂靜順禪思 啓王請遊彼, “[for] dhyāna/thinking, following peace and quiet, she asked the king for permission to pass time pleasantly there.”

²⁸ *Bhūmi-pati*, “master of the earth,” here means the king. Often in his epic poetry, Aśvaghoṣa uses expressions like these in describing the dignified behaviour of a buddha, i.e. a king of dharma.

²⁹ *Vihāra* means walking for pleasure or exploring – as in the title of BC Canto 2. *Vihāra* was also used as the name of a place given over to practice of activities like walking, lying down, standing, and sitting.

**tasmin vane śrīmati rāja-patnī prasūti-kālaṁ samavekṣamāṇā /
śāyāṁ vitānopahitāṁ prapede nārī-sahasrair abhinandyamānā // 1.8 //**

In that glorious grove, perceiving that it was time for the birth, / The queen took to a bed covered over with an awning, being joyfully received into the bosom of thousands of fellow women. //1.8//

**tataḥ prasannaś ca babhūva puṣyas tasyāś ca devyā vrata-saṁskṛtāyāḥ /
pārśvāt suto loka-hitāya jajñe nirvedanaṁ caiva nirāmayam ca // 1.9 //**

Then, as a propitious moon passed into the asterism of *Puṣya*, to that queen sanctified by the manner of her action – / Through her,³⁰ for the welfare of the world – a son was born, painlessly and healthily. //1.9//

**ūror yathaurvasya pṛthoś ca hastān māndhātur indra-pratimasya mūrdhnaḥ /
kakṣīvataś caiva bhujāṁsa-deśāt tathāvidhaṁ tasya babhūva janma // 1.10 //**

Just as Aurva was born from the thigh, Pṛthu from the hand, Indra-equalling Māndhātṛ from the head, / And Kakṣīvat from the armpit: of that same order was his birth. //1.10//

**krameṇa garbhād abhiniṣṛtaḥ san babhau cyutaḥ khād iva yony-ajātaḥ /
kalpeṣv anekeṣu ca bhāvitātmā yaḥ saṁprajānan suṣuve na mūḍhaḥ // 1.11 //**

Having emerged from the womb gradually,³¹ he whose position at birth was never fixed,³² shone as if he had dropped from empty space. / Again, as one whose self had been developing over many aeons, he was born with integral awareness, and not in a wrong position. //1.11//

**dīptyā ca dhairyēṇa ca yo rarāja bālo ravir bhūmim ivāvatīrṇaḥ /
tathātidīpto 'pi nirīkṣyamāṇo jahāra cakṣūṁṣi yathā śaśāṅkaḥ // 1.12 //**

With brightness he shone, and with constancy, like a newly-risen sun inundating the earth; / Thus he blazed too brightly to be gazed upon, and at the same time he stole the eyes, in the manner of the hare-marked moon. //1.12//

³⁰ *Pārśva* means “the side”; therefore, ostensibly the ablative *pārśvāt* means “through her side.” But *pārśvāt* sometimes simply means “by means of, through.” So in this case the ostensible meaning requires a leap of the imagination, whereas the real or hidden meaning expresses the more everyday miracle of a natural birth.

³¹ *Krameṇa* – the birth went well, being neither precipitous nor prolonged.

³² *Yony-ajātaḥ* ostensibly means not born by a vaginal birth. The Chinese has 不由於生門 (“not through the birth gate”). But besides the birth canal, *yoni* has the secondary meaning of “the form of existence or station fixed by birth (e.g. that of a man, Brahman, animal).”

**sa hi sva-gātra-prabhayojjvalantyā dīpa-prabhām bhāskaravan mumoṣa /
mahārha-jāmbūnada-cāru-varṇo vidyotayām āsa diśaś ca sarvāḥ // 1.13 //**

For with the blazing light of his body, he blotted out the light of lamps as does the sun; / And with his beautiful lustre of precious gold, he enlightened all directions. //1.13//

**anākulāny ubja-samudgatāni niṣpeṣavad vyāyata-vikramāṇi /
tathaiva dhīrāṇi padāni sapta saptarṣi-tārā-sa-dṛśo jagāma // 1.14 //**

With even footsteps, his feet rising up like water-born lotuses, and coming down in long stamping strides: / Seven such firm steps he took, looking like the Seven Seer cluster of stars.³³ //1.14//

**bodhāya jāto 'smi jagadd-hitārtham antyā bhavotpattir iyaṁ mameti /
catur-diśaṁ siṁha-gatir vilokya vāṇīm ca bhavyārtha-karīm uvāca // 1.15 //**

“For awakening I am born, for the welfare of the world; this for me is the ultimate coming into existence.” / Surveying the four quarters, he of lion’s gait voiced a sound that conveyed this gist of what would be.³⁴ //1.15//

**khāt prasrute candra-marīci-śubhre dve vāri-dhāre śiśiroṣṇa-vīrye /
śarīra-saṁsparśa-sukhāntarāya nipetatur mūrdhani tasya saumye // 1.16 //**

Flowing out of the emptiness, as radiant as moonbeams, two showers of raindrops, had a cooling and a heating effect / Conveying the ease that is conveyed through bodily contact, as they fell upon his cool, moist, moon-like head.³⁵ //1.16//

**śrīmad-vitāne kanakojjvalāṅge vaiḍūrya-pāde śayane śayānam /
yad gauravāt kāñcana-padma-hastā yakṣādhipāḥ saṁparivārya tasthuḥ // 1.17 //**

As he lay on a bed with a glorious royal canopy, a base of shining gold and legs of cats’-eye gems, / An honour guard of yakṣa-wrangers stood around him, with golden lotuses in hand. //1.17//

******* ś ca divaukasah khe yasya prabhāvāt praṇataiḥ śirobhiḥ /
ādhārayan pāṇḍaram ātapa-traṁ bodhāya jepuḥ paramāśiṣaś ca // 1.18 //**

Heaven-dwellers who seemed to be concealed in the sky, with heads bowed down at his majesty, / Held up a white umbrella, and sang their best wishes for his awakening. //1.18//

³³ Saptarṣi, the Seven Seers: the constellation we call the Plough, or the Big Dipper, within the larger constellation of Ursa Major.

³⁴ In other words, we need not understand literally that the baby declared in polished Sanskrit metre, *antyā bhavotpattir iyaṁ mameti*, “This for me is the ultimate coming into existence.” More likely, in exhibiting nothing more or less miraculous than the neo-nate stepping reflex and a newborn's unbridled cry, the baby forcefully announced his presence, as if to say, “I am here. This for me is it.”

³⁵ Coolness, moistness, and mildness are characteristics attributed to the mildly intoxicating juice of the soma plant, collected under the moonlight and hence identified with the moon.

**mahoraḡā dharmā-viṣeṣa-tarṣād buddheṣv atīteṣu kṛtādhikārāḡ /
yam avyajan bhakti-viṣiṣṭa-netrā mandāra-puṣpaiḡ samavākiramās ca // 1.19 //**

Mighty serpents who, in their thirst for the choicest dharma, had watched over buddhas of the past, / Fanned him, their eyes exuding partiality, and covered him in a confetti of *mandāra* blossoms. //1.19//

**tathāgatotpāda-guṇena tuṣṭāḡ śuddhādhivāsās ca viśuddha-sattvāḡ /
devā nanandur vigate 'pi rāge magnasya duḡkhe jagato hitāya // 1.20 //**

Gladdened by a birth that went so well, those whose essence is pure and who dwell in the clear blue yonder, / The gods, though devoid of any red taint of passion, rejoiced for the welfare of a world steeped in sorrow. //1.20//

**yasya prasūtau giri-rāja-kilā vātāhatā naur iva bhūs cacāla /
sa-candanā cotpala-padma-garbhā papāta vṛṣṭir gaganād anabhrāt // 1.21 //**

At his birth the earth, anchored by the king of mountains, shook like a ship being battered in a gale; / And a sandalwood-scented rain, containing lillies and lotuses, fell from the cloudless sky.³⁶ //1.21//

**vātā vavuḡ sparśa-sukhā mano-jñā divyāni vāsāmsy avapātayantaḡ /
sūryaḡ sa evābhyadhikaḡ cakāṣe jajvāla saumyārcir anīrito 'gniḡ // 1.22 //**

Breezes blew that were pleasant to the touch and agreeable to the mind, causing fancy clothing to fall off. / The sun shone with extra brightness, being nothing but itself. Fire, with a full, moon-like flame, burned without being stirred. //1.22//

**prāḡ-uttare cāvasatha-pradeṣe kūpaḡ svayaḡ prādur abhūt sitāmbuḡ /
antaḡ-purāṇy āgata-vismayāni yasmin kriyās-tīrtha iva pracakruḡ // 1.23 //**

In the north-eastern corner of the residence a well of pure water spontaneously appeared;³⁷ / And there the royal householders, filled with wonder, performed bathing practices as if on the bank of a sacred stream. //1.23//

**dharmārthibhir bhūta-ḡaṇaiś ca divyais tad-darśanārthaḡ vanam āpupūre /
kautūhalenaiva ca pāda-pebhyaḡ puṣpāny akāle 'pi * * * * * // 1.24 //**

Hosts of divine, dharma-needy beings, being motivated to meet him, filled up the forest. / And such indeed was the zealous absorption, that blossoms, even out of season, were caused to fall from trees. //1.24//

³⁶ The falling of rain from a cloudless sky (*gaganād anabhrāt*) is ostensibly a miracle. But as Nāḡārjuna would later explain in detail, in reality there is no such thing, as a thing existing unto itself, as a cloud. In this sense the sky is always empty.

³⁷ The ancient Indian sages apparently deemed the north-east to be best direction for wells and water tanks.

***** /
 ***** **ayatnato** ***** // 1.25 //

[Diseases cleared up,] naturally. //1.25//³⁸

***** /
diśaḥ praseduḥ ***** // 1.26 //

Directions became clear... //1.26//³⁹

***** /
jaḡad-vimokṣāya guru-prasūtau ***** // 1.27 //

The guru had been born for the liberation of the world. [Only the God of Love did not rejoice.]
 //1.27//⁴⁰

[On seeing the marvellous birth of his son, the king, steadfast though he was, was much disturbed, and from his affection a double stream of tears flowed, born of joy and apprehension.
 //1.28//]⁴¹

³⁸ No Sanskrit is extant from BC1.25 through to the last line of BC1.40; and for these verses, unlike for the opening verses of the chapter, EH Johnston did not endeavour further to restore Aśvaghōṣa's original Sanskrit. EHJ's translation from the Tibetan for this verse was: "At that time the noxious creatures consorted together and did each other no hurt. Whatever diseases there were among mankind were cured too without effort." "Without effort" may well have been *ayatnatas* in Sanskrit, represented in the Chinese translation by 自, by itself, spontaneously, naturally (不療自然除).

³⁹ EHJ: "The birds and deer did not call aloud and the rivers flowed with calm waters. The quarters became clear (Tibetan: phyogs rnams rab snañ) and the sky shone cloudless; the drums of the gods resounded in the air."

⁴⁰ EHJ: "When the Guru was born for the salvation of all creatures, the world became exceeding peaceful, as though, being in a state of disorder, it had obtained a ruler. Kāmadeva alone did not rejoice." The Chinese translation has 唯彼魔天王 震動大憂惱, "Only he, the celestial king Māra, trembled and was greatly distressed." Māra, "the Destroyer," also known as Kāma-deva, "God of Love," is the subject of BC Canto 13.

⁴¹ Six lines of Chinese correspond: 父王見生子 奇特未曾有 素性雖安重 驚駭改常容 二息交胸起 一喜復一懼.

[The queen also was filled with fear and joy. //1.29//]⁴²

[Superstitious old women... /...prayed to the gods for good fortune. //1.30//]⁴³

[Brahmins of learning and eloquence, and reputed good conduct... /... said to the king: //1.31//]⁴⁴

["Men born on earth, for their peace, desire above all else a son. Rejoice, for this is the lamp of your people. //1.32//]⁴⁵

[Your son, among beings beset by suffering, will be a leader. //1.33//]⁴⁶

[Having the lustre of gold, and the radiance of a lamp, /... he will be either a spiritual seer or an earthly king. //1.34//]⁴⁷

[Should he desire earthly sovereignty, he will stand above all kings, as the sun outshines all stars. //1.35//]⁴⁸

[Should he seek freedom in the forest, then he will stand on the earth transcending all teachings, as Mount Meru stands as king of all mountains. //1.36//]⁴⁹

⁴² EHJ: "The queen was filled with fear and joy, like a stream of hot and cold water mixed, because the power of her son was other than human on the one hand, and because she had a mother's natural weakness on the other."

⁴³ EHJ: "The pious old women failed in penetration, seeing only the reasons for alarm; so, purifying themselves and performing luck-bringing rites, they prayed to the gods for good fortune." The Chinese has 互亂祈神明, "in mutual confusion praying to the divine intelligence."

⁴⁴ EHJ: "When the Brahmins, famed for conduct, learning and eloquence, had heard about these omens and considered them, then with beaming faces full of wonder and exultation they said to the king, who was both fearful and joyfull." The Chinese translation also mentions 高名稱, "lofty fame."

⁴⁵ EHJ: "On earth men desire for their peace no excellence at all other than a son. As this lamp of yours is the lamp of your race, rejoice and make a feast to-day." The Chinese includes 人生於世間 唯求殊勝子, "people in the world only wish for an excellent son."

⁴⁶ EHJ: "Therefore in all steadfastness renounce anxiety and be merry; for your race will certainly flourish. He who has been born here as your son is the leader for those who are overcome by the suffering of the world." The Chinese includes 靈祥集家國, "spiritual fortune will be concentrated in your family and nation" and 必為世間救 "he will surely be the world's salvation."

⁴⁷ EHJ: "According to the signs found on this excellent one, the brilliance of gold and the radiance of a lamp, he will certainly become either an enlightened seer or a Cakravartin monarch on earth among men." The Chinese translation includes 金色 "the colour of gold."

⁴⁸ EHJ: "Should he desire earthly sovereignty, then by his might and law he will stand on earth at the head of all kings, as the light of the sun at the head of all constellations." The Chinese includes 猶如世光明 日光為最勝, "just as, of brightness in the world, the light of the sun is best."

⁴⁹ EHJ: "Should he desire salvation and go to the forest, then by his knowledge and truth he will overcome all creeds and stand on the earth, like Meru king of mountains among all the heights." The

[As gold is the best of metals, Meru of mountains, the ocean of waters, / And as the moon is the best of planets, he will be the best of men. //1.37//]⁵⁰

[His eyes are blazing and yet mild, deep blue with long black lashes. How will these eyes not see everything?] //1.38//]⁵¹

[The king said to the brahmins: “Why should these signs be seen in him, when they were not seen in any former king? What is the cause?”... /... Then the brahmins said to him: //1.39//]⁵²

***** /

***** **nidarśanāny atra ca no nibodha // 1.40 //**

[“Some things, such as wisdom, glorious deeds, and a king’s fame, are beyond former and latter. And yet every effect arises from a cause.] So listen to these examples [of unprecedented accomplishment:] //1.40//]⁵³

**yad rāja-śāstram bhṛguḥ aṅgirā vā na cakratur vaiśa-karāv-ṛṣī tau /
tayoh sutau saumya sasarjatus tat kālena śukraś ca bṛhas-patiś ca // 1.41 //**

That science of kingship which Bhṛgu⁵⁴ and Aṅgiras⁵⁵, those two lineage-founding seers, failed to formulate, / Was created in the course of time, O gentle sir!, by their sons Śukra⁵⁶ and Bṛhas-pati.⁵⁷ //1.41//

Chinese includes 譬如須彌山 普為諸山王, “just as Sumeru Mountain, among all mountains everywhere, is the king.”

⁵⁰ EHJ: “As pure gold is the best of metals, Meru of mountains, the ocean of waters, the moon of planets and the sun of fires, so your son is the best of men.” The Chinese includes 諸宿月為最, “among constellations, the moon is best.”

⁵¹ EHJ: “His eyes gaze unwinkingly and are limpid and wide, blazing and yet mild, steady and with very long black eyelashes. How can he not have eyes that see everything?” The Chinese describes 淨目, his pure eye.

⁵² EHJ: “Then the king said to the twice-born: “What is the cause that these excellent characteristics should be seen, as you say, in him, when they were not seen in previous great-souled kings?” Then the Brahmins said to him:” The Chinese includes 如此奇特相 以何因緣故, “special signs like these, are due to what causes and conditions?”

⁵³ EHJ: “In respect of wisdom, renowned deeds and fame of kings there is no question of former and latter. And, since in the nature of things there is a cause here for the effect, listen to our parallels thereto.” The Chinese includes 物性之所生 各從因緣起, “That which in the nature of things is born/produced, in each case arises out of causes and conditions.”

⁵⁴ Name of an ancient seer regarded as progenitor of the Bhṛgu tribe.

⁵⁵ Another ancient seer, regarded as the father of the fire-god Agni. Various hymns and law books are attributed to him.

⁵⁶ “The Bright One,” a name of the planet Venus or its regent (regarded as the son of Bhṛgu). Also a name of Agni.

⁵⁷ “Lord of Prayer.” EH Johnston notes that Śukra and Bṛhas-pati are regularly coupled together as the authors of the first treatises on political science

**sārasvataś cāpi jagāda naṣṭam vedaṁ punar yaṁ dadṛśur na pūrve /
vyāsaś tathainaṁ bahudhā cakāra na yaṁ vasiṣṭhaḥ kṛtavān aśaktiḥ // 1.42 //**

And Sārasvata⁵⁸ articulated again a lost Veda which forebears had never seen; / Vyāsa,⁵⁹ ‘the Compiler,’ likewise, arranged it into many sections, which Vasiṣṭha,⁶⁰ for lack of Capability, had not done. //1.42//

**vālmīkir ādau ca sasarja padyaṁ jagrantha yan na cyavano maharṣiḥ /
cikitsitaṁ yac ca cakāra nātriḥ paścāt tad ātreya ṛṣir jagāda // 1.43 //**

Vālmīki⁶¹ invented a metre which the great seer Cyavana,⁶² in his compositions, had never used; / And that treatise on healing which Atri failed to produce, the seer Ātreya⁶³ would later expound. //1.43//

**yac ca dvijatvaṁ kuśiko na lebhe tad gādhinaḥ sūnur avāpa rājan /
velāṁ samudre sagaraś ca dadhre nekṣvākavo yāṁ prathamam babandhuḥ // 1.44 //**

That rank of twice-born brahmin⁶⁴ which “Squint-Eyed” Kuśika never won, O King!, the son of Gādhin did attain;⁶⁵ / And “Poison-Possessing” Sagara⁶⁶ gave the ocean a shoreline, a boundary which formerly the Ikṣvākus had failed to fix. //1.44//

**ācāryakaṁ yoga-vidhau dvijānām aprāptam anyair janako jagāma /
khyātāni karmāṇi ca yāni śaureḥ śūrādayas teṣv abalā babhūvuḥ // 1.45 //**

The status of teacher to twice-born brahmins of the method of yoga, a status that nobody but a brahmin had obtained, Janaka did attain;⁶⁷ / And the celebrated deeds of Śāuri, “Descended from the Mighty,” were beyond the power of Śūra, “the Mighty Man” himself, and his contemporaries. //1.45//

⁵⁸ See also SN Canto 7: So too did brahma-begotten Aṅgiras, when his mind was seized by passion, have sex with Sarasvatī; To her was born his son Sarasvata, who gave voice again to missing Vedas. //SN7.31 //

⁵⁹ Vyāsa, classifier of the Vedas, is also known as Dvaipāyana, “island-born,” since he was born in a small island in the Ganges. Nanda also refers to him in SN Canto 7: *Dvaipāyana, equally, while having dharma as his primary object, enjoyed a woman at a brothel in Kāśī; Struck by her foot, with its trembling ankle bracelet, he was like a cloud being struck by a twist of lightning.* // SN7.30 //

⁶⁰ Vasiṣṭha was the owner of the cow of plenty mentioned in SN1.3. His son's name was Śakti, “Capability.”

⁶¹ Author of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

⁶² One of the authors of the *Ṛg Veda*.

⁶³ A famous physician whose name Ātreya means “descended from Atri.”

⁶⁴ In this verse, it is clear from the context that *dvi-ja-tvam*, lit. “twice-born-ness” means being a Brahman.

⁶⁵ Viśva-mitra “Friend of All,” who was the son of Gādhin and the grandson of Kuśika, was born into the warrior caste of kṣatriyas but after enduring years of ascetic self-denial eventually earned the epithet *brahmarṣi*, “Brahman Seer” – only then to be captivated by the nymph Ghṛtācī. Nanda refers to the same story in SN7.35.

⁶⁶ So called because of poison given to his pregnant mother by the other wife of his father.

⁶⁷ King Janaka, as such, was a member of the kṣatriya cast of royal warriors. As such, again, he reversed the usual relationship in which brahmins would have taught yoga to kings.

**tasmāt pramāṇam na vayo na vaṁśaḥ kaś-cit kva-cic chraiṣṭhyam upaiti loka /
rājñām ṛṣiṇām ca hi tāni tāni kṛtāni putrair akṛtāni pūrvaiḥ // 1.46 //**

The criterion, then, is neither age nor descent; anyone anywhere may attain pre-eminence in the world. / For, among kings and seers, sons have achieved various things that forebears failed to achieve.” //1.46//

**evaṁ nṛpaḥ pratyaivitair dvijais tair āsvāsitaś cāpy abhinanditaś ca /
śāṅkāṁ aniṣṭām vijahau manastaḥ prahaṛṣam evādhikam āruroha // 1.47 //**

The king, being thus cheered and encouraged by those trusted twice-born provers, / Banished from his mind awkward doubt and rose to still greater heights of joy. //1.47//

**prītaś ca tebhyo dvija-sattamebhyaḥ satkāra-pūrvam pradadau dhanāni /
bhūyād ayaṁ bhūmi-patir yathokto yāyāj jarām etya vanāni ceti // 1.48 //**

And so upon those truest of the twice-born,⁶⁸ he joyfully bestowed riches, along with hospitality, / Wishing “May the boy become a king as prophesied and retire to the forest in his old age.” //1.48//

**atho nimittaiś ca tapo-balāc ca taj-janma janmānta-karasya buddhvā /
śākyeśvarasyālayam ājagāma saddharma-tarṣād asito maharṣiḥ // 1.49 //**

Then, awoken by dint of practice of austerities and alerted via signs to the birth of the one who would put an end to birth, / There appeared at the palace of the Śākya king, driven by a thirst for true dharma, the great seer Asita, “the Not White One.”⁶⁹ //1.49//

**taṁ brahmavid brahmavidāṁ jvalantaṁ brāhmyā śriyā caiva tapaḥ-śriyā ca /
rājño gurur gaurava-satkriyābhyām praveśayām āsa narendra-sadma // 1.50 //**

The king’s own guru, a knower of brahma among brahma-knowers,⁷⁰ ushered in him who was blazing with brahma-begotten brilliance and with the glowing heat of ascetic exertion – / The king’s guru, with the gravity and hospitality due to a guru, ushered Asita into the king’s royal seat. //1.50//

⁶⁸ *Dvija-sattamebhyaḥ*, “to the truest of the twice-born,” seems here to contain a pinch of irony. In later cantos (esp. BC Canto 7) *dvi-ja* (twice-born, born again) might be intended to carry a hidden, non-pejorative meaning. But here Aśvaghoṣa seems to suggest, below the surface, that the brahmins were self-seeking and not so true. The great seer Asita, who appears in the following verse, is not included among the twice-born [brahmins] – he is not called *dvi-jaḥ*; he, evidently, was one who was different (*anyaḥ*).

⁶⁹ Asita, “black, not white,” is thought to be a back formation from *sita*, “white.” Assuming that Aśvaghoṣa chose the name himself, the suggestion might be that Asita was different from brahmins who affected spiritual purity. Hence Asita’s intuition was real, and it would hit the target.

⁷⁰ As discussed in connection with Arāḍa’s teaching in BC Canto 12, *brahma* is derived from \sqrt{brh} , whose meanings include to grow, to develop, to get fat.

**sa pārthivāntaḥ-pura-saṁnikarṣaṁ kumāra-janmāgata-harṣa-vegaḥ /
viveśa dhīro vana-saṁjñayaiva tapaḥ-prakarṣāc ca jarāśrayāc ca // 1.51 //**

He entered the intimate surroundings of the women's quarters of the palace, bristling with a rush of joy at the prince's birth, / But steady, seeing the harem as if it were a forest, through his exceptional practice of austerities – and thanks also to old age. //1.51//

**tato nṛpas taṁ munim āsana-sthaṁ pādyārghya-pūrvam pratipūjya samyak /
nimantrayām āsa yathopacāraṁ purā vasiṣṭhaṁ sa ivāntidevaḥ // 1.52 //**

Then that sage who was devoted to sitting,⁷¹ the king fittingly honoured, with foot-washing water and with welcoming water; / The king offered to him appropriate service, as once upon a time Antideva did to Vasiṣṭha.⁷² //1.52//

**dhanyo 'smy anugrāhyam idaṁ kulaṁ me yan mām didṛkṣur bhagavān upetaḥ /
ājñāpyatām kiṁ karavāṇi saumya śiṣyo 'smi viśrambhitum arhasīti // 1.53 //**

“Fortunate am I and favoured is my family in that you, beauty-possessed man!, have come to see me. / Let me know, O moonlike man of *soma*!, what I should do. Please believe in me, for I am ready to be taught.” //1.53//

**evam nṛpeṇopamantritaḥ san sarveṇa bhāvena munir yathāvat /
sa vismayotphulla-viśāla-dṛṣṭir gambhīra-dhīrāṇi vacānsy uvāca // 1.54 //**

Being bidden like this by a ruler of men, the sage, with his whole being, [responded] appropriately; / He whose expansive eye was, in his state of wonderment, wide open, voiced words whose sound was deep and sonorous: //1.54//

**mahātmani tvayy upapannam etat priyātithau tyāgini dharmā-kāme /
sattvānvaya-jñāna-vayo-'nurūpā snigdha yad evam mayi te matiḥ syāt // 1.55 //**

“This befits you, great and noble soul that you are, hospitable, generous, and dharma-loving, / That you should show towards me, reflecting your character, family, wisdom and vitality, such affectionate appreciation. //1.55//

**etac ca tad yena nṛpa-rṣayas te dharmeṇa sūkṣmeṇa dhanāny avāpya /
nityaṁ tyajanto vidhivad babhūvus tapobhir āḍhyā vibhavair daridrāḥ // 1.56 //**

This, moreover, is that means whereby those seers who were rulers of men, on garnering riches, by the subtle method, / And constantly giving those riches away, in a principled manner, became flush with austerities and bereft of luxuries. //1.56//

⁷¹ The ostensible meaning of *āsana-sthaṁ* is “remaining seated” or simply “sitting down.”

⁷² The story of how Antideva went to heaven after serving warm water to Vasiṣṭha is contained in the *Mahā-bhārata*.

**prayojanaṃ yat tu mamopayāne tan me śrṇu prītim upehi ca tvam /
divyā mayāditya-pathe śrutā vāg bodhāya jātas tanayas taveti // 1.57 //**

But as to my own motive in coming here, hear it from me and be glad: / The cosmic word, I have heard – on Āditi’s way, on the path of the sun – is that your son has been born for the sake of awakening. //1.57//

**śrutvā vacas tac ca manaś ca yuktvā jñātvā nimittaiś ca tato ’smy upetaḥ /
didṛkṣayā śākya-kula-dhvajasya śakra-dhvajasyeva samucchritasya // 1.58 //**

Listening for that directive,⁷³ applying the mind to it, and intuiting it by signs, on that basis I am arrived⁷⁴ / Desirous of seeing the banner of the Śākya clan held aloft like the flag of mighty Indra.” //1.58//

**ity etad evaṃ vacanaṃ niśamya praharṣa-saṃbhrānta-gatir narendraḥ /
ādāya dhātry-aṅka-gataṃ kumāraṃ saṃdarśayām āsa tapo-dhanāya // 1.59 //**

Thus discerning this direction, the king, with a joyful spring in his step, / Took the prince, who was sitting on a nurse’s lap, and showed him to austerity-rich [Asita]. //1.59//

**cakrāṅka-pādaṃ sa tato mahārṣir jālāvanaddhāṅguli-pāṇi-pādam /
sorṇa-bhruvaṃ vāraṇa-vasti-kośaṃ savismayaṃ rāja-sutaṃ dadarśa // 1.60 //**

Then the great seer observed the wheel-marked feet, the webbed fingers and toes, / The circle of hair between the eyebrows, and the testes drawn up like an elephant’s: disbelievingly did he behold the son of the king. //1.60//

**dhātry-aṅka-saṃviṣṭam avekṣya cainaṃ devy-aṅka-saṃviṣṭam ivāgni-sūnum /
babhūva pakṣmānta-vicañcitāśrur niśvasya caiva tridivonmukho ’bhūt // 1.61 //**

As he watched [the prince] sitting in the lap of a nurse, like the son of Agni sitting in the lap of divine nymphs, / [Asita’s] tears dangled on the ends of his eyelashes, and, taking a deep breath, he looked up towards the heavens. //1.61//

**dr̥ṣṭvāsitaṃ tv aśru-pariplutākṣaṃ snehāt tanū-jasya nṛpaś cakampe /
sa-gadgadaṃ bāṣpa-kaṣāya-kañṭhaḥ papraccha sa prāñjalir ānatāṅgaḥ // 1.62 //**

But when the ruler of men beheld [Asita] all teary-eyed, the king’s attachment to his own flesh and blood caused him to shudder: / Stammering, choking back astringent tears, with his cupped hands held before him, and his body bent low, he asked: //1.62//

⁷³ *Vacas* like *vacanam* in the next verse ostensibly suggests a spoken word or act of speaking. At the same time, *vacas* and *vacanam* can also mean a teaching or direction.

⁷⁴ Ostensible meaning: “thus I have come to the palace.” In the hidden meaning, “on the basis of that direction, here I am, being here like this.”

**alpāntaram yasya vapuḥ surebhyo bahv-adbhutaṁ yasya ca janma dīptam /
yasyottamaṁ bhāvinam āttha cārtham taṁ prekṣya kasmāt tava dhīra bāṣpaḥ // 1.63 //**
“On beholding him whose form is little different from the gods, whose shining birth was
wonderful in many ways, / And whose purpose, you said, was destined to be of the highest
order, why, O Steadfast Soul, would you shed tears? //1.63//

**api sthirāyur bhagavan kumāraḥ kac-cin na śokāya mama prasūtaḥ /
labdhā katham-cit salilāñjalir me na khalv imaṁ pātum upaiti kālaḥ // 1.64 //**
Will the prince, O one full of fortune!⁷⁵, be blessed with long life? Heaven forbend that he was
born for my sorrow! / Am I in my cupped hands somehow to have gained water, only for Death
to come and drink it? //1.64//

**apy akṣayaṁ me yaśaso nidhānaṁ kac-cid dhruvo me kula-hasta-sāraḥ /
api prayāsyāmi sukhaṁ paratra supto 'pi putre 'nimiṣaika-cakṣuḥ // 1.65 //**
Again, will the repository of my glory be immune to decay? I hope the extending hand of my
family is secure! / Shall I depart happily to the hereafter, keeping one eye open in my son, even
while I sleep? //1.65//

**kac-cin na me jātam aphullam eva kula-pravālaṁ pariśoṣa-bhāgi /
kṣipraṁ vibho brūhi na me 'sti śāntiḥ snehaṁ sute vetsi hi bāndhavānām // 1.66 //**
Heaven forbid that my family's new shoot has budded only to wither away before opening. /
Tell me quickly, O abundantly able one!; I have no peace, for you know the love that blood
relatives invest in a child.” //1.66//

**ity āgatāvegam aniṣṭa-buddhyā buddhvā narendraṁ sa munir babhāṣe /
mā bhūn matis te nrpa kā-cid anyā niḥsaṁśayaṁ tad yad avocam asmi // 1.67 //**
Knowing the king to be thus agitated by a sense of foreboding, the sage said: / “Let not your
mind, O protector of men, be in any way disturbed;⁷⁶ what I have said I have said beyond doubt.
//1.67//

**nāsyānyathātvaṁ prati vikriyā me svām vañcanām tu prati viklavo 'smi /
kālo hi me yātum ayaṁ ca jāto jāti-kṣayasyāsulabhasya boddhā // 1.68 //**
Worried I am not about a twist of fate for him; distressed I am, though, about missing out
myself. / For the time is nigh for me to go, now that he is born, who will know the secret of
putting birth to death. //1.68//

⁷⁵ “O one full of fortune” and “O beauty-possessed man” are translations of the vocative *bhagavan* – as is
“O glorious one!” *Bhagavat*, as in the Canto title *bhagavat-prasutiḥ*, means one possessed of *bhaga*. The
meanings of *bhaga* include fortune, happiness, welfare, and beauty.

⁷⁶ *Anyā*: more literally, “different.”

**viḥāya rājyaṁ viṣayeṣv anāsthas tīvraiḥ prayatnair adhigamya tattvam /
jagaty ayaṁ moha-tamo nihantuṁ jvaliṣyati jñāna-mayo hi sūryaḥ // 1.69 //**

Indifferent to objects, he will give up his kingdom; then, through exacting and unrelenting effort, he will realize the truth; / And then, to dispel the darkness of delusion in the world, he will shine forth as a sun whose substance is knowing. //1.69//

**duḥkhārṇavād vyādhi-vikīrṇa-phenāj jarā-taraṅgān maraṇogra-vegāt /
uttārayiṣyaty ayam uhyamānam ārtam jagaj jñāna-mahā-plavena // 1.70 //**

Out of the surging sea of suffering, whose scattered foam is sickness, whose waves are old age, and whose terrible tide is death, / He will deliver the afflicted world which is borne helplessly along, by means of the great raft of knowing. //1.70//

**prajñāmbu-vegāṁ sthira-śīla-vaprām samādhi-śītām vrata-cakravākām /
asyottamām dharma-nadīm pravṛttām tṛṣṇārditaḥ pāsyati jīva-lokaḥ // 1.71 //**

The river whose flow is the water of wisdom, whose steep banks are sturdy integrity, whose coolness is balance, and whose greylag geese, calling and answering,⁷⁷ are acts of obedience – / That highest of rivers – the water of dharma flowing forth from him – the thirst-afflicted world of living beings will drink. //1.71//

**duḥkhārditebhyo viṣayāvṛtebhyaḥ saṁsāra-kāntāra-patha-sthitebhyaḥ /
ākhyāsyati hy eṣa vimokṣa-mārgaṁ mārga-praṇaṣṭebhya ivādhvagebhyaḥ // 1.72 //**

To sorrow-afflicted, object-laden souls, stuck in the scrubby ruts of saṁsāra, / He will tell a way out, as if to travellers who have lost their way. //1.72//

**vidahyamānāya janāya loke rāgāgnināyaṁ viṣayendhanena /
prahlādam ādhāsyati dharma-vṛṣṭyā vṛṣṭyā mahā-megha ivātapānte // 1.73 //**

To people being burned in this world by a fire of passion whose fuel is objects, / He with a rain of dharma will bring joyous refreshment like a great cloud with rain at the end of sweltering heat. //1.73//

**tṛṣṇārgalaṁ moha-tamaḥ-kapāṭam dvāraṁ prajānām apayāna-hetoḥ /
vipāṭayiṣyaty ayam uttamaena saddharma-tāḍena dur-āsadena // 1.74 //**

The door with panels of darkness and delusion, bolted shut by thirst, he will break open to let people out / By means of a thump of the highest order – the incontestable clout of true dharma, alongside which it is hard to sit. //1.74//

⁷⁷ Water birds – greylag geese, or in some translations ruddy ducks – called *cakra-vāka*, lit. “circular calling,” were known to call mournfully – *ang, ang* – to each other when separated during the night. They feature prominently in Sanskrit romantic poetry.

**svair moha-pāśaiḥ pariveṣṭitasya duḥkhābhībhūtasya nirāśrayasya /
lokasya sambudhya ca dharma-rājaḥ kariṣyate bandhana-mokṣam eṣaḥ // 1.75 //**

For folk entangled in the twisted fetters of their own delusion, for folk pulled down into their misery who lack the means to be lifted up, / He when he is fully awake, as a king of dharma, will undo the ties that bind. //1.75//

**tan mā kṛthāḥ śokam imaṃ prati tvam asmin sa śocyo 'sti manuṣya-loke /
mohena vā kāma-sukhair madād vā yo naiṣṭhikaṃ śroṣyati nāsyā dharmam // 1.76 //**

Therefore do not sorrow for him; those who deserve sorrow are those in this human world who, / Whether through the delusion that stems from sensual desires, or because of fervent inspiration, will not learn his ultimate dharma. //1.76//

**bhraṣṭasya tasmāc ca guṇād ato me dhyānāni labdhvāpy akṛtārthataiva /
dharmasya tasyāśravaṇād ahaṃ hi manye vipattiṃ tri-dive 'pi vāsam // 1.77 //**

And since I have fallen short of that merit, in spite of having mastered the stages of meditation, I have failed. / Because of being a non-learner of his dharma, I deem it a misfortune to remain even in the highest heaven." //1.77//

**iti śrutārthaḥ sasuhṛt-sadāras tyaktvā viṣādaṃ mumude narendraḥ /
evaṃ-vidho 'yaṃ tanayo mameti mene sa hi svām api sāravattām // 1.78 //**

Thus informed, the king in the company of his wife and friends dismissed dejection and rejoiced; / For, thinking "Such is this son of mine," he saw his son's excellence as being also his own. //1.78//

**ārṣeṇa mārgeṇa tu yāsyatīti cintā-vidheyaṃ hṛdayaṃ cakāra /
na khalv asau na-priya-dharma-pakṣaḥ saṃtāna-nāśāt tu bhayaṃ dadarśa // 1.79 //**

But then it preyed upon his mind that his son might trace a seer's path: / Biased against dharma he surely was not, but dread he did foresee from the ending of his line. //1.79//

**atha munir asito nivedya tattvaṃ suta-niyataṃ suta-viklavāya rājñe /
sa-bahu-matam udikṣyamāṇa-rūpaḥ pavana-pathena yathāgataṃ jagāma // 1.80 //**

And so the sage Asita went away, having let the reality be known, having caused the king, who was worried about his child, to know the inevitable reality tied to having a child. / While people, with varying degrees of appreciation, looked up at his excellent form, the Not White One went as he had come, on the way of the wind. //1.80//

**kṛta-mitir anujā-sutaṁ ca dr̥ṣṭvā muni-vacana-śravaṇe ca tan matau ca /
bahu-vidham anukampayā sa sādhuḥ priya-sutavad viniyojayāṁ cakāra // 1.81 //**

[A royal relative] who, having beheld his younger sister's son, knew the score, saw to it that the sage's direction should be listened to and given thought; / [This uncle] in many different ways, with empathy, being himself straight and true, saw to this as if for his own beloved son. //1.81//

**nara-patir api putra-janma-tuṣṭo viṣaya-gatāni vimucya bandhanāni /
kula-sadṛśam acīkarad yathāvat priya-tanayas tanayasya jāta-karma // 1.82 //**

Even the king himself, delighted at the birth of a son, loosened his ties to worldly objects / Whereupon, in a manner befitting his nobility, he performed for his son, out of love for his son, a rite of birth. //1.82//

**daśasu pariṇateṣv ahaḥsu caiva prayata-manāḥ parayā mudā parītaḥ /
akuruta japa-homa-maṅgalādyāḥ parama-bhavāya sutasya devatejyāḥ // 1.83 //**

Again, when ten days were up, with a purified mind, and filled with the greatest gladness, / He performed mutterings, fire oblations, ritual movements and other acts of religious worship, with a view to the ultimate well-being of his son. //1.83//

**api ca śata-sahasra-pūrṇa-saṁkhyāḥ sthira-balavat-tanayāḥ sahema-śṛṅgīḥ /
anupagata-jarāḥ payasvinīr gāḥ svayam adadāt suta-vṛddhaye dvijebhyaḥ // 1.84 //**

Still more, cows numbering fully a hundred thousand, with strong, sturdy calves and gilded horns, / Unimpaired by age or infirmity, yielding milk in abundance, he freely gave to the twice-born brahmins, with a view to his son's advancement. //1.84//

**bahu-vidha-viṣayās tato yatātmā sva-hṛdaya-toṣa-karīḥ kriyā vidhāya /
guṇavati divase śive muhūrte matim akaron muditaḥ pura-praveśe // 1.85 //**

With his self reined in, then, on that basis – after performing sacrificial acts which were variously oriented towards his end and which made him feel gratified in his heart – / At an auspicious moment in a good day, he rejoicingly resolved to enter the city. //1.85//

**dvi-rada-rada-mayīm atho mahārḥm sita-sita-puṣpa-bhṛtām maṇi-pradīpām /
abhajata śivikām śivāya devī tanayavatī praṇipatya devatābhyaḥ // 1.86 //**

And then into a precious pallequin made from a tusker's two tusks, which was filled with the white flowers of the White Flower, the *sita*, and which had pearls for lamps, / The god-queen with her child repaired, having bowed down, for good fortune, before images of gods. //1.86//

**puram atha purataḥ praveśya patnīm sthavira-janānugatām apatya-nāthām /
nṛ-patir api jagāma paura-saṅghair divam amarair maghavān ivārcyamānaḥ // 1.87 //**
Now, having let his wife enter the city ahead of him – her with their offspring, and elders⁷⁸
trailing behind – / The king also approached, applauded by groups⁷⁹ of townsfolk, like gift-
bestowing Indra entering heaven, applauded by the immortals. //1.87//

**bhavanam atha vigāhya śākya-rājo bhava iva ṣaṇ-mukha-janmanā pratītaḥ /
idam idam iti harṣa-pūrṇa-vaktro bahu-vidha-puṣṭi-yaśas-karam vyadhatta // 1.88 //**
Headlong into his palace, then, dived the Śākya king, happy as Bhava at the birth of six-faced
Kārttikeya.⁸⁰ / “Do this! Do that!” he commanded, his face brimming with joy, as he made
arrangements for all sorts of lavishness and splendour. //1.88//

**iti nara-pati-putra-janma-vṛddhyām sa-jana-padaṁ kapilāhvayaṁ puram tat /
dhana-da-puram ivāpsaro-’vakīrṇam muditam abhūn nala-kūbara-prasūtau // 1.89 //**
Thus at the happy development which was the birth of the king’s son, that city named after
Kapila,⁸¹ along with surrounding settlements, / Showed its delight, just as the city of the
Wealth-Giver, spilling over with celestial nymphs, became delighted at the birth of Nala-
kūbara.⁸² //1.89//

iti buddha-carite mahā-kāvye bhagavat prasūtir nāma prathamāḥ sargaḥ // 1 //
The first canto, titled “The Birth of Something Beautiful,”
in an epic story of awakened action.

⁷⁸ *Sthavira* means elder, as in *sthavira-vādins* or “Devotees of the Teaching of the Elders.”

⁷⁹ *Samgha* means group or community. These two terms *sthavira* and *saṅgha* may have a hidden significance insofar as in the second general council held at Vaiśālī, one hundred years after the Buddha's death, a schism is said to have arisen between *Sthavira-vādins* (Pāli *Thera-vādī*) and *Mahā-saṅghikas* or “Members of the Great Community.”

⁸⁰ Six-faced Kārttikeya was the son of the fire-god Agni, aka Bhava, mentioned above in BC1.61.

⁸¹ Kapilavastu.

⁸² Nāla-kubara was a son of Kubera, here called *dhāna-da*, “the Wealth-Giver.” Usually depicted as a dwarfish figure with a large paunch, Kubera was nonetheless revered by many as the god of riches and treasure.

Canto 2: antaḥ-pura-vihāraḥ Exploring within the Women's Quarters [or Faring Well within the Battlements]

Introduction

Antar means within, and *pura* means 1. fortress, castle, city, town; 2. the female apartments. *Antaḥ-pura* is thus given in the dictionary as the king's palace, and the female apartments. *Vihāra* includes the meanings of travelling around for fun, exploring, and faring well.

The Canto concludes by affirming the historical fact that the Śākya prince who would become the Buddha, in the period before he left the palace, enjoyed sensual pleasures with his wife and with other women in the royal palace. And ostensibly the Canto title points to these sexual explorations with women within the women's apartments – hence, “Exploring within the Women's Quarters.”

As with Saundara-nanda Canto 2 (A Portrait of the King), however, Aśvaghōṣa seems, below the surface, to be more interested in portraying King Śuddhodana as a paragon of the transcendent virtues of a buddha. Such virtues, called *pāramitās* – transcendent virtues, transcendent accomplishments, or perfections – are traditionally six in number:

śīla, discipline, integrity, not doing wrong (see e.g. BC2.33; 2.34; 2.43; 2.44; 2.52)
prajñā, wisdom (BC2.35; 2.52).
dāna, free giving (BC2.36; 2.40)
vīrya, strongly directed energy, heroic endeavour (BC2.40; 2.50)
kṣānti, forbearance (BC2.42; 2.43)
dhyāna, meditation (BC2.45)

To these six are sometimes added:

maitra, friendship (BC2.6; 2.35)
adhithāna, steadfast resolution (BC2.34; 2.49)
satya, truthfulness (BC2.38)
upekṣā, equanimity (BC2.52)

But nowhere does Aśvaghōṣa enumerate the six or the ten *pāramitās* like this one by one. In fact nowhere in Aśvaghōṣa's two epic poems does the word *pāramitā* even appear. In the present Canto, there is a reference to the steadfast integrity (*sthira-śīla*) of Yaśodharā's family in BC2.26, but none of the above *pāramitās*, by name, is ascribed to the king.

Nevertheless, the main point of this Canto, below the surface, seems to be to describe how a lord of the earth, along with those below him, all fare well, within safe limits, when the protector of men manifests transcendent virtues. Hence, to convey this central hidden meaning, the Canto title might better be rendered “Faring Well within the Battlements.”

**ā janmano janma-jarānta-gasya tasyātmajasyātma-jitaḥ sa rājā /
ahany ahany artha-gajāśva-mitrair vṛddhiṃ yayau sindhur ivāmbu-vegaiḥ // 2.1 //**

Following the birth of his self-begotten son – following the birth of the self-conquering son who would get to the bottom of birth and aging – / The king day by day waxed mightier by dint of wealth, elephants, horses and allies, as a river develops by dint of its tributaries. //2.1//

**dhanasya ratnasya ca tasya tasya kṛtākṛtasyaiva ca kāñcanasya /
tadā hi naikān sa nidhīn avāpa manorathasyāpy atibhāra-bhūtān // 2.2 //**

The king obtained all sorts of money and treasure, of wrought gold, or unwrought bullion – / He obtained manifold reserves, loaded, as it were, even beyond the capacity of the chariot of his mind.⁸³ //2.2//

**ye padma-kalpair api ca dvipendrain na maṇḍalaṃ śakyam ihābhinetum /
madotkaṭā haimavatā gajāś te vināpi yatnād upatasthur enam // 2.3 //**

And elephants surrounded him that none in this world, not even top tuskers of Padma's ilk⁸⁴, Could lead around a circle – / Himālayan elephants massively in rut stationed themselves, without the making of any effort at all, about his circle. //2.3//

**nānāṅka-cihnair nava-hema-bhāṇḍair vibhūṣitair lamba-saṭais tathānyaiḥ /
saṃcuṣubhe cāsyā purāṃ turaṅgair balena maitryā ca dhanena cāptaiḥ // 2.4 //**

[His city was traversed] by horses [or fast movers]⁸⁵ of different strokes and distinctive characters, rigged out in new gold gear,⁸⁶ and [traversed] by other types too, adorned with long braided manes⁸⁷; / Again, his city shook with [the stomping of] horses obtained by force, won through friendship, and bought with money.⁸⁸ //2.4//

⁸³ *Mano-ratha* generally means “heart's joy,” but here as in several other places Aśvaghoṣa makes a play on *ratha* whose meanings include both joy and chariot.

⁸⁴ Padma is the southernmost of the elephants that support the earth.

⁸⁵ *Turaṅga* lit. “fast-going,” ostensibly means a horse. So on the surface Aśvaghoṣa is talking about horses but below the surface he has in mind those whose consciousness is quick.

⁸⁶ Ostensibly, new gold trappings. In the hidden meaning, instruments for newly producing what is golden, or for digging out for the first time gold itself. The meanings of *bhaṇḍa* include 1. a tool or instrument, and 2. a horse's harness of trappings.

⁸⁷ In the hidden meaning, generic ascetic strivers.

⁸⁸ An example of the inherent *madhyamaka* logic of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis – force is opposed to friendship (or so-called loving-kindness, *maitrī*); in the middle way is the practical mechanism of the market.

**puṣṭāś ca tuṣṭāś ca tathāśya rājye sādhyo 'rajaskā guṇavat-payaskāḥ /
udagra-vatsaiḥ sahitā babhūvur bahvyo bahu-kṣīra-duhaś ca gāvah // 2.5 //**

Equally in his kingdom, well-fed and well-satisfied, well-disposed, dustless, and overflowing with goodness,⁸⁹ / There were, together with their lanky young, many cows,⁹⁰ which yielded abundant milk. //2.5//

**madhya-sthatām tasya ripur jagāma madhya-stha-bhāvaḥ prayayau suhṛttvam /
viśeṣato dārḍhyam iyāya mitraṁ dvāv asya pakṣāv aparas tu nāsa // 2.6 //**

An enemy of his entered into neutrality; neutrality turned into friendship; / friendship became something exceptionally solid. For him, though he had two sides, “the other” did not exist. //2.6//

**tathāśya mandānila-megha-śabdaḥ saudāminī-kuṇḍala-maṇḍitābhraḥ /
vināśma-varṣāśani-pāta-doṣaiḥ kāle ca deśe pravavarṣa devaḥ // 2.7 //**

For him, equally, with whispers of rainclouds blown by lazy breezes, with clouds of thunder gilded by rings of lightning, / But without any flak from showers of stone missiles or falling thunderbolts, at the right time and place, it rained. //2.7//

**ruroha sasyam phalavad yathārtu tadākṛtenāpi kṛṣi-śrameṇa /
tā eva cāsyauśadhayo rasena sāreṇa caivābhyadhikā babhūvuḥ // 2.8 //**

Each crop developed fruitfully in accordance with its season, without toil at the plough being done then at all,⁹¹ / And those same plants, for him, became herbs, only stronger, in taste and in efficacy. //2.8//

**śarīra-saṁdeha-kare 'pi kāle saṁgrāma-saṁmarda iva pravṛtte /
svasthāḥ sukham caiva nirāmayaṁ ca prajajñire garbha-dharāś-ca nāryaḥ // 2.9 //**

In dealing with that circumstance which, like a clash between armies, spells danger for the body, / Remaining even then in their natural state, with ease and without disease, pregnant women gave birth. //2.9//

**prthag vratibhyo vibhave 'pi garhye na prārthayanti sma narāḥ parebhyah /
abhyarthitah sūkṣma-dhano 'pi cāryas tadā na kaś-cid vimukho babhūva // 2.10 //**

Save for those observing a vow, no man, however lacking in means, ever begged from others; / And no noble person, however scant his resources, turned away when asked to give. //2.10//

⁸⁹ The first half of the verse invites us to expect that the subject will be good teachers.

⁹⁰ In the original Sanskrit the subject, cows (*gāvah*), comes at the very end of the verse.

⁹¹ Like *vināpi yatnād* (without any effort at all) in verse 3 above, the suggestion is of the effortlessness and spontaneity which we aspire to in the practice of non-doing. Ostensible meaning, then: no effort was made. Real meaning: effort emerged naturally, and work was done without undue stress.

**nāgauravo bandhuṣu nāpy adātā naivāvratō nāṅṛtiko na hiṁsraḥ /
āsīt tadā kaś-cana tasya rājye rājño yayāter iva nāhuṣasya // 2.11 //**

No disrespect nor any stinginess towards kinsmen, nor any lawlessness at all, or untruthfulness or cruelty, / Was shown by anybody in his kingdom at that time, as in the realm of King Yayāti, son of Nahuṣa.⁹² //2.11//

**udyāna-devāyatanāśramāṇām kūpa-prapā-puṣkariṇī-vanānām /
cakruḥ kriyās tatra ca dharma-kāmāḥ pratyakṣataḥ svargam ivopalabhya // 2.12 //**

Gardens, temples, and ashrams, wells and drinking fountains, lotus-ponds and woods, / Lovers of dharma established there as acts of religious sacrifice – almost as if they had seen heaven with their own eyes.⁹³ //2.12//

**muktaś ca durbhikṣa-bhayāmayebhyo hr̥ṣṭo janaḥ svarga ivābhireme /
patnīm patir vā mahiṣī patiṁ vā parasparaṁ na vyabhicerauś ca // 2.13 //**

Exempt from famine, terror, and sickness, people dwelt there as gladly as if they were in heaven; / And neither husband against wife nor wife against husband did man and woman do each other wrong. //2.13//

**kaś-cit siṣeve rataye na kāmāṁ kāmārtham artham na jugopa kaś-cit /
kaś-cid dhanārtham na cacāra dharmāṁ dharmāya kaś-cin na cakāra hiṁsām // 2.14 //**

Nobody served desire for pleasure; nobody, on account of desire, guarded wealth; / Nobody practised dharma for a prize; nobody, in pursuit of dharma, did harm.⁹⁴ //2.14//

⁹² Yayāti represents somebody in ancient Indian mythology who recognized the error of his former ways, with beneficial subsequent results for his kingdom. As such he is praised twice in Saundara-nanda: *Those equals of Indra took charge of that city with noble ardour but without arrogance; / And they thus took on forever the fragrance of honour, like the celebrated sons of Yayāti.* // SN1.59 // *Bhūri-dyumna and Yayāti and other excellent kings, / Having bought heaven by their actions, gave it up again, after that karma ran out -* // SN11.46 //

⁹³ *Pratyakṣataḥ... iva: as if* before their eyes. The ironic implication is that these worshippers of a religious dharma, involving religious rites, ceremonies and sacrifices (*kriyāḥ*), had not in fact seen what they aspired to with their own eyes.

⁹⁴ The three elements of this verse are the triple set of *kāma* (desire/love), *artha* (wealth), and *dharma* – identified in ancient India before the Buddha as three aims of human life. The verse suggests that the aims in themselves were not harmful, in a golden age, under enlightened sovereignty, when those aims were not pursued in a wrong way.

**steyādibhiś cāpy aribhiś ca naṣṭam svastham sva-cakraṁ para-cakra-muktam /
kṣemaṁ subhikṣam ca babhūva tasya purānaraṇyasya yathaiva rāṣṭre // 2.15 //**

Theft and suchlike were non-existent, as also were enemies; his realm was self-sufficient, immune to outside interference, / Pleasant to live in and plentifully provided – just as it was, once upon a time, in the kingdom of An-araṇya, “Nowhere Wild.”⁹⁵ //2.15//

**tadā hi taj-janmani tasya rājño manor ivāditya-sutasya rājye /
cacāra harṣaḥ praṇanāśa pāpmā jajvāla dharmah kaluṣam śaśāma // 2.16 //**

For at that time, at the time of that birth, in that king’s kingdom, as in the kingdom of Sun-begotten Manu, / Joy prevailed and wickedness was no more; dharma burned bright and foulness faded away. //2.16//

**evam-vidhā rāja-sutasya tasya sarvārtha-siddhiś ca yato babhūva /
tato nṛpas tasya sutasya nāma sarvārtha-siddho ’yam iti pracakre // 2.17 //**

And since in that son begotten by the king such fulfillment of everything was realized / The ruler of men named that son of his accordingly, saying “He is Sarvārtha-siddha, Fulfillment of Everything.” //2.17//

**devī tu māyā vibudharṣi-kalpaṁ dṛṣṭvā viśālam tanaya-prabhāvam /
jātaṁ praharṣam na śaśāka soḍhuṁ tato ’vināśāya divaṁ jagāma // 2.18 //**

But having witnessed her offspring’s mighty power, which could rival that of a divine seer, / Queen Māyā could not endure the extreme joy that arose in her; and so, rather than towards total oblivion, she ‘went to heaven.’⁹⁶ //2.18//

**tataḥ kumāraṁ sura-garbha-kalpaṁ snehena bhāvena ca nirviśeṣam /
māṭṛ-ṣvasā māṭṛ-sama-prabhāvā samvardhayām ātmajavad babhūva // 2.19 //**

Then the prince whose peers were the progeny of gods, was brought up by the unconditional means of love and affection: / His mother’s sister, who in her power was like his mother, caused him to grow as if he were her own son. //2.19//

**tataḥ sa bālārka ivodaya-sthaḥ samīrito vahnir ivānilena /
krameṇa samyag vavṛdhe kumāras tārādhipaḥ pakṣa ivātamaskē // 2.20 //**

And so, like the early-morning sun on the way up, or like a fire being fanned by wafts of air, / Gradually, the child developed well – like the waxing moon in the bright fortnight. //2.20//

⁹⁵ A truly civilized place, in a mythical Golden Age?

⁹⁶ In short, she died. But rather than forget her, people said that she had gone to heaven.

**tato mahārḥāṇi ca candanāni ratnāvalīś caṣadhibhiḥ saḡarbhā /
mṛḡa-prayuktā rathakāś ca haimā ācakrire 'smai suhṛd-ālayebhyaḥ // 2.21 //**

Then precious preparations of sandalwood, and a string of jewels with herbs inside them, / And little golden carts drawn by deer, were brought to him, from the homes of good-hearts – //2.21//

**vayo-'nurūpāni ca bhūṣaṇāni hiraṇ-mayā hasti-mṛḡāśvakāś ca /
rathāś ca gavo vasana-prayuktā tantrīś ca cāmīkara-rūpya-citrā // 2.22 //**

And ornaments appropriate for his age, toy elephants, deer and horses, made of gold, / And carts, and oxen⁹⁷ harnessed by finely woven fabric, with a tether for their calves, of gold and silver strands. //2.22//

**evam sa tais tair viṣayopacārain vayo-'nurūpair upacaryamāṇaḥ /
bālo 'py abāla-pratimo babhūva dhṛtyā ca śaucena dhiyā śriyā ca // 2.23 //**

While thus indulged by various sense-stimulating gifts, of a sort appropriate for his age,⁹⁸ / Child though he was, he was not like a child in constancy, and in simplicity, sagacity and dignity. //2.23//

**vayaś ca kaumāram atītya madhyaṁ samprāpya bālaḥ sa hi rāja-sūnuḥ /
alpair ahobhir bahu-varṣa-gamyā jagrāha vidyāḥ sva-kulānurūpāḥ // 2.24 //**

For, having passed through the early stage of life and arrived at the middle,⁹⁹ he, the young son of a king / Grasped in a few days subjects that took many years to master – fields of learning that befitted the house to which he belonged. //2.24//

**naiḥśreyasaṁ tasya tu bhavyam arthaṁ śrutvā purastād asitān maharṣeḥ /
kāmeṣu saṅgaṁ janayāṁ babhūva vanāni yāyād iti śākya-rājaḥ // 2.25 //**

But having heard before, from the great seer Asita, that the prince's future purpose would be transcendent bliss, / The Śākya king encouraged in his son attachment to sensual desires, so that he might not go to the forest. //2.25//

⁹⁷ Traditional symbol of bodhisattva-practice.

⁹⁸ With the repetition from the previous verse of description of toys as age-appropriate (*vayo-'nurūpa*), Aśvaghōṣa seems to wish to emphasize, wisely, the importance of playthings that give children the sense stimulation they need at different stages of their development.

⁹⁹ *Madhyam*, the middle – the middle stage between childhood and adulthood, or, in the hidden meaning, the middle way between extremes, i.e. moderation or balance.

**kulāt tato 'smai sthira-śīla-yuktāt sādhvīm vapur-hrī-vinayopapannām /
yaśodharām nāma yaśo-viśālām vāmābhidhānām śriyam ājuhāva // 2.26 //**

Then the king summoned for him, from a family of steadfast integrity, a true woman, the possessor of fine form, modesty and discipline, / A woman full of glory whose name was Yaśodharā, “Bearer of Glory” – in the shape of such a woman did the king invoke Śrī, goddess of fortune. //2.26//

**vidyotamāno vapuṣā pareṇa sanatkumāra-pratimaḥ kumāraḥ /
sārdham tayā śākya-narendra-vadhvā śacyā sahasrākṣa ivābhireme // 2.27 //**

The prince, with his supremely fine form shining forth, like “the Prince Who Was Forever Fresh,” Sanat-kumāra,¹⁰⁰ / Enjoyed himself together with that Śākya princess as did mighty “All-Eyed” Indra,¹⁰¹ mightily, with Śacī. //2.27//

**kiṁ-cin manaḥ-kṣobha-karam pratīpaṁ katham na paśyed iti so 'nucintya /
vāsam nṛpo vyādīśati sma tasmai harmyodareṣv eva na bhū-pracāram // 2.28 //**

[The king asked himself:] “How might he not see the slightest unpleasantness that could cause disturbance in his mind?” / Reflecting thus, the king assigned to the prince a residence up in the bowels of the palace, far away from the bustle on the ground. //2.28//

**tataḥ śarat-toyada-pāṇḍareṣu bhūmau vimāneṣv iva rañjiteṣu /
harmyeṣu sarvartu-sukhāśrayeṣu strīṇām udārair vijahāra tūryaiḥ // 2.29 //**

Then, in penthouse apartments painted white as autumn clouds – like the seven-storey palaces of gods, only on the earth – / And appointed for comfort in every season, he roamed for fun among female players of the finest instruments. //2.29//

**kalair hi cāmīkara-baddha-kakṣair nārī-karāgrābhīhatair mṛdaṅgaiḥ /
varāpsaro-nṛtya-samaiś ca nṛtyaiḥ kailāsa-vat tad-bhavanam rarāja // 2.30 //**

For, with sounds of gold-studded tambourines being softly beaten by women’s fingers, / And with dancing like the dancing of the choicest heavenly nymphs, that residence was as fabulous as Mount Kailāsa.¹⁰² //2.30//

¹⁰⁰ Name of one of the four or seven sons of brahmā. The name sanat-kumāra is sometimes given to any great saint who retains youthful purity.

¹⁰¹ Indra being “all-eyed” (lit. “thousand-eyed”) refers to the story of how Ahalya's aged husband Gautama punished Indra for seducing his wife by cursing Indra to carry his shame on his body in the form of a thousand vulvae. These female organs later turned to eyes when Indra worshipped the sun-god Surya.

¹⁰² Fabulous residence of Kubera, lord of wealth, and paradise of Śiva.

**vāgbhiḥ kalābhir lalitaís ca hāvair madaiḥ sakhelai madhuraiś ca hāsaiḥ /
tañ tatra nāryo ramayām babhūvur bhrūvañcitair ardha-nirīkṣitaiś ca // 2.31 //**

Using sweet nothings and playful gestures, accompanied by tipsy movements and charming chuckles, / The women there caressed him with secretly arched eyebrows, and sidelong glances. //2.31//

**tataḥ sa kāmāśraya-pañḍitābhiḥ strībhir gṛhīto rati-karkaśābhiḥ /
vimāna-prṣṭhān na mahīm jagāma vimāna-prṣṭhād iva puṇya-karmā // 2.32 //**

And so, embraced by experts in erotic addiction, by women who were unsagging in pursuit of pleasure, / He did not descend from high up in the palace down to earth – as a doer of good would not descend, from an upper carriage of gods on high. //2.32//

**nṛpas tu tasyaiva vivṛddhi-hetos tad-bhāvinārthena ca codyamānaḥ /
śame 'bhireme virarāma pāpād bheje damañ sañvibabhāja sādḥūn // 2.33 //**

The king, meanwhile, having as his inner motive only his son's growth, while also being goaded by [Asita's] prediction of his son's future purpose, / Maintained himself in balance and restrained himself from evil; he did his share of self-regulation and he left their share to the good.¹⁰³ //2.33//

**nādhīravat kāma-sukhe sasañje na sañrarañje viṣamañ jananyām /
dhṛtyendriyāśvāmś capalān vijigye bandhūrś ca paurāmś ca guṇair jigāya // 2.34 //**

He did not cling, like an irresolute type, to sensual pleasure; nor was he unduly enamoured with a female agent of rebirth; / The restless horses of the senses he tamed through constancy. He surpassed by his virtues both royal relatives and townsfolk. //2.34//

**nādhyaīṣṭa duḥkhāya parasya vidyām jñānañ śivam yat tu tad adhyagīṣṭa /
svābhyaḥ prajābhyo hi yathā tathaiva sarva-prajābhyāḥ śivam āśāmañse // 2.35 //**

He did not pursue learning to the detriment of the other but was steeped in that wisdom which is kindness; / For he wished all the best, in like manner, for his own offspring and for every offshoot. //2.35//

¹⁰³ The ostensible meaning may be as per EH Johnston's "he rewarded the good." The hidden meaning may reflect the principle of not doing wrong and letting the right thing do itself.

**bhañ bhāsuram cāngirasāhidevam yathāvad ānarca tad-āyuse saḥ /
juhāva havyāny akṛṣe kṛśānau dadau dvi-jebhyaḥ kṛśanam ca gās ca // 2.36 //**

To the shining constellation whose regent is the planet Āngirasa,¹⁰⁴ he religiously recited a song of praise, for his son's long life. / In a fiery fire of Agni, he offered what was to be offered. And to the twice-born brahmins he gave both gold and cows.¹⁰⁵ //2.36//

**sasnau śarīram pavitum manas ca tīrthāmbubhiś caiva guṇāmbubhiś ca /
vedopadiṣṭam samam ātmajam ca somam papau śānti-sukham ca hārdam // 2.37 //**

To cleanse body and mind, he bathed in the waters of sacred bathing places, and in the waters of merit; / And at one and the same time, he imbibed what is prescribed in the Vedas and what is produced from within: the *soma*-juice and the ease of a tranquil heart. //2.37//

**sāntvam babhāṣe na ca nārthavad yaj jajalpa tattvam na ca vipriyam yat /
sāntvam hy atattvam paruṣam ca tattvam hriyāśakann ātmana eva vaktum // 2.38 //**

He spoke gently, and yet said nothing lacking in reality; he chatted the truth, and yet said nothing nasty; / For a gently spoken untruth, or a harshly told truth, modesty forbade him from voicing, even inwardly. //2.38//

**iṣṭeṣv aniṣṭeṣu ca kārya-vatsu na rāga-doṣāśrayatām prapede /
śivam siṣeve 'vyavahāra-labdham yajñam hi mene na tathā yathāvat // 2.39 //**

When things pleasant and unpleasant called for action, he did not resort to reliance on raw desire, and faults; / He dwelt in the benign state which is won without fuss; for an act of devotion involving sacrifice¹⁰⁶ he valued not so highly. //2.39//

**āsāvate cābhigatāya sadyo deyāmbubhis tarṣam acechidiṣṭa /
yuddhād ṛte vṛtta-paraśvadhena dviḍ-darpam udvṛttam abebhidiṣṭa // 2.40 //**

Again, when the expectant came up to him, there and then, using the waters of giving, he washed away thirst; / And without starting a war but using the battleaxe of action, the enemy's swollen pride¹⁰⁷ he burst. //2.40//

¹⁰⁴ Jupiter.

¹⁰⁵ The verse seems to express affirmation of service of dharma, and at the same time sardonic negation of superstitious or religious beliefs and customs.

¹⁰⁶ Ostensibly *yajñam*, "sacrifice," refers to religious rituals like animal sacrifice, but the real meaning, in this context, is performance of any task in a manner which places undue emphasis on ends over means. See also BC2.49.

¹⁰⁷ *Dviḍ-darpam*. Ostensible meaning: the enemy's swollen pride. Hidden meaning: the enemy, swollen pride.

ekam vininye sa jugopa sapta saptaiva tatyāja rarakṣa pañca /

prāpa tri-vargaṃ bubudhe tri-vargaṃ jajñe dvi-vargaṃ prajahau dvi-vargaṃ // 2.41 //

He gave direction to the one and guarded the seven; he shunned the seven¹⁰⁸ and turned his attention to the five;¹⁰⁹ / He experienced the three and minded the three;¹¹⁰ he knew the two and abandoned the two.¹¹¹ //2.41//

kṛtāgaso 'pi pratipādyā vadhyān nājīghanan nāpi ruṣā dadarśa /

babandha sāntvena phalena caitāms tyāgo 'pi teṣāṃ hy anayāya drṣṭaḥ // 2.42 //

Even those who had committed a capital offence he did not put to death, nor even looked upon with anger. / With gentleness, and by way of retribution, he held them confined – for letting go of them, obviously, was also to invite trouble. //2.42//

ārṣāṇy acārīt parama-vratāni vairāṇy ahāsīc cira-sambhṛtāni /

yaśāmsi cāpad guṇa-gandhavanti rajāmsy ahārsin malinī-karāṇi // 2.43 //

Ultimate practices of the ancient seers, he repeated; long-harboured hostilities, he renounced; / And merit-scented feats of honour, he achieved. [But] the defiling dust of his passions, he did own. //2.43//

na cājihīrṣid balim apravṛttaṃ na cācīkīrṣīt para-vastv-abhidhyām /

na cāvivakṣīd dviṣatām adharmaṃ na cādīdhakṣīd hṛdayena manyum // 2.44 //

No inclination did he have to raise tax (or pay tribute)¹¹² that had not accrued, to covet what belonged to others, / To discuss the wrongness of hateful foes, or to ignite anger in his own heart. //2.44//

tasmīms tathā bhūmi-patau pravṛtte bhṛtyāś ca paurāś ca tathaiva ceruḥ /

śamātmake cetasi viprasanne prayukta-yogasya yathendriyāṇi // 2.45 //

While that earth-lord was acting thus, the mandarins and the townsfolk behaved likewise, / Like the senses of a person who is harnessed to practice, when the thinking mind is peaceful and clear.¹¹³ //2.45//

¹⁰⁸ Ostensibly (as per EH Johnston's note), "The sevens are the constituents of a kingdom and the seven vices of kings." In the hidden meaning, the seven could be the seven limbs of awakening, whose idealism is affirmed in the 1st pāda and negated in the 2nd pāda.

¹⁰⁹ Five ostensibly refers to the five *upāyas* [means of success against an enemy]; in the hidden meaning, the five might be five senses.

¹¹⁰ Ostensibly the three are the triple set of dharma, wealth, and sensual desire, the three aims of a king's life. In the hidden meaning, greed, anger and delusion might be the three to experience and mind.

¹¹¹ Ostensibly the two might (as per EHJ's note) good and bad policy. In the hidden meaning, divided consciousness (3rd in the 12 links) is the casual grounds of psycho-physicality (4th in the 12 links), and psycho-physicality is causal grounds of divided consciousness. See BC Canto 14, verses 74-76.

¹¹² Ostensibly, the king did not out of greed raise taxes unjustly. In the hidden meaning, a lord of the earth already has everything he needs, and so does not out of greed curry favour. *Balim vhr* could mean to raise tax or to pay tribute.

**kāle tataś cāru-payo-dharāyām yaśodharāyām sva-yaśo-dharāyām /
śuddhodane rāhu-sapatna-vaktro jajñe suto rāhula eva nāmnā // 2.46 //**

Then in time to a bearer of lovely milk, to Yaśodharā, a bearer of glory by her own actions, /
Was born a son who beamed like a rival of “Eclipsing” Rāhu,¹¹⁴ and that moon-faced son of
Śuddhodhana’s son was named Rāhula. //2.46//

**atheṣṭa-putraḥ parama-pratītaḥ kulasya vṛddhiṁ prati bhūmi-pālaḥ /
yathaiva putra-prasave nananda tathaiva pautra-prasave nananda // 2.47 //**

And so having had the son he desired, and feeling satisfaction of the highest order at the
extension of his house, a keeper of the earth, / Just as he had rejoiced at the delivery of a son,
rejoiced equally at the delivery of a son of his son.¹¹⁵ //2.47//

**putrasya me putra-gato mamaiva snehaḥ kathaṁ syād iti jāta-harṣaḥ /
kāle sa taṁ taṁ vidhim ālalambe putra-priyaḥ svargam ivāruruḥṣan // 2.48 //**

Joyfully he pondered: “By what means might there occur in my son this same attachment to a
son as I have?” / With this in mind, the king devoted himself in good time to this and that
prescribed practice, as if he were a *putra-priya*, an “offspring-loving” bird, aspiring to soar to
heaven. //2.48//

**sthitvā pathi prāthama-kalpikānām rājarṣabhānām yaśasānvitānām /
śuklāny amuktvāpi tapāmsy atapta yajñaiś ca himsā-rahitair ayaṣṭa // 2.49 //**

Standing firmly on the path of primeval royal bulls steeped in glory, / He practised austerities
with his whites still on, and he worshipped with sacrificial acts that did no harm. //2.49//

**ajājvaliṣṭātha sa puṇya-karmā nṛpa-śriyā caiva tapaḥ-śriyā ca /
kulena vṛttena dhiyā ca dīptas tejaḥ sahasrāmśur ivotsiṣṭkṣuḥ // 2.50 //**

And so this pious man of pure karma blazed with the majesty of a ruler of men, and with the
glow of hot austerity. / Made brilliant by good family,¹¹⁶ good conduct and good sense, He was
like the thousand-rayed sun, desiring to emit its brightness. //2.50//

¹¹³ Ostensibly the second half of the verse illustrates the first half; in fact the real teaching – since our primary interest is in hierarchies in the brain and nervous system, and not in politics – is contained in the second half. This is a technique we will encounter repeatedly in figures of speech employed by Aśvaghōṣa.

¹¹⁴ Rāhu, “the Seizer,” is the name of a demon who is supposed to seize the sun and moon and thus cause eclipses.

¹¹⁵ In the hidden meaning, a keeper of the earth (*bhūmi-pālaḥ*) is a buddha and delivery of a son (*putra-prasava*) might mean stimulating a student into action. *Prasava* can mean 1. begetting, procreation, birth, or 2. setting in motion, stimulation.

¹¹⁶ *Kula* means good family or, in the hidden meaning, noble lineage.

**svāyam̐bhuvan̐ cārcikam arcayitvā jajāpa putra-sthitaye sthita-śrīḥ /
cakāra karmāṇi ca duṣkarāṇi prajāḥ sisṛkṣuḥ ka ivādi-kāle // 2.51 //**

Again, having devoutly caused to be chanted those chants of praise attributed to Svayam-bhū,
“The Spontaneously Arisen,”¹¹⁷ he of enduring majesty muttered a prayer for his son’s enduring
existence / And performed difficult karmic rites – like Ka,¹¹⁸ in the beginning, desiring to create
creatures. //2.51//

**tatjyāja śastraṁ vimamarśa śāstraṁ śamaṁ siṣeve niyamaṁ viṣeḥ /
vaśīva kaṁ-cid viṣayaṁ na bheje piteva sarvān viṣayān dadarśa // 2.52 //**

The hymn of praise he could set aside; dogmatic scripture he could scarce abide. He applied
himself to equanimity; and subjected himself to restraint. / Into any sensory realm, he, like a
master, did not slide. All realms, he, like a patriarch, did realize. //2.52//

**babhāra rājyaṁ sa hi putra-hetoḥ putraṁ kulārthaṁ yaśase kulaṁ tu /
svargāya śabdaṁ divam ātma-hetor dharmārtham ātma-sthitim ācakāṅkṣa // 2.53 //**

For he cherished his sovereignty on account of his son, his son for the sake of his noble house,
his house as an expression of honour, / He cherished expression of truth as a way to heaven,
and heaven as a function of the self. He desired the continued existence of the self for the sake
of dharma. //2.53//

**evaṁ sa dharmāṁ vividhaṁ cakāra sadbhir nipātaṁ śrutitaś ca siddham /
dṛṣṭvā kathaṁ putra-mukhaṁ suto me vanaṁ na yāyād iti nāthamānaḥ // 2.54 //**

Thus he practised the dharma of many strata which the good alight upon, and penetrate
through listening, / All the time asking himself: “Now that my son has seen the face of his son,
how might he be stopped from going to the forest?” //2.54//

**rirakṣiṣantaḥ śriyam ātma-saṁsthāṁ rakṣanti putrān bhūmi-pālāḥ /
putraṁ narendraḥ sa tu dharmā-kāmo rarakṣa dharmād viṣayeṣu muñcan // 2.55 //**

Desiring to preserve their own personal power, on this earth, keepers of the earth guard against
their sons. / But this dharma-loving lord of men had guarded his son from dharma, by letting
him loose among sensual objects. //2.55//

¹¹⁷ Svayam-bhū, “Spontaneously Arisen” or “Self Existing” – i.e., Independent – is a name given to Brahmā and sometimes also to Śiva. In the hidden meaning, the buddhas of the three times, to whom a verse is traditionally recited for the transference of merit?

¹¹⁸ Ka is an alias of Prajā-pati, “lord of creatures,” the creator deity. Ka is also the name of the first consonant of the Sanskrit alphabet. Does *duṣkarāṇi* (hard to do, difficult) in this context mean totally impossible to achieve?

**vanam anupama-sattvā bodhisattvās tu sarve
viṣaya-sukha-rasa-jñā jagmur utpanna-putrāḥ /
ata upacita-karmā rūḍha-mūle 'pi hetau
sa ratim upasiṣeve bodhim āpan na yāvat // 2.56 //**

To the forest, nonetheless, went all bodhisattvas, all matchless beings on the way to awakening, who had known the taste of sensuality and produced a son. / Thus did he who had heaped up ample karma, even while the cause [of his awakening] was a developing root, partake of sensual enjoyment in the period before he took possession of awakening. //2.56//

iti buddha-carite mahā-kāvyē 'ntaḥ-pura-vihāro nāma dvitīyaḥ sargaḥ // 2 //

The 2nd canto, titled "Faring Well Within the Battlements,"
in an epic tale of awakened action.

Canto 3: saṁvegotpattiḥ Arising of Nervous Excitement

Introduction

In this Canto, depending on how one reads it, the prince is either appalled or inspired. Ostensibly he is appalled by visions, conjured by the gods, of (a) old age, (b) sickness and (c) death. In the hidden meaning, on entering the royal road he is inspired (a) by a mature person who has well-developed powers of forgetting; (b) by a person, rendered helpless by disabled senses, whose pride has been broken by multiple failures and disappointments; and (c) by one who has stopped trying mindfully to breath. Either way, whether by disgust or by enthusiasm, the prince's fear reflexes are stimulated, and his mind is perturbed – the *saṁvega* of the Canto title, which means violent agitation or excitement, is from the root *saṁ-√vij*, which means to tremble or start with fear. *Utpatti* means arising.

**tataḥ kadā-cin mṛdu-śādvalāni puṁs-kokilonnādita-pādapāni /
śuśrāva padmākara-maṇḍitāni gītair nibaddhāni sa kānanāni // 3.1 //**

Then, one day, he went to places carpeted with tender grass where trees resounded with a cuckoo's calls, / To places adorned with profusions of lotuses – he went to forests fabricated in songs.¹¹⁹ //3.1//

**śrutvā tataḥ strī-jana-vallabhānām mano-jña-bhāvaṁ pura-kānanānām /
bahiḥ-prayāṇāya cakāra buddhim antar-gr̥he nāga ivāvaruddhaḥ // 3.2 //**

Thus having heard how agreeable were the city's forests, which the women loved so dearly, / He, like an elephant shut inside a house, made a decision to get out. //3.2//

**tato nṛpas tasya niśamya bhāvaṁ putrābhidhānasya mano-rathasya /
snehasya lakṣmyā vayasaś ca योग्याम ājñāpayām āsa vihāra-yātrām // 3.3 //**

Then the king, catching the gist of the prince's expression of his heart's desire, / Convened a procession, commensurate with his affection and his wealth, and with a young man's energy – the ruler of men decreed a pleasure outing. //3.3//

¹¹⁹ *Gītair nibaddhāni* could also mean “covered with songs” or “furnished with songs.” Also the old Nepalese manuscript has not *gītair* but *śīte* (in the cold; hence “to forests chained in the cold”). The Tibetan and Chinese translations, however, indicate that the prince heard about the forests in songs. Is the point to highlight how motivating nervous agitation can begin with nothing more substantial than an idea?

**nivartayām āsa ca rāja-mārgē saṃpātam ārtasya pṛthag-janasya /
mā bhūt kumāraḥ su-kumāra-cittaḥ saṃvigna-cetā iti manyamānaḥ // 3.4 //**

He decreed, again, that on the royal road no afflicted common person must be met, / So that the prince with his impressionable young mind would not be mentally perturbed – or so the king supposed. //3.4//

**pratyāṅga-hīnān vikalendriyāṃś ca jīrṇaturādīn kṛpaṇāṃś ca dikṣu /
tataḥ samutsārya pareṇa sāmṇā śobhām parām rāja-pathasya cakruḥ // 3.5 //**

Those bereft of extremities,¹²⁰ with disabled organs of sense, along with pitiable people everywhere – the old, the infirm, and the like – / Were therefore caused, with great gentleness, to clear the area, so that the royal road was made to shine with great splendour. //3.5 //

**tataḥ kṛte śrīmati rāja-mārgē śrīmān vinītānucaraḥ kumāraḥ /
prāsāda-pṛṣṭhād avatīrya kāle kṛtābhyanujñō nṛpam abhyagacchat // 3.6 //**

And so in majestic action on the royal road, a majesty-possessing heir-apparent with an amenable assembly in his train, / Having alighted at the proper time from atop his elevated perch, approached, with his assent, a protector of men. //3.6//

**atho narendraḥ sutam āgatāśruḥ śirasya upāghrāya ciraṃ nirīkṣya /
gaccheti cājñāpayati sma vācā snehān na cainaṃ manasā mumoca // 3.7 //**

Then the king, tears welling, gazed long upon his son, kissed his head, / And issued his command, with the word “Go!” But with his heart, because of attachment, he did not let him go. //3.7//

**tataḥ sa jāmbūnada-bhāṇḍa-bhṛdbhir yuktaṃ caturbhir nibhṛtais turaṅgaiḥ /
aklība-vidvac-chuci-raśmi-dhāraṃ hiraṇ-mayaṃ syandanam āruroha // 3.8 //**

Yoked to four calm submissive horses bearing golden trappings, / With a complete man of knowledge and integrity holding the reins, was the golden carriage which he then ascended. //3.8//

¹²⁰ The ostensible meaning is having missing limbs, but the ironic hidden meaning is being free of extreme views and habits. The ironic hidden meaning of the rest of this verse will emerge during the course of the canto, as the prince considers the meaning of growing old, not breathing, and so on.

**tataḥ prakīrṇojjvala-puṣpa-jālaṃ viṣakta-mālyaṃ pracalat-patākam /
mārgaṃ prapede sadṛśānuyātraś candraḥ sanakṣatra ivāntarīkṣam // 3.9 //**

And so a road bestrewn with masses of flowers in full bloom, along which wreaths hung down and flags fluttered fleetingly,¹²¹ / He entered, with suitable backing, like the moon entering the sky in the company of stars. //3.9//

**kautūhalāt sphītataraiś ca netrair nīlotpalārdhair iva kīryamāṇaḥ /
śanaiḥ śanai rāja-pathaṃ jagāhe pauraiḥ samantād abhivīkṣyamāṇaḥ // 3.10 //**

And while eyes that bulged with curiosity, covered him, like so many halves of blue lotuses, / He travelled the royal road, quietly and calmly, viewed on all sides by the townsfolk. //3.10//

**taṃ tuṣṭuvuḥ saumya-guṇena ke-cid vavandire dīptatayā tathānye /
saumukhyatas tu śriyam asya ke-cid vaipulyam āśaṃsiṣur āyuśaś ca // 3.11 //**

Some praised him for his gentle, moon-like quality; others celebrated his blazing brilliance. / But such was the brightness of his face, that some wished to make his majesty their own, and to attain the depth of his vital power.¹²² //3.11//

**niḥṣṛtya kubjās ca mahā-kulebhyo vyūhās ca kairātaka-vāmanānām /
nāryaḥ kṛśebhyaś ca niveśanebhyo devānuyāna-dhvajavat praṇemuḥ // 3.12 //**

Hunch-backed men from noble houses, and regiments of mountain-men and dwarves, / And women from homes of no consequence,¹²³ like hanging flags in the procession of a god, all came out and bowed. //3.12//

**tataḥ kumāraḥ khalu gacchatīti śrutvā striyaḥ preṣya-janāt pravṛttim /
didṛkṣayā harmya-talāni jagmur janena mānyena kṛtābhyanujñāḥ // 3.13 //**

Then the women, hearing from their servants the news that the prince was on his way, / Went, wishing to see him, onto the roofs and balconies – with assent from their masters.¹²⁴ //3.13//

¹²¹ Ostensibly garlands and flags festooned the road as marks of joyful celebration. In the hidden meaning, wreaths and fluttering flags on the royal road which is the noble eightfold path, were marks of impermanence.

¹²² Thesis, antithesis, synthesis – two opposing views, and effort in the direction of abandoning all views.

¹²³ Ostensible meaning: low-status women. Hidden meaning: monks who have left home already. The three groups can be seen as following a dialectic progression to do with social status.

¹²⁴ Ostensibly this sounds chauvinistic. In the hidden meaning, however, again, the women with their various peculiarities represent individual practitioners practising under the guidance of a teacher whose gender and personal background is of no consequence.

tāḥ srasta-kāñcī-guṇa-vighnitās ca supta-prabuddhākula-locanās ca /
vṛttānta-vinyasta-vibhūṣaṇās ca kautūhalenānibhṛtāḥ parīyuh // 3.14 //

Impeded by slipping girdles and strings, with the bleary eyes of those being roused from deep sleep,¹²⁵ / And having put on their unfolded splendour¹²⁶ as events unfolded, the girls, unabashed in their eager desire, circled around. //3.14//

prāsāda-sopāna-tala-praṇādaīḥ kāñcī-ravair nūpura-nisvanaiś ca /
vitṛṣayantyo gr̥ha-pakṣi-saṅghān anyonya-vegānś ca samākṣipantyaḥ // 3.15 //

With the banging of feet on platform steps, with jingling of girdles and jangling of anklets, / They sent congregations¹²⁷ of house sparrows fluttering, and each derided the others for their haste.¹²⁸ //3.15//2

kāsām-cid āsām tu varāṅganānām jāta-tvarāṇām api sotsukānām /
gatiṃ gurutvāj jagṛhur viśālāḥ śroṇī-rathāḥ pīna-payo-dharās ca // 3.16 //

But some among these fine ladies, hurry though they might in their eagerness, / Were stopped in their tracks, by the heft of the mighty chariots of their hips and their corpulent breasts. //3.16//

śīghram samarthāpi tu gantum anyā gatiṃ nijagrāha yayau na tūrṇam /
hriyāpragalbhā vinigūhamānā rahaḥ-prayuktāni vibhūṣaṇāni // 3.17 //

An individual who was different,¹²⁹ meanwhile, though she was capable of going quickly, restrained her movement and went slowly, / Not showing off, but modestly keeping secret, splendid adornments connected to intimate practices.¹³⁰ //3.17//

paras-parotpīḍana-piṇḍitānām saṃmarda-saṃkṣobhita-kuṇḍalānām /
tāsām tadā sasvana-bhūṣaṇānām vātāyaneṣv aprāśamo babhūva // 3.18 //

At the windows at that time, the women pressed up against each other in squashed masses, their earrings colliding and ricocheting, / Their jewellery rattling, so that in each airy aperture there was a commotion. //3.18//

¹²⁵ In the hidden meaning, from unconscious behaviour.

¹²⁶ In the hidden meaning, their unfolded ochre robes (kaṣāyas).

¹²⁷ This is one of several occasions where Aśvaghōṣa uses *saṅgha* as a collective noun. Nowhere does he use the word in the sense it is conventionally used in Buddhist circles, to mean a formal community or congregation.

¹²⁸ A parody of a group of practitioners barging unskilfully about.

¹²⁹ Ostensibly *anyā* simply means another woman; below the surface, an individual who was different is a non-buddha – i.e, a buddha who is different from ordinary people's stereotypical expectations of what a buddha might be.

¹³⁰ Ostensibly, for example, lacy under-garments. In the hidden meaning, for example, a certificate of transmission. *Rahas* means 1. privacy, a secret, a mystery; 2. sexual intercourse.

**vātāyanebhyas tu viniṣṣṛtāni paras-parāyāsita-kuṇḍalāni /
strīṇām virejur mukha-pañkajāni saktāni harmyeṣv iva pañka-jāni // 3.19 //**

And yet, as they emerged from the windows, ear-rings setting each other aflutter, / The women's lotus faces looked like flowers of mud-born lotuses that had attached themselves to the grand mansions.¹³¹ //3.19//

**tato vimānair yuvatī-karālaiḥ kautūhalodghāṭita-vātapānaiḥ /
śrīmat samantān nagaram babhāse viyad vimānair iva sāpsarobhiḥ // 3.20 //**

Thus, with its lofty mansions, whose gaping balconies young women lined, and whose shutters had been opened up out of curiosity, / The splendid city was wholly resplendent, like space, with its celestial chariots bearing celestial nymphs. //3.20//

**vātāyanānām aviśāla-bhāvād anyonya-gaṇḍārpita-kuṇḍalānām /
mukhāni rejuḥ pramadottamānām baddhāḥ kalāpā iva pañka-jānām // 3.21 //**

Through the narrowness of the windows, the women's ear-rings overlapped each other's cheeks, / So that the faces of those most gorgeous of girls seemed like tied-together bunches of lotus flowers.¹³² //3.21//

**taṁ tāḥ kumāraṁ pathi vīkṣamāṇāḥ striyo babhur gām iva gantu-kāmāḥ /
ūrdhvonmukhāś cainam udīkṣamāṇā narā babhur dyām iva gantu-kāmāḥ // 3.22 //**

As down they gazed at the prince upon the road, the women seemed to wish to go to earth; / And the men, as up they looked at him, with upturned faces, seemed to wish to go to heaven. //3.22//

**dr̥ṣṭvā ca taṁ rāja-sutaṁ striyas tā jājvalyamānaṁ vapuṣā śriyā ca /
dhanyāsyā bhāryeti śanair avocañ śuddhair manobhiḥ khalu nānya-bhāvāt // 3.23 //**

Seeing the king's son shining bright with beauty and majesty, those women said in a soft whisper, "Lucky is his wife!" – speaking with pure minds and out of no other sense at all.¹³³ //3.23//

¹³¹ Even as he parodies the barging about of individuals who have come together to practise, Aśvaghoṣa sees something very beautiful in that collective effort – though he never once speaks of a Buddhist saṅgha.

¹³² A suggestion of the inter-connectedness of individuals in a group – a suggestion that is antithetical to the description of the contrary individual in BC3.17?

¹³³ What is ostensibly praise of purity is really tragicomic irony. The women in their innocence do not suppose what grief is about to come Yaśodharā's way. "Out of no other sense" is *nānya-bhāvāt* – the hidden meaning, then, is "having no sense of irony."

ayaṃ kila vyāyata-pīna-bāhū rūpeṇa sāksād iva puṣpa-ketuḥ /

tyaktvā śriyaṃ dharmam upaiṣyatīti tasmin hi tā gauravam eva cakruḥ // 3.24 //

“He of arms so lengthened and full, so they say, who is like a flower-bannered god of love in manifest form, / Will give up royal sovereignty and pursue dharma.” Thus the women conferred on him the full weight of their estimation. //3.24//

kīrṇaṃ tathā rāja-pathaṃ kumāraḥ paurair vinītaiḥ śuci-dhīra-veṣaiḥ /

tat pūrvam-ālokya jaharṣa kiṃ-cin mene punar-bhāvam ivātmanaś ca // 3.25 //

On his first reading of the royal road, which was filled like this with obedient citizens ostensibly displaying purity and steadfastness,¹³⁴ / The prince was thrilled, and somewhat conscious of himself being as if reborn.¹³⁵ //3.25//

puraṃ tu tat svargam iva prahr̥ṣṭaṃ śuddhādhivāsāḥ samavekṣya devāḥ /

jīrṇaṃ naraṃ nirmamire prayātuṃ saṃcodanārthaṃ kṣitipātmapajasya // 3.26 //

But when they saw that city all buoyed up, as if it were heaven, the gods whose perch is purity / Elicited an old man to wander by, for the purpose of provoking a prince who was an offspring of a protector of the earth. //3.26//

tataḥ kumāro jarayābhibhūtaṃ dr̥ṣṭvā narebhyaḥ pṛthag-ākṛtiṃ tam /

uvāca saṃgrāhakam āgatāsthas tatraiva niṣkampa-niviṣṭa-dr̥ṣṭiḥ // 3.27 //

And so the prince beheld that man humbled by growing old, who was of an order different to other men,¹³⁶ / He quizzed the gatherer of the reins,¹³⁷ being full of interest in that state, in which sole direction he rested his eyes, immovably.¹³⁸ //3.27//

ka eṣa bhoḥ sūta naro ’bhyupetaḥ keśaiḥ sitair yaṣṭi-viṣakta-hastaḥ /

bhrū-saṃvṛtākṣaḥ śīthilānatāṅgaḥ kiṃ vikriyaiṣā prakṛtir yad-ṛcchā // 3.28 //

“Who is this man, O master of the horses, that has appeared with hair all white, hand firmly gripping a staff,¹³⁹ / Eyes concealed below his brow, limbs loose and bending: Is this strange transformation his original condition? Is it a chance occurrence?”//3.28//

¹³⁴ Meanings of *veṣa* include 1. dress, clothes, and 2. artificial exterior, assumed appearance. To add further ambiguity, the old Nepalese manuscript has *ceṣaiḥ*, which was most probably a corruption of *veṣaiḥ* but could possibly have been a corruption of *ceṣṭaiḥ* (gestures).

¹³⁵ *Punar-bhāva*, being born again, ostensibly carries a favourable meaning. But on the royal road, the suggestion may be (taking *veṣaiḥ* to mean assumed appearances), one should beware of first impressions. The truth, on the royal road, may be that the doings which the ignorant one does do, always lead, until such time as they are stopped, in the direction of repeated becoming (*punar-bhavāya*; see MMK26.1).

¹³⁶ In the hidden meaning, one grown old means a fully developed person, a buddha.

¹³⁷ In the hidden meaning, *saṃgrāhakam* “a gatherer of the reins,” might also mean a buddha.

¹³⁸ The object of the focused contemplation could be the old one or, equally, could be the state of one who holds the reins, having tamed the horses. A parallel phrase follows in verse 40, with reference to the one who has been broken.

¹³⁹ In the ostensible meaning, a sign of weakness. In the hidden meaning, a sign of firmness.

**ity evam uktaḥ sa ratha-praṇetā nivedayām āsa nṛpātmaajāya /
saṁrakṣyam apy artham adoṣa-darśī tair eva devaiḥ kṛta-buddhi-mohaḥ // 3.29 //**

Addressed thus, the driver of a chariot of joy divulged to the offspring of a ruler of men / The very information he was supposed to protect; failing to see the fault in this, under the influence of those same old gods, he was confounded by way of his own resolve.¹⁴⁰ //3.29//

**rūpasya hantrī vyasanam balasya śokasya yonir nidhanam ratinām /
nāśaḥ smṛtinām ripur indriyāṇām eṣā jarā nāma yayaiṣa bhagnaḥ // 3.30 //**

“Ripping away of beautiful appearance, defeat of force, beginning of sorrow, ending of joys of passion, / And fading out of things remembered: an adversary of the senses is this process, called ‘growing old,’ by which the one here is being undone. //3.30//

**pītam hy anenāpi payaḥ śīśutve kālena bhūyaḥ parisarpam urvyām /
krameṇa bhūtvā ca yuvā vapuṣmān krameṇa tenaiva jarām upetaḥ // 3.31 //**

For even such a man in infancy sucked milk and, in the course of time, again, he went on hands and knees upon the earth;¹⁴¹ / Having become, step by step, an adult in possession of his body, by that same process, step by step, he has grown old.” //3.31//

**ity evam ukte calitaḥ sa kiṁ-cid rājātmajaḥ sūtam idam babhāṣe /
kim eṣa doṣo bhavitā mamāpity asmai tataḥ sārathir abhyuvāca // 3.32 //**

Thrown somewhat off balance on being thus informed, he the fruit of a king’s loins said to the master of the horses: / “Will I also have this fault in the future?” Then the driver of the chariot in which the two were riding said to him: //3.32//

**āyuṣmato ’py eṣa vayaḥ-prakarṣo niḥsaṁśayaṁ kāla-vaśena bhāvī /
evam jarām rūpa-vināśayitrīm jānāti caivecchatī caiva lokaḥ // 3.33 //**

The present span of life of you who are so full of life will also in future, through the power of time, surely run its course. / The world knows that growing old thus destroys beautiful appearances, and yet the world desires it.” //3.33//

**tataḥ sa pūrvāśaya-śuddha-buddhir vistīrṇa-kalpācīta-puṇya-karmā /
śrutvā jarām saṁvivije mahātmā mahāśaner ghoṣam ivāntike gauḥ // 3.34 //**

And so he whose mind had been cleansed by good intentions, before the fact,¹⁴² he who had heaped up piles of good karma, through long kalpas, by his acts, / When he heard about growing old, recoiled mightily, like a bull hearing the crash of a nearby thunderbolt. //3.34//

¹⁴⁰ The gods, as in Greek drama, are the masters of cosmic irony.

¹⁴¹ In the hidden meaning, for example, during the act of making a prostration.

¹⁴² Pūrvā, beforehand, in advance. A passing reminder that the secret is in the preparation, that the readiness is all?

**niḥśvasya dīrghaṁ sva-śiraḥ prakampya tasmimś ca jīrṇe viniveśya cakṣuḥ /
tām caiva dr̥ṣṭvā janatām saharṣām vākyam sa saṁvigna idaṁ jagāda // 3.35 //**

He took an audible deep breath, then shook his head, then fixed his eye upon the old man,¹⁴³ /
And then he took in the joyful throng; after that, still in a state of alarm, he uttered these
words:¹⁴⁴ //3.35//

**evaṁ jarā hanti ca nirviśeṣaṁ smṛtiṁ ca rūpaṁ ca parā-kramaṁ ca /
na caiva saṁvegam upaiti lokaḥ praty-akṣato 'pīdr̥śam ikṣamāṇaḥ // 3.36 //**

“Growing old like this demolishes – without discrimination – memory, beautiful appearance,
and forcefulness; / And yet the world is not stirred, even as the world witnesses it so before its
very eyes. //3.36//

**evaṁ gate sūta nivartayāśvān śighraṁ gṛhāṇy eva bhavān prayātu /
udyāna-bhūmau hi kuto ratir me jarā-bhave cetasi vartamāne // 3.37 //**

Being so, O master of the horses, turn the horses back!¹⁴⁵ Take us home, good sir, quickly! For
what pleasure can there be for me in parkland while the reality of growing old is occupying my
mind?”//3.37//

**athājñayā bhartṛ-sutasya tasya nivartayām āsa rathaṁ niyantā /
tataḥ kumāro bhavanaṁ tad eva cintā-vaśaḥ śūnyam iva prapede // 3.38 //**

And so at the behest of the child of his master, the tamer of horses turned the chariot around; /
Then into the palace, that real piece of royal real estate,¹⁴⁶ the prince went, in the thrall of
anxious thought, as if he were going into emptiness. //3.38//

**yadā tu tatraiva na śarma lebhe jarā jareti praparīkṣamāṇaḥ /
tato narendrānumataḥ sa bhūyaḥ krameṇa tenaiva bahir jagāma // 3.39 //**

When actually there, however, he found no happiness, looking deeper and deeper into aging,
and thinking, “growing old..., growing old...”; / Whereupon, with the king’s approval, again, by
the exact same procedure, he went outside. //3.39//

¹⁴³ The verb *pra-ṅkamp* means to shake or to loosen. In the hidden meaning, taking a deep breath, loosening the head (i.e. letting the head/neck be free), and fixing one's eye upon the Old Man (the Buddha), suggests meditative practice itself.

¹⁴⁴ An ironic description of giving a “dharma-talk” in front of a joyfully expectant audience?

¹⁴⁵ The hidden meaning of turning back is brought out in detail in BC Canto 6, *Chandaka / Turning Back*.

¹⁴⁶ *Bhavana* means a place of abode, a palace, and the place where anything grows. In the hidden meaning, turning back to the royal abode symbolizes coming back to just sitting in full lotus.

**athāparam vyādhi-parīta-deham ta eva devāḥ sasṛjur manuṣyam /
dṛṣṭvā ca tam sārathim ābabbhāṣe śauddhodanis tad-gata-dṛṣṭir eva // 3.40 //**

Then one whose body was encompassed by sickness,¹⁴⁷ a human being unlike any other, those same old gods conjured up; / And on seeing him the son of Śuddhodana addressed the driver of the chariot, with his eye directed squarely in that direction. //3.40//

**sthūlodaraḥ śvāsa-calac-charīraḥ srastāmsa-bāhuḥ kṛśa-pāṇdu-gātraḥ /
ambeti vācam karuṇam bruvāṇaḥ param samāśritya naraḥ ka eṣaḥ // 3.41 //**

“That individual with an expanded belly, whose body moves as he breathes, whose arms hang loose from his shoulders, whose limbs are wasted and pale, / And who, pathetically, keeps saying ‘Mother!’, while leaning on others for support:¹⁴⁸ This man is Who?” //3.41//

**tato ’bravīt sārathir asya saumya dhātu-prakopa-prabhavaḥ pravṛddhaḥ /
rogābhīdhānaḥ sumahān anarthaḥ śakro ’pi yenaīṣa kṛto ’svatantraḥ // 3.42 //**

Then spoke the leader who was in the same chariot as him¹⁴⁹: “O gentle moon-like man! Stemming originally from excitement of primitive elements and now far advanced / Is the momentous reverse, known as a breakdown,¹⁵⁰ that has rendered even this strong man helpless.¹⁵¹“ //3.42//

**ity ūcivān rāja-sutaḥ sa bhūyas tam sānukampo naram ikṣamāṇaḥ /
asyaiva jātaḥ pṛthag-eṣa doṣaḥ sāmānyato roga-bhayaṁ prajānām // 3.43 //**

The son of the king spoke again, being moved by pity as he looked at the man: / “Is this fault arisen specifically in the one here? Is the terror of breaking down common to all creatures?” //3.43//

**tato babbhāṣe sa ratha-praṇetā kumāra sādharmaṇa eṣa doṣaḥ /
evam hi rogaḥ paripīḍyamāno rujāturo harṣam upaiti lokaḥ // 3.44 //**

Then the driver of that vehicle of joy said: “This fault, O Prince, is common to all. / For, while thus pressed all around by forces of disintegration, people pained by disorder move towards pleasure.”¹⁵² //3.44//

¹⁴⁷ In the hidden meaning, a person steeped in the truth of suffering; a man of clouded eyes. *Vyādhi* means disorder, disease, sickness but also “any tormenting or vexatious thing.”

¹⁴⁸ Ostensibly he leans on others because of being too sick to stand, and cries for his mother. In the hidden meaning he goes begging, addressing women he meets as *ambā*, “mother,” a term of respect.

¹⁴⁹ *Sārathir asya* ostensibly means “his charioteer” or “his leader.” But *sārathi* is from *sa-ratha*, which as an adverbial phrase means “on the same chariot with” or simply “together with.” The phrase thus serves as a reminder that, whether drivers or passengers, we are all in the same chariot.

¹⁵⁰ *Roga*, disease, sickness, is from the root *vruj*, to break or shatter – as when an illusion is shattered.

¹⁵¹ *Asvatantraḥ*, lit. “not pulling his own strings” – an ironic suggestion of non-doing.

¹⁵² In the hidden meaning, those struck by the truth of suffering direct their practice towards *nirvāṇa*. “Driver of the vehicle of joy,” “master of the horse,” “tamer of horses,” et cetera, all indicate that the charioteer is, below the surface, thus teaching the teaching of a buddha.

iti śrutārthaḥ sa viṣaṇṇa-cetāḥ prāvepatāmbūrmi-gataḥ śaśīva /

idaṁ ca vākyam karuṇāyamānaḥ provāca kiṁ-cin mṛdunā svareṇa // 3.45 //

Mentally dejected to listen to this truth, the prince trembled like the moon reflected in ripples of water; / And, emoting with compassion, he uttered these words, in a somewhat feeble voice: //3.45//

idaṁ ca roga-vyasanam prajānām paśyamś ca viśrambham upaiti lokaḥ /

vistīrṇam ajñānam aho narāṇām hasanti ye roga-bhayair amuktāḥ // 3.46 //

“Seeing this for living creatures as ‘the evil of disease,’ still the world rests easy. / Vast, alas, is the ignorance of men who laugh and joke though not yet liberated from their fears of disease. //3.46//

nivartyatām sūta bahiḥ-prayānān narendra-sadmaiva rathaḥ prayātu /

śrutvā ca me roga-bhayaṁ ratibhyaḥ pratyāhataṁ saṁkucatīva cetaḥ // 3.47 //

Let the chariot of joy, O master of the horse!, be turned back from going onward and outward. Let the chariot go back to the royal seat of the best of men.¹⁵³ / Having learned of the danger arising from disease, my mind, driven back from miscellaneous enjoyments, also seems to turn inward.” //3.47//

tato nivṛttaḥ sa nivṛtta-harṣaḥ pradhyāna-yuktaḥ praviveśa veśma /

taṁ dvis tathā prekṣya ca saṁnivṛttaṁ paryeṣaṇam bhūmi-patiś cakāra // 3.48 //

Then, having turned back, and having turned back exuberance, he deeply entered the royal abode, absorbed in deep reflection. / And, seeing him thus twice turned back, a possessor of the earth made an investigation. //3.48//

śrutvā nimittam tu nivartanasya saṁtyaktam ātmānam anena mene /

mārgasya śaucādhikṛtāya caiva cukrośa ruṣṭo 'pi ca nogra-daṇḍaḥ // 3.49 //

On learning, then, a cause of turning back, he felt himself being totally abandoned by him.¹⁵⁴ / And though [the possessor of the earth] railed against the overseer who was charged with clearing the road,¹⁵⁵ however annoyed he was, he did not resort to cruelty with the cudgel. //3.49//

¹⁵³ In the hidden meaning, again, the royal seat is the act of sitting in the lotus posture.

¹⁵⁴ In the ostensible meaning, the king felt himself being abandoned by his son. In the hidden meaning, a possessor of the earth is aware of a process of being forgotten by himself.

¹⁵⁵ In the hidden meaning, a dharma-holder who (like Nanda in SN Canto 18) has been charged with carrying the torch of that transmission which dispels all views and opinions.

**bhūyaś ca tasmai vidadhe sutāya viśeṣa-yuktaṁ viṣaya-pracāram /
calendriyatvād api nāma śakto nāsmān vijahyād iti nāthamānaḥ // 3.50 //**

And once more he arranged for his son a special playground of sensual enjoyments, / All the time praying: “Though it be through the fickle power of the senses, would that he were unable to leave us!” //3.50//

**yadā ca śabdādibhir indriyārthair antaḥpure naiva suto ’sya reme /
tato bahir vyādīśati sma yātrām rasāntaram syād iti manyamānaḥ // 3.51 //**

And since his son had taken no delight in the sounds of voices, or in the other sensory stimuli, within the battlements of the women’s apartments, / The king gave the order for a trip outside, thinking that this might be a different kind of enjoyment. //3.51//

**snehāc ca bhāvaṁ tanayasya buddhvā saṁvega-doṣān avicintya kāmś-cit /
yogyāḥ samājñāpayati sma tatra kalāsv abhijñā iti vāra-mukhyāḥ // 3.52 //**

Attentive, out of attachment, to his son’s state of mind, and heedless of any faults associated with nervous excitement,¹⁵⁶ / He summoned to be present there well-practised women who, being adept in subtle skills, were mistresses of deferred pleasure.¹⁵⁷ //3.52//

**tato viśeṣeṇa narendra-mārge svalaṁkṛte caiva parīkṣite ca /
vyatyasya sūtaṁ ca rathaṁ ca rājā prasthāpayām āsa bahiḥ kumāram // 3.53 //**

Then, once the royal road had been adorned even more beautifully and had been inspected with even more care, / The king switched around the charioteer and the chariot, and urged the prince on his way, outwards.¹⁵⁸ //3.53//

**tatas tathā gacchati rāja-putre tair eva devair vihito gatāsuḥ /
taṁ caiva mārgē mṛtam uhyamānaṁ sūtaḥ kumāraś ca dadarśa nānyaḥ // 3.54 //**

Consequently, as the son of the king thus went into movement, those same old gods conjured up one who had breathed his last;¹⁵⁹ / And as he, being dead, was borne along the road, nobody saw him but the charioteer and the prince. //3.54//

¹⁵⁶ The point might be to emphasize the importance of establishing the will to the truth, without worrying about attendant faults. For example, Dogen wrote that the bodhi-mind has been established in drunkenness.

¹⁵⁷ *Kalāsv abhijñā iti vāra-mukhyāḥ*. Ostensibly the best among skillful courtesans; in the hidden meaning (which will be brought out in the following canto), masters skilled in the use of expedient means, or indirect tactics.

¹⁵⁸ Symbolizing reciprocal efforts, to sit with mind, and to sit with body, in the direction of dropping off body and mind.

¹⁵⁹ In the hidden meaning, one who had stopped breathing, i.e. one who had given up trying to control his breath, or other vital processes, by direct means. One who had learned to let the right thing do itself.

**athābravīd rāja-sutaḥ sa sūtaṁ naraiś caturbhir hriyate ka eṣaḥ /
dīnair manuṣyair anugamyamāno yo bhūṣito 'śvāsy avarudyate ca // 3.55 //**

Then the son of the king said to the master of the horses: “This is Who, who is being carried by four people,¹⁶⁰ / Who is being followed by afflicted human beings, who is beautifully adorned, and yet, as one who does not breathe, inspires tears.” //3.55//

**tataḥ sa śuddhātmabhir eva devaiḥ śuddhādhivāsair abhibhūta-cetāḥ /
avācyam apy artham imaṁ niyantā pravyājahārāthavad īśvarāya // 3.56 //**

Then the charioteer, while his mind was overpowered by the gods whose essence is purity itself, by the gods who sit upon pure perches, / He, in a voice full of meaning, as the tamer of the horses,¹⁶¹ conveyed to the prince the unspeakable meaning in question. //3.56//

**buddhīndriya-prāṇa-guṇair viyuktaḥ supto viśamjñas tṛṇa-kāṣṭha-bhūtaḥ /
saṁvardhya saṁrakṣya ca yatnavadbhiḥ priya-priyais tyajyata eṣa ko 'pi // 3.57 //**

“Dissevered from the strings of sense power and breathing, inactive and insensible, akin to straw and wood, / Having been nurtured and cherished, he is deliberately left alone by his dearest friends – this, indeed, is Who.”¹⁶² //3.57//

**iti praṇetuḥ sa niśamya vākyam saṁcukṣubhe kiṁ-cid uvāca cainam /
kiṁ kevalo' syaiva janasya dharmāḥ sarva-prajānām ayam īdṛśo 'ntaḥ // 3.58 //**

On hearing the words of a guide he was somewhat agitated, and said to him: / “Is this a condition unique to this person here? Is such the end for all creatures?” //3.58//

**tataḥ praṇetā vadati sma tasmai sarva-prajānām idam anta-karma /
hīnasya madhyasya mahātmano vā sarvasya loke niyato vināśaḥ // 3.59 //**

Then the guide said to him: “This is the ultimate karma of all creatures: / For everybody in this world, whether low, middling, or mighty, utter loss is certain.”¹⁶³ //3.59//

**tataḥ sa dhīro 'pi narendra-sūnuḥ śrutvaiva mṛtyuṁ viśasāda sadyaḥ /
aṁsena saṁśliṣya ca kūbarāgraṁ provāca nihrādavatā svareṇa // 3.60 //**

Then, mild-mannered though he was, as a son of the best of men, on learning of dying, he sank back and down, instantly deflated, / And, bringing his shoulder into contact with the tip of the pole of the yoke of the chariot,¹⁶⁴ he asserted in a sonorous voice: //3.60//

¹⁶⁰ Four or more often five (= one who has breathed his last + four who support him or her?) is the traditional minimum number to form a community devoted to the practice of the Buddha's teaching.

¹⁶¹ Again, in the hidden meaning, *niyantā*, restrainer, tamer of horses, may be taken as an epithet for a teacher of the Buddha's teaching.

¹⁶² A person who is as one with the ineffable, the unspeakable, unbelievable truth.

¹⁶³ In the hidden meaning, emptiness is the most reliable thing there is.

¹⁶⁴ In the ostensible meaning, he reached the point of giving up, and rested back on the chariot. In the hidden meaning, he contacted the point at which he might begin to make effort to move the chariot.

**īyaṃ ca niṣṭhā niyatā prajānām pramādyati tyakta-bhayaś ca lokaḥ /
manāmsi śanke kaṭhināni nṛṇām svasthās tathā hy-adhvani vartamānāḥ // 3.61 //**

“This, for sentient creatures, is a certain conclusion, and yet the world barges heedlessly about, disregarding danger. / Stiffened, I venture, are the mental sinews of men, who so self-assuredly remain on such a path.¹⁶⁵ //3.61//

**tasmād rathaḥ sūta nivartyatām no vihāra-bhūmer na hi deśa-kālaḥ /
jānan vināśam katham ārti-kāle sacetanaḥ syād iha hi pramattaḥ // 3.62 //**

Therefore, O master of the horses, let our chariot of joy be turned back, for this is not the time or the place for roaming around: / Knowing utter loss, in the hour of pain, how could anybody possessed of consciousness be negligent in this area?” //3.62//

**iti bruvāṇe ’pi narādhipātmaḥ nivartayām āsa sa naiva taṃ ratham /
viśeṣa-yuktaṃ tu narendra-śāsanāt sa-padma-ṣaṇḍam vanam-eva niriyayau // 3.63 //**

Even with an offspring of a ruler of men telling him so, assuredly he did not turn that chariot back; / Rather, following the order of the best of men, to a wood imbued with special distinction, to Sa-padma-ṣaṇḍa-vana, ‘the Wood of the Liberated Bull among Lotuses,’ he ventured farther out. //3.63//

**tataḥ śivaṃ kusumita-bāla-pādapaṃ paribhramat-pramudita-matta-kokilam /
vimānavat-sa-kamala-cāru-dīrghikaṃ dadarśa tad-vanam-iva nandanam vanam // 3.64 //**

There with young trees in flower, lusty cuckoos roving joyously around, / And tiered pavilions in charming stretches of lotus-covered water, that happy glade he glimpsed, like Nandana-vana, ‘the Gladdening Garden’ of Indra. //3.64//

**varāṅganā-gaṇa-kalilam nṛpātmaḥ tato balād vanam atinīyate sma tat /
varāpsaro-vṛtam alakādhipālayam nava-vrato munir iva vighna-kātarāḥ // 3.65 //**

Most lushly wooded with beautiful women was that park, to which the offspring of a ruler of men was then forcibly led, / Like a sage to a palace populated by the choicest nymphs in Alaka,¹⁶⁶ when his practice is young and he is nervous about impediments. //3.65//

iti buddha-carite mahākāvye saṃvegopattir nāma tṛtīyaḥ sargaḥ // 3 //

The 3rd canto, titled “Arising of Nervous Excitement”

in an epic tale of awakened action.

¹⁶⁵ A double-bluff – ostensibly the prince is being ironic, but in the hidden meaning bodhisattvas on the path are indeed steadfast.

¹⁶⁶ The capital city of the realm of Kubera, Lord of Wealth.

Canto 4: strī-vighātaṇaḥ Warding ‘Women’ Away

Introduction

Aśvaghoṣa’s teaching points resolutely in the direction of abandoning all -isms. That being so, it would be a mistake to see Aśvaghoṣa as a champion of feminism as an ideology. On the other hand, when in Saundara-nanda Canto 8 (titled A Tirade against Women), Aśvaghoṣa presents in detail the misogynist view of a certain Buddhist striver, it should be understood that he is satirizing that unenlightened view.

In a deeper reading of the present Canto, then, the “warding away” (*vighātana*) of the Canto title refers not to the Prince’s rebuffing of a gang of women who were ostensibly out to seduce him, but rather to the abandonment of the generic concept “woman” or “women” (*strī*). To this end, Aśvaghoṣa describes various individuals who are different (*anyā*) using various stratagems to capture the heart of the Prince. And these women are not only different from each other: they represent buddhas using skilful means, and as such are quite different from what we first thought, on a superficial reading of the Canto title “Warding Women Away.”

**tatas tasmāt purodyānāt kautūhala-calekṣaṇāḥ /
pratyujjagmur nṛpa-sutaṁ prāptaṁ varam iva striyaḥ // 4.1 //**

Then, out of that royal plot, their interested eyes darting, / The women advanced to meet the son of the king as if he were an arriving suitor. //4.1//

**abhigamya ca tās tasmai vismayotphulla-locaṇāḥ /
cakrire samudācāraṁ padma-kośa-nibhaiḥ karaiḥ // 4.2 //**

And having approached him, their peepers opened wide in wonderment, / They made their salutations with hands like lotus buds, //4.2//

**tasthuś ca parivāryainaṁ manmathākṣipta-cetasah /
niścalaiḥ prīti-vikacaiḥ pibantya iva locanaiḥ // 4.3 //**

And keeping him in their midst they stationed themselves, their minds caught fast by ardour; / While, with motionless eyes that sparkled with relish, they seemed almost to be indulging in a feast. //4.3//

**taṁ hi tā menire nāryaḥ kāmo vigrahavān iti /
śobhitaṁ lakṣaṇair dīptaiḥ saha-jair bhūṣaṇair iva // 4.4 //**

For those women esteemed him as a god of love in physical form, / Made beautiful by brilliant attributes like the adornments one is born with.¹⁶⁷ //4.4//

¹⁶⁷ Ostensibly, *saha-jair-bhūṣaṇaiḥ* means “with ornaments born on him.” But the real intention might be to suggest that nothing is more beautiful than the natural state.

**saumyatvāc caiva dhairyāc ca kāś-cid enaṁ prajāñire /
avatīrṇo mahīm sāksād gūdhāmsuś candramā iti // 4.5 //**

Because of his *soma*-steeped mildness, and his constant gravity, some women intuited him to be,
/ Alighting on the earth in person, a moon whose beam is contained within. //4.5//

**tasya tā vapuṣākṣiptā nigrhītaṁ jajrmbhire /
anyonyaṁ drṣṭibhir hatvā śanaś ca viniśāsvasuḥ // 4.6 //**

Entranced by his form, they inwardly opened out / And, killing each other with glances,
exhaled deeply and quietly. //4.6//

**evaṁ tā drṣṭi-mātreṇa nāryo dadṛśur eva tam /
na vyājhrur na jahasuḥ prabhāveṇāsya yantritāḥ // 4.7 //**

Thus, with the full extent of their mind's eyes, the women did nothing but behold him: / They
did not speak and did not laugh, held spellbound by his power.¹⁶⁸ //4.7//

**tās tathā tu nir-ārambhā drṣṭvā praṇaya-viklavāḥ /
purohita-suto dhīmān udāyī vākyam abravīt // 4.8 //**

But seeing them so disinclined to do, thinking them timid about displaying love, / The clever
son of a family priest, 'Hurry-Up' Udāyin, spoke his piece: //4.8//

**sarvāḥ sarva-kalā-jñāḥ stha bhāva-grahaṇa-panḍitāḥ /
rūpa-cāturya-saṁpannāḥ sva-guṇair mukhyatām gatāḥ // 4.9 //**

"Adept in all the subtle arts, expert in understanding the emotions, / Possessed of beautiful
form and dexterity, by graces that are proper to you, you all have risen to pre-eminence.¹⁶⁹
//4.9//

**śobhayeta guṇair ebhir api tān uttarān kurūn /
kuberasyāpi cākriḍaṁ prāg eva vasu-dhām imām // 4.10 //**

By the means of these graces you could cause to shine even that superior kingdom of the
Northern Kurus, / And even the pleasure-grove of Kubera – all the more, then, this earthly
acreage. //4.10//

**śaktāś cālayituṁ yūyaṁ vīta-rāgān ṛṣiṇ api /
apsarobhīś ca kalitān grahītuṁ vibudhān api // 4.11 //**

You are able to spur into movement even dispassionate seers; / And even gods enticed by
heavenly nymphs you are able to hold transfixed. //4.11//

¹⁶⁸ A long silent exhalation, followed by doing nothing but beholding him – like a moon whose beam is directed within. These descriptions may be taken in their hidden meaning as a suggestion of the practice of realizing the buddha-nature in oneself, by just sitting.

¹⁶⁹ The irony here (and the challenge for the translator) is that Udāyin thinks he is describing pre-eminent courtesans, but his words equally well describe buddhas.

**bhāva-jñānena hāvena rūpa-cāturya-saṃpadā /
strīṇām eva ca śaktāḥ stha saṃrāge kiṃ punar nṛṇām // 4.12 //**

Again, through knowing the emotions, through challenging invitations, through possession of beautiful form and dexterity, / You are powerful agents in respect of passion in women, to say nothing of passion in men. //4.12//

**tāsām evaṃ vidhānām vo viyuktānām sva-gocare /
iyam evaṃ-vidhā ceṣṭā na tuṣṭo 'smy ārjavena vaḥ // 4.13 //**

You being as you are, like this, each set apart in her own sphere of activity, / This action of yours is like this – in you, I am not satisfied with innocence. //4.13//

**idaṃ nava-vadhūnām vo hrī-nikuñcita-cakṣuṣām /
sadrśaṃ ceṣṭitaṃ hi syād api vā gopa-yoṣitām // 4.14 //**

For women who have recently taken their vows¹⁷⁰ and who modestly turn the light of their eyes within, / This behaviour of yours might be fitting – as also for the wives of cowherds!¹⁷¹ //4.14//

**yad api syād ayaṃ dhīraḥ śrī-prabhāvān mahān iti /
strīṇām api mahat-teja iti kāryo 'tra niścayaḥ // 4.15 //**

Though this man may prove to be, by his majestic light, a mighty steadfast man, / Mighty also is the efficacy of women – in which matter verification is to be carried out: //4.15//

**purā hi kāśi-sundaryā veśa-vadhvā mahān-ṛṣiḥ /
tāḍito 'bhūt padā vyāso dur-dharṣo devatair api // 4.16 //**

For once upon a time the Beauty of Benares, Kāśi-sundarī, a common woman, / Beat with a flick of her foot the great seer Vyāsa whom even the gods could not conquer.¹⁷² //4.16//

¹⁷⁰ Ostensibly, marriage vows. In the hidden meaning, bodhisattva vows.

¹⁷¹ Ostensibly, this is Udayin's snobbery. In the hidden meaning, the principle is that of Dogen's *Fukan-zazengi* – Rules of Sitting-Meditation Recommended for Everybody.

¹⁷² See also BC1.42 and SN7.30.

**manthāla-gautamo bhikṣur jaṅghayā vāra-mukhyayā /
pīpṛiṣuś ca tad-arthārtham vyaśūn niraharat purā // 4.17 //**

The beggar Manthāla Gautama, wishing to please the royal courtesan ‘Legs’ Jaṅgā, / Again in olden times, with that aim in view, carried corpses out for burial.¹⁷³ //4.17//

**gautamaṁ dīrgha-tapaśam maharṣim dīrgha-jīvinam /
yoṣit saṁtoṣayām āśa varṇa-sthānāvarā satī // 4.18 //**

The great seer Gautama Dīrgha-tapas was long on asceticism and in longevity, / But a girl pleased him who was low in colour and standing.¹⁷⁴ //4.18//

**ṛṣya-śṛṅgaṁ muni-sutaṁ tathaiva strīṣv apaṇḍitam /
upāyair vividhaiḥ śāntā jagrāha ca jahāra ca // 4.19 //**

Ṛṣya-śṛṅga, ‘Antelope Horn,’ a sage’s son, was similarly inexpert in regard to women; / Śāntā, ‘Tranquillity,’ using various wiles, took him captive and carried him away.¹⁷⁵ //4.19//

**viśvāmitro maharṣiś ca vigādho ’pi mahat-tapaḥ /
daśa-varṣāny ahar mene ghṛtācy āpsarasā hṛtaḥ // 4.20 //**

And the great seer Viśvā-mitra, ‘Friend of All,’ though steeped in rigorous asceticism, / Deemed ten years to be a day, while captivated by the nymph Ghṛtācī.¹⁷⁶ //4.20//

**evam-ādīn ṛṣīms tāms tān anayan vikriyām striyaḥ /
lalitaṁ pūrva-vayaśam kiṁ punar nṛpateḥ sutam // 4.21 //**

Various seers such as these have women brought down; / How much more then the son of the king, who is in the first flush of frolicsome youth? //4.21//

**tad evaṁ sati viśrabdham prayatadhvaṁ tathā yathā /
iyaṁ nṛpasya vaṁśa-śrīr ito na syāt parānmukhī // 4.22 //**

It being so, with calm confidence, apply yourselves in such a way, / That this light of the lineage of a protector of men might not be turned away from here.¹⁷⁷ //4.22//

¹⁷³ EH Johnston suspected that this verse may have been an interpolation.

¹⁷⁴ A high-minded ascetic named Dīrgha-tapas is also mentioned at the beginning of Saundara-nanda (SN1.4).

¹⁷⁵ See also SN7.34.

¹⁷⁶ Through his seduction by the nymph Ghṛtācī (also known as Menakā), Viśvā-mitra fathered Śakuntalā, who is the heroine of Kālidāśa’s famous play “*The Recognition of Śakuntalā*.” See also SN7.35.

¹⁷⁷ This is a good example of the ironic use of the term “a protector of men” to describe, in the hidden meaning, the Buddha or a buddha-ancestor.

**yā hi kāś-cid yuvatayo haranti sadṛśam janam /
nikṛṣṭotkṛṣṭayor bhāvaṃ yā grhṇanti tu tāḥ striyaḥ // 4.23 //**

For any girl entrances those on her level, / But those who stop the heart of low and high: they are true women.” //4.23//

**ity udāyi-vaçaḥ śrutvā tā viddhā iva yoṣitaḥ /
samāruruhur ātmānaṃ kumāra-grahaṇaṃ prati // 4.24 //**

Having thus attended to the words of Udāyin, the women, as if they had been pricked, / Went up, rising above themselves, in the direction of apprehending the prince.¹⁷⁸ //4.24//

**tā bhrūbhiḥ prekṣitair hāvair hasitair laḍitair gataiḥ /
cakrur ākṣepikāś ceṣṭā bhīta-bhītā ivāṅganāḥ // 4.25 //**

Using their foreheads, using glimpsed enticements, using smiling artful dodges, / The women performed suggestive actions, like women wary of fear.¹⁷⁹ //4.25//

**rājñas tu viniyogena kumārasya ca mārđavāt /
jahuh kṣipram aviśrambhaṃ madena madanena ca // 4.26 //**

But in view of the king’s assignment, and thanks to a prince’s mildness of manner, / They quickly shed their diffidence – through inspiration and through enchantment. //4.26//

**atha nārī-jana-vṛtaḥ kumāro vyacarad vanam /
vāsītā-yūtha-sahitaḥ karīva himavad-vanam // 4.27 //**

And so, surrounded by the women, the prince roved around the wood / Like a bull elephant accompanied by a herd of single females as he roves a Himālayan forest. //4.27//

**sa tasmin kānane ramye jajvāla strī-puraḥsaraḥ /
ākriḍa iva vibhrāje vivasvān apsaro-vṛtaḥ // 4.28 //**

In that delightful forest, attended by the women, he shone / Like Vivasvat, the Shining Sun, in the Vibhrāja pleasure grove, surrounded by *apsarases*. //4.28//

**madenāvarjitā nāma taṃ kāś-cit tatra yoṣitaḥ /
kaṭhinaiḥ pasprśuḥ pīnaiḥ saṃhatair valgubhiḥ stanaiḥ // 4.29 //**

Pretending to be tipsy, some girls there / Brushed him, with firm, round, closely set, beautiful breasts. //4.29//

¹⁷⁸ Ostensibly, towards seduction of the prince. In the hidden meaning, towards their realization of the buddha-nature, or towards the prince's realization of his own buddha-nature.

¹⁷⁹ Ostensibly, they looked skittish. In the hidden meaning, they were alert to the terrors of sickness, aging and death.

srastāmsa-komalālamba-mṛdu-bāhu-latābalā /

anṛtaṁ skhalitaṁ kā-cit kṛtvainaṁ sasvaje balāt // 4.30 //

One girl – from whose relaxed shoulders delicately dangled soft arms like tendrils – / Simulated a stumble, so that she could not help but cling to him.¹⁸⁰ //4.30//

kā-cit tāmrādharoṣṭhena mukhenāsava-gandhinā /

vinīśāśvāsa karṇe 'sya rahasyaṁ śrūyatām iti // 4.31 //

One girl, whose mouth with copper-red lower lip betrayed a whiff of distilled nectar, / Whispered in his ear, “Let the secret be revealed!” //4.31//

kā-cid ājñāpayantīva provācārdrānulepanā /

iha bhaktiṁ kuruṣveti hastaṁ saṁśliṣya lipsayā // 4.32 //

As if she were giving an order, one girl who was moist with body oils insisted: / “Perform the act of devotion here!” as – wanting it – she closely attached herself to a hand.¹⁸¹ //4.32//

muhur-muhur mada-vyāja-srasta-nīlāṁśukāparā /

ālakṣya-rasanā reje sphurad vidyud iva kṣapā // 4.33 //

A different girl, as she repeatedly simulated intoxication, and let her dark blue robe, made of fine cloth, slip down, / Showed scarcely observable glimmers of sensibility, like a night lit by lightning, in flashes.¹⁸² //4.33//

kāś-cit kanaka-kāñcībhir mukharābhir itas tataḥ /

babhramur darśayantyo 'sya śroṇīs tanv aṁśukāvṛtāḥ // 4.34 //

Some women wobbled from here to there, their golden girdle-trinkets tinkling noisily, / As they exhibited to him swaying hips thinly veiled by a robe of fine cloth.¹⁸³ //4.34//

¹⁸⁰ This verse has a play on *abalā*, “one who is weak (f.)” i.e. a girl, a so-called member of the weaker sex, and *balāt*, “perforce,” “helplessly.” The ironic subtext is that relaxed shoulders and soft arms are sometimes a mark of strength, and simulation of a stumble might be an expedient means.

¹⁸¹ In the hidden meaning, wanting to attain the ineffable, she adhered to the Buddha's teaching.

¹⁸² In the hidden meaning, did Aśvaghōṣa see himself using words repeatedly, in flashes, to simulate intoxication?

¹⁸³ A parody of *kaṣaya*-clad practitioners bargaining heedlessly about?

cūta-śākhām kusumitām praghyānyā lalāmbire /

su-varṇa-kalaśa-prakhyān darśayantyaḥ payodharān // 4.35 //

Ones who were different held and hung onto a flowering mango branch, / Causing others to see breasts, resembling golden jugs, which would bear milk. [Or clouds, set off by the golden pinnacles of stūpas, which would bear water.] [[Or containers, resembling golden jars, of the lifeblood.]]¹⁸⁴ //4.35//

kā-cit padma-vanād etya sa-padma padma-locanā /

padma-vaktrasya pārśve 'sya padma-śrīr iva tasthuṣī // 4.36 //

One girl, from out of a bed of lotuses, bearing a lotus and looking through lotus eyes, / Came and stood by the side of the lotus-faced one, like Śrī, the lotus-hued goddess of beauty. //4.36//

madhuraṁ gītam anv-arthaṁ kā-cit sābhinayaṁ jagau /

taṁ svasthaṁ codayantīva vañcito 'sīty avekṣitaiḥ // 4.37 //

A sweet song whose meaning was clear, one girl sang, with actions that suited the words, / As if she were goading the one who was self-assured with glimpses whose gist was, “You are cheating yourself!” //4.37//

śubhena vadanenānyā bhrū-kārmuka-vikaṣṇā /

prāvṛtyānucakārasya ceṣṭitaṁ dhīra-līlayā // 4.38 //

A different girl, with a bright countenance, the bows of her eyebrows being spread wide apart, / Put on his manner and did what he did – playfully replicating his seriousness [or having fun, with gravity]. //4.38//

pīna-valgu-stanī kā-cidd hāsāghūrṇita-kunḍalā /

uccair avajahāsainaṁ sa-māpnotu bhavān iti // 4.39 //

One girl, whose breasts were big and beautiful, and whose earrings whirled round as she laughed, / Taunted him from above, as if to say, “Catch up with me, mister!”¹⁸⁵ //4.39//

apayāntaṁ tathavānyā babandhur mālya-dāmabhiḥ /

kāś-cit sākṣepa-madhurair jagṛhur vacanāṅkuśaiḥ // 4.40 //

Different ones in the same vein, as he wandered away, held him back with daisy chains;¹⁸⁶ / While some girls stopped him in his tracks with the elephant hooks of sweet words, barbed with irony. //4.40//

¹⁸⁴ *Payo-dhara* literally means “fluid-bearers” and hence breasts (as containing milk), or clouds (as containing water), or even the women themselves (as containing vital spirit, or the lifeblood). *Kalaśa* means jug or jar, but it too has a secondary meaning: a round pinnacle on the top of a temple (especially the pinnacle crowning a Buddhist *caitya* or *stūpa*).

¹⁸⁵ A parody of a larger-than-life Zen master?

¹⁸⁶ By subtle, indirect means – not by brute force.

pratiyogārthinī kā-cid grhītvā cūta-vallarīm /

idaṃ puṣpaṃ tu kasyeti papraccha mada-viklavā // 4.41 //

One girl, wishing to be contrary, seized the branch of a mango tree – / “Now then! Whose flower is this?” she demanded, bewildered by blithe exuberance. //4.41//

kā-cit puruṣavat kṛtvā gatiṃ saṃsthānam eva ca /

uvācainam jitaḥ strībhir jaya bho pṛthivīm imām // 4.42 //

One girl, acting like a man, in her way of moving and standing still, / Said to him: “Women have defeated you. Now you defeat this earth!” //4.42//

atha lolekṣaṇā kā-cij jighrantī nīlam utpalam /

kiṃ-cin mada-kalair vākyair nṛpātmajam abhāṣata // 4.43 //

Then a girl with avid eyes, who was smelling the flower of a blue lotus, / Said, with words that intoxication rendered somewhat indistinct, to the one begotten out of the selves of protectors of men: //4.43//

paśya bhartaś citam cūtam kusumair madhu-gandhibhiḥ /

hema-pañjara-ruddho vā kokilo yatra kūjati // 4.44 //

“Observe, master, the mango tree covered with honey-scented blossoms / Where, as if confined in a golden cage, the cuckoo keeps on calling. //4.44//

aśoko dṛśyatām eṣa kāmi-śoka-vivardhanaḥ /

ruvanti bhramarā yatra dahyamānā ivāgninā // 4.45 //

See [or realize] this: the sorrowless [state of an] *a-śoka*, augmenter [or expunger]¹⁸⁷ of a lover’s sorrow, / Where bumble bees buzz as if being singed by a fire.¹⁸⁸ //4.45//

cūta-yaṣṭyā samāśliṣṭo dṛśyatām tilaka-drumaḥ /

śukla-vāsā iva naraḥ striyā pītāṅga-rāgayā // 4.46 //

Witness the *tilaka* tree, being closely embraced by the mango’s branch, / Like a white-robed man¹⁸⁹ by a woman whose limbs are coated in scented yellow cosmetics. //4.46//

¹⁸⁷ *Vivardhana* could be derived from *vi-√vṛdh*, to augment, or from *vi-√vardh*, to cut off, expunge.

¹⁸⁸ In pain, or in a state of sincere action.

¹⁸⁹ In the hidden meaning, the intention may be to remind the reader of the difficulty of practising as a lay practitioner (a wearer of white clothes).

**phullaṃ kurubakaṃ paśya nirbhuktālaktaka-prabham /
yo nakha-prabhayā strīṇāṃ nirbhartsita ivānataḥ // 4.47 //**

Look at the *kurubaka* plant, with its red flower-heads – It is luminous, like one that has yielded up every drop of red sap, / And yet, as if outshone, by the luminance of women’s finger-nails, it is bowing down.¹⁹⁰ //4.47//

**bālāśokaś ca nicito dṛśyatām eṣa pallavaiḥ /
yo ’smākaṃ hasta-śobhābhir lajjamāna iva sthitaḥ // 4.48 //**

Again, see [or realize] this: [the state of] a young *a-śoka* – It is brimming with new shoots / And yet, as if abashed, at the hennaed loveliness of our hands, it remains modestly standing there. //4.48//

**dīrghikāṃ prāvṛtāṃ paśya tīra-jaiḥ sinduvārakaiḥ /
pāṇḍurāṃśuka-saṃvītāṃ śayānāṃ pramadāṃ iva // 4.49 //**

Look at the stretch of still water, veiled by the *sindu-vāra* shrubs growing around its banks, / Like a woman, clad in fine white cloth, who is lying down.¹⁹¹ //4.49//

**dṛśyatām strīṣu mātmyaṃ cakravāko hy asau jale /
pṛṣṭhataḥ preṣyavad bhāryāṃ anuvṛtyānugacchati // 4.50 //**

Let it be realized, with reference to females of the species, what greatness is. That greylag gander in the water over there, for instance :- / Trailing behind his mate like a slave, he follows.¹⁹² //4.50//

**mattasya para-puṣṭasya ruvataḥ śrūyatām dhvaniḥ /
aparaḥ kokilo ’nuktaḥ pratiśrutkeva kūjati // 4.51 //**

Let the sound be heard of the intoxicated male who is calling – he who was nourished by one other than his mother!¹⁹³ / Another male cuckoo, acting without scruple, makes a call like an echo. //4.51//

**api nāma vihaṅ-gānāṃ vasantenāhṛto madaḥ /
na tu cintayataś cittam janasya prājña-māninaḥ // 4.52 //**

Can spring deliver exuberant joy, to those that fly the skies, / But not the mind of a thinking man who thinks that he is wise?” //4.52//

¹⁹⁰ A suggestion of enlightenment as a state of humility?

¹⁹¹ Ostensibly the reclining woman is an erotically exciting image. In the hidden meaning, a long stretch of still water suggests an expanse of time spent coming back to quiet.

¹⁹² The ostensible point is that the goose is stronger than the gander. The real point is that there is great strength in following.

¹⁹³ In the hidden meaning, a man or a woman who was caused to grow by his or her teacher, in the direction of totally letting himself or herself go.

**ity evaṁ tā yuvatayo manmathoddāma-cetasah /
kumāraṁ vividhais tais tair upacakramire nayaiḥ // 4.53 //**

In this manner those girls, with hearts unbridled by love, / Approached the chosen One using many and various stratagems. //4.53//

**evam ākṣipyamāṇo 'pi sa tu dhairyāvṛtendriyaḥ /
martavyam iti sodvego na jaharṣa na sismiye // 4.54 //**

And even while, in such a manner, he was being put to shame, keeping his senses contained by constancy, / And still excited, by the prospect of dying, he neither bristled nor blushed. //4.54//

**tāsāṁ tattve 'navasthānaṁ drṣṭvā sa puruṣottamaḥ /
samaṁ vignena dhīreṇa cintayām āsa cetasā // 4.55 //**

He, an excellent man, considering those girls to have a loose foothold in reality, / Deliberated, with a mind that was agitated and at the same time resolute:¹⁹⁴ //4.55//

**kiṁ vinā nāvagacchanti capalaṁ yauvanaṁ striyaḥ /
yato rūpeṇa saṁpannaṁ jarā yan nāśayiṣyati // 4.56 //**

“What is missing in these women that they do not understand youthfulness to be fleeting? / Because, whatever is possessed of beauty, aging will destroy. //4.56//

**nūnam etā na paśyanti kasya-cid roga-saṁplavam /
tathā hrṣṭā bhayaṁ tyaktvā jagati vyādhi-dharṁiṇi // 4.57 //**

Surely they fail to foresee anybody finishing with dis-ease, / So joyful are they, having set fear aside, in a world that is subject to disease. //4.57//

**anabhijñās ca su-vyaktaṁ mṛtyoḥ sarvāpahāriṇaḥ /
tathā svasthā nirudvignāḥ krīḍanti ca hasanti ca // 4.58 //**

Evidently, again, they are ignorant of the death that sweeps all away, / So easy in themselves are they, as, unstirred, they play and laugh. //4.58//

**jarāṁ vyādhiṁ ca mṛtyuṁ ca ko hi jānan sa-cetanaḥ /
svasthas tiṣṭhen niṣīded vā suped vā kiṁ punar haset // 4.59 //**

For what man in touch with his reason, who knows aging, sickness and death, / Could stand or sit at ease, or lie down – far less laugh? //4.59//

¹⁹⁴ The irony is that the prince had established an excellent will to the truth, but it was the ones among the women who were different, if Aśvaghōṣa's irony is understood, that were truly living in reality.

**yas tu dṛṣṭvā param jīrṇam vyādhitaṁ mṛtam eva ca /
svastho bhavati nodvigno yathācētās tathaiva saḥ // 4.60 //**

Rather, when one man sees another who is worn out and riddled with sickness, not to mention dead, / And he remains at ease in himself, unstirred, he acts as though his reason were absent.¹⁹⁵ //4.60//

**viyuḥyamāne hi tarau puṣpair api phalair api /
patati cchidyamāne vā tarur anyo na śocate // 4.61 //**

For at a tree's shedding of its flowers and fruits, / And at its falling, or at its felling, no other tree mourns.¹⁹⁶ //4.61//

**iti dhyāna-param dṛṣṭvā viṣayebhyo gata-spr̥ham /
udāyī nīti-śāstra-jñas tam uvāca suhṛttayā // 4.62 //**

Seeing the prince thus absorbed in thinking and without desire for objects, / Udāyin, knowing the rules of how to handle people, said to him, in a spirit of friendship: //4.62//

**ahaṁ nṛ-patinā dattaḥ sakhā tubhyaṁ kṣamaḥ kila /
yasmāt tvayi vivakṣā me tayā praṇaya-vat-tayā // 4.63 //**

“I am, by appointment to the King, fit, so he thinks, to be a friend to you; / On which grounds I am going to speak to you as frankly as this. //4.63//

**ahitāt pratiṣedhaś ca hite cānupravartanam /
vyasane cāparityāgas trividhaṁ mitra-lakṣaṇam // 4.64 //**

Keeping one out of harm's way, urging one on in the good, / and not deserting one in adversity, are the three marks of a friend. //4.64//

**so 'haṁ maitrīm pratijñāya puruṣārthāt parāṅmukham /
yadi tvā samupekṣeya na bhaven mitratā mayi // 4.65 //**

Now that I personally have promised my friendship to you, who is turning his back on an aim of human life, / If I then were to abandon you, there would be no friendship in me. //4.65//

**tad bravīmi suhṛd-bhūtvā taruṇasya vapuṣmataḥ /
idaṁ na pratirūpaṁ te strīṣv adākṣiṇyam idṛṣam // 4.66 //**

Speaking, therefore, as a friend, I must say that for a handsome young man / It does not become you to be so tactless towards women. //4.66//

¹⁹⁵ An ironic description of the transcendent state of sitting-buddha – in which reason is not absent, but may appear to be absent.

¹⁹⁶ Ostensibly a criticism of the state in which reason does not appear to be operating. Below the surface, a pointer to the teaching that the non-emotional preaches dharma (see Shobogenzo chap. 53).

anṛtenāpi nārīṇām yuktaṁ samanuvartanam /

tad-vrīḍā-parihārārtham ātma-raty artham eva ca // 4.67 //

For women, even if the means are deceitful, obedience is appropriate, / To sweep away their diffidence, and purely for the purpose of enjoying oneself! //4.67//

samnatīś cānuvṛttiś ca strīṇām hṛdaya-bandhanam /

snehasya hi guṇā yonir māna-kāmāś ca yoṣitaḥ // 4.68 //

Humility and submissive behaviour are, for women, what captures the heart – / Because excellent acts engender tender feelings, and women are lovers of honour. //4.68//

tad arhasi viśālākṣa hṛdaye 'pi parān-mukhe /

rūpasyāsyānurūpeṇa dākṣiṇyenānuvartitum // 4.69 //

Therefore, O large-eyed one, though your heart be otherwise inclined, / With tact and delicacy that befit such a beautiful form, you should submit! //4.69//

dākṣiṇyam auśadham strīṇām dākṣiṇyam bhūṣaṇam param /

dākṣiṇya-rahitaṁ rūpaṁ niṣpuṣpam iva kānanam // 4.70 //

For women, tact and delicacy are medicine; tact and delicacy are the highest adornment; / Beautiful form without tact and delicacy is like a garden without flowers. //4.70//

kiṁ vā dākṣiṇya-mātreṇa bhāvenāstu parigrahaḥ /

viṣayān durlabhān llabdhvā na hy avajñātum arhasi // 4.71 //

Equally, what good are tact and delicacy alone? Let all be bounded by what is real! / For, having gained objects that are hard to gain, you should not think light of such.¹⁹⁷ //4.71//

kāmaṁ param iti jñātvā devo 'pi hi puraṁdaraḥ /

gautamasya muneḥ patnīm ahalyām cakame purā // 4.72 //

Knowing desire to be paramount, even the god Puraṁdara, 'Clever of Strongholds,' for example, / Made love in olden times to Ahalyā, the wife of the sage Gautama.¹⁹⁸ //4.72//

agastyah prārthayām āsa soma-bhāryām ca rohiṇīm /

tasmāt tat-sadrśīm lebhe lopā-mudrām iti śrutiḥ // 4.73 //

And so much did Agastya desire Red Rohiṇī, the wife of moon-god Soma, / That he came to possess, tradition has it, a woman modelled after her, 'The Robber of Attributes,' Lopā-mudrā.¹⁹⁹ //4.73//

¹⁹⁷ Thus, even Udāyin's argument, shallow though it sounds on the surface, can be read as pointing in its hidden meaning to the Buddha's teaching of skilful means, or expediency.

¹⁹⁸ Puraṁdara is an epithet of Indra, whose liaison with Ahalyā is also mentioned in SN7.25. See also note to BC2.27. The philosophical question Udāyin raises is how important desire is.

¹⁹⁹ Agastya is said to have fashioned Lopā-mudrā by taking her doe-eyes from deer, and other attractive attributes from other animals.

**utathyasya ca bhāryāyām mamatāyām mahā-tapāḥ /
māruṭyām janayām āsa bharad-vājam bṛhas-patiḥ // 4.74 //**

Again, the great ascetic Bṛhas-pati, 'Lord of Prayer,' begat Bharad-vāja, 'Bearer of Velocity,' / In 'Self-Centred' Mama-tā, who was a daughter of the storm-gods and the wife of [his brother] Utathya.²⁰⁰ //4.74//

**bṛhas-pater mahiṣyām ca juhvatyām juhvatām varaḥ /
budhaṁ vibudha-dharmāṇaṁ janayām āsa candramāḥ // 4.75 //**

And the Moon, most eminent among oblation-offerers, begat 'The Learned' Budha, who was innately very learned, / In Bṛhas-pati's own esteemed wife, while she was offering an oblation. //4.75//

**kālīm caiva purā kanyām jala-prabhava-sambhavām /
jagāma yamunā-tīre jāta-rāgaḥ parāśaraḥ // 4.76 //**

In olden times, again, the maiden Kālī whose birth had its origin in water, / Was pressed for sex on a bank of the Yamunā by lusting Parāśara, 'The Crusher.'²⁰¹ //4.76//

**mātaṅgyām akṣamālāyām garhitāyām riraṁsayā /
kapiñjalādaṁ tanayaṁ vasiṣṭho 'janayan munih // 4.77 //**

The sage Vasiṣṭha²⁰² through desire for sexual enjoyment, / Begat his son Kapiñjalāda in the despised outcaste Akṣa-mālā. //4.77//

**yayātiś caiva rājarṣir vayasy api vinirgate /
viśvācyāpsarasā sārdaṁ reme caitra-rathe vane // 4.78 //**

There again, the royal seer Yayāti,²⁰³ though his best years were behind him, / Enjoyed a romp in Citra-ratha's woods with the celestial nymph Viśvācī //4.78//

²⁰⁰ In the Sanskrit original, the subject of the verse, Bṛhas-pati (see also BC1.41) comes at the end. The effect is to emphasize the hypocrisy, and the weakness in the face of sexual desire, of the oh-so-pious 'Lord of Prayer.'

²⁰¹ Kālī was the mother of Vyāsa, 'the Compiler' (see BC1.42). See also SN7.29.

²⁰² Owner of the cow of plenty. See also BC1.42, BC1.52; SN7.28.

²⁰³ Yayāti's kingdom is mentioned in a favourable light in BC2.11. See also SN1.59, SN11.46.

**strī-saṁsargaṁ vināśāntaṁ pāṇḍuḥ jñātvāpi kauravaḥ /
mādrī-rūpa-guṇākṣiptaḥ siṣeve kāma-jaṁ sukham // 4.79 //**

‘The Pale’ Pāṇḍu, a king in the Kuru line, knew that intercourse with his wife would end in death / And yet, bowled over by Mādrī’s beautiful attributes, he indulged in pleasure born of desire.²⁰⁴ //4.79//

**karāla-janakaś caiva hr̥tvā brāhmaṇa-kanyakām /
avāpa bhraṁśam apy evaṁ na tu seje na man-matham // 4.80 //**

And ‘the Dreadful Begetter’ Karāla-janaka when he abducted a brahmin maiden, / Though he thus incurred ruin, never stopped attaching to his love. //4.80//

**evam ādīn mahātmāno viṣayān garhitān api /
rati-hetor bubhujire prāg eva guṇa-saṁhitān // 4.81 //**

Great men, driven by pleasure, enjoyed objects such as these, / Even when those enjoyments were forbidden – how much more [to be enjoyed] are those that come with merit?²⁰⁵ //4.81//

**tvaṁ punar nyāyataḥ prāptān balavān rūpavān yuvā /
viṣayān avajānāsi yatra saktam idaṁ jagat // 4.82 //**

And yet you disdain enjoyments that fittingly belong to you, a young man possessed of strength and handsome form; / You despise objects to which the whole world is attached.” //4.82//

**iti śrutvā vacas tasya ślakṣṇam āgama-saṁhitam /
megha-stanita-nirghoṣaḥ kumāraḥ pratyabhāṣata // 4.83 //**

Having listened to these polished words of his, complete with scriptural references, / The prince in a voice resonant as thunder spoke back: //4.83//

**upapannam idaṁ vākyaṁ sauhārda-vyañjakaṁ tvayi /
atra ca tvānuneṣyāmi yatra mā duṣṭhu manyase // 4.84 //**

“This talk intimating friendship is fitting in you, / And I shall bring you round in the areas where you misjudge me. //4.84//

²⁰⁴ As king of the Kurus, Pāṇḍu married the princess Mādrī along with another princess named Kuntī. While out hunting in the woods Pāṇḍu accidentally shot the sage Kindama while the latter had taken the form of a deer and was mating with a doe. The wounded sage Kindama placed a curse on Pāṇḍu to the effect that he would die if he ever again had sex. Pāṇḍu then remorsefully renounced his kingdom and lived with his wives as a celibate ascetic. After fifteen years of ascetic celibacy, however, when his second wife Kuntī was away, Pāṇḍu was irresistibly drawn to his first wife Mādrī, and so fulfilled the sage's curse and died. The story is also referenced in SN7.45.

²⁰⁵ Ostensibly Udāyin, despite his protestations of friendship, is trying to tempt the prince down the backslider's path. In the hidden meaning, he might be upholding a true friend's teaching of *alpecchu-saṁtuṣṭa*, having small desire and being content.

nāvajānāmi viṣayān jāne lokaṁ tad-ātmakam /

anityaṁ tu jagan matvā nātra me ramate manaḥ // 4.85 //

I do not despise objects. I know them to be at the heart of human affairs. / But seeing the world to be impermanent, my mind does not delight in them. //4.85//

jarā vyādhiś ca mṛtyuś ca yadi na syād idaṁ trayam /

mamāpi hi manojñeṣu viṣayeṣu ratir bhavet // 4.86 //

Aging, disease, and death – in the absence of these three, / Enjoyment might exist for me also in agreeable objects.²⁰⁶ //4.86//

nityaṁ yady api hi strīṇām etad eva vapur bhavet /

doṣavatsv api kāmeṣu kāmaṁ rajyeta me manaḥ // 4.87 //

For if indeed the beauty that women have here and now could be eternal, / Then desires, however blemished by imperfection, might – it is true – please my mind. //4.87//

yadā tu jarayā pītaṁ rūpam āsām bhaviṣyati /

ātmano 'py anabhipretaṁ mohāt tatra ratir bhavet // 4.88 //

But since growing old will drain from them any semblance of beauty, / Enjoyment of such, on the grounds of ignorance, might be an occurrence that nobody – including the women themselves – should expect.²⁰⁷ //4.88//

mṛtyu-vyādhi-jarā-dharmā mṛtyu-vyādhi-jarātmabhiḥ /

ramamāṇo 'hy asaṁvignaḥ samāno mṛga-pakṣibhiḥ // 4.89 //

A man whose substance is dying, being ill, and growing old, who remains unperturbed while playing / With others whose essence is dying, being ill, and growing old, is as one with the birds and beasts.²⁰⁸ //4.89//

yad apy āttha mahātmānas te 'pi kāmātmakā iti /

saṁvego 'traiva kartavyo yadā teṣām api kṣayaḥ // 4.90 //

Although you say that even the greats are desirous by nature, / That is rather a cause to be nervous, since, for them also, ending is the rule. //4.90//

²⁰⁶ Ironically, the prince is predicting how it will be for him in future.

²⁰⁷ In the hidden meaning, enjoyment of growing older (i.e. becoming wiser) is a pleasant surprise.

²⁰⁸ Ostensibly, his level is sub-human. In the hidden meaning he, together with other buddhas, is at one with nature.

**māhātmyam na ca tan manye yatra sāmānyataḥ kṣayaḥ /
viṣayeṣu prasaktir vā yuktir vā nātmavattayā // 4.91 //**

I fail to see greatness there, where ending is the general rule²⁰⁹ – / Where there is, on the one side, adherence to objects, and, on the other, no union with the state of self-possession.²¹⁰ //4.91//

**yad apy ātthānṛtenāpi strī-jane vartyatām iti /
an-ṛtaṁ nāvagacchāmi dākṣiṇyenāpi kiṁ-cana // 4.92 //**

Although you say that even deception may be used as a means to deal with women, / I have no understanding at all of deception, even when used with tact and delicacy.²¹¹ //4.92//

**na cānuvartanam tan me rucitam yatra nārjavam /
sarva-bhāvena saṁparko yadi nāsti dhig astu tat // 4.93 //**

Neither do I find submissive behaviour to be agreeable, where sincerity is lacking; / If coming together is not with one's whole being, then out with it!²¹² //4.93//

**anṛte śrad-dadhānasya saktasyādoṣa-darśinaḥ /
kiṁ hi vañcayitavyam syāj jāta-rāgasya cetasaḥ // 4.94 //**

If a person believes in, sticks to, and sees no fault in untruth, / What could there be worth deceiving in a soul so redly tainted?²¹³ //4.94//

**vañcayanti ca yady eva jāta-rāgāḥ paras-param /
nanu naiva kṣamaṁ draṣṭum narāḥ strīṇāṁ nṛṇāṁ striyaḥ // 4.95 //**

And if those tainted by redness do indeed deceive one another, / Then is it never appropriate for men to see women, or women men?²¹⁴ //4.95//

²⁰⁹ In the hidden meaning, the prince has yet to realize the truth of cessation.

²¹⁰ In the hidden meaning, *adhering to objects* might mean, e.g., diligently tending a crop of vegetables; and *no union with the state of self-possession* might be synonymous with body and mind dropping off.

²¹¹ In the hidden meaning, the prince has yet to understand what he will later preach as “skilful means.”

²¹² Ostensibly, Aśvaghōṣa is celebrating the prince's idealism. Below the surface, he is inviting the reader to notice how impractical idealism is, since it negates the possibility of starting from present doubt-ridden imperfection – aka polishing a tile.

²¹³ For the hidden meaning, see e.g. the story of Handsome Nanda, a redly-tainted soul in whom the Buddha clearly saw something worth deceiving.

²¹⁴ In the hidden mean, the question calls into question the validity of the concepts “women” and “men” – hence the hidden meaning of the Canto title *Warding 'Women' Away*.

**tad evaṃ sati duḥkhārtaṃ jarā-maraṇa-bhāginam /
na mām kāmeṣv anāryeṣu pratārayitum arhasi // 4.96 //**

Since in this situation I am pained by suffering and am an heir to growing old and dying, / You should not try to persuade me to stray into ignoble desires.²¹⁵ //4.96//

**aho 'tidhīraṃ balavac ca te manaś caleṣu kāmeṣu ca sāra-darśinaḥ /
bhaye 'pi tivre viṣayeṣu sajjase nirīkṣamāṇo maraṇādhvani prajāḥ // 4.97 //**

How extremely firm and strong is your mind if in transient desires you see what is essential – / If, even in the midst of acute terror, you stick to objects, while watching sentient creatures on the road to extinction!²¹⁶ //4.97//

**ahaṃ punar bhīrur atīva-viklavo jarā-vipad-vyādhi-bhayaṃ vicintayan /
labhe na śāntiṃ na dhṛtiṃ kuto ratiṃ niśāmayan dīptam ivāgninā jagat // 4.98 //**

I, in contrast, am fearful – I am exceedingly agitated as I contemplate the terror of aging, death, and disease; / I know neither peace nor constancy, much less enjoyment, seeing the world blazing as if it were on fire. //4.98//

**asaṃśayaṃ mṛtyur iti prajānato narasya rāgo hṛdi yasya jāyate /
ayo-mayīm tasya paraimi cetanām mahā-bhaye rajyati yo na roditi // 4.99 //**

When a man knows the certainty of death and yet the red taint of delight arises in his heart, / I venture that his consciousness must be made of steel, who does not weep but delights in the great terror.”²¹⁷ //4.99//

**atho kumāraś ca viniścayātmikāṃ cakāra kāmāśraya-ghātinīm kathām /
janasya cakṣur gamanīya-maṇḍalo mahī-dharaṃ cāstam iyāya bhās-karaḥ // 4.100 //**

And so, as the prince made a speech, that was tantamount to a decision, murdering any recourse to Love, / The disc that is plain for all to see went to meet the western mountain – light-producer meeting Earth-container. //4.100//

²¹⁵ In the superficial meaning, “I am weak, so please don't tempt me.” In the real meaning, “I am already established on the path, so don't waste your breath.”

²¹⁶ In the hidden meaning, e.g. a brain surgeon, appreciating how transient human life is, nevertheless sticks to his decision to remove a brain tumour.

²¹⁷ In ostensibly mocking a libertine, the prince unwittingly praises buddha.

**tato vṛthā-dhārita-bhūṣaṇa-srajaḥ kalā-guṇaiś ca praṇayaiś ca niṣphalaiḥ /
sva eva bhāve viniguhya manmatham puram yayur bhagna-mano-rathāḥ striyaḥ // 4.101
//**

Then, their ornaments and garlands having been worn in vain, their graceful arts and displays of affection having proved fruitless, / Each enshrouding her love within her own heart, the women traipsed back to the city, for the chariots of their fancy had been rent apart. //4.101//

**tataḥ purodyāna-gatām jana-śriyam nirikṣya sāye pratisamhṛtām punaḥ /
anityatām sarva-gatām vicintayan viveśa dhiṣṇyam kṣiti-pālakātmajaḥ // 4.102 //**

Then, having witnessed the beautiful women's brightness which had pervaded the park receding once more into the twilight, / The one begotten from a guardian of the earth, contemplating all-pervading impermanence, entered his earthen-hearthed dwelling. //4.102//

**tataḥ śrutvā rājā viṣaya-vimukham tasya tu mano
na śiśye tām rātriṁ hṛdaya-gata-śalyo gaja iva /
atha śrānto mantre bahu-vividha-mārge sa-sacivo
na so 'nyat-kāmebhyo niyamanam apaśyat suta-mateḥ // 4.103 //**

Then, hearing that the prince's mind was turned away from objects, the king, like an elephant with an arrow in its heart, did not sleep that night; / Though he wearied himself further in all sorts of consultations with his ministers, he saw no other means, aside from desires, to control his offspring's mind. //4.103//

iti buddha-carite mahā-kāvye strī-vighātano nāma caturthaḥ sargaḥ // 4 //

The 4th canto, titled "Warding Women Away,"
in an epic tale of awakened action.

Canto 5: abhiniṣkramaṇaḥ Getting Well & Truly Out

Introduction

Kramaṇa means, stepping, walking, going. With the prefix *nis-* (out, forth, away), *niṣkramaṇa* means going out or going forth. And the additional prefix *abhi-* (over) adds emphasis and a sense of transcendence – as also in the title of Canto 14, *Abhisambodhi*, The Total Transcendent Awakening.

Ostensibly the transcendence in question is the Prince's transcendence of family life, in going forth from Kapilavāstu.

At the same time, following on from the previous Canto, there are further vivid descriptions of individual women who are different (*anyā*). And for a person steeped in the ignorant misconception of “correct posture,” these descriptions are very challenging. They seem, below the surface, to ask: Whether or not you are a home-leaver, have you really, well and truly, got free of all the old conceptions that stopped you from being free?

**sa tathā viṣayair vilobhyamānaḥ paramarhair api śākya-rāja-sūnuḥ /
na jagāma ratim na śarma lebhe hṛdaye simha ivātidigdha-viddhaḥ // 5.1 //**

Though enticed in this way by most costly sensual enjoyments [or by most worthy objects], the son of the Śākya king / Neither partook of pleasure nor obtained relief – like a lion pierced in its heart by a poisoned arrow. //5.1//

**atha mantri-sutaiḥ kṣamaiḥ kadā-cit sakhibhiś citra-kathaiḥ kṛtānuyātraḥ /
vana-bhūmi-didṛkṣayā śamepsur nara-devānumato bahiḥ pratasthe // 5.2 //**

Then one day, attended by sons of ministers whose diverse chatter would make them suitable companions, / Since, in his desire for tranquillity, he wanted to visit the forest, with the king's permission he set off out. //5.2//

**nava-rukma-khalīna-kiṅkiṇikaṁ pracalac-cāmara-cāru-hema-bhāṇḍam /
abhiruhyā sa kanthakaṁ sad-aśvaṁ prayayau ketum iva drumābja-ketuḥ // 5.3 //**

Onto the good horse Kanthaka, decked with bridle-bit and small bells of new gold, with waving plume, and with lovely golden harness, / He climbed, and rode forth, like a star among trees, or a star among lotuses, on a shooting star.²¹⁸ //5.3//

²¹⁸ The simile can be understood in more than one way, due to the ambiguity of *ketu* (brightness, sign, flag, comet, etc.) and *drumābja* (tree + water-born). The suggestion in this translation is of stillness in movement.

**sa vikṣṭatarām vanānta-bhūmiṃ vana-lobhāc ca yayau mahī-guṇāc ca /
salilormi-vikāra-sīra-mārgām vasu-dhām caiva dadarśa kṣyamāṇām // 5.4 //**

To the edge of a more distant forest, he rode, by dint of his impatient yearning for the woods, and on the grounds of the merit inherent in the Earth,²¹⁹ / And there indeed, where tracks of ploughs had turned the soil to waves, he saw the bountiful earth²²⁰ being tilled. //5.4//

**hala-bhinna-vikīrṇa-śaṣpa-darbhām hata-sūkṣma-krimi-kīṭa-jantu-kīrṇām /
samavekṣya rasām tathā-vidhām tām svajanasyeva vadhe bhṛśam śuśoca // 5.5 //**

As the ploughs tore and scattered tufts of young grass over the soil, and littered the soil with dead worms, insects, and other little creatures, / He saw that soil²²¹ like that, and felt intense sorrow, as if at the killing of his own human relatives. //5.5//

**kṣataḥ puruṣāmś ca vīkṣamāṇaḥ pavanārkāmśu-rajo-vibhinna-varṇān /
vahana-klama-viklavāmś ca dhuryān paramāryaḥ paramām kṛpām cakāra // 5.6 //**

Again, seeing the men ploughing, their complexions riven by the wind, the sun's rays and the dust, / and seeing the oxen unsteady from the exhaustion of drawing, the most noble one felt extreme pity. //5.6//

**avatīrya tatas turaṅga-pṛṣṭhāc chanakair gām vyacarac chucā parītaḥ /
jagato janana-vyayaṃ vicinvan kṛpaṇaṃ khalv idam ityuvāca cārtaḥ // 5.7 //**

Then, getting down off the back of his fleet-footed steed, he slowly moved over the ground,²²² overtaken by sorrow. / And as he reflected on how life comes into existence and perishes, hurting, he uttered, "How pitiful this is." //5.7//

**manasā ca viviktatām abhīpsuḥ suhṛdas tām anuyāyino nivārya /
abhitaś cala-cāru-parṇavatya vijane mūlam upeyivān sa jambvāḥ // 5.8 //**

Desiring to be alone with his thoughts, he fended away those amicable hangers on / And drew close to the root of a solitary rose-apple tree whose abundant plumage fluttered agreeably all around. //5.8//

**niṣasāda sa yatra śaucavatyām bhuvi vaidūrya-nikāśa-śādvalāyām /
jagataḥ prabhava-vyayau vicinvan manasaś ca sthiti-mārgam ālalambe // 5.9 //**

There he sat upon the honest, verdant earth²²³ whose horizons shimmered like emeralds; / And, while reflecting how the living world arises and perishes, he dangled on the path of standing firmly upright, which is of the mind.²²⁴ //5.9//

²¹⁹ *Mahī* (lit. the great one [f.]) means the Earth, Mother Earth.

²²⁰ *Vasu-dhā* (lit. wealth-giver [f]), the bountiful earth.

²²¹ *Rasā* (f) means soil or earth.

²²² *Gām* (f) means a cow, or the earth as the milk-cow of kings.

²²³ *Bhū* (again, feminine) is the usual term for the earth.

**samavāpta-manaḥ-sthitiś ca sadyo viṣayecchādibhir ādhibhiś ca muktaḥ /
sa-vitarka-vicāram āpa śāntaṁ prathamam dhyānam anāsrava-prakāram // 5.10 //**

In stumbling upon firm upstandingness of the mind, he was instantly released from worries, such as those associated with desires for objects; / He entered the first peaceful stage, in which there are ideas and thoughts, of the meditation whose essence is freedom from polluting influences.²²⁵ //5.10//

**adhigamya tato viveka-jaṁ tu parama-prīti-sukhaṁ manaḥ-samādhim /
idam eva tataḥ paraṁ pradadyau manasā loka-gatiṁ niśamya samyak // 5.11 //**

But then, having experienced that most excellent state of joy and ease, born of seclusion, which is integration of the mind, / He proceeded to give consideration to the following evident fact – since, by means of the mind, he had clearly seen the way of the world. //5.11//

**kṛpaṇam bata yaj janaḥ svayaṁ sann avaśo vyādhi-jarā-vināśa-dharmā /
jarayārditam āturaṁ mṛtaṁ vā param ajño vijugupsate madāndhaḥ // 5.12 //**

“O how pitiable it is that human beings, while being ourselves at the mercy of sickness, aging and death, / Should tend, in our ignorance and wanton blindness, to disavow the other, who is afflicted by old age, or who is diseased or dying. //5.12//

**iha ced aham iḍṛśaḥ svayaṁ san vijugupseya paraṁ tathā-svabhāvam /
na bhavet sadṛśaṁ hi tat-kṣamaṁ vā paramaṁ dharmam imaṁ vijānato me // 5.13 //**

For if I here, being like that myself, should disavow another in the same condition, / That would not be worthy of me, or conduce to my knowing this most excellent dharma.” //5.13//

**iti tasya vipaśyato yathāvaj jagato vyādhi-jarā-vipatti-doṣān /
bala-yauvana-jīvita-pravṛtto vijagāmātma-gato madaḥ kṣaṇena // 5.14 //**

While he, for his part, was properly seeing through faults of the living associated with sickness, aging, and death, / The high spirits that had once intoxicated him, arising from his strength, youth and life, instantly evaporated. //5.14//

**na jaharṣa na cāpi cānutepe vicikitsāṁ na yayau na tandri-nidre /
na ca kāma-guṇeṣu samraraṅje na vididveṣa paraṁ na cāvamene // 5.15 //**

He felt neither thrill nor pang; into intellectual striving, or lassitude and sleepiness, he did not fall; / He was not reddened by passion for sensual desires, and neither did he hate, or look down upon, the other. //5.15//

²²⁴ The juxtaposition of *ālalambe* (he hung, he dangled) and *stṛiti* (standing upright or standing firm) seems to hint at the balancing act of sitting on the earth resolutely still, without fixity. *Bhuvi* (loc.) means “on the earth” or, maybe more accurately “in [the gravitational field of] the earth.”

²²⁵ The first dhyāna is also described in SN Canto 17 and BC Canto 12 as containing ideas and thoughts, and being born of seclusion.

iti buddhir iyaṃ ca nī-rajaskā vavṛdhe tasya mahātmano viśuddhā /

puruṣair aparair adṛśyamānaḥ puruṣaś copasasarpa bhikṣu-veṣaḥ // 5.16 //

Thus did this dustless mind, this mind which is cleansed, develop in him whose nature was great; / Whereupon, unseen by the other men, up crept a man who was dressed in beggar's garb. //5.16//

nara-deva-sutas tam abhyapṛcchad vada ko 'sīti śaśaṃsa so 'tha tasmai /

nara-puṃgava janma-mṛtyu-bhītaḥ śramaṇaḥ pravrajito 'smi mokṣa-hetoḥ // 5.17 //

The prince asked him: "Say! Who are you?", to which he replied: / "O bull among men! Alarmed by birth and death, I have gone forth as an ascetic striver, for the sake of liberation. //5.17//

jagati kṣaya-dharmake mumukṣur mṛgaye 'haṃ śivam akṣayaṃ padaṃ tat /

sva-jane 'nya-jane ca tulya-buddhir viṣayebhyo vinivṛtta-rāga-doṣaḥ // 5.18 //

Desiring liberation in a world marked by decay, I pursue that happy step which is immune to decay. / I am even-minded towards my own people and other people; turning back from objects, I have allowed the stain of redness to fade away. //5.18//

nivasan kva-cid eva vṛkṣa-mūle vijane vāyatane girau vane vā /

vicarāmy aparigraho nirāśaḥ paramārthāya yathopapanna-bhaikṣaḥ // 5.19 //

Dwelling anywhere – at the root of a tree, or in an abandoned house, or on a mountain, or in the forest, / I wander here and there, with no possessions and no expectations, subsisting, for the sake of ultimate riches, on whatever scraps I chance to get from begging." //5.19//

iti paśyata eva rāja-sūnor idam uktvā sa nabhaḥ samutpapāta /

sa hi tad-vapur-anya-buddhi-darśī smṛtaye tasya sameyivān divaukāḥ // 5.20 //

He uttered these words, while the son of the king looked powerlessly on, and then he vanished into the clouds; / For he was a sky-dweller who, peeping the prince's mind conflicting with his body, had come to help him towards mindfulness. //5.20//

gaganam kha-ga-vad gate ca tasmin nṛ-varaḥ saṃjahṛṣe visismiye ca /

upalabhya tataś ca dharma-saṃjñam abhiniryāṇa-vidhau matiṃ cakāra // 5.21 //

When he had gone, like a bird into the sky, the foremost of men was full of gladness and wonder; / And having thus received a hint of dharma, he set his mind on the matter of marching forth. //5.21//

**tata indra-samo jitendriyāśvaḥ pravivikṣuḥ param aśvam āruroha /
parivartya janam tv avekṣamāṇas tata evābhimatam vanam na bheje // 5.22 //**

And so, powerful as Indra, with the powerful horses of his senses tamed, the prince mounted his highest of horses, wishing to get started. / But then, having regard for people, he turned [his horse] around again, and did not repair directly to the longed for forest. //5.22//

**sa jarā-maraṇa-kṣayam cikīrṣur vana-vāsāya matim smṛtau nidhāya /
praviveśa punaḥ puram na kāmād vana-bhūmer iva maṇḍalam dvipendraḥ // 5.23 //**

Desiring to put an end to aging and dying, he had – while remaining mindful – directed his thinking towards living in the forest, / And yet he reluctantly re-entered the city, like a mighty elephant from the jungle entering a ring. //5.23//

**sukhitā bata nirvṛtā ca sā strī patir idṛkṣa ih' āyatākṣa yasyāḥ /
iti tam samudīkṣya rāja-kanyā praviśantaṁ pathi sāñjalir jagāda // 5.24 //**

“Made happy, alas, and *nirvṛtā*, perfectly contented, is the woman whose husband is such as you are here, O one of lengthened eyes!” / Thus, on seeing him entering, did a young princess exclaim, as she watched by the road with her hollowed hands joined. //5.24//

**atha ghoṣam imam mahābhra-ghoṣaḥ pariśuśrāva śamam param ca lebhe /
śrutavān sa hi nirvṛteti śabdaṁ parinirvāṇa-vidhau matim cakāra // 5.25 //**

Then, he of battle-cry like roaring thunder-cloud, listened to this cry of woe, and experienced a calmness most profound; / For as he heard the word *nirvṛtā*, “perfectly contented,” he set his mind on the matter of *pari-nirvāṇa* – the happiness of complete extinction.²²⁶ //5.25//

**atha kāñcana-śaila-śṛṅga-varṣmā gaja-megha-rṣabha-bāhu-nisvanākṣaḥ /
kṣayam akṣaya-dharma-jāta-rāgaḥ śaśi-simhānana-vikramaḥ prapede // 5.26 //**

Then, statuesque as a golden mountain peak, with the arms, voice, and eyes of an elephant, a cloud, and a bull, / Ardent desire having been aroused in him for [or by] something imperishable, he of moon-like faces and lion’s paces entered the palace. //5.26//

**mṛga-rāja-gatis-tato ’bhyagacchan nṛpatiṁ mantri-gaṇair upāsyamānam /
samitau marutām iva jvalantaṁ maghavantaṁ tri-dive sanat-kumāraḥ // 5.27 //**

And so, going with the gait of a king of beasts, he approached the lord of men attended by his coveys of ministers, / Like “Fresh Prince” Sanat-kumāra in the third heaven approaching shining Indra among his retinue of storm-gods. //5.27//

²²⁶ *Nirvṛta* is from the root *√vr*, to stop, whereas *nirvāṇa* is from another root, for example, *√vā*, to blow; but in both words the prefix *nir-* suggests something having faded out. The prefix *pari-* adds the sense of completeness.

**praṇīpatya ca sāñjalir babhāṣe diśa mahyaṁ nara-deva sādhv-anujñāṁ /
parivivrajiṣāmi mokṣa-hetor niyato hy asya janasya viprayogaḥ // 5.28 //**

Bowing down with hollowed hands joined, he said: “Grant me, O god among men, proper assent!
/ I desire to go wandering, for the sake of liberation, since, for a man such as I am, the
invariable rule is separation.” //5.28//

**iti tasya vaco niśamyā rājā kariṇevābhīhato drumas̄ cacāla /
kamala-pratime ’ñjalau gr̥hītvā vacanaṁ cedam uvāca bāṣpa-kaṅṭhaḥ // 5.29 //**

The king, hearing these words of his, shook like a tree assaulted by an elephant; / He grasped
the hands that were folded like a lotus and spoke, in a voice choked with tears, as follows:
//5.29//

**pratisaṁhara tāta buddhim etāṁ na hi kālas tava dharma-saṁśrayasya /
vayasi prathame matau calāyāṁ bahu-doṣāṁ hi vadanti dharma-caryāṁ // 5.30 //**

“Put off this idea, my son; it is not time for you to be united with your dharma. / For early in life
when the mind is changeable there are, they say, many pitfalls in the practice of dharma.
//5.30//

**viṣayeṣu kutūhalendriyasya vrata-khedeṣv asamartha-niścayasya /
taruṇasya manaś calaty aranyād anabhijñasya viṣeṣato viveke // 5.31 //**

When his curious senses reach out to objects, when in the face of wearying observances he lacks
fixity of purpose, / When, above all, he is not accustomed to seclusion, the mind of one who is
young veers away from the wasteland. //5.31//

**mama tu priya-dharma dharma-kālas tvayi lakṣmīm avasṛjya lakṣa-bhūte /
sthira-vikrama vikrameṇa dharmas tava hitvā tu guruṁ bhaved adharmah // 5.32 //**

For me, O lover of dharma! it is time for religious dharma – after I have surrendered to you, the
apple of my eye, the apple of my royal power. / But for you, O firmly striding force! After you
have forcibly forsaken your own father, religious dharma might turn into irreligion. //5.32//

**tad imaṁ vyavasāyam utsṛja tvaṁ bhava tāvan nirato gr̥ha-stha-dharme /
puruṣasya vayaḥ-sukhāni bhuktvā ramaṇīyo hi tapo-vana-praveśaḥ // 5.33 //**

Therefore give up this fixity of purpose and be, for the present moment, devoted to the dharma
that abides in living at home; / For when a man has already experienced the joys of vernal
energy, his entry then into the ascetic’s grove is something to delight in.” //5.33//

iti vākyam idaṁ niśamya rājñāḥ kalaviṅka-svara uttaraṁ babhāṣe /

yadi me pratibhūś caturṣu rājan bhavasi tvaṁ na tapo-vanaṁ śrayiṣye // 5.34 //

Having heard these words of the king, he with the voice of a *kalaviṅka* bird²²⁷ spoke his reply: /
“If in four things, O king, you will be my guarantor, I will not go to the ascetic grove – //5.34//

na bhaven maraṇāya jīvitam me viharet svāsthyam idaṁ ca me na rogaḥ /

na ca yauvanam ākṣipej jarā me na ca saṁpattim imām hared vipattiḥ // 5.35 //

My life shall not lead to death; no breakdown shall put asunder my present state of soundness; /
Growing old shall not take away my youthfulness; and going wrong shall not impinge upon
what presently goes well.”²²⁸ //5.35//

iti dur-labham artham ūcivāmsaṁ tanayaṁ vākyam uvāca śākya-rājaḥ /

tyaja buddhim imām ati-pravṛttām avahāsyo ’ti-mano-ratha-kramaś ca // 5.36 //

To the son who had expressed such a difficult purport,²²⁹ the Śākya king told his command: /
“Abandon this idea, which goes too far! A way of high-flown fancy is ridiculous.” //5.36//

atha meru-gurur guruṁ babhāṣe yadi nāsti krama eṣa nāsmi vāryaḥ /

śaraṇāj jvalanena dahyamānān na hi niścikramiṣum kṣamaṁ grahītum // 5.37 //

Then he who had the moment of Mount Meru addressed his momentous relative: “Whether or
not this turns out to be a way, I ought not to be held back; / For when a house is being
consumed by fire it is not right to stop a man who seeks a way out. //5.37//

jaḡataś ca yathā dhruvo viyogo nanu dharmāya varam svayaṁ viyogaḥ /

avaśaṁ nanu viprayojayen mām akṛta-svārtham atṛptam eva mṛtyuḥ // 5.38 //

Again, since for the living world separation is the immutable constant, is it not better for the
separation to be willingly done for dharma’s sake? / Will not death, whether I like it or not,
separate me, leaving me unsatisfied, the doing of my own thing being unfinished?” //5.38//

iti bhūmi-patir niśamya tasya vyavasāyaṁ tanayasya nirmumukṣoḥ /

abhidhāya na yāsyatīti bhūyo vidadhe rakṣaṇam uttamānś ca kāmān // 5.39 //

A lord of the earth, thus perceiving the fixity of purpose of his freedom-seeking son, / Declared
“He shall not go!” And he provided him with an increased guard, along with the most exquisite
objects of desire. //5.39//

²²⁷ Famed for its beautiful song.

²²⁸ On the surface, the prince is asking the king to guarantee what could never be, since all lives lead to death. Below the surface, the irony is that the Buddha would in fact obtain the nectar of immortality. And a deeper irony still might be that obtaining the nectar of immortality would itself be a kind of dying. Similarly for the other three conditions.

²²⁹ Ostensibly *dur-labham artham* means a thing that is hard to do; below the surface *dur-labham artham* is meaning that is hard to grasp.

**sacivais tu nidarśīto yathāvad bahu-mānāt prañayāc ca śāstra-pūrvam /
guruṇā ca nivārito 'śru-pātaiḥ praviveśāvasatham tataḥ sa śocan // 5.40 //**

Apprised, following protocol, by ministers, with great respect and affection and with reference to sacred books; / While forbidden by his father, with falling tears, he went then into his lodging quarters, sorrowing. //5.40//

**cala-kuṇḍala-cumbitānanābhir ghana-niśvāsa-vikampita-stanībhiḥ /
vanitābhir adhīra-locanābhir mṛga-śāvābhir ivābhyudikṣyamāṇaḥ // 5.41 //**

Women whose swaying ear-rings lightly kissed their mouths, and whose deep sighs caused their breasts²³⁰ to tremble, / Watched him with skittish eyes, like young does, looking up. //5.41//

**sa hi kāñcana-parvatāvadāto hṛdayonmāda-karo varāṅganānām /
śravaṇāṅga-vilocanātmabhāvān vacana-sparśa-vapur-guṇair jahāra // 5.42 //**

For he with the luminance of a golden mountain, he who unhinged beautiful women's hearts, / Carried away their ears, bodies, eyes, and souls, with his speech, sensitivity, handsome form, and excellent qualities. //5.42//

**vigate divase tato vimānaṁ vapuṣā sūrya iva pradīpyamānaḥ /
timiraṁ vijighāmsur ātma-bhāsā ravir udyann iva merum āruroha // 5.43 //**

Then, when day was done, blazing like the sun with his handsome form, / The one who would by his own brightness dispel darkness ascended the palace, like the rising sun ascending Mount Meru.²³¹ //5.43//

**kanakojjala-dīpta-dīpa-vṛkṣam vara-kālāguru-dhūpa-pūrṇa-garbhā /
adhiruḥya sa vajra-bhakti-citraṁ pravaraṁ kāñcanam āsanaṁ siṣeve // 5.44 //**

Rising above, [he sat seated within] a light-tree that blazed with golden brightness, a womb filled with the finest fragrance of *kālāguru*, 'impenetrable lightness,' / And streaked with dotted lines of diamonds – he occupied a most excellent seat [or practised most excellent sitting], made of gold.²³² //5.44//

²³⁰ *Stana* means the female breast (either human or animal), teat, udder – a part of mammalian anatomy to which Aśvaghōṣa keeps coming back.

²³¹ *Āruroha* means he ascended, he went up. The upward direction is given further emphasis by *adhiruḥya* in the next verse, and *uttamam* in the next verse but one.

²³² *Kanaka*, *ujjala*, and *dīpta* in the 1st pāda, and *kāñcana* in the 4th pāda, as nouns, can all mean gold. Ostensibly Aśvaghōṣa is describing a golden seat (*kāñcanam āsanam*), but *āsana* is originally an *-na* neuter action noun that means "sitting." A *dīpa-vṛkṣam* ("light-tree") ostensibly means a candlestick, but in the hidden meaning a tree of light and golden sitting might be synonymous. *Kālāguru* was the proper name for a kind of black aloe wood, but *kālāguru* (*kāla* + *a-guru*) literally means a lightness (*a-guru*) that is black or dark (*kāla*), i.e. difficult to see distinctly or impenetrable. Wrapping up the allusion to sitting practice itself are the streaks of dotted lines of diamonds (*vajra-bhakti-citra*) which suggest the needlework on the *kaṣāya* of the one who is sitting.

**tata uttamam uttamāṅganās taṁ niśi tūryair upatasthur indra-kalpam /
himavac-chirasīva candra-gaure draviṇendrātmajam apsaro-gaṇaughāḥ // 5.45 //**

Then the upmost of women, accompanied by musical instruments, waited in the night on him the upmost man, a man to rival Indra; / They waited on him like cumuli of celestial nymphs waiting on the son of the Lord of Wealth up upon a moon-white Himālayan peak. //5.45//

**paramair api divya-tūrya-kalpaiḥ sa tu tair naiva ratim yayau na harṣam /
paramārtha-sukhāya tasya sādhor abhiniścikramiṣā yato na reme // 5.46 //**

But even those ultimate instruments, on a par with heavenly harps, gave him no pleasure nor any joy. / His desire, as a sincere man going straight for his goal, was to get out, in pursuit of the happiness of ultimate riches; and therefore he was not in the mood for play. //5.46//

**atha tatra surais tapo-variṣṭhair akaniṣṭhair vyavasāyam asya buddhvā /
yugapat pramadā-janasya nidrā vihitāsīd vikṛtās ca gātra-ceṣṭāḥ // 5.47 //**

At that juncture, the *a-kaniṣṭha* gods, the doyens of asceticism 'of whom none is youngest,' being acquainted with his fixity of purpose, / Visited, upon all the young women at once, deep sleep, and upon the women's bodies and limbs, irregular poses.²³³ //5.47//

**abhavac chayitā hi tatra kā-cid viniveśya pracale kare kapolam /
dayitām api rukma-pattra-citrām kupitevāṅka-gatām vihāya vīṇām // 5.48 //**

There was one girl there, for instance, who slept with her cheek resting on a precarious hand, / Her cherished lute, brightly decorated with gold-leaf, lying by her lap as if cast aside in anger.²³⁴ //5.48//

**vibabhau kara-lagna-veṇur anyā stana-visrasta-sitāmśukā śayānā /
rju-ṣaṭ-pada-paṅkti-juṣṭa-padmā jala-phena-prahasat-taṭā nadīva // 5.49 //**

Another individual,²³⁵ clasping her bamboo flute in her hand, as she slept with a white robe slipping down from her breast, / Resembled a river where a line of orderly bees is visiting a lotus – a river where foam from the water is giving the shore a white smile.²³⁶ //5.49//

²³³ *Vikṛta* means changed but especially changed for the worst – deformed, disfigured, abnormal. *Vikṛta* can also mean unnatural, strange, extraordinary. So the ostensible meaning is that the women were sleeping in grotesque forms. But in the hidden meaning which emerges from the following fourteen verses, each different individual was letting her own light shine, without trying to make herself meet any external or internal norm of “correct posture.”

²³⁴ A parody of a monk who has dropped off next to a begging bowl that resembles the body of a large-bellied lute?

²³⁵ *Anyā*, one who is different. One who does not necessarily conform to expectations.

²³⁶ To explain the simile: the woman resembles a flowing river; the line of bees correspond to the bamboo flute, and the lotus to the woman's hand; the white foam along the shore corresponds to the white robe. What is harder to understand, however, is the point of the metaphor – what connection is intended between a beautiful scene in nature and a pose that has been described as irregular, or grotesque (*vikṛta*)?

**nava-puṣkara-garbha-komalābhyām tapanīyojjvala-saṁgatāṅgadābhyām /
svapiti sma tathāparā bhujābhyām parirabhya priyavan mṛdaṅgam eva // 5.50 //**

With her two arms as soft as the sepals of young lotuses, with her two arms whose blazing golden bands²³⁷ had merged together, / Slept an individual who thus was different, embracing, as if it were a beloved friend, nothing more or less than a drum.²³⁸ //5.50//

**nava-hāṭaka-bhūṣaṇās tathānyā vasaṇam pītam anuttamaṁ vasānāḥ /
avaśā vata nidrayā nipetur gaja-bhagnā iva karṇikāra-śākhāḥ // 5.51 //**

Other individuals who, similarly, were different, who, wearing their peerless yellow garments, lent beauty to new-found gold from gold-rich Hāṭaka, / Dropped down helpless (alas!) under the influence of sleep, like Karṇikāra branches broken by an elephant.²³⁹ //5.51//

**avalaṁbya gavākṣa-pārsvam anyā śayitā cāpa-vibhugna-gātra-yaṣṭiḥ /
virarāja vilambi-cāru-hārā racitā toraṇa-śāla-bhañjikeva // 5.52 //**

Another individual slept leaning against the side of a round window, her slender body curved like a bow; / She shone, entrancing in her pendulous splendour, like the breaker of a Śāla branch, sculpted in an arched gateway.²⁴⁰ //5.52//

**maṇi-kuṇḍala-daṣṭa-pattra-lekhaṁ mukha-padmaṁ vinataṁ tathāparasyāḥ /
śata-pattram ivārdha-vakra-nāḍam sthita-kāraṇḍava-ghaṭṭitaṁ cakāṣe // 5.53 //**

With its streaks of scented make-up nibbled by jewelled ear-rings, the bowed lotus-face of one, again, who was different, / Looked a picture, like a lotus of many petals, with its stalk half rounded, that had been pecked and dunked by a perching duck.²⁴¹ //5.53//

²³⁷ For soft arms see also BC4.30. Golden cuffs or golden arm-bands are a recurring theme (see also verses 54 and 81). Is the suggestion of unhindered circulation when shoulders, elbows, and wrists are free?

²³⁸ Like the expanded belly of a Happy Buddha? For expanded belly, see also BC3.41.

²³⁹ The suggestion is of sitting practitioners wearing ochre robes, all dropping off together body and mind.

²⁴⁰ A particularly famous example of such a sculpture adorns an arched gateway to the great stupa commissioned by Aśoka at Sanchi. The point might be that it would be false always to associate beautiful form with symmetry. If when you sit, your right shoulder is lower than your left shoulder, don't fiddle about trying to put it right, you ignoramus – let it all be wrong!

²⁴¹ Neither should we strive, when sitting, to push and pull anything into what we feel to be upright alignment. The point is to drop off body and mind, not to simulate perfect physical form. Thus Aśvaghōṣa here praises the beauty of one who does not sit bolt upright but whose back is naturally somewhat rounded.

**aparāḥ śayitā yathopaviṣṭāḥ stana-bhārair avanamyamāna-gātrāḥ /
upaguhya parasparam virejur bhujā-pāśais tapanīya-pārihāryaiḥ // 5.54 //**

Other individuals, having dropped off as they sat, their bodies bowing down under the troy weight²⁴² of their breasts, / Shone forth, as they drew each other into a protective embrace, using the leashes of their arms, with golden cuffs. //5.54//

**mahatīm parivādinīm ca kā-cid vanitāliṅgya sakhīm iva prasuptā /
vijughūrṇa calat-suvarṇa-sūtrā vadanenākula-yoktrakojjvalena // 5.55 //**

One woman, who was far gone, embraced a large lute as if it were her confidante; / She rolled about, her golden strings trembling, and her face shining with the golden radiance of fastenings fallen into disarray.²⁴³ //5.55//

**paṇavam yuvatir bhujāṁsa-deśād avavisraṁsita-cāru-pāśam anyā /
sa-vilāsa-ratānta-tāntam ūrvor vivare kāntam ivābhiniya śīśye // 5.56 //**

Another young woman had close to her a portable drum, whose impeccable strap she had let slip down from her shoulder.²⁴⁴ / As if the drum were her breathless beloved, at the end of playful enjoyment, she had brought it into the open space between her thighs, and dropped off. //5.56//

**aparā na babhur nimīlitākṣyo vipulākṣyo 'pi śubha-bhruvo 'pi satyaḥ /
pratisaṁkucitāravinda-kośāḥ savitary astam ite yathā nalinyaḥ // 5.57 //**

Different women, though truly they had large eyes and beautiful brows, did not make a pretty sight,²⁴⁵ with their eyes closed, / Like lotus ponds with their lotus buds closed at the setting of the sun. //5.57//

²⁴² *Bhāra* means weight in general, but a particular weight (20 *tulās*) of gold.

²⁴³ A metaphor for coming undone, i.e., for the *undoing* of needless tensions.

²⁴⁴ For a monk to carry his or her bowl using a shoulder strap is traditional behaviour.

²⁴⁵ *Na babhur* means they did not shine. The ostensible meaning is they looked bad. But the real meaning is that they made no effort to look good – just as a beautiful lotus pond makes no effort, but looks fine as it is.

**śithilākula-mūrdhajā tathānyā jaghana-srasta-vibhūṣaṇāṁśu-kāntā /
aśayiṣṭa vikīrṇa-kaṅṭha-sūtrā gaja-bhagnā pratiyātan'-āṅganeva // 5.58 //**

One adorable woman, similarly, was otherwise: decorative threads had fallen from her hips, and her hair was undone and dishevelled [or her thoughts were occupied with undoing].²⁴⁶ / She had dropped off, sending her necklaces scattering [or propagating the Neck Sūtra], like a statue-woman, broken by elephants.²⁴⁷ //5.58//

**aparās tv avaśā hriyā viyuktā dhṛti-matyō 'pi vapur-guṇair upetāḥ /
viniśāsvasur ulbaṇaṁ śayānā vikṛtāḥ kṣipta-bhujā jajṛmbhire ca // 5.59 //**

Contrary ones, meanwhile, helplessly and shamelessly – possessed though they were of self-command and personal graces – / Exhaled, in their repose, in a manner that was extra-ordinary and unreasonable; and, in irregular fashion, their arms moving impulsively, they stretched out.²⁴⁸ //5.59//

**vyapaviddha-vibhūṣaṇa-srajo 'nyā viṣṭāgranthana-vāsaso viśamjñāḥ /
animīlita-śukla-niścalākṣyo na viṛjuḥ śayitā gatāsu-kalpāḥ // 5.60 //**

Different individuals, leaving trinkets jettisoned and garlands trashed, unconsciously, in robes of undone knots, / With their bright, motionless eyes open, displayed no beauty, reposing there like women who had breathed their last. //5.60//

**viṛtāsyā-putā vivṛddha-gātrī prapatad-vaktra-jalā prakāśa-guhyā /
aparā mada-ghūrṇiteva śiśye na babhāse vikṛtaṁ vapuḥ puṣa // 5.61 //**

With her oral cavity open and her legs spreading out, so that she sprayed saliva, and made visible what normally remains secret, / One very different one had dropped off; rocking somewhat in her intoxication, she did not make a pretty sight, but filled an irregular frame.²⁴⁹ //5.61//

²⁴⁶ Ostensibly *ākula* means “dishevelled” but it can also mean “eagerly occupied.” *Mūrdha-ja* (lit. “head-born” or “begotten from the head”) ostensibly means the hair that grows on the head but its hidden meaning is thinking that is conceived in the head.

²⁴⁷ The original meaning of *sūtra* is string or thread, as in a string of pearls. The breaking of a statue might be a metaphor for breaking the fixed conception of correct posture – as preached in the Sūtra of Liberation of the Neck.

²⁴⁸ What is spontaneous movement? The behaviour of the ignorant who just do whatever they like, without self-restraint? Or the behaviour of the enlightened who just do whatever they like, without self-restraint? The matter is discussed, with reference to the non-buddha, in Shobogenzo chap. 28, *Butsu-kojono-ji*.

²⁴⁹ In the last of these fourteen verses, the gap between ostensible and hidden meaning is stretched to the limit. Ostensibly the scene portrayed is disgusting: saliva is being sprayed out from the open mouth of an ignorant one who is asleep. In the hidden meaning, the spraying is going on inside the oral cavity of a conspicuously healthy person who is free of undue tension. Ostensibly a woman is unconsciously revealing her private parts. In the hidden meaning, a buddha is revealing secrets of the Buddha's teaching.

**iti sattva-kulānvayānurūpaṁ vividhaṁ sa pramadā-janaḥ śayānaḥ /
sarasāḥ sadṛśaṁ babhāra rūpaṁ pavanāvarjita-rugna-puṣkarasya // 5.62 //**

Thus, each in accordance with her nature and her lineage, that company of women – all reposing in diversity – / Bore the semblance of a lotus-pond whose lotuses had been bent down and broken by the wind. //5.62//

**samavekṣya tathā tathā śayānā vikṛtās tā yuvatīr adhīra-ceṣṭāḥ /
guṇavad-vapuṣo 'pi valgu-bhāṣā nṛpa-sūnuḥ sa vigarhayāṁ babhūva // 5.63 //**

Beholding them dropped off in irregular fashion, in this way and that, seeing the lack of constraint in the movement of their limbs, / Perfectly beautiful though those women were in their form, and beautifully dulcet in their speech, the son of the king was moved to scorn.²⁵⁰ //5.63//

**aśucir vikṛtaś ca jīva-loke vanitānām ayam īdṛśaḥ sva-bhāvaḥ /
vasanābharaṇais tu vañcyamānaḥ puruṣaḥ strī-viṣayeṣu rāgam eti // 5.64 //**

“Impure and impaired – such, in the living world of men, is the nature of women. / And yet, deceived by clothes and accoutrements, a man is reddened with love for a woman’s sensual charms.²⁵¹ //5.64//

**vimṛśed yadi yoṣitām manuṣyaḥ prakṛtiṁ svapna-vikāram īdṛśaṁ ca /
dhruvam atra na vardhayet pramādaṁ guṇa-saṁkalpa-hatas tu rāgam eti // 5.65 //**

If a man reflected on women’s original nature, and on how such change is wrought by sleep, / Surely by these means he would not be making intoxication grow. Smitten by a notion of excellence, however, he is moved to redness.”²⁵² //5.65//

**iti tasya tad-antaram viditvā niśi niścikramaṣā samudbabhūva /
avagamyā manas tato 'sya devair bhavana-dvāram apāvṛtaṁ babhūva // 5.66 //**

When he had seen this deficiency in the other,²⁵³ the desire sprang up in him to escape in the night; / Whereupon, under the influence of gods, who were steeped in this mind,²⁵⁴ the entrance of the palace was found to be wide open. [Or the way to freedom from existence was seen to be wide open.]²⁵⁵ //5.66//

²⁵⁰ The scorn, in a superficial reading, is directed towards women.

²⁵¹ On a deeper reading, the prince's scorn is directed towards men who are slaves to sensual desire for women who in their imperfect (impure and impaired) reality, really are beautiful.

²⁵² Ostensibly the allusion is to “impurity meditation.” In a deeper reading, the reflection in question would be reflection on the buddha-nature.

²⁵³ Ostensibly the deficiency is the impurity of women; in the deeper meaning, the deficiency is in the attachment to sensual passion of men.

²⁵⁴ In the hidden meaning, the gods are cosmic observers of irony. Therefore they are steeped in the mind which sees its own faults not in itself but in the other.

²⁵⁵ A play on *bhavana*, whose meanings include “palace” and “coming into existence.”

**atha so 'vatatāra harmya-prṣṭhād yuvatīḥ tāḥ śayitā vigarhamāṇaḥ /
avatīrya tataś ca nirviśaṅko gṛha-kakṣyām prathamam vinirjagāma // 5.67 //**

And so he descended from the palace heights scorning those women who were asleep, / And thus, having descended, being quite without doubt, he went directly into the outer courtyard.²⁵⁶ //5.67//

**turagāvacaram sa bodhayitvā javinam chandakam ittham ity uvāca /
hayam ānaya kanthakam tvarāvān amṛtam prāptum ito 'dya me yiyāsā // 5.68 //**

He woke that ready runner of the fleet of foot, the stableman Chandaka, and addressed him as follows: / “Bring me in haste the horse Kanthaka! I wish today to flee from here, in order to obtain the nectar of immortality. //5.68//

**hr̥di yā mama tuṣṭir adya jātā vyavasāyaś ca yathā dhṛtau niviṣṭaḥ /
vijane 'pi ca nāthavān ivāsmi dhruvam artho 'bhimukhaḥ sa me ya iṣṭaḥ // 5.69 //**

Since there has arisen today in my heart a certain satisfaction,²⁵⁷ since strenuous fixity of purpose has settled down into a contented constancy, / And since even in solitude I feel as if I am in the presence of a protector, assuredly, the valuable object to which I aspire is smiling upon me. //5.69//

**hriyam eva ca saṁnatiṁ ca hitvā śayitā mat-pramukhe yathā yuvatyaḥ /
vivṛte ca yathā svayam kapāṭe niyataṁ yātum anāmayāya kālaḥ // 5.70 //**

As the women, abandoning all shame and submission, relaxed in front of me; / And as the doors opened, spontaneously, it is doubtless time to depart, in pursuit of wellness.” //5.70//

**pratigṛhya tataḥ sa bhartur ājñām veditārtho 'pi narendra-śāsanasya /
manasīva pareṇa codyamānas tura-gasyānayane matiṁ cakāra // 5.71 //**

Chandaka acquiesced, on those grounds, in his master's wisdom – though he knew the meaning of a king's command – / And he made the decision, as if his mind were being moved by another, to bring the horse. //5.71//

**atha hema-khalīna-pūrṇa-vaktram laghu-śayyāstaranopagūḍha-prṣṭham /
bala-sattva-javānvay'-opapannaṁ sa varāśvam tam upānināya bhartre // 5.72 //**

And so one whose mouth was filled with a golden bit, one whose back was overspread by the instant refuge of a light covering of cloth,²⁵⁸ / One endowed with strength, spirit, quickness and pedigree – a most excellent horse he brought out for the master. //5.72//

²⁵⁶ In the ironic hidden meaning, in being without doubt the prince is committing the sin of certainty. In scorning others who are asleep, it is the prince himself who is not yet awake.

²⁵⁷ Ostensibly the prince is demonstrating the virtue of contentment, but in the hidden meaning he might still be demonstrating the sin of religious certainty.

²⁵⁸ In the hidden meaning, a kaṣāya, an ochre robe.

**pratata-trika-puccha-mūla-pārṣṇīm nibhṛtaṁ hrasva-tanūja-prṣṭha-karṇam /
vinat'-onnata-prṣṭha-kukṣi-pārśvam vipula-protha-lalāṭa-kaṭy-uraskam // 5.73 //**

His tail, supports, and heels formed spreading triangles; the mane around his crown and ears was closely cropped, in an unassuming manner; / The curves of his back, belly and sides wound downward and wound upward; his horse's nostrils expanded, as did his forehead, hips and chest.²⁵⁹ //5.73//

**upagṛhya sa taṁ viśāla-vakṣāḥ kamalābhena ca sāntvayan kareṇa /
madhurākṣarayā girā śāsāsa dhvajinī-madhyam iva praveṣṭu-kāmaḥ // 5.74 //**

He whose chest was broad reached up and drew him to himself; then, while comforting with a lotus-like hand, / He bade him with a song of soothing noises, as might a warrior when preparing to go, where banners fly, into the middle: //5.74//

**bahuśaḥ kila śatravo nirastāḥ samare tvām adhiruhya pārthivena /
aham apy amṛtaṁ padaṁ yathāvat turaga-śreṣṭha labheya tat kuruṣva // 5.75 //**

“Often indeed has a lord of the earth expelled enemies while riding in battle on you! / So that I too might realise the deathless step, please, O best of horses, act! //5.75//

**su-labhāḥ khalu saṁyuge sahāyā viṣayāvāpta-sukhe dhanārjane vā /
puruṣasya tu dur-labhāḥ sahāyāḥ patitasyāpadi dharmā-saṁśraye vā // 5.76 //**

Readily indeed are companions found when the battle is joined, or in the happiness at the gaining of the end, when the booty is acquired; / But companions are hard for a man to find when he is getting into trouble – or when he is turning to dharma. //5.76//

**iha caiva bhavanti ye sahāyāḥ kaluṣe karmaṇi dharmā-saṁśraye vā /
avagacchati me yathāntar-ātmā niyataṁ te 'pi janās tad-aṁśa-bhājaḥ // 5.77 //**

There again, all in this world who are companions, whether in tainted doing or in devotion to dharma, / Living beings without exception – as my inner self intuits – are entitled to their share of the prize. //5.77//

**tad idaṁ parigamya dharmā-yuktaṁ mama niryāṇam ato jagadd-hitāya /
turagottama vega-vikramābhyāṁ prayatasv ātmā-hite jagadd-hite ca // 5.78 //**

Fully appreciate, then, this act of mine, yoked to dharma, of getting out, proceeding from here, for the welfare of the world; / And exert yourself, O best of horses, with quick and bold steps, for your own good and the good of the world.” //5.78//

²⁵⁹ Ostensibly, a description of the horse; in the hidden meaning, of a master.

**iti suhṛdam ivānuśiṣya kṛtye turaga-varaṁ nṛ-varo vanaṁ yiyāsuḥ /
sitam asita-gati-dyutir vapuṣmān ravir iva śāradam abhram āruroha // 5.79 //**

Having thus exhorted the best of horses, as if exhorting a friend to his duty, and desiring to ride into the forest, / The best of men with his handsome form, bright as fire, climbed aboard the white horse, like the sun aboard an autumn cloud, up above. //5.79//

**atha sa pariharan niśītha-caṇḍaṁ parijana-bodha-karaṁ dhvaniṁ sad-aśvaḥ /
vigata-hanu-ravaḥ praśānta-heṣaś-cakita-vimukta-pada-kramo jagāma // 5.80 //**

And so, avoiding the noise that stridently attacks slumber, avoiding the noise that makes people all around wake up,²⁶⁰ / Being through with sputtering, the fires of his neighing all extinguished, that good horse, with footsteps liberated from timidity, set off. //5.80//

**kanaka-valaya-bhūṣita-prakoṣṭhaiḥ kamala-nibhaiḥ kamalān iva pravidhya /
avanata-tanavas tato 'sya yakṣās cakita-gatair dadhire khurān karāgraiḥ // 5.81 //**

Bowing *yakṣas*, their wrists adorned with golden bands, their lotus-like hands seeming to emit sprays of lotus flowers, / Their lotus-petal fingertips coyly trembling, then bore up that horse's hooves. //5.81//

**guru-parigha-kapāṭa-saṁvṛtā yā na sukham api dvi-radair apāvriyante /
vrajati nṛpa-sute gata-svanās tāḥ svayam abhavan vivṛtāḥ puraḥ pratolyaḥ // 5.82 //**

Primary pathways were blocked by gates with heavy bars [or by gates whose bars were gurus]²⁶¹ – gates not easily opened, even by elephants – / But as the prince went into movement, those major arteries, noiselessly and spontaneously, became open. //5.82//

**pitaram abhimukhaṁ sutaṁ ca bālaṁ janam anuraktam anuttamāṁ ca lakṣmīm /
kṛta-matir apahāya nir-vyapekṣaḥ piṭṛ-nagarāt sa tato vinirjagāma // 5.83 //**

The father who doted on him, a son who was still young; the people who loved him; and an incomparable fortune – / With his mind made up and without a care, he had left them all behind, and so, on that basis, from the city of his fathers, away he went. //5.83//

**atha sa vikaja-paṅkajāyatākṣaḥ puram avalokya nanāda simha-nādam /
janana-maraṇayor adṛṣṭa pāro na punar ahaṁ kapilāhvayaṁ praveṣṭā // 5.84 //**

Then he with the lengthened eyes of a lotus – one born of mud, not of water²⁶² – surveyed the city and roared a lion's roar: / “Until I have seen the far shore of birth and death I shall never again enter the city named after Kapila.” //5.84//

²⁶⁰ In the hidden meaning what is denied is the sense of compulsion – making people wake up in the sense of trying to force them to wake up, by direct, unskilful means.

²⁶¹ As an adjective, *guru* means heavy. As a noun it means a venerable or respectable person, like a father or a teacher, and especially a spiritual preceptor.

**iti vacanam idaṁ niśamya tasya draviṇa-pateḥ pariṣad-gaṇā nananduḥ /
pramudita-manasaś ca deva-saṅghā vyavasita-pāraṇam āśaśamsire 'smai // 5.85 //**

Having heard this declaration of his, the yakṣa cohorts sitting around Kubera, Lord of Wealth, rejoiced; / And jubilant sanghas²⁶³ of gods conveyed to him the expectation that a resolution must be carried through to the end. //5.85//

**huta-vaha-vapuṣo divaukaso 'nye vyavasitam asya ca duṣkaraṁ veditvā /
akuruta tuhine pathi prakāśaṁ ghana-vivara-praṣṭā ivendu-pādāḥ // 5.86 //**

Sky-dwellers of a different ilk,²⁶⁴ with fiery forms, knowing how difficult his resolution was to do, / Produced on his dewy path a brightness like moon-beams issuing through chinks in the clouds. //5.86//

**hari-turaga-turaṅgavat-turaṅgaḥ sa tu vicaran manasīva codyamānaḥ /
aruṇa-paruṣa-tāram antar-ikṣaṁ sa ca su-bahūni jagāma yojanāni // 5.87 //**

With the one in question, as quick as the bay horse of Indra, moving swiftly on, as if being spurred in his mind, / The one in question²⁶⁵ rode into the dawn sky, where ruddy Aruṇa²⁶⁶ tarnishes the stars, and a good many miles he went. //5.87//

iti buddha-carite mahā-kāvye 'bhiniṣkramaṇo nāma pañcamaḥ sargaḥ //

The 5th canto, titled Getting Well & Truly Out,
in an epic tale of awakened action.

²⁶² *Paṅkaja*, “mud-born,” means a lotus. *Vikaja* can be read as not (vi) water(ka) born (ja) – in which case the point is to emphasize that the bodhisattva was not only an ideal archetype but also a real human being.

²⁶³ Here is one of several examples of Aśvaghōṣa using the word *saṅgha* to mean a group or a religious congregation. It is remarkable that Aśvaghōṣa never once uses the word *saṅgha* in the conventional sense of a community of devotees of the Buddha – though he does describe the Buddha leading Nanda to a *vihāra*.

²⁶⁴ Once again *anye* indicates individuals who were different. The religious congregations of gods in heaven were one kind of sky-dweller, burdening the bodhisattva with their expectation. These were sky-dwellers of a different ilk – perhaps they were real fireflies?

²⁶⁵ The subject of each line is *sa*, he, that one. But was the one in question the prince, Sarvārtha-siddha? Or was the one in question the horse, Kanthaka?

²⁶⁶ Dawn personified.

Canto 6: chandaka-nivartanaḥ Chandaka & Turning Back

Introduction

The ostensible title of the present Canto is Turning Chandaka Back, so that it describes the Prince sending the horseman Chandaka back to Kapilavāstu.

Below the surface, however, the verb *ni-vṛt*, to turn back, to stop, has deep meaning in the Buddha's teaching as *Aśvaghōṣa* records it. Hence in *Saundara-nanda* Canto 16, the Buddha tells Nanda:

Comprehend, therefore, that suffering is doing; witness the faults impelling it forward;
Realise its stopping as non-doing; and know the path as a turning back (*nivartakam*). // SN16.42 //

**tato muhūrtābhyudite jagac-cakṣuṣi bhās-kare /
bhārgavasyāśrama-padaṁ sa dadarśa nṛṇāṁ varaḥ // 6.1 //**

Then at the instant of the rising of the light-producing eye of the world, / The ashram of a son of *Bhṛgu*²⁶⁷ he the best of men did see. //6.1//

**supta-viśvasta-hariṇaṁ svastha-sthita-vihaṅgamam /
viśrānta iva yad dṛṣṭvā kṛtārtha iva cābhavat // 6.2 //**

Deer there breathed easy, in unsuspecting sleep, and birds perched with self-assurance – / On seeing which he seemed reposed, like one who has been successful. //6.2//

**sa vismaya-nivṛtṭy arthaṁ tapaḥ-pūjārtham eva ca /
svāṁ cānuvartitāṁ rakṣann aśva-prṣṭhād avātarat // 6.3 //**

As an act of inhibition of pride, and out of respect, yes, for ascetic endeavour, / While guarding his own submission,²⁶⁸ he got down off the back of the horse. //6.3//

²⁶⁷ *Bhṛgu* was the name of a prominent family of the brahman, or priestly, class. The seer regarded as the ancestor of the family was also called *Bhṛgu*.

²⁶⁸ The concept of *anuvartitā*, submissiveness or compliance, featured in *Udāyin's* speech (BC4.50, 4.67, 4.69) and the prince's reply (BC4.93). In today's verse the ostensible meaning is that the prince maintained his submissiveness, i.e..he was polite. A deeper and more sceptical reading is that he withheld submission. In fact, at this stage, the prince is not prepared to submit to the principle of asceticism – this doesn't happen until the end of BC Canto 12.

avatīrya ca pasparśa nistīrṇam iti vājinam /

chandakam cābravit prītaḥ snāpayann iva cakṣuṣā // 6.4 //

Having got down he patted the war-horse, saying “Well done,” / And said to Chandaka, with joyful appreciation, as if bathing him in his eyes: //6.4//

imaṁ tārksyopama-javam turaṅgam anugacchatā /

darśitā saumya mad-bhaktir vikramaś cāyam ātmanaḥ // 6.5 //

“By following this horse as swift as Tārksya,²⁶⁹ / O mellow man of soma, you have shown devotion to me. This, at the same time, is your own valiant doing. //6.5//

sarvathāsmya anya-kāryo ’pi gṛhīto bhavatā hṛdi /

bhartṛ-snehaś ca yasyāyam īdṛśī śaktir eva ca // 6.6 //

While altogether absorbed in alternative pursuit,²⁷⁰ I am taken into the heart by you – / You who possess this allegiance to a master and at the same time such proactive power. //6.6//

a-snigdho ’pi samartho ’sti niḥ-sāmarthyo ’pi bhaktimān /

bhaktimāms caiva śaktaś ca durlabhas tvad-vidho bhuvi // 6.7 //

Some, while uncongenial, are capable; some, though ineffectual, are devoted; / One of your ilk, both devoted and able, is hard to find on this earth. //6.7//

tat prīto ’smi tavānena mahā-bhāgena karmaṇā /

dṛśyate mayi bhāvo ’yam phalebhyo ’pi parān-mukhe // 6.8 //

Therefore I am gladdened by this most magnificent action of yours. / This attitude towards me is conspicuous, turned away while I am from rewards²⁷¹. //6.8//

²⁶⁹ Tārksya is described in the Ṛg-veda as a swift horse, but also taken to be a bird and later (e.g. in the Mahā-bhārata) identified with Garuda. The prince is praising Chandaka for the kind of submissive following which co-exists with initiative – as the passive and active co-exist in the samādhi of accepting and using the self.

²⁷⁰ Ostensibly by *anya-kārya* “other work,” the prince is apologizing for his mind having been on other things. In the hidden meaning, *anya* expresses the principle of truly alternative pursuit, as a thinking and non-thinking individual.

²⁷¹ Being *phalebhyaḥ parān-mukhaḥ*, turned away from rewards, may be taken as an amplification of the meaning of *anya*, being different, in verse 6.

**ko janasya phala-sthasya na syād abhimukho janaḥ /
janī-bhavati bhūyiṣṭhaṁ sva-jano 'pi viparyaye // 6.9 //**

What person would not tend to turn his face in the direction of a person who offers promise of reward? / Even one's own people become, on the whole, part of common humankind, in the event of a turnaround in the opposite direction.²⁷² //6.9//

**kulārthaṁ dhāryate putraḥ poṣārthaṁ sevyate pitā /
āśayāc chliṣyati jagan nāsti niškāraṇāsvatā // 6.10 //**

For the sake of continuing a line, a son is maintained; on account of his nurturing of growth, a father is served; / Living beings cohere because of an agenda – there is no unselfishness without a cause.²⁷³ //6.10//

**kim uktvā bahu saṅkṣepāt kṛtaṁ me sumahat-priyam /
nivartasvāsvam ādāya saṁprāpto 'smīpsitaṁ padam // 6.11 //**

Why say much? It is a great kindness to me that you have, in a word, done. / Take the horse and turn back! I have arrived where I wanted to be.” //6.11//

**ity uktvā sa mahā-bāhur ānṛśaṁsa-cikīrṣayā /
bhūṣaṇāny avamucyāsmāi saṁtapta-manase dadau // 6.12 //**

Thus having spoken, he of mighty arm, desiring by his action to prevent what injures a man,²⁷⁴ / Unloosened ornaments and gave them to him whose mind was inflamed with grief. //6.12//

**mukūṭād dīpa-karmāṇaṁ maṇim ādāya bhāsvaram /
bruvan vākyam idaṁ tasthau sāditya iva mandarahaḥ // 6.13 //**

The shining pearl, which serves as a source of light, he took into his possession, from his crown, / And firmly he stood, speaking these words, like Mount Mandara²⁷⁵ in the Aditi-begotten sun. //6.13//

**anena maṇinā chanda praṇamya bahuśo nṛpaḥ /
vijñāpyo 'mukta-viśrambhaṁ saṁtāpa-vinivṛttaye // 6.14 //**

“Using this pearl, Chanda, bow down repeatedly, / And, without loosening your grip on fearlessness,²⁷⁶ commune with the protector of men²⁷⁷ so that the fires of anguish may be turned back and extinguished. //6.14//

²⁷² The hidden meaning relates to the *turning back* of the canto title. Ostensibly, when things turn out badly for ordinary people (one of whom Chandaka is not), even members of one's own family become just anybody. In the hidden meaning, when a bodhisattva turns back towards her original nature, all human beings are already her own family.

²⁷³ The ironic hidden meaning is that having a true agenda liberates us from selfishness.

²⁷⁴ Ostensibly *ānṛśaṁsa-cikīrṣayā* means “desiring to do a kindness.” But *a-nṛ-śaṁsa* (lit. not man-injuring) is originally negative, and brings to mind the preventive principle, which might be the true pearl.

²⁷⁵ A sacred mountain said to have served the gods for a churning-stick with which to churn the ocean.

**jarā-marāṇa-nāsārthaṃ praviṣṭo 'smi tapo-vanam /
na khalu svarga-tarṣeṇa nāsnehena na manyunā // 6.15 //**

[Tell the king as follows:]

'For an end to aging and death, I have entered the ascetic woods; / Not out of any thirst for heaven, nor disaffectedly, nor with zealous ardour. //6.15//

**tad evam abhiniṣkrāntaṃ na mām śocitum arhasi /
bhūtvāpi hi ciraṃ śleṣaḥ kālena na bhaviṣyati // 6.16 //**

So you ought not to grieve for me who thus am well and truly gone; / Since any union, for however long it has existed, in time will cease to exist. //6.16//

**dhruvo yasmāc ca viśleṣas tasmān mokṣāya me matiḥ /
viprayogaḥ kathaṃ na syād bhūyo 'pi sva-janād iti // 6.17 //**

And since separation is certain therefore my mind is directed towards liberation / In order that, somehow, one might not be repeatedly dis severed from one's own people. //6.17//

**śoka-tyāgāya niṣkrāntaṃ na mām śocitum arhasi /
śoka-hetuṣu kāmeṣu saktāḥ śocyās tu rāgiṇaḥ // 6.18 //**

For me who has left, to leave sorrow behind, you ought not to sorrow. / Those stuck on sorrow-causing desires – those who carry the taint of redness – rather, are the ones to sorrow for. //6.18//

**ayaṃ ca kila pūrveṣāṃ asmākaṃ niścayaḥ sthiraḥ /
iti dāyādyā-bhūtena na śocyo 'smi pathā vrajan // 6.19 //**

And this, assuredly, was the firm resolve of our forebears! / Going, in this spirit, by a path akin to an inheritance, I am not to be sorrowed after. //6.19//

**bhavanti hy artha-dāyādāḥ puruṣasya viparyaye /
pṛthivyāṃ dharma-dāyādāḥ durlabhās tu na santi vā // 6.20 //**

For when a man experiences a reverse and comes to an end,²⁷⁶ there are heirs to a thing of substance he possesses. / Dharma-heirs, however, on the earth, are hard to find, or non-existent.²⁷⁹ //6.20//

²⁷⁶ *Viśrambha* means 1. loosening, relaxation; 2. confidence, trust; and 3. absence of restraint, familiarity. So *amukta-viśrambham* might be read as a paradoxical directive along the lines of *thinking the state of not-thinking* – e.g. “without loosening your grip on loosening” or “without letting go of coming undone.”

²⁷⁷ Ostensibly *vijñāpyaḥ* means “tell him” or “let him know.” In the hidden meaning, the communication *Aśvagoṣa* has in mind might be non-verbal.

²⁷⁸ The meanings of *viparyaya* include turning round and coming to an end. The ostensible meaning here is coming to an end, i.e. dying. The hidden meaning is as per verse 9.

²⁷⁹ Ostensibly, the prince is thinking light of *artha*, wealth, things of substance, and assigning weight to religious dharma. In the hidden meaning, he is thinking light of religious dharmas which do not really exist, and assigning weight to *paramārtha*, ultimate reality.

**yad api syād asamaye yāto vanam asāv iti /
akālo nāsti dharmasya jīvite cañcale sati // 6.21 //**

Though he might be said to have gone at a bad time to the forest, / In dharma, in truth, no bad time exists – life being as fickle as it is. //6.21//

**tasmād adyaiva me śreyaś cetavyam iti niścayaḥ /
jīvite ko hi viśrambho mṛtyau praty-arthini sthite // 6.22 //**

Therefore my conviction is that, this very day, the better state is there to be garnered in me. / For who can rely on lasting life while inimical death stands by? //6.22//

**evam-ādi tvayā saumya vijñāpyo vasudhādhipaḥ /
prayatethās tathā caiva yathā mām na smared api // 6.23 //**

With words like these and otherwise,²⁸⁰ my gentle friend, you are to commune with a ruler of the wealth-giving earth; / And may you endeavour further, so that he is not mindful of me at all.²⁸¹ //6.23//

**api nairguṇyam asmākaṁ vācyaṁ nara-patau tvayā /
nairguṇyāt tyajyate snehaḥ sneha-tyāgān na śocyate // 6.24 //**

Indeed, speak to the king of our being-without virtue.²⁸² / Because of the being-without virtue, attachment is abandoned.²⁸³ Because of abandoning attachment, one does not suffer grief.” //6.24//

**iti vākyam idaṁ śrutvā chandaḥ saṁtāpa-viklavaḥ /
bāṣpa-grathitayā vācā pratyuvāca kṛtāñjaliḥ // 6.25 //**

Having heard these words, the anguished Chanda, / With voice clogged with tears, as he stood with hands held together in a reverent posture, answered back: //6.25//

**anena tava bhāvena bāndhavāyāsa-dāyinā /
bhartaḥ sīdati me ceto nadī-pañka iva dvipaḥ // 6.26 //**

“Because of this purport of yours, which so exercises those who are close to you,²⁸⁴ / My heart, Master!, sinks, like an elephant into mud by a river. //6.26//

²⁸⁰ In the hidden meaning, by both verbal and – more importantly – by non-verbal means.

²⁸¹ Ostensibly, so that he, the king, forgets about me, the prince. In the hidden meaning, so that he drops off body and mind.

²⁸² Ostensibly, *nairguṇyam* means absence of virtue. The hidden meaning is the virtue of being without – e.g. being without ignorance and associated doings, attachments, and so on.

²⁸³ Ostensible meaning: when we see the faults in a loved one, attachment to that loved one diminishes. For the hidden meaning, or real meaning, see BC Canto 14.

²⁸⁴ *Āyāsa* mean 1. effort, exertion, 2. trouble, anguish. Ostensibly Chandaka means that what is in the prince's heart will cause anguish to his relatives. The hidden meaning is that what is in the hearts and minds of buddhas and bodhisattvas encourages people around them to join in an effort.

**kasya notpādayed bāṣpaṁ niścayas te 'yam iḍṛśaḥ /
ayo-maye 'pi ḥṛdaye kiṁ punaḥ sneha-viklave // 6.27 //**

Who would not be moved to tears by a resolve such as this of yours, / Even with a heart made of iron? How much more with a heart befuddled by attachment? //6.27//

**vimāna-śayanārhaṁ hi saukumāryam idaṁ kva ca /
khara-darbhāṅkuravatī tapo-vana-mahī kva ca // 6.28 //**

For where could there co-exist this softness, fit for a bed in a palace, / And the ground of the ascetic forest, covered with hard blades of *darbha* grass?²⁸⁵ //6.28//

**śrutvā tu vyavasāyam te yad aśvo 'yam mayāḥṛtaḥ /
balāt kāreṇa tan nātha daivenaivāsmi kāritaḥ // 6.29 //**

But when I learned from you your purpose, Master, and I brought for you this horse, / I was caused to do it, inescapably, by a doing which really was divine. //6.29//

**kathaṁ hy ātma-vaśo jānan vyavasāyam imaṁ tava /
upānayeyam turagam śokam kapilavastunaḥ // 6.30 //**

For how by my own will could I, knowing this purpose of yours, / Lead swift-going sorrow away from Kapilavastu²⁸⁶? //6.30//

**tan nārhasi mahā-bāho vihātuṁ putra-lālasam /
snigdham vṛddham ca rājānam sad-dharmam iva nāstikaḥ // 6.31 //**

Therefore, O man of mighty arm! The fond old king who is so devoted to his son / You should not forsake in the way that a nihilist forsakes true dharma.²⁸⁷ //6.31//

**samvardhana-pariśrāntām dvitīyām tām ca mātaram
devīm nārhasi vismartuṁ kṛta-ghna iva sat-kriyām // 6.32 //**

And the queen who exhausted herself bringing you up, your second mother – / You should not forget her in the way that an ingrate forgets the rendering of kindness.²⁸⁸ //6.32//

²⁸⁵ Ostensibly it is a rhetorical question. In the hidden meaning, it is a pointer to the condition in which hard and soft co-exist in harmony.

²⁸⁶ In the ostensible meaning *kapilavastunaḥ* is genitive so that *turagam śokam kapilavastunaḥ* means “the horse, the bale/sorrow of Kapilavastu.” In that case, Chandaka's question is “how could I have brought the horse to you?” In the hidden meaning, *kapilavastunaḥ* is ablative, so that *turagam śokam kapilavastunaḥ* means “swift-going sorrow from Kapilavastu.” In that case Chandaka is asking about the means quickly to dispel sorrow. For example, is the means doing by one's own volition? Or is the means non-doing, in which the right thing seems to do itself?

²⁸⁷ Ostensibly Chandaka is saying (falsely) that the prince should never leave the king at all. In the hidden meaning, he is saying (truly) that, when it comes to leaving home, the home-leaver should not leave in a misguided manner.

²⁸⁸ Again, the hidden meaning is that one *should* leave, but not like that.

**bāla-putrām guṇavatīm kula-ślāghyām pati-vratām /
devīm arhasi na tyaktuṃ klībaḥ prāptām iva śriyam // 6.33 //**

The princess, mother of your young son and possessor of her own virtues, who is laudable as a noble lady and loyal as a wife – / You should not leave her in the way that a sissy abdicates a high office he has assumed. //6.33//

**putrām yāśodharam ślāghyam yaśo-dharma-bhṛtām varam /
bālam arhasi na tyaktuṃ vyasanivottamaṃ yaśaḥ // 6.34 //**

The boy who is Yaśodhara's laudable son, a most excellent bearer of your glory and dharma – / You should not part from him in the way that a compulsive grafter forgoes ultimate glory. //6.34//

**atha bandhuṃ ca rājyaṃ ca tyaktum eva kṛtā matiḥ /
mām nārhasi vibho tyaktuṃ tvat-pādaḥ hi gatiḥ mama // 6.35 //**

Or else, if kith and kingdom you are determined to renounce, / Please, Master, do not abandon me – for your two feet are my refuge. //6.35//

**nāsmi yātuṃ puram śakto dahyamānena cetasā /
tvām aranye parityajya sumantra iva rāghavam // 6.36 //**

I am not able, with a mind that is burning, to go to the city, / Having left you behind in the woods – as Sumantra was unable to leave behind Raghu-descended Rāma.²⁸⁹ //6.36//

**kiṃ hi vakṣyati mām rājā tvad-ṛte nagaram gatam /
vakṣyāmy ucita-darśitvāt kiṃ tavāntaḥ-purāṇi vā // 6.37 //**

For what will the king express to me when I arrive in the city without you? / Again, what shall I express, based on seeing what is expedient, to the ones within the battlements, who belong to you?²⁹⁰ //6.37//

**yad apy ātthāpi nairguṇyam vācyam nara-patāv iti /
kiṃ tad vakṣyāmy abhūtam te nir-doṣasya muner iva // 6.38 //**

Though you have said that the being-without virtue is to be communicated to a ruler of men, / How am I to communicate what in you is absent – as is absent in a faultless sage?²⁹¹ //6.38//

²⁸⁹ In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Su-mantra (lit. 'Following Good Advice') is the name of a minister and charioteer of Rāma's father Daśa-ratha. In the 57th canto of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, titled The Return of Sumantra, the charioteer Sumantra does leave Rāma behind in the woods physically, but emotionally he does not.

²⁹⁰ Again, ostensibly Chandaka is worrying about somehow finding a way out of a personal predicament. In the hidden meaning, a student is asking about the expedient means whereby he or she might convey to other followers of the Buddha the Buddha's truth of non-doing.

²⁹¹ This is a question which, two generations after Aśvaghōṣa, Nāgārjuna famously picks up in his exposition of the absence, in all things, of any intrinsic thing – the teaching known for short as *sūnyatā*, emptiness.

hṛdayena sa-lajjena jihvayā sajjamānayā /

aham yady api vā brūyām kas tac-chrad-dhātum arhati // 6.39 //

Or, even if, with shame-tinged heart and cleaving tongue, / I were to speak words, who is going to give credence to that?²⁹² //6.39//

yo hi candramasas taikṣṇyam kathayec chrad-dadhīta vā /

sa doṣāms tava doṣa-jña kathayec chrad-dadhīta vā // 6.40 //

One who would tell of, or have confidence in, the fierceness of the mellow moon, / He would tell of faults in you, O knower of faults!, or would have confidence therein.²⁹³ //6.40//

sānukrośasya satataṁ nityaṁ karuṇa-vedinaḥ /

snigdha-tyāgo na sadṛśo nivartasva prasīda me // 6.41 //

For one who is eternally compassionate, who is constantly steeped in kindness, / It is not befitting to abandon devoted friends. Turn back, please, for me.²⁹⁴ //6.41//

iti śokābhībūtasya śrutvā chandasya bhāṣitam /

svasthaḥ paramayā dhṛtyā jagāda vadatām varaḥ // 6.42 //

Having listened to this speech of the grief-stricken Chanda, / Being at ease in himself, thanks to constancy of the highest order, the best of speakers spoke: //6.42//

mad-viyogaṁ prati chanda samtāpas tyajyatām ayam /

nānā-bhāvo hi niyataḥ pṛthag-jātiṣu dehiṣu // 6.43 //

“Let this distress at separation from me, Chanda, be abandoned. / Disparate existence is the rule, among singly-born beings who own a body.²⁹⁵ //6.43//

²⁹² Ostensibly Chandaka says, “Even if did tell such a lie, about your lack of virtue, who would believe me anyway?” In this case, the cause for shame, and the cause for the tongue getting tied, is the telling of a lie. Below the surface, the shame is having recourse to words. The shame is that words are always an inferior means of communicating the virtue of being without, the quality of emptiness. People who misunderstand this point treat Zen as a separate transmission outside of the verbal teaching. ~When they speak, they speak as if Zen were a separate transmission, which does not have recourse to verbal teaching. True Zen teachers, like Aśvaghoṣa and Nāgārjuna in India and like Dogen in Japan, are more skilful in their use of inadequate words.

²⁹³ If we follow ancient Indian custom, the moon is inherently mild and mellow. In the ancient Indian view, therefore, the moon is not fierce. But the Buddha's teaching is in the direction of abandoning all views.

²⁹⁴ Ostensibly Chandaka is exhorting the prince to turn back towards Kapilavastu. In the hidden meaning, to turn back is to learn the backward step of turning light around and letting it shine – and in this way never to abandon all bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas.

²⁹⁵ In the hidden meaning, individuals, each of whom, in just sitting, is lord of the earth.

**sva-janaṁ yady api snehān na tyajeyaṁ mumukṣayā /
mṛtyur anyonyam avaśān asmān saṁtyājaiṣyati // 6.44 //**

Even if, while retaining the desire to be free, I, through attachment, fail to abandon my own people, / Death, perforce, will cause us totally to abandon one another.²⁹⁶ //6.44//

**mahatyā tṛṣṇayā duḥkhair garbheṅāsmi yayā dhṛtaḥ /
tasyā niṣphala-yatnāyāḥ kvāhaṁ mātuḥ kva sā mama // 6.45 //**

With a great desire, and attendant sufferings, she bore me in her womb: / When her effort's fruit is naught,²⁹⁷ where will I be, for my mother? Where she, for me? //6.45//

**vāsa-vṛkṣe samāgamyā vigacchanti yathāṇḍa-jāḥ /
niyataṁ viprayogāntas tathā bhūta-samāgamaḥ // 6.46 //**

Just as, on a roosting-tree, birds of an egg-born feather flock together and then go their separate ways, / So does an association of real beings always have separation as its end.²⁹⁸ //6.46//

**sametya ca yathā bhūyo vyapayānti balāhakāḥ /
saṁyogo viprayogaś ca tathā me prāṇināṁ mataḥ // 6.47 //**

Just as clouds join together and then drift apart again, / So, as I see it, is the joining and separation of those who breathe. //6.47//

**yasmād yāti ca loko 'yaṁ vipralabhya parasparam /
mamatvaṁ na kṣamaṁ tasmāt svapna-bhūte samāgame // 6.48 //**

And since this world slips away, each side leaving the other disappointed, / The sense that it belongs to me is not fitting, in a coming together that's like a dream.²⁹⁹ //6.48//

**sahajena viyujyante parṇa-rāgeṇa pāda-pāḥ /
anyenānyasya viśleṣaḥ kiṁ punar na bhaviṣyati // 6.49 //**

Trees shed the redness of leaves generic to them; / How much surer is separation to come to pass between one individual and another one who is different.³⁰⁰ //6.49//

²⁹⁶ In the hidden meaning, death might be the state of a practitioner who is through with breathing.

²⁹⁷ In the hidden meaning, when the practitioner comes to quiet.

²⁹⁸ In the hidden meaning, separation means, for example, the ending of attachment.

²⁹⁹ In the hidden meaning, the suggestion is the dropping away of divided consciousness of body and mind, self and external world.

³⁰⁰ Ostensibly *anyenānyasya viśleṣaḥ* means “the separation of one thing from another thing which is different from it.” This is supposed to be even surer than a tree's shedding of the leaves which originally belong to it. In the hidden meaning, the prince might be speaking of the one-to-one transmission of a letting go.

**tad evaṃ sati saṃtāpaṃ mā kārṣiḥ saumya gamyatām /
lambate yadi tu sneho gatvāpi punar āvraja // 6.50 //**

It being so, O mellow man of *soma*, do not agonize! Let there be movement! / And if attachment lingers on, having gone away, then come again.³⁰¹ //6.50//

**brūyāś cāsmāsu sāpekṣaṃ janaṃ kapilavastuni /
tyajyatām tad-gataḥ snehaḥ śrūyatām cāsyā niścayaḥ // 6.51 //**

And say to people in Kapilavastu who look to me with expectation: / 'Let attachment directed there be given up, and let this purpose here and now be heard.'³⁰² //6.51//

**kṣipram eṣyati vā kṛtvā jarā-mṛtyu-kṣayaṃ kila /
akṛtārtho nirārambho nidhanaṃ yāsyatīti vā // 6.52 //**

Either he will come back quickly, I believe, having put an end to aging and death, / Or else deflated, his aim undone,³⁰³ he will go to his own end.³⁰⁴ “ //6.52//

**iti tasya vacaḥ śrutvā kanthakas turagottamaḥ /
jihvayā lilihe pādaḥ bāṣpam uṣṇaṃ mumoca ca // 6.53 //**

Having listened to these words of his, Kanthaka, highest among swift-going horses, / Licked the prince's feet with his tongue and shed hot tears. //6.53//

**jālinā svastikāṅkena cakra-madhyena pāṇinā /
āmamaṛśa kumāras taṃ babhāṣe ca vayasyavat // 6.54 //**

Using a hand whose fingers formed a gapless web, a mark of well-being,³⁰⁵ using a hand with a wheel in its middle,³⁰⁶ / The prince stroked the horse and spoke to him like a friend equal in years³⁰⁷: //6.54//

³⁰¹ Ostensible meaning: Go back to Kapilavastu! Hidden meaning: Practise meaningful repetition!

³⁰² Ostensible meaning: Listen to the following words! Hidden meaning: Mind here and now is buddha.

³⁰³ Ostensibly *a-kṛtārthaḥ* means unsuccessful. Ironically, it might mean being successful in a negative matter, like un-doing or non-doing.

³⁰⁴ He will come back to his original state.

³⁰⁵ *Svastikāṅkena* means “with the swastika mark.” The swastika is originally an auspicious sign or mark of well-being (*sv* = well; *asti* = being). Rather than understanding the swastika to be an extraneous symbol, I have taken the webbed fingers (i.e. fingers being without deformity, having no gaps between them) as the auspicious sign itself.

³⁰⁶ Ostensibly, the hand carried not only swastika symbols but also a wheel sign on its palm. An alternative reading is that the prince in stroking his horse was conscious of his hand not only as a mechanical device but also as an energy centre; and so he used his hand with a *cakra* (wheel) in its middle.

³⁰⁷ They were friends, but were not equal in years; hence “like.”

muñca kanthaka mā bāṣpaṃ darśiteyaṃ sad-aśvatā /

mṛṣyatām sa-phalaḥ śighraṃ śramas te 'yaṃ bhaviṣyati // 6.55 //

“Do not shed tears, Kanthaka! This the true horse-nature is proven.³⁰⁸ / Let it be. This effort of yours will rapidly become fruitful.” //6.55//

maṇi-tsaruṃ chandaka-hasta-saṃsthaṃ tataḥ kumāro niśitaṃ gṛhītvā /

kośād asiṃ kāñcana-bhakti-citraṃ bilād ivāśi-viṣaṃ udbabarha // 6.56 //

The jewelled hilt in Chandaka’s hand the prince then sharply grasped, / And from its sheath the gold-streaked sword, like a viper from its hole, he drew up and out. //6.56//

niṣkāśya taṃ cotpala-pattra-nīlaṃ ciccheda citraṃ mukuṭaṃ sa-keśaṃ /

vikīryamāṇāmśukam antar-īkṣe cikṣepa cainaṃ sarasīva haṃsam // 6.57 //

Unsheathing that dark blue blade – ushering out the darkness of the ‘lotus petal’ brand³⁰⁹ – he cut off his patterned headdress, along with his hair, / And into the middle distance between earth and heaven, as the unravelling muslin spread softly shining wings,³¹⁰ he launched it, like a bar-headed goose towards a lake. //6.57//

pūjābhilāṣeṇa ca bāhu-mānyād divaukasas taṃ jagṛhuḥ praviddham /

yathāvad enaṃ divi deva-saṅghā divyair viśeṣair mahayāṃ ca cakruḥ // 6.58 //

With eager desire to worship it, because it was so greatly to be revered, the beings who dwell in heaven seized upon that jetsam; / And divine congregations in heaven,³¹¹ with due ceremony, with special celestial honours,³¹² exalted it. //6.58//

³⁰⁸ Does a horse have the buddha-nature? Aśvaghoṣa nowhere discusses buddha-nature (*buddhatā*). But here he has the prince speak of *sad-aśva-tā*, true-horse-nature.

³⁰⁹ The meanings of *utpala-pattra* include 1. the leaf or petal of a blue lotus, 2. a *tilaka* (an auspicious or superstitious or religious mark on the forehead), and 3. a broad-bladed knife. *Nila* means dark blue or dark. *Utpala-pattra-nīlam* ostensibly means a dark-blue blade, but below the surface is there also an indirect suggestion of dispensing with the darkness of ancient superstitions, like lucky marks?

³¹⁰ An unavoidably creative translation. *Vikīryamāṇāmśukam* could equally well mean “its fine cloth being unravelled” or “its gentle light being diffused.” *Aṃśuka* generally means fine white cloth, muslin, but the Apte dictionary also gives “a mild or gentle blaze of light.” EH Johnston notes that the Tibetan translation also takes *aṃśu* in the sense of rays of light.

³¹¹ *Divi deva-saṅghāḥ*, “divine congregations in heaven.” Notice again that Aśvaghoṣa uses *saṅgha* as a collective noun for various beings in *saṃsāra* – like gods in heaven and applauding townfolk (BC1.87) – but not for human individuals who in practice are following the Buddha. *Saṅgha* is nowhere used in Aśvaghoṣa’s poems in the conventional sense of “a brotherhood of monks” or “a community of Buddhists.”

³¹² *Divyair viśeṣaiḥ* means “with divine specialities.” At the same time a *viśeṣa*, or special mark, is another name for the lucky religious symbol painted on the forehead.

muktvā tv alaṅkāra-kalatravattām śrī-vipravāsaṁ śīrasaś ca kṛtvā /

ḍṛṣṭvāmśukam kāñcana-haṁsa-citram vanyaṁ sa dhīro 'bhicakāñkṣa vāsaḥ // 6.59 //

He, however, having let go of being wedded to ornaments, having acted to banish the crowning glory from his head, / And having seen the softly shining light whose brightness is the best of gold,³¹³ he with firm steadfastness longed for clothing of the forest. //6.59//

tato mṛga-vyādha-vapur-divaukā bhāvaṁ viditvāsyā viśuddha-bhāvaḥ /

kāṣāya-vastro 'bhiyayau samīpaṁ taṁ śākya-rāja-prabhavo 'bhyuvāca // 6.60 //

Then a sky dweller in the guise of a hunter of forest game, his heart being pure, knew what was in the other's heart / And he drew near, in his ochre-coloured camouflage. The son of the Śākya king said to him: //6.60//

śivaṁ ca kāṣāyam ṛṣi-dhvajas te na yujyate hiṁsram idaṁ dhanuś ca /

tat saumya yady asti na saktir atra mahyaṁ prayacchedam idaṁ grhāṇa // 6.61 //

“Your propitious ochre robe, the banner of a seer, does not go with this deadly bow. / Therefore, my friend, should there be no attachment in this matter, give me that and you take this.” //6.61//

vyādho 'bravīt kāma-da kāmam ārād anena viśvāsyā mṛgān nihatya /

arthas tu śakropama yady anena hanta pratīcchānaya śuklam etat // 6.62 //

The hunter spoke: “This robe, O granter of desires, is the means whereby, from as far away as desired, I inspire trust in wild creatures, only to shoot them down....³¹⁴ / But if you have a use for this means, O man as mighty as Indra, here, accept it, and render here the white.” //6.62//

pareṇa harṣeṇa tataḥ sa vanyaṁ jagrāha vāso 'mśukam utsasarja /

vyādhas tu divyaṁ vapur eva bibhrat tac-chuklam ādāya divaṁ jagāma // 6.63 //

Then, with joy of the highest order, he took the garment of the forest and gave away his linen finery; / But the hunter, wearing the very essence of the divine, went to heaven, taking that whiteness with him.³¹⁵ //6.63//

³¹³ *Kāñcana* means gold (as in *kāñcanam āsanam*, golden seat/sitting). *Haṁsa* means goose or swan, or, in compounds, the best of anything. So ostensibly “the goose of gold” might refer to the muslin headdress which flew away like a bar-headed goose. But I think the real meaning which Aśvaghōṣa had in mind was to point to the practice of sitting in lotus as the most valuable thing there is.

³¹⁴ Below the surface, this might be a suggestion of a function of the so-called “ritual robe,” before it is realized as an emblem of what is real, not religious.

³¹⁵ The suggestion, again, below the surface is that what is white, or spiritually pure, rightly belongs in heaven – a place that does not really exist, except in people's minds.

**tataḥ kumāraś ca sa cāśva-gopas tasmimś tathā yāti visismiyāte /
āraṇyake vāsasi caiva bhūyas tasminn akārṣṭām bahu-mānam āśu // 6.64 //**

Then the prince and the horse-master (*aśva-gopa*),³¹⁶ marvelled at his departing in such a manner; / And of that clothing of the forest all the more highly did they think. //6.64//

**chandaṁ tataḥ sāśru-mukhaṁ visrjya kaṣāya-saṁvid-dhṛti-kīrti-bhṛt saḥ /
yenāśramas tena yayau mahātmā saṁdhyābhra-saṁvīta ivoḍu-rājaḥ // 6.65 //**

Then, having set the tear-faced Chanda free, clad in consciousness of the ochre robe and wearing constancy and honour, / He moved majestically in the direction of the ashram, like the moon – king among stars – veiled by a dusky cloud. //6.65//

**tatas tathā bhartari rājya-niḥsprḥe tapo-vanaṁ yāti vivarṇa-vāsasi /
bhujau samutkṣipyataḥ sa vāji-bhṛd bhṛśaṁ vicukrośa papāta ca kṣitau // 6.66 //**

And so, as his master was retiring like this into the ascetic woods, desiring nothing in the way of sovereignty³¹⁷ and wearing clothing of no distinction,³¹⁸ / The preserver of the war-horse, there and then, threw up his arms, cried out wildly, and fell upon the earth. //6.66//

**vilokya bhūyaś ca ruroda sa-svaraṁ hayaṁ bhujābhyām upaguhya kanthakam /
tato nir-āśo vilapan muhur muhur yayau śarīreṇa puram na cetasā // 6.67 //**

Looking again, he bellowed in full voice and embraced the horse Kanthaka with both arms; / Thus, devoid of hope or expectation, and lamenting over and over, he journeyed back to the city with his body, not with his mind.³¹⁹ //6.67//

³¹⁶ Aśvaghōṣa calls Chandaka by many epithets in this canto. This one, *aśva-gopa* ('horse-keeper'), seems to be a play on his own name *aśva-ghoṣa* ('horse-whinny').

³¹⁷ In the hidden meaning, nothing (or emptiness) is what confers true sovereignty.

³¹⁸ The meaning of *vivarṇa* is having no colour or having no caste. Its ostensible meaning is pejorative – the dictionary gives “pale; low, vile; belonging to a mixed caste.” Thus Aśvaghōṣa subverts those pejorative meanings in his ironic description of the *kaṣāya* as *vivarṇa-vāsa*, “clothing of no distinction.”

³¹⁹ Ostensible meaning: Looking [at the prince] again, he wept out loud, and hugged the horse Kanthaka with both arms. / Then, hopelessly lamenting over and over again, he withdrew to the city with his body, though his heart was not in it.

Hidden meaning: Seeing [everything] with fresh eyes, he loudly roared [the lion's roar], having fully embraced the horse-power of Kanthaka. / On that basis, being without expectation and repeatedly sorrowing [for the clinging world], he journeyed to the city riding a wave of pure physical energy – nothing mental.

**kva-cit pradadyau vilāpa ca kva-cit kva-cit pracaskhāla papāta ca kva-cit /
ato vrajan bhakti-vaśena duḥkhitaś cacāra bahvīr avaśaḥ pathi kriyāḥ // 6.68 //**

Here he reflected,³²⁰ there he lamented; here he stumbled, there he fell; / And so keeping on, suffering pain on account of devotion, he did without meaning to do many actions on the path. //6.68//

iti buddha-carite mahā-kāvyē chandaka-nivartano nāma ṣaṣṭhaḥ sargaḥ // 6 //

The 6th canto, titled Chandaka Turning Back,
in an epic tale of awakened action.

³²⁰ *√dhyai*, the root from which *dhyāna* is derived, means to ponder or to brood, and also to meditate. Ostensibly Chandaka is described as a hapless emotional being, brooding as he goes on his miserable way. Below the surface, the verse might be Aśvaghōṣa's ironic description of his own life, centred on the practice of non-doing.

Canto 7: tapo-vana-praveśaḥ Entering the Woods of Painful Practice

Introduction

As a sweeping generalization, *tapas*, asceticism, is bad in Aśvaghōṣa's writing, in contrast to *yoga*, practice, which is good. There again, another general rule for a student of Aśvaghōṣa might be to forego sweeping generalizations, and to go beyond bad and good.

Ostensibly, then, the title of the present Canto describes the Prince's entry (*praveśa*) into the "the ascetic grove" (*tapo-vana*). But in the hidden meaning, it may be up to each one of us individually to go metaphorically into the woods and investigate what the real meanings of *tapas* – beyond the straw doll of "asceticism" – might be. Before it defines *tapas* as "religious austerity," for example, the Monier-Williams dictionary defines *tapas* as 1. warmth, heat, and 2. pain, suffering.

**tato viṣṛjyāśru-mukhaṁ rudantaṁ chandaṁ vana-cchandatayā nir-āsthaḥ /
sarvārthasiddho vapuṣābhībhūya tam āśramaṁ siddha iva prapede // 7.1 //**

Then, having sent on his way the weeping tear-faced Chanda, and being interested in nothing,³²¹ through a *chanda* (a partiality) for the forest, / Sarvārtha-siddha, All Things Realized, overpowering the place by his physical presence, entered that ashram like a *siddha*, a realized man. //7.1//

**sa rāja-sūnur mṛga-rāja-gāmī mṛgājiraṁ tan mṛgavat praviṣṭaḥ /
lakṣmī-viyukto 'pi śarīra-lakṣmyā cakṣūṁṣi sarvāśramaṇāṁ jahāra // 7.2 //**

He the son of a king, moving like a lion-king, entered like a forest creature that arena of forest creatures; / By the majesty of his physical person, though bereft of the tokens of majesty, he stole the eyes of all the ashram-dwellers³²² – //7.2//

**sthitā hi hasta-stha-yugās tathaiva kautūhalāc cakra-dharāḥ sa-dārāḥ /
tam indra-kalpaṁ dadṛṣur na jagmur dhuryā ivārdhāvanataiḥ śirobhiḥ // 7.3 //**

For standing in precisely that manner, rooted in their curiosity, with yoke in hand, were the wheel-bearers, with wives in tow; / They beheld him the equal of Indra, and did not move, like beasts of burden with their heads half bowed.³²³ //7.3//

³²¹ *Nir-āsthaḥ* – ostensible meaning, not interested in anything; hidden meaning, interested in the possibility of *pari-nirvāṇa*, or emptiness, or other aspects of the truth of cessation.

³²² The next five verses expand on this generic description of *sarvāśramaṇāṁ*, "all the ashram-dwellers," by considering in detail particular types.

³²³ Was being accompanied by wives an indication of indecision? Or was having the head half bowed (in the middle way between being pulled back and falling too far forward) an indication that these individuals were originally buddhas, in the state of readiness to act?

**viprās ca gatvā bahir idhma-hetoḥ prāptāḥ samit-puṣpa-pavitra-hastāḥ /
tapaḥ-pradhānāḥ kṛta-buddhayo 'pi taṁ draṣṭum īyur na maṭhān abhīyuh // 7.4 //**

And inspired brahmins, who had gone out for fuel to feed the sacred fire, and returned holding in their hands kindling, flowers, and *kuśa* grass,³²⁴ / Though they were men of formed minds for whom ascetic practice was paramount, they went to see him. They did not go towards their huts. //7.4//

**hr̥ṣṭās ca kekā mumucur mayūrā dr̥ṣṭvāmbu-daṁ nīlam ivonnamantam /
śaṣpāṇi hitvābhimukhās ca tasthur mṛgās-calākṣā mṛga-cāriṇas ca // 7.5 //**

Bristling with rapture also, the peacocks let loose their cries, as if they had seen a dark raincloud rising up;³²⁵ / While, letting grass fall as they turned to face him, the deer stood still, along with the deer-imitators, with only their eyes moving. //7.5//

**dr̥ṣṭvā tam ikṣvāku-kula-pradīpaṁ jvalantam udyantam ivāmśumantam /
kṛte 'pi dohe janita-pramodāḥ prasusruvur homa-duhaś ca gāvaḥ // 7.6 //**

Seeing him, the lamp of the Ikṣvāku tribe, shining like the rising sun, / The cows that were milked for offerings, though they had already been milked, were overjoyed, and flowed forth again.³²⁶ //7.6//

**kac-cid vasūnām ayam aṣṭamaḥ syāt syād aśvinor anyataraś cyuto ' tra /
uccerur uccair iti tatra vācas tad-darśanād vismaya-jā muninām // 7.7 //**

“Could this be the eighth of the *vasus*, the good gods, or one of the two *aśvins*, the charioteers, alighting here?” / Calls like this went up on high, born of the bewilderment of the sages there, at seeing him. //7.7//

**lekharṣabhasyeva vapur-dvitiyaṁ dhāmeva lokasya carācarasya /
sa dyotayām āsa vanaṁ hi kṛtsnaṁ yad-ṛcchayā sūrya ivāvatīrṇaḥ // 7.8 //**

For, like the physical double of Indra, bull of gods, like the glory of all that moves and is still in the world, / He lit up the whole forest – as if the Sun himself had dropped by. //7.8//

**tataḥ sa tair āśramibhir yathāvad abhyarcitaś copanimantritaś ca /
pratyarcayām dharma-bhr̥to babhūva svareṇa sāmbo-'mbu-dharopamena // 7.9 //**

Then, being honoured and invited, with due courtesy, by those ashram-dwellers, / He in return, to the upholders of a dharma, paid his respects with a voice like rain-clouds full of rain. //7.9//

³²⁴ *Samit* can mean war, as well as kindling. *Pavitra* can mean a means of purification, as well as *kuśa* grass. This makes possible the hidden meaning that they were “holding in their hands the means of purification which is a flower of war.” The war, in that case, might be the war on sleep, and a means of purification might be a means of eliminating the pollutants such as greed and anger.

³²⁵ In Sanskrit poems in general peacocks are described as bursting into joyous song at the coming of the rains. At the same time, in Saundara-nanda (SN1.11) Aśvaghōṣa poked fun at ascetic peacocks with their dreadlocks – *śikhin* means both peacock and having a lock or tuft of hair on top of the head.

³²⁶ For the ironic hidden meaning of cows being milked, cf SN1.3.

**kīrṇaṃ tathā puṇya-kṛtā janena svargābhikāmena vimokṣa-kāmaḥ /
tam āśramaṃ so 'nucacāra dhīras tapāmsi citrāṇi nirīkṣamāṇaḥ // 7.10 //**

Through the ashram that was filled in this manner with pious people having designs upon heaven, / He, being desirous of release, steadily walked, observing the various ascetic practices. //7.10//

**tapo-vikārāṃś ca nirīkṣya saumyas tapo-vane tatra tapo-dhanānām /
tapasvināṃ kaṃ-cid anuvrajantaṃ tattvaṃ vijijñāsura idam babhāṣe // 7.11 //**

And the moon-like man of soma-mildness, when he had observed there, in that forest of ascetic severity, the ascetic contortions of ascetics steeped in severity, / He spoke as follows, wanting to know the truth of it, to one of the ascetics who was walking along with him: //7.11//

**tat-pūrvam-adyāśrama-darśanaṃ me yasmād-imaṃ dharma-vidhiṃ na jāne /
tasmād-bhavān-arhati bhāṣituṃ me yo niścayo yat prati vaḥ pravṛttaḥ // 7.12 //**

“Since today is my first visit to an ashram and I do not understand this method of dharma; / Therefore, kind sir, please tell me – you are all possessed of what intention, directed towards what.”³²⁷ //7.12//

**tato dvi-jātiḥ sa tapo-vihāraḥ śākyarṣabhāyarṣabha-vikramāya /
krameṇa tasmai kathayāṃ cakāra tapo-viśeṣāṃś tapasaḥ phalaṃ ca // 7.13 //**

And so the twice-born man,³²⁸ an explorer of the pleasure of painful practice, spoke to the bull of the Śākyas, whose steps were the steps of a bull – / He spoke to him, in steps, about the varieties of painful practice and about the fruit of painful practice.³²⁹ //7.13//

³²⁷ Ostensibly a question; in the hidden meaning a statement of ineffable reality.

³²⁸ *Dvi-jātiḥ* or *dvi-jaḥ*, one twice-born, generally indicates a Brahman, re-born through investiture with the sacred thread. But these terms can also indicate a tooth and a bird. This particular twice-born individual is going to tell the truth on more than one level, and so in the hidden meaning *dvi-jātiḥ*, or “born again,” may be taken to mean enlightened.

³²⁹ Aśvaghōṣa generally uses *tapas* with a pejorative connotation (*tapas* = asceticism vs *yoga* = practice). Below the surface in the present canto, however, *tapas* (hard practice, painful practice) can be read as representing practice itself, which, even if it need not be painful in theory, so often tends to be painful in practice.

**agrāmyam annaṁ salila-prarūḍhaṁ parṇāni toyaṁ phala-mūlam eva /
yathāgamaṁ vṛttir iyaṁ munīnām bhinnās tu te te tapasām vikalpāḥ // 7.14 //**

“Unprocessed food – food that grows in the presence of water – leaves and water and fruits and roots: / This, according to tradition, is the fare of sages.³³⁰ But in their painful practices there are alternative approaches, each being distinct. //7.14//

**uñchena jīvanti kha-gā ivānye tṛṇāni ke-cin mṛgavac caranti /
ke-cid bhujāṅgaiḥ saha vartayanti valmīka-bhūtā iva mārutena // 7.15 //**

Ones who are different live by gleaning crumbs, like movers in emptiness, or birds³³¹; some graze on leaves of grass, like deer; / Some, together with sitters in coils, or snakes – as if they were ant-hills – subsist on thin air. //7.15//

**aśma-prayatnārjita-vṛttayo ’nye ke-cit sva-dantāpahatānna-bhakṣāḥ /
kṛtvā parārthaṁ śrapaṇaṁ tathānye kurvanti kāryaṁ yadi śeṣam-asti // 7.16 //**

Ones who are different live by what is ground out through effort on a stone; some are sustained by breaking food down with their own teeth; / Ones, again, who are different, having done the cooking for others, do what is for them to do, if anything is left over.³³² //7.16//

**ke-cij jala-kinna-jaṭā-kalāpā dviḥ pāvakaṁ juhvati mantra-pūrvam /
mīnaiḥ samaṁ ke-cid apo vigāhya vasanti kūrmollikhitaiḥ śarīraiḥ // 7.17 //**

Some, their matted coils of hair dripping with water, twice pour butter into the fire, with mantras [or make offerings of two times three, using a mantra]³³³ / Some, like fishes, go deep into the water and there they abide, their bodies scratching the surface of the tortoise³³⁴. //7.17//

³³⁰ EH Johnston amended the text to *salile prarūḍham* and translated accordingly “that which grows in the water.” This conveys the ostensible meaning of very restrictive ascetic fare. But the real or hidden meaning might simply be to convey the general rule that sages (not only ascetic ones) eat food that is natural, not over-processed.

³³¹ Ostensibly *kha-gāh*, “movers in emptiness,” means birds. Below the surface it suggests those who are free, i.e. those who have left home to live the wandering life.

³³² Ostensibly a twice-born brahmin ascetic is listing some rules for ascetic practice. In the hidden meaning, one who is born again is continuing to suggest the everyday life of buddhas, bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas.

³³³ *Dviś* means twice or twice a day. *Pāvaka* means fire, but also, because fire is of three kinds, the number 3; *pāvaka* is also given in the dictionary as “a kind of *ṛṣi*, a saint, a person purified by religious abstraction or one who purified from sin.” *Juhvati* means they make a sacrifice, especially by pouring butter into the fire. But *juhvati* can also simply mean they honour. A *mantra*, according to one explanation of its etymology, from the root *vman*, to think, literally means “an instrument of thought.” Many possible hidden meanings, then, can be read into *dviḥ pāvakaṁ juhvati mantra-pūrvam*. For example: “twice [a day], using thought as an instrument, they honour a great seer.”

³³⁴ Ostensibly the brahmin ascetic is describing an ascetic practice involving holding the breath under water: “And there they abide, their bodies being scratched by turtles.” In the hidden meaning, the suggestion might be that even the buddhas, with all their wisdom, cannot fathom the merit of just sitting, but are content at least to scratch the surface.

**evam-vidhaiḥ kāla-citais-tapobhiḥ parair divaṁ yānty aparair nṛ-lokam /
duḥkhena mārgena sukhaṁ kṣiyanti duḥkhaṁ hi dharmasya vadanti mūlam // 7.18 //**
Through painful practices such as these, accumulated over time, they arrive, via superior practices, at heaven, and via lowlier ones at the world of human beings.³³⁵ / By an arduous path they come to inhabit ease; for suffering, they say, is the starting point of dharma.³³⁶ //7.18//

**ity evam-ādi dvipadendra-vatsaḥ śrutvā vacas tasya tapo-dhanasya /
adrṣṭa-tattvo 'pi na samtutoṣa śanair idaṁ cātma-gataṁ babhāṣe // 7.19 //**
The son of a chief among two-footed beings, listened to words like these, and more, under that man steeped in painful practice / But he failed to see the truth of it, and was not satisfied. Silently he said to himself: //7.19//

**duḥkhātmakaṁ naika-vidhaṁ tapaś ca svarga-pradhānaṁ tapasaḥ phalaṁ ca /
lokāś ca sarve pariṇāmapantaḥ sv-alpe śramaḥ khalv ayam āśramāṇām // 7.20 //**
“Asceticism in its various forms has suffering at its core; at the same time, ascetic practice has heaven as its chief reward; / And yet every world is subject to change – all this toil in ashrams, for so very little! //7.20//

**śriyam ca bandhūn viṣayānś ca hitvā ye svarga-hetor niyamaṁ caranti /
te viprayuktāḥ khalu gantu-kāmā mahattaraṁ bandhanam eva bhūyaḥ // 7.21 //**
Those who abandon prestige, connections, and objects, to observe restrictions for the sake of heaven – / Evidently, when parted from there, are destined to go only into greater bondage. //7.21//

**kāya-klamair yaś ca tapo 'bhidhānaiḥ pravṛttim ākāṅkṣati kāma-hetoḥ /
saṁsāra-doṣān aparīkṣamāṇo duḥkhena so 'nvicchati duḥkham eva // 7.22 //**
And he who, by the bodily travails called ascetic practice, desires advancement for the sake of desire / While failing to attend to the faults that fuel saṁsāra – he by the means of suffering pursues nothing but suffering. //7.22//

**trāsaś ca nityaṁ maraṇāt prajānām yatnena cecchanti punaḥ prasūtim /
satyāṁ pravṛttau niyataś ca mṛtyus tatraiva magnā yata eva bhītāḥ // 7.23 //**
Though people are ever afraid of dying, still actively they strive for re-birth, / And just in their doing, their death is assured – right there, where they are drowning, in fear itself. //7.23//

³³⁵ The ironic hidden meaning might be that buddhas opt for the lowlier, or more humble, practice among fellow human beings.

³³⁶ Again, the words apply equally to a dharma of asceticism and to the Buddha's dharma of four noble truths.

**ihārtham eke praviśanti khedaṁ svargārtham anye śramam āpnuvanti /
sukhārtham āśā kṛpaṇo 'kṛtārthaḥ pataty an-arthe khalu jīva-lokaḥ // 7.24 //**

Some individuals go through grim exhaustion for an end in this world, others suffer the ascetic grind for an end in heaven – / Pitifully expectant, having happiness as its end but failing to accomplish its end, humankind sinks into end-less disappointment. //7.24//

**na khalv ayaṁ garhita eva yatno yo hīnam utsṛjya viśeṣa-gāmī /
prājñaiḥ samānena pariśrameṇa kāryaṁ tu tad yatra punar na kāryam // 7.25 //**

Not to be blamed, certainly, is this effort which, casting aside the inferior, aims for distinction; / But the work wise men should do, exerting themselves as one, is that work wherein nothing further needs doing. //7.25//

**śarīra-pīḍā tu yadīha dharmāḥ sukhaṁ śarīrasya bhavaty adharmaḥ /
dharmeṇa cāpnoti sukhaṁ paratra tasmād adharmaṁ phalatīha dharmāḥ // 7.26 //**

If causing the body pain, in contrast, is the dharma here, the body being happy constitutes the opposite of dharma. / And yet by the dharma the body is [supposed] to obtain happiness in future. On those grounds, the dharma here results in the opposite of dharma. //7.26//

**yataḥ śarīraṁ manaso vaśena pravartate vāpi nivartate vā /
yukto damaś-cetasa eva tasmāc cittād ṛte kāṣṭha-samaṁ śarīram // 7.27 //**

Since the body, by the mind's command, either carries on or stops its doing, / Therefore what is appropriate is taming of the mind. Without the thinking mind, the body is like a wooden log. //7.27//

**āhāra-śuddhyā yadi puṇyam iṣṭaṁ tasmān mṛgāṇāṁ api puṇyam asti /
ye cāpi bāhyāḥ puruṣāḥ phalebhyo bhāgyāparādhena parānmukhārthāḥ // 7.28 //**

If the good is to be got through purity of food, it follows that there is good in even the creatures of the forest; / As also there are human beings who, through the reaping of fruits, subsist as outsiders – human beings who, because of contravening destiny, are turned away from wealth.³³⁷ //7.28//

**duḥkhe 'bhisāmdhis tv atha puṇya-hetuḥ sukhe 'pi kāryo nanu so 'bhisāmdhiḥ /
atha pramāṇaṁ na sukhe 'bhisāmdhir duḥkhe pramāṇaṁ nanu nābhisāmdhiḥ // 7.29 //**

But if the cause of good is the ability to handle hardship, then is not the same ability to be practised with regard to happiness? / Or else, if being able to handle happiness is not the standard, then how can ability to handle hardship be the standard? //7.29//

³³⁷ Ostensibly the prince is poking fun at the conception that religious merit (*puṇya*) is to be gained by eating pure food – because, if it were so, even deer and even outcasts could gain religious merit by living outside of human civilization. In the hidden meaning, forest monks (creatures of the forest) do indeed gain merit by transcending the will to fame and profit and living as outsiders.

**tathaiva ye karma-viśuddhi-hetoḥ spr̥santy apas-tīrtham iti pravṛttāḥ /
tatrāpi toṣo hr̥di kevalo 'yaṁ na pāvayisyanti hi pāpam āpaḥ // 7.30 //**

Those again who, with a view to purifying their karma, zealously sprinkle on themselves water which they feel to be sacred, / Are only, in so doing, pleasing their own heart, for wrong will never be washed away by waters. //7.30//

**spr̥ṣtaṁ hi yad yad guṇavadbhir ambhas tat tat pṛthivyāṁ yadi tīrtham iṣṭam /
tasmād guṇān eva paraimi tīrtham āpas tu niḥsamśayam āpa eva // 7.31 //**

Whatever water has been touched by people steeped in good – that is sacred bathing water, if such on earth is sought. / Therefore, virtues, yes, I do see as a sacred ford. But water, without doubt, is water.” //7.31//

**iti sma tat tad bahu-yukti-yuktaṁ jagāda cāstaṁ ca yayau vivasvān /
tato havir-dhūma-vivarṇa-vṛkṣaṁ tapaḥ-prasāntaṁ sa vanaṁ viveśa // 7.32 //**

Thus, employing many and various forms of reasoning, did he speak, as the Brilliant One set behind the Western Mountain. / Then he went where the trees, veiled by smoke from burnt offerings, were turning gray; the practising of pain there having ceased, he went into the forest... //7.32//

**abhyuddhṛta-prajvalitāgni-hotraṁ kṛtābhiṣekarṣi-janāvakīrṇam /
jāpya-svanākūjita-deva-koṣṭhaṁ dharmasya karmāntam iva pravṛttam // 7.33 //**

... Into the flaring forest, where the sacrificial flame was passed from fire to blazing fire; into the bespattered forest, filled with seers performing their bathing rites; / Into the cooing forest, where shrines to gods resounded with muttered prayers; into the forest which was like a hive of dharma, all busy with doing. //7.33//

**kās-cin niśās tatra niśā-karābhaḥ parīkṣamāṇaś ca tapāmsy uvāsa /
sarvaṁ parikṣepya tapaś ca matvā tasmāt tapaḥ-kṣetra-talāj jagāma // 7.34 //**

For several nights, resembling the night-making moon, he dwelt there, investigating ascetic practices; / And, having embraced asceticism in the round and come to his own conclusion about it, he made to depart from that field of asceticism. //7.34//

**anvavrajann āśramaṇas tatas taṁ tad-rūpa-māhātmya-gatair manobhiḥ /
deśād anāryair abhibhūyamānān maharṣayo dharmam ivāpayāntam // 7.35 //**

Then the ashram-dwellers followed him, their minds directed on his beauty and dignity – / Like great seers following the dharma, when, from a land being overrun by uncivil people, the dharma is retreating.³³⁸ //7.35//

³³⁸ This could be another example in which the second half of a simile, ironically, carries the main gist of what Aśvaghoṣa seems to want to suggest – namely, that we should not attach to a geographical location, but should just follow the dharma.

**tato jaṭā-vaḷkala-cīra-khelāms tapo-dhanāms caiva sa tāt dadarśa /
tapāmsi caiṣām anurudhyamānas tasthau śive śrīmati vṛkṣa-mūle // 7.36 //**

Then those men whose wealth was painful practice he beheld in their matted locks, strips of bark, and flapping rags; / So seeing, and yet feeling towards their austerities a fond respect, he remained there standing, at the foot of an auspicious and splendid tree. //7.36//

**athopasṛtyāśrama-vāsinas taṁ manuṣya-varyaṁ parivārya tasthuḥ /
vṛddhaś ca teṣāṁ bahu-māna-pūrvam kalena sāmna giram ity uvāca // 7.37 //**

And so the ashram-dwellers stepped near and stood surrounding that most excellent human being, / And the most mature among them, being full of respect, spoke in a soft voice these gentle words: //7.37//

**tvayyāgate pūrṇa ivāśramo ’bhūt saṁpadyate sūnya iva prayāte /
tasmād imam nārhasi tāta hātuṁ jijīviṣor deham iveṣṭam āyuh // 7.38 //**

“At your coming the ashram seemed to become full; at your going, it seems to become empty. / Therefore, my son, you should desist from leaving this [place of painful exertion] – like the cherished life-force [not leaving] the body of a man who is fighting for his life.³³⁹ //7.38//

**brahmarṣi-rājarṣi-surarṣi-juṣṭaḥ puṇyaḥ samīpe himavān hi śailaḥ /
tapāmsi tāny eva tapo-dhanānām yat saṁnikarṣād bahulī bhavanti // 7.39 //**

For near to us, inhabited by brahmin seers, king-seers, and god-seers, rises a holy Himālayan mountain³⁴⁰ / Through whose closeness are augmented those very investments of painful effort of people whose capital is painful effort. //7.39//

**tīrthāni puṇyāny abhitas tathaiva sopāna-bhūtāni nabhas-talasya /
juṣṭāni dharmātmabhir ātmavadbhir devarṣibhiś caiva nṛparṣibhiś ca // 7.40 //**

All around us, likewise, are holy bathing places, which are akin to stairways to heaven;³⁴¹ / They are frequented by seers whose essence of themselves is dharma, and by seers possessed of themselves – by divine seers and by seers who are protectors of men. //7.40//

³³⁹ Again, when A is like B, ostensibly the point of B is to illustrate A, but really A is the convenient fiction and the real message is in B.

³⁴⁰ Alternate reading of *puṇyaḥ... himavān*: a pleasant snow-clad peak. “A holy Himālayan peak” sounds religious, but this spiritual reading is undermined by the hidden reading.

³⁴¹ Alternate reading: “All around us, likewise, are wholesome bathing places which, at the level of the air, consist of steps.” Again the hidden reading undermines the holiness of bathing places which are esteemed as stairways to a spiritual place.

**itaś ca bhūyaḥ kṣamam uttaraiva dik-sevituṃ dharma-viśeṣa-hetoḥ /
na tu kṣamaṃ dakṣiṇato budhena padaṃ bhaved ekam api prayātum // 7.41 //**

And going further, from here, the direction is northward that deserves to be cultivated, for the sake of distinction in dharma; / It ill befits a wise man to take, contrarily, even one step that might lead southward.³⁴² //7.41//

**tapo-vane 'sminn atha niṣkriyo vā saṃkīrṇa-dharme patito 'śucir vā /
dṛṣṭas tvayā yena na te vivatsā tad brūhi yāvad rucito 'stu vāsaḥ // 7.42 //**

Or else, in this forest of painful practice, you have seen one who neglects rites; or you have seen one who is not pure, one who, in a commingled dharma, has fallen / And for this reason there is in you no desire to dwell – then say as much, and be pleased to stay! [or express as much, in which act of abiding, let light be shone!]³⁴³ //7.42//

**ime hi vāñchanti tapaḥ-sahāyaṃ tapo-nidhāna-pratimaṃ bhavantam /
vāsaḥ tvayā hīndra-samena sārthaṃ bṛhas-pater apy udayāvahaḥ syāt // 7.43 //**

For these want as their companion in ascetic practice you who resemble a repository of ascetic practice³⁴⁴ – / Because abiding with you, the equal of Indra, would be a means of lifting up even Bṛhas-pati, ‘the Lord of Spiritual Growth.’” //7.43//

**ity evam ukte sa tapasvi-madhye tapasvi-mukhyena maṇiṣi-mukhyaḥ /
bhava-praṇāśāya kṛta-pratijñāḥ svaṃ bhāvam antar-gatam ācacakṣe // 7.44 //**

When he, in the midst of the ascetics, was thus addressed by the first ascetic, he the first in perspicacity, / Since he had vowed to end the *bhava* which is becoming, disclosed the *bhāva* of his own real inner feelings and thoughts: //7.44//

**rjv-ātmanām dharma-bhṛtām muninām iṣṭāthitvāt sva-janopamānām /
evam-vidhair mām prati bhāva-jātaiḥ prītiḥ parā me janitaś ca mārgaḥ // 7.45 //**

“Under dharma-upholding sages who tend in their core towards uprightness, and who are, in their willing hospitality, like family, / To have had shown towards me such manifestations of sincerity has filled me with great joy, and has opened for me a way. //7.45//

³⁴² Ostensibly, northward means towards the Himālayas; in the hidden meaning, north means up and south means down.

³⁴³ In the hidden meaning, one who neglects rites is a non-buddha, who expresses his or her true nature in the backward step of turning light and letting it shine. *Rucita* means shone upon (by the sun &c), and hence pleasant. *Astu* means “let it be.” So *rucito 'stu* ostensibly means “be pleased to...,” but the hidden meaning is “let [light] be shone.”

³⁴⁴ Alternate reading of *tapo-nidhāna-pratimaṃ bhavantam*: “you who represent the laying aside of asceticism.”

**snigdhabhir abhir hrdayam gamabhiḥ samāsataḥ snāta ivāsmi vāgbhiḥ /
ratiś ca me dharma-nava-grahasya vispanditā samprati bhūya eva // 7.46 //**

By these emollient words of yours, which seep through to the heart, I am as if smeared all over;
/ And the enjoyment a beginner feels, at newly laying hands on dharma, is now pulsing through
me all over again. //7.46//

**evam pravṛttān bhavataḥ śaraṇyān atīva saṁdarśita-pakṣapātān /
yāsyāmi hitveti mamāpi duḥkham yathaiva bandhūns tyajatas tathaiva // 7.47 //**

To leave you all like this, so devoted to all you do and so hospitable, to leave you who have
shown me such excessive kindness – / It pains me that I will leave you like this and depart, even
as it pained me to leave my kith and kin. //7.47//

**svargāya yuṣmākam ayaṁ tu dharmo mamābhilāṣas tv apunar-bhavāya /
asmin vane yena na me vivatsā bhinnāḥ pravṛtṭyā hi nivṛtti-dharmaḥ // 7.48 //**

But this dharma of yours aims at heaven, whereas my desire is for no more becoming; / Which
is why I do not wish to dwell in this wood: for a non-doing dharma is different from doing.³⁴⁵
//7.48//

**tan nāratir me na parāpacāro vanād ito yena parivrajāmi /
dharme sthitāḥ pūrva-yugānurūpe sarve bhavanto hi mahārṣi-kalpāḥ // 7.49 //**

So it is neither displeasure in me nor wrong conduct by another that causes me to walk away
from this wood; / For, standing firm in a dharma adapted to the first age of the world, all of you
bear the semblance of great sages.³⁴⁶ //7.49//

**tato vacaḥ sūnṛtam arthavac ca su-ślakṣṇam ojasvi ca garvitaṁ ca /
śrutvā kumārasya tapasvinas te viśeṣa-yuktaṁ bahu-mānam iyuḥ // 7.50 //**

Then, having listened to the prince's speech, which was both friendly and full of real meaning, /
Thoroughly gracious and yet strong and proud, those ascetics held him in especially high
regard. //7.50//

³⁴⁵ Other possible readings of *bhinnāḥ pravṛtṭyā hi nivṛtti-dharmaḥ* include: 1. “A non-doing dharma is destroyed by doing;” 2. “The dharma of non-doing is mixed in with doing.” Besides the ostensible meaning of “different from,” *bhinna* can mean 1. split or destroyed; and 2. mixed or mingled with. The ambiguity may have been intentional on Aśvaghōṣa's part, inviting us to ask ourselves what the relation is between non-doing and doing, in practice and in theory.

³⁴⁶ The suffix *kalpa* means having the form of, resembling, like but with a degree of inferiority. On one level, then, the prince is praising those who are devoted to hard practice. But below the surface, the affirmation is by no means unreserved.

**kaś-cid dvijas tatra tu bhasma-śāyī prāṁśuḥ śikhī dārava-cīra-vāsāḥ /
ā-piṅgalākṣas tanu-dīrgha-ghoṇaḥ kuṇḍaika-hasto giram ity uvāca // 7.51 //**

But up spoke one twice-born individual there, whose practice was to lay in ashes; standing tall, clothed in bark strips and wearing his hair in a top-knot, / His eyes dark red, his nose long and thin, holding in one hand a bowl-shaped container, he said these words:³⁴⁷ //7.51//

**dhīmann udāraḥ khalu niścayas te yas tvaṁ yuvā janmani dṛṣṭa-doṣaḥ /
svargāpavargau hi vicārya samyag yasyāpavarge matir asti so 'sti // 7.52 //**

“O man of understanding! High indeed is the purpose of one who, young as you are, has seen the faults in rebirth; / For the man who, having properly thought about heaven and about ending rebirth, is minded towards ending rebirth – he is the man! //7.52//

**yajñais tapobhir niyamaiś ca tais taiḥ svargaṁ yiyāsanti hi rāgavantaḥ /
rāgeṇa sārđhaṁ ripuṇeva yuddhvā mokṣaṁ pariṣanti tu sattvavantaḥ // 7.53 //**

For those who are coloured by desire’s red taint, desire by various austerities, restrictions, and acts of devotion, to go to heaven; / Whereas, having battled with red desire as if with an enemy, those who are animated by the true essence, desire to arrive at liberation. //7.53//

**tad buddhir eṣā yadi niścitā te tūrṇaṁ bhavān gacchatu vindhya-koṣṭham /
asau munis tatra vasaty arāḍo yo naiṣṭhike śreyasi labdha-cakṣuḥ // 7.54 //**

Therefore if this is your settled purpose, go quickly to the region of the Vindhya Hills; / There lives the sage Arāḍa, who has gained insight into the ultimate good. //7.54//

**tasmād bhavāñ chroṣyati tattva-mārgaṁ satyāṁ rucau sampratipatsyate ca /
yathā tu paśyāmi matis tathaisā tasyāpi yāsyaty avadhūya buddhim // 7.55 //**

From him you will hear the method of the *tattvas* (or the path of reality)³⁴⁸ and will follow it as far as you like; / But since this mind of yours is such you will, I am sure, progress on, after shaking off the *buddhi*, or intelligence, of even that sage. //7.55//

**spāṣṭocca-ghoṇaṁ vipulāyatākṣaṁ tāmṛādharauṣṭhaṁ sita-tikṣṇa-damṣṭram /
idaṁ hi vaktraṁ tanu-rakta-jihvaṁ jñeyārṇavaṁ pāsyati kṛtsnam eva // 7.56 //**

For, beneath a straight and high nose, and lengthened and widened eyes, with its lower lip the colour of copper, and its large teeth, sharp and white, / This mouth, with its thin red tongue, will drink up the whole ocean of what is to be known. //7.56//

³⁴⁷ Being tall (*prāṁśuḥ*) and holding a bowl-shaped vessel (*kuṇḍa*) could be marks of a forest bhikṣu. But could laying in ashes also be such a mark?

³⁴⁸ *Tattva* (truth, reality) and *buddhi* (intellect, view) were concepts in Sāṁkhya philosophy, wherein 20-odd *tattvas*, or truths, were enumerated. In fact Arāḍa in BC Canto 12 does not enumerate *tattvas*, though he does speak of *tattva-jñāḥ*, those who know the truth / the *tattvas* (BC12.65). And he cites *buddhi* (“the intelligent”) in the category of *prakṛti*, Primary Matter (BC12.18).

gambhīratā yā bhavatas tv agādhā yā dīptatā yāni ca lakṣaṇāni /

ācāryakaṁ prāpsyasi tat pṛthivyām yan narṣibhiḥ pūrva-yuge 'py avāptam // 7.57 //

Moreover, in view of this unfathomable depth which you have,³⁴⁹ in light of this brilliance, and judging by these signs, / You will realize on earth that seat of a teacher which was obtained not even by seers of the first age." //7.57//

paramam iti tato nṛpātmajas tam ṛṣi-janaṁ pratinandya nirayau /

vidhivad anuvidhāya te 'pi taṁ praviviśur āśramaṇas tapo-vanam // 7.58 //

"Very well," said the son of a protector of men; then, bidding a glad farewell to that group of seers, he went out. / For their part, having duly seen him off, the ashram-dwellers entered anew the woods of painful practice. //7.58//

iti buddha-carite mahā-kāvye tapo-vana-praveśo nāma saptamaḥ sargaḥ // 7 //

The 7th canto, titled Entering the Woods of Painful Practice,
in an epic tale of awakened action.

³⁴⁹ Or "to which you belong" – the genitive *bhavatas* leaves open both subjective and objective readings.

Canto 8: antaḥ-pura-vilāpaḥ **Lamenting within the Women's Quarters** **[or Lamenting from within the Battlements]**

Introduction

As discussed in the introduction to Canto 2, the ostensible meaning of *antaḥ-pura* is “the women’s apartments,” but literally *antaḥ-pura* means within (*antar*) a fortress, city or other fortified area (*pura*). Hence *antaḥ-pura* can mean not only the women’s quarters within a palace complex but also, more widely, a king’s palace – and, in the hidden meaning, the area that falls within the sphere of protection of a protector of men, i.e., the sphere of influence of a buddha.

The other element of the Canto title, *vilāpa*, ostensibly means unconscious expression of grief, as when a cow moos through the night for a calf that has been taken away to satisfy the market for veal. But in verse 70, the actions of a lamenting queen are described as *ruroda dadhyau vilāpa*, “she wept, she reflected/meditated, she lamented.” In the hidden meaning, then, *vilāpa* might suggest not unconscious expression of grief but rather conscious teaching on suffering that emerges, via reflection and meditation, out of suffering. In this sense, the Buddha’s turning of the Dharma-wheel, in which he taught the four noble truths, was just lamenting from within the battlements.

Ironically, then, below the surface this Canto is a kind of celebration. It is a celebration of the truths of suffering, arising of suffering, cessation of suffering, and practice leading towards cessation of suffering. The ironic subtext of celebration is there, for example, when Chanda describes non-doing action seeming spontaneously to do itself, in the zone of the gods.

**tatas turaṅgāvacaraḥ sa dur-manās tathā vanaṁ bhartari nirmame gate /
cakāra yatnaṁ pathi śoka-nigrahe tathāpi caivāśru na tasya cikṣipe // 8.1 //**

In low spirits, meanwhile – with his master gone thus,³⁵⁰ with no sense of me and mine, to the forest – / He whose sphere was horses made on the road an effort to suppress his sorrow. And surely enough, he, while also being thus, failed to banish his tears. //8.1//

**yam eka-rātreṇa tu bhartur ājñayā jagāma mārgaṁ saha tena vājinā /
iyāya bhartur virahaṁ vicintayaṁ tam eva panthānam ahobhir aṣṭabhiḥ // 8.2 //**

But the road which at his master’s behest he with that warhorse had travelled in one night – / That same road, pondering the master’s desertion, [or reflecting on the separateness of a master,] he now travelled in eight days.³⁵¹ //8.2//

³⁵⁰ *tathā... gate*, “thus... gone,” suggests one meaning of *tathāgata*, “the Thus-Gone,” as an epithet of the Buddha.

**hayaś ca saujasvi cacāra kanthakas tatāma bhāvena babhūva nirmadaḥ /
alamkṛtaś cāpi tathaiva bhūṣaṇair abhūd gata-śrīr iva tena varjitaḥ // 8.3 //**

And the horse Kanthaka moved himself by an effort of physical strength; he panted; he was, through his whole being, devoid of ebullience,³⁵² / Again, decked though he was in decorative trappings, he seemed, without the one in question, to lack lustre. //8.3//

**nivṛtya caivābhimukhas tapo-vanaṁ bhṛśaṁ jiheṣe karuṇaṁ muhur muhuḥ /
kṣudhānvito 'py adhvani śaṣpam ambu vā yathā purā nābhinananda nādade // 8.4 //**

And yet, having turned back, so that he was fronting the woods of painful practice, loudly he neighed, pitifully,³⁵³ again and again. / However hungry he was, he neither rejoiced at nor partook of, as before, grass or water on the road.³⁵⁴ //8.4//

**tato vihīnaṁ kapilāhvayaṁ puraṁ mahātmanā tena jagadd-hitātmanā /
krameṇa tau śūnyam ivopajagmatur divākareṇeva vinā-kṛtaṁ nabhaḥ // 8.5 //**

And so, the city called after Kapila, the city forsaken by that mighty soul whose soul was given to the welfare of the world, / The two approached, step by gradual step, as if approaching emptiness – an emptiness like the sky bereft of the day-making sun. //8.5//

**sa-puṇḍarīkair api śobhitaṁ jalair alamkṛtaṁ puṣpa-dharair nagair api /
tad eva tasyopavanaṁ vanopamaṁ gata-prahaṣair na rarāja nāgaraiḥ // 8.6 //**

The city's park, though graced by lotus-covered waters, though adorned by flower-bearing plants, / Being nothing but that park itself, was like the woods – it no longer exuded lordly splendour,³⁵⁵ now that the citizens' exuberant joy was gone. //8.6//

³⁵¹ Ostensibly he travelled slowly because of being in a bad state. The alternative reading is that Chandaka – representing the more mental aspect of a psycho-physical unity – was in a reflective or meditative state.

³⁵² Ostensibly, again, *nirmada* suggests being at a low psycho-physical ebb. But *mada* has connotations of being puffed up with pride or intoxication or wantonness. So in its hidden meaning *nirmada* also points to a reflective or meditative state. Cf. SN12.11: “Trembling went he of mighty arm, like a top bull elephant, through with rut (*nirmadaḥ*).”

³⁵³ *Karuṇam* can mean either deserving or showing compassion. Ostensibly the meaning here is pitifully in the sense of deserving pity; the hidden meaning may be that the neighing was pitiful in the archaic sense of pitiful – i.e. being full of pity.

³⁵⁴ Ostensibly the horse also had changed for the worse. But in the ironic hidden meaning, something in Kanthaka – representing greater physical prowess in a psycho-physical unity – had changed for the better.

³⁵⁵ *Na rarāja*; in the hidden meaning, there is no pejorative sense: the park was as it was. See also note to verse 13.

**tato bhramadbhir diśi dīna-mānasair anujjalair bāṣpa-hatekṣaṇair naraiḥ /
nivāryamāṇāv iva tāv ubhau puram śanair apasnātam ivābhijagmatuḥ // 8.7 //**

Thus, as though being slowed down, by men wandering in their direction, men with dispirited minds, men no longer blazing, men whose eyes tears had knocked out,³⁵⁶ / The two together approached the city – as silently as if going to a funeral bath. //8.7//

**niśamya ca srasta-śarīra-gāminau vināgatau śākya-kularṣabheṇa tau
mumoca bāṣpaṁ pathi nāgaro janaḥ purā rathe dāśarather ivāgate // 8.8 //**

And seeing the pair with disjointed gaits, their bodies hanging loosely,³⁵⁷ coming back without the bull of the Śākya herd, / The people of the city let their tears fall on the road – like in ancient times when the chariot of Rāma, son of ‘Ten Chariots’ Daśa-ratha, came back [without Rāma]. //8.8//

**atha bruvantaḥ samupeta-manyavo janāḥ pathi chandakam āgatāsravaḥ /
kva rāja-putraḥ pura-rāṣṭra-nandano hṛtas tvayāsāv iti pṛṣṭhato ’nvayauḥ // 8.9 //**

There again, speaking tensely, common folk afflicted by distress³⁵⁸ addressed Chandaka on the road – / “Where is the Child of the King, the joy of the city and of the kingdom? You have stolen away that child!” they said, from the rear, following behind.³⁵⁹ //8.9//

**tataḥ sa tān bhaktimato ’bravīj janān narendra-putraṁ na parityajāmy aham /
rudann-ahaṁ tena tu nirjane vane gr̥ha-stha-veśāś ca visarjitāv iti // 8.10 //**

Then he said to those devout folk: “No neglecter am I of the child of a lord among men. / On the contrary, by that child in the folk-free forest, the weeping I, and the clothes of a householder, are both cast off together.”³⁶⁰ //8.10//

³⁵⁶ In the ironic hidden meaning, men who no longer have any illusions – non-buddhas.

³⁵⁷ Cf BC3.28 *śithilānatāṅgaḥ*, “limbs loose and bending.”

³⁵⁸ Amendment to *āgatāsravaḥ*, would give “visited by tears.” But *āgatāsravaḥ* or “afflicted by the pollutants [namely, desire (*kāmāsrava*), becoming (*bhavāsrava*), and ignorance (*avidyāsrava*)],” as per the Old Nepalese manuscript, also has meaning.

³⁵⁹ A suggestion of a lack of initiative which tends to be shown by religious followers? In the hidden meaning, are the devout expecting some kind of outside intervention, so that their own buddha-nature might be restored to them?

³⁶⁰ In the hidden meaning, Chandaka is (1) emphasizing the importance of each individual regularly not neglecting (atop a round black cushion) his or her own buddha-nature; and (2) suggesting how, ultimately, it is not I who abandons *the weeping I* so much as it is the buddha-nature which casts off *the weeping I*.

**idaṃ vacas tasya niśamya te janāḥ su-duṣkaraṃ khalv iti vismayam yauḥ /
patadd hi jahruḥ salilaṃ na netra-jaṃ mano nininduś ca phalārtham ātmanaḥ // 8.11 //**
When those common folk heard this utterance of his, because of its very great difficulty, they were dismayed; / For the eye-born flood of falling tears they had not averted, and their own minds, taking account of karmic retribution, they did blame.³⁶¹ //8.11//

**athocur adyaiva viśāma tad vanaṃ gataḥ sa yatra dvipa-rāja-vikramaḥ /
jjīviṣā nāsti hi tena no vinā yathendriyāṇām vigame śarīriṇām // 8.12 //**
Or else they said: “Right now let us go into that forest,³⁶² where he is, whose stride is the stride of a king of elephants; / For without him we have no wish to live on, like embodied beings when the power of the senses has departed. //8.12//

**idaṃ puraṃ tena vivarjitaṃ vanaṃ vanaṃ ca tat tena samanvitaṃ puram /
na śobhate tena hi no vinā puraṃ marutvatā vṛtra-vadhe yathā divam // 8.13 //**
This city without Him is the woods, and those woods in his presence are a city. / For in his absence our city does not shine³⁶³ – like heaven without *marut*-attended Indra, at the slaying of Vṛtra [Or like the sky, without the Almighty and his storm-gods, at the break-up of a thunder-cloud].³⁶⁴ //8.13//

**punaḥ kumāro viniṣṛta ity atho gavākṣa-mālāḥ pratipedire ’ṅganāḥ /
vivikta-prṣṭhaṃ ca niśamya vājinaṃ punar gavākṣāṇi pidhāya cukruśuḥ // 8.14 //**
“The prince has come back again!” said the women, as now they appeared in the rows of round windows. / But seeing the horse’s empty back, they closed the windows again and wailed. //8.14//

³⁶¹ In short, this group of devout believers, not being awake to the four noble truths, wallowed in self-reproach.

³⁶² Or else they rushed too hastily into action.

³⁶³ In the hidden meaning, because of his truth of emptiness, the city exists as it is.

³⁶⁴ According to a myth recorded in the *Ṛg-veda*, having killed the demon Vṛtra, Indra went to the ends of the earth to conceal himself. Ostensibly *vṛta* means this demon, who was supposed to be in possession of the clouds. But *vṛta* also means a non-fictional thunder-cloud. So in the hidden meaning, again, the city was as it was, like the sky when all trace of heaven has vanished.

**praviṣṭa-dīkṣas tu sutopalabdhaye vratena śokena ca khinna-mānasaḥ /
jajāpa devāyatane narādhipaś cakāra tās tās ca yathāśrayāḥ kriyāḥ // 8.15 //**

Whereas, having undertaken complete dedication, with a view to getting a son, his mind exhausted by observance and by sorrow, / The ruler of men spoke in whispers in the temple, and performed, as he felt fit, various actions.³⁶⁵ //8.15//

**tataḥ sa bāṣpa-pratipūrṇa-locanas turaṅgam ādāya turaṅgamānugaḥ /
viveśa śokābhihato nṛpa-kṣayaṁ yudhāpinīte ripuṇeva bhartari // 8.16 //**

Then, with eyes filled with tears, the horse-servant betook to himself the horse³⁶⁶ / And, beaten by sorrow, he entered the abode of a protector of men³⁶⁷ – as though his master had been spirited away by an enemy warrior [or like when a master has been reeled in by a deceitful combatant].³⁶⁸ //8.16//

**viḡāhamānaś ca narendra-mandiraṁ vilokayann aśru-vahena cakṣuṣā /
svareṇa puṣṭena rurāva kanthako janāya duḡkhaṁ prativedayann iva // 8.17 //**

Also entering the royal stable, while looking through tearful eyes, Kanthaka roared in a full-sounding voice, as if making his suffering known to the people. //8.17// [Alternative translation] Immersing himself in the place of stillness of the best of men,³⁶⁹ while looking, with an eye containing tears,³⁷⁰ Kanthaka roared in a full-sounding voice, as if, for the benefit of humanity, causing suffering to be known. //8.17//

³⁶⁵ In the hidden meaning, the ruler of men might represent one who, having dedicated himself completely (*praviṣṭa-dīkṣaḥ*), with a view to gaining Dharma-heirs (*sutopalabdhaye*), exhausts himself by grieving for a suffering world and by practice – he is able to convey his teaching by secret whispers in a temple, or by acting in his everyday life just as he pleases.

³⁶⁶ A suggestion of sitting with body and with mind?

³⁶⁷ *Nṛpa-kṣayam*, the abode of a protector of men, the seat of a king, carries, as in so many similar instances, the hidden meaning of sitting-meditation, as dropping off of body and mind.

³⁶⁸ Ostensibly Chanda was downcast, in a bad state, like one whose master has been spirited away *yudhā ripunā*, by an enemy warrior. In the hidden meaning one master is reeled in, or led astray, by another master – and thus something transcendent is celebrated, as in so many of the famous koans recorded in Tang China.

³⁶⁹ *Mandira* is from the root *√mand*, to stand still, to abide. It means a place of abiding, e.g. a waiting room, or a stable for horses. So *narendra-mandiram* ostensibly means the royal stable, but again the hidden meaning is sitting-meditation as a place of calm abiding.

³⁷⁰ In the hidden meaning, insight informed by the four noble truths.

**tataḥ kha-gāś ca kṣaya-madhyā-gocarāḥ samīpa-baddhās turagās ca sat-kṛtāḥ /
hayasya tasya pratisasvanuḥ svanam narendra-sūnor upayāna-śāṅkitāḥ // 8.18 //**

Then the birds whose feeding place was in the middle of the dwelling, and the well-treated horses tethered nearby, / Echoed the sound of that horse, in anticipation of the prince's approach. //8.18// [Alternative translation] Then those movers in empty space³⁷¹ whose range, in loss,³⁷² is the middle, and those venerated³⁷³ movers in readiness³⁷⁴ who are bound to immediacy,³⁷⁵ / Echoed the sound of that horse, with the intuitive sense of getting close which belongs to a son or a daughter of the best of men³⁷⁶. //8.18//

**janās ca harṣātiśayena vañcitā janādhipāntaḥ-pura-saṁnikarṣa-gāḥ /
yathā hayaḥ kanthaka eṣa heṣate dhruvaṁ kumāro viśatīti menire // 8.19 //**

Over-exuberance, again, deceived people who were moving in the vicinity of the battlements of their lord.³⁷⁷ / “Since the horse Kanthaka is here neighing,” they thought, “It must be that the prince is on his way!” //8.19//

**ati-prahaṣād atha śoka-mūrchitāḥ kumāra-saṁdarśana-lola-locanāḥ /
grḥhād viniścakramur āśayā striyaḥ śarat-payodād iva vidyutaś calāḥ // 8.20 //**

And so in their exuberant joy, the women who had been insensible with grief, their darting eyes now eager for a sight of the prince, / Stepped forth from their homes full of hope – like flashes of lightning from an autumn cloud.³⁷⁸ //8.20//

³⁷¹ *Kha-gāḥ*, “goers in empty space,” means birds, and, in the hidden meaning, those whose practice is emptiness.

³⁷² The meanings of *kṣaya* include 1. abode, dwelling-place and 2. loss, destruction.

³⁷³ The meanings of *sat-kṛta* include 1. well-treated and 2. venerated, worshipped.

³⁷⁴ *Tura-gāḥ*, “fast goers,” means horses, and, in the hidden meaning, those whose consciousness is quick, people who are awake.

³⁷⁵ *Samīpa-baddha*: 1. tethered (*baddha*) nearby (*samīpa*); 2. bound (*baddha*) to nearness (*samīpa*). In the hidden meaning, then, a phrase equivalent to Dogen's GOCCHI NI SAERARU, “bound to the still state.” Cf also *nidrayā hr̥ta*, “seized by repose,” in verse 47 below.

³⁷⁶ *Narendra-sūnoḥ*, “of the son of best of men,” means the prince's, and in the hidden meaning, belonging to a follower of the Buddha.

³⁷⁷ The deceitful combatant of BC8.16 may be relevant here – a hidden sense being that we are, via a state of nervous excitement, brought by expedient means into the sphere of influence of buddhas, as e.g. Nanda was in the story of Handsome Nanda.

³⁷⁸ In the hidden meaning, the women's eager interest mirrors the curiosity of those who have established the will to the truth, in regard to what a buddha's enlightenment might be.

**vilamba-veṣyo malināmsukāmbārā nirañjanair bāṣpa-hatekṣaṇair mukhaiḥ /
kṛṣṇā vivarṇā mṛjayā vinā-kṛtā divīva tārā rajanī-kṣayāruṇāḥ // 8.21 //**

Their hair having dropped down, wearing garments of dirty cloth,³⁷⁹ with unrouged faces whose eyes had been marred by tears,³⁸⁰ / Bereft of cosmetic embellishment, they manifested themselves as colourless – like stars in the sky when red dawn is dispelling dark night. //8.21//

**arakta-tāmrāiś caraṇair anūpurair akuṇḍalair ārjava-karṇikair mukhaiḥ /
svabhāva-pīnair jaghanair amekhalair a-hāra-yoktrair muṣitair iva stanaiḥ // 8.22 //**

Their feet were without ornaments and not painted red; their faces were flanked by plain ears, ears without ear-rings; / Their hips and thighs, without girdles, were naturally full; their female breasts, without their ropes of pearls, seemed to have been stripped naked. //8.22//
[Alternative translation] Their unembellished practices³⁸¹ were not reddened by passion; their mouths³⁸² were connected with ears of frankness, unfettered ears; / Their hips and thighs, ungirt of the belts that signified social rank,³⁸³ expanded by themselves; their breasts, without any attachment to stripping away,³⁸⁴ seemed to have been laid bare. //8.22//

**nirīkṣya tā bāṣpa-parīta-locanā nir-āśrayam chandakam aśvam eva ca /
viṣaṇṇa-vaktrā rurudur varāṅganā vanāntare gāva iva rṣabhōjjhitāḥ // 8.23 //**

Looking through tearful eyes at the destitute Chandaka-and-horse,³⁸⁵ having nothing to depend upon, / Those beautiful women wept, with downcast faces, like cows in the woods abandoned by the bull. //8.23//

**tataḥ sa-bāṣpā mahiṣī mahī-pateḥ pranaṣṭa-vatsā mahiṣīva vatsalā /
pragrhya bāhū nipapāta gautamī vilola-parṇā kadalīva kāñcanī // 8.24 //**

Then the king's queen, Gautamī, tearful as a doting water buffalo that had lost her calf, / Abducted her arms³⁸⁶ and fell, fronds shuddering, like a golden banana plant. //8.24//

³⁷⁹ In the hidden meaning, a reference to the filthy rags (Jap: FUNZO-E) traditionally regarded as the best and purest material out of which to patch together a kaṣāya.

³⁸⁰ *Bāṣpa-hatekṣaṇaiḥ*, as in verse 7 above.

³⁸¹ *Caraṇa* means foot and, in the hidden meaning, practice.

³⁸² *Mukha* means face or mouth.

³⁸³ *Mekhala* means a girdle or belt, but (according to the Monier-Williams dictionary) “especially one worn by men of the first three classes.”

³⁸⁴ The many meaning of *hāra* include a necklace, and taking away. In the hidden meaning, Aśvagoṣa is praising the attitude of Zen practitioners who let body and mind drop away naturally, without being tempted to do anything to try to help the process along.

³⁸⁵ In the hidden meaning, they realized not only the mental but also the physical. Ostensibly Chandaka and the horse were destitute (*nir-āśrayam*); in the hidden meaning, those who saw realized emptiness, having nothing to depend upon (*nir-āśrayam*).

³⁸⁶ Cf the description of palaces seeming to fling out their arms in verse 37.

**hata-tviṣo 'nyāḥ śīthilātma-bāhavaḥ striyo viṣādena vicetanā iva /
na cukruśur nāśru jahur na śāsvasur na celur āsur likhitā iva sthitāḥ // 8.25 //**

Other women, being bereft of sparkle, being flaccid in their core and in their arms, women who seemed by their languor to be almost insensible, / Neither cried out, nor shed tears; they neither audibly breathed, nor moved a muscle: As if in a painting, they stayed still. //8.25//
[Alternative Translation] Individual women, being different, being free of fury, being relaxed in their souls and loose in their arms, women who seemed by their languor to be almost insensible, / Neither cried out, nor shed tears; they neither audibly breathed, nor moved a muscle: As if in a painting, they stayed still.³⁸⁷ //8.25//

**adhīram anyāḥ pati-śoka-mūrchitā vilocana-prasravaṇair mukhaiḥ striyaḥ /
siṣiñcire proṣita-candanān stanān dharā-dharāḥ prasravaṇair ivopalān // 8.26 //**

Other women, losing control, dizzyed by sorrow for their lord, with streaming faces, whose wellsprings were eyes, / Wetted bare breasts bereft of sandal paste – like mountains with their wellsprings wetting rocks. //8.26// [Alternative Translation] Those women, as individuals who were different, not in a fixed manner,³⁸⁸ but as masters caused through sorrow to grow,³⁸⁹ with streaming faces, whose wellsprings were eyes, / Wetted bare breasts bereft of sandal paste – like mountains with their wellsprings wetting rocks. //8.26//

**mukhaiś ca tāsām nayanāmbu-tāḍitaiḥ rarāja tad-rāja-niveśanam tadā /
navāmbu-kāle 'mbu-da-vṛṣṭi-tāḍitaiḥ sravaj-jalais tāma rasair yathā saraḥ // 8.27 //**

And in the presence of the tear stricken faces of those individuals, that lair of kings, in that moment, was bathed in splendour – / Like a lake at the time of the first rains when clouds with their raindrops are striking its dripping lotuses.³⁹⁰ //8.27//

³⁸⁷ As also in BC Canto 5, “the women” in the hidden meaning represent practitioners sitting still in a meditation hall. Ostensibly their arms were flaccid, lacking muscle tone; in the hidden meaning, their joints were free of undue tension. Ostensibly their lifeless state made their breathing unduly shallow and barely perceptible; in the hidden meaning, there was no restriction in their breathing, which was therefore as silent as a winter breeze in a forest without leaves.

³⁸⁸ *Adhīra* means “deficient in calm self-command,” excitable; in the hidden meaning, it means not fixed, adaptable.

³⁸⁹ In the compound *pati-śoka-mūrchitāḥ*, *pati-śoka* ostensibly means “sorrow for their lord/master” but can equally mean “the sorrow of a master.” The meanings of *vmurch* include 1. to become solid, thicken, and, by extension, to stupefy; and 2. to expand, increase, grow. Hence *mūrchitāḥ* could be describing the women as 1. stupefied, fainting, dizzyed [by sorrow for their lost lord]; or, in the hidden meaning, 2. caused to grow [through the experience of sorrow as a master].

³⁹⁰ Here as in several previous verses, by comparing grieving women with rain-soaked lotuses Aśvaghōṣa hints at the possibility of there being profound beauty, even in bitter-sweet investigation of the noble truth of suffering.

**su-vṛtta-pīnāṅgulibhir nir-antarair abhūṣaṇair gūḍha-sirair varāṅganāḥ /
urāṁsi jaghnuḥ kamalopamaiḥ karaiḥ sva-pallavair vāta-calā latā iva // 8.28 //**

With hands whose gapless fingers were beautifully round and full, with unadorned hands whose blood-vessels were invisible, / With their hands resembling lotuses, the most beautiful of women beat their breasts – like wind-blown creepers beating themselves with their own tendrils. //8.28//

**kara-prahāra-pracalaiś ca tā babhur yathāpi nāryaḥ sahitonntaiḥ stanaiḥ /
vanānilāghūrṇita-padma-kampitaiḥ rathāṅga-nāmnām mithunair ivāpagāḥ // 8.29 //**

Again, as their conjoined and upturned breasts trembled under the barrage from their hands, those women also resembled rivers / Whose lotuses, sent whirling by the forest wind, shook into movement pairs of *rathāṅga* geese – geese called after a wheel.³⁹¹ //8.29//

**yathā ca vakṣāṁsi karair apīḍayaṁs tathaiva vakṣobhir apīḍayan karān /
akārayaṁs tatra paras paraṁ vyathāḥ karāgra-vakṣāṁsy abalā dayālasāḥ // 8.30 //**

Insofar as they goaded their bosoms with their hands, to that same degree they goaded their hands with their bosoms; / Those in that loop³⁹² whose strength was not in strength, their compassion being inactive,³⁹³ made bosoms, and the tips of doing hands, antagonize each other.³⁹⁴ //8.30//

³⁹¹ For more on *rathāṅga* geese, aka *cakravāka* ducks, see note to verse 60 below. Here women's breasts are compared to pairs of these birds being shaken into movement beneath lotus faces. On the surface, *Aśvaghōṣa* may seem to be unduly interested in beautiful women's breasts. Below the surface his point may be to stimulate us to reflect what it really is, whether we are a man or a woman, to be a mammal. For example, to what extent is the course of a life of a human being born on the earth, as a mammal, determined by emotion, and to what extent by reason?

³⁹² *Tatra* means there, or, in the hidden meaning in that state, in that loop.

³⁹³ The subject is *abalā dayālasāḥ*. Ostensibly *abalāḥ* means “those who are weak (f.),” i.e. women as the so-called weaker sex; and *dayālasāḥ* means “disinclined to pity” (*dayā* = pity, compassion; *a-lasā* = inactive, lazy, faint). In the hidden meaning, *Aśvaghōṣa* seems to be suggesting that true compassion tends to be manifested subtly, by indirect means, and not so much by brute force.

³⁹⁴ A *kara*, a hand, is literally “a doer,” from the root *√kr*, to do or make. Goaded bosoms with hands might be a metaphor for stimulating the lazy heart and mind by doing something. Conversely, goading hands with bosoms can be understood as a metaphor for stimulating the lazy body by thinking something. The relation between bosoms and hands thus mirrors the relation already suggested between *Kanthaka* and *Chanda*, horse and groom.

**tatas tu roṣa-pravirakta-locanā viṣāda-sambandha-kaṣāya-gadgadam /
uvāca niśvāsa-calat-payodharā vigāḍha-śokāśru-dharā yaśodharā // 8.31 //**

But then, with eyes reddened by fury, stammering with the emotion that belongs to despondent love, / Up spoke a bearer of glory, whose milk-bearers³⁹⁵ heaved as she sighed – bearing tears of grief running deep as the Earth, Yaśodharā said: //8.31//

**niśi prasuptām avasām vihāya mām gataḥ kva sa chandaka man-mano-rathaḥ /
upāgate ca tvayi kanthake ca me samam gateṣu triṣu kampate manaḥ // 8.32 //**

“Leaving me helplessly asleep in the night, where, Chandaka, has the joy of my heart gone? / Seeing you and Kanthaka come back, when three departed,³⁹⁶ my mind, in all honesty, wavers. //8.32//

**anāryam asnidgham amitra-karma me nṛśaṁsa kṛtvā kim ihādyā rodiṣi /
niyaccha bāṣpaṁ bhava tuṣṭa-mānaso na samvadaty aśru ca tac ca karma te // 8.33 //**

It is an ignoble and ungentle action, the action of a non-friend,³⁹⁷ that you, O dealer in others’ pain,³⁹⁸ have done to me. Why now do you weep? / Stop the tears! Let your mind be satisfied! Tears, and that action of yours, do not chime well together. //8.33//

**priyeṇa vaśyena hitena sādhunā tvayā sahāyena yathārtha-kāriṇā /
gato ’rya-putro hy apunar nivṛttaye ramaṣva diṣṭyā sa-phalaḥ śramas tava // 8.34 //**

For, thanks to you, a devoted friend – willing, well-meaning, and straight, a doer of what was necessary – / That noble son is gone, never to return. Be glad! How wonderful for you, that your effort was fruitful!³⁹⁹ //8.34//

³⁹⁵ *Payodhara* means bearer or container of liquid, i.e, a cloud or a breast. The use of *payodhara* here is partly poetic, since Yaśodharā means Bearer of Glory. But it is also a further reminder of the mammalian nature of human grief.

³⁹⁶ If Kanthaka is body and Chanda is mind, do Yaśodharā's words suggest that the missing third element is [her] heart?

³⁹⁷ *A-mitra*, a non-friend, in its hidden meaning might be a true friend – as a non-buddha is a true buddha, not one who necessarily conforms to expectations.

³⁹⁸ *Nṛ-śaṁsa* lit. means “injuring men;” hence, cruel. In the hidden meaning, an ironic epithet for one steeped in the wisdom of the four noble truths.

³⁹⁹ A double bluff – Yaśodharā intends her words to be ironic, not true. The real irony, below the surface, is that her words *are* true.

**varam manuṣyasya vicakṣaṇo ripur na mitram aprājñam ayoga-peśalam /
suhṛd-bruveṇa hy avipaścītā tvayā kṛtaḥ kulasyāsyā mahān upaplavaḥ // 8.35 //**

It is better for a man to have an insightful enemy, rather than a friend of no wisdom, skilled in no method;⁴⁰⁰ / For thanks to you, one versed in nothing who calls himself a friend,⁴⁰¹ great misfortune has befallen this noble house. //8.35//

**imā hi śocyā vyavamukta-bhūṣaṇāḥ prasakta-bāṣpāvila-rakta-locanāḥ /
sthite 'pi patyau himavan-mahī-same pranaṣṭa-śobhā vidhavā iva striyaḥ // 8.36 //**

These women are deeply to be commiserated, who have shed embellishments, whose bloodshot eyes are clouded by tears of lasting devotion, / Who are like widows who lost their former lustre – though their master is still there, standing firm on those flat Himālayan uplands [or being as even as the snow-clad earth].⁴⁰² //8.36//

**imās ca vikṣipta-viṭaṅka-bāhavaḥ prasakta-pārāvata-dīrgha-nisvanāḥ /
vinā-kṛtās tena sahāvarodhanair bhṛśam rudantīva vimāna-panktayaḥ // 8.37 //**

These rows of palaces too, flinging the dove-cots of their arms up and out,⁴⁰³ their long calls being the cooing of devoted doves, / Seem when bereft of him, along with the women of the inner apartments, mightily to weep and wail. //8.37//

**anartha-kāmo 'sya janasya sarvathā turaṅgamo 'pi dhruvam eṣa kanthakaḥ /
jahāra sarvasvam itas tathā hi me jane prasupte niśi ratna-cauravat // 8.38 //**

This here horse Kanthaka, also, is constantly desirous that I, in every way, should come to naught.⁴⁰⁴ / For thus, from here, he took away my everything – like a jewel thief who steals in the night, while people are fast asleep. //8.38//

⁴⁰⁰ *Aprājñam ayoga-peśalam*. *A-prājñam* ostensibly means unlearned, having no wisdom, but in the hidden meaning, having the wisdom of no, the wisdom of going without. *Ayoga-peśalam* ostensibly means skilful (*peśalam*) only in the wrong way (*ayoga*)” but, in the hidden meaning, skilful (*peśalam*) in the way (*yoga*) of no (*a-*).

⁴⁰¹ In the hidden meaning, again, the horse-tamer is a person of wisdom and compassion. *A-vipaś-cit* ostensibly means not (*a-*) knowing (*-cit*) enlightenment (*vipas*); hence unwise, ignorant; but in the ironic hidden meaning knowing (*-cit*) the enlightenment (*vipas*) of absence [from ignorance] (*a-*).

⁴⁰² *Himavan-mahī-same* could be read “remaining as constant as the Himālayas or the Earth,” or “being the same as the Himālayas and the earth,” or “being as even as the ground in the Himālayas.” In the hidden meaning, again, the women are Zen practitioners. The object of their devotion is constantly in balance.

⁴⁰³ An allusion to the infantile panic reflex (the so-called Moro reflex)? See also BC8.24 above, and the description of Sundarī in SN Canto 6 (SN6.24-27).

⁴⁰⁴ In the hidden meaning, a suggestion of the fact that in the natural world all energy tends to dissipate? Kanthaka in general stands for the power of nature, or the physical body harnessed to the mind of Chanda. (Chandaka's name originally means Liking, Volition, Desire, Will.)

**yadā samarthaḥ khalu soḍhum āgatān iṣu-prahārān api kiṃ punaḥ kaśāḥ /
gataḥ kaśā-yāta-bhayāt katham̐ nv ayaṃ śriyaṃ gr̥hītvā hṛdayaṃ ca me samam // 8.39 //**
When he is well able to defy even incoming arrows, to say nothing of whips, / How could fear⁴⁰⁵
of a whip's goading have caused this [fast-goer] to go, snatching away, in equal measure, my
royal pomp and my heart? //8.39//

**anārya-karmā bhṛśam adya heṣate narendra-dhiṣṇyaṃ pratipūrayann iva /
yadā tu nirvāhayati sma me priyaṃ tadā hi mūkas turagādhamo 'bhavat // 8.40 //**
Now the doer of un-āryan deeds is neighing loudly, as if filling with sound the seat of a first
among men; / But when he carried away my love, then the low-down donkey was dumb.⁴⁰⁶
//8.40//

**yadi hy aheṣiyata bodhayan janaṃ khuraiḥ kṣitau vāpy akariṣyata dhvanim /
hanu-svanam̐ vājanayiṣyad uttamaṃ na cābhaviṣyan mama duḥkham̐ idṛśam // 8.41 //**
For if he had whinnied, waking people up, or else had made a noise with his hoofs on the
ground, / - Or had he made the loudest sound he could with his jaws [had he sounded the
ultimate warning of death and disease⁴⁰⁷] - I would not have experienced suffering like this."⁴⁰⁸
//8.41//

**itiha devyāḥ paridevitāśrayaṃ niśamya bāṣpa-grathitākṣaraṃ vacaḥ /
adho-mukhaḥ sāsru-kalaḥ kṛtāñjaliḥ śanair idam̐ chandaka uttaraṃ jagau // 8.42 //**
When thus he had heard, here in this world, the lament-laden words of the queen, whose every
syllable had been punctuated with a tear, / Chandaka, face turned down, tongue-tied by his own
tearfulness, and hands held like a beggar's, softly voiced the following response: //8.42//

**vigarhituṃ nārhasi devi kanthakaṃ na cāpi roṣaṃ mayi kartum arhasi /
anāgasau svaḥ samavehi sarvaśo gato nṛ-devaḥ sa hi devi devavat // 8.43 //**
“Please do not blame Kanthaka, O godly queen, nor show anger towards me. / Know us both as
blameless in every way, for that god among men, O royal goddess, departed like a god. //8.43//

⁴⁰⁵ *Bhayāt* means “because of fear.” Below the surface Yaśodharā's question seems to ask whether what goes readily in nature can be forced to go through intimidatory tactics.

⁴⁰⁶ Below the surface, is an auto-biographical element discernible? Is Aśvaghōṣa (the Horse-Whinny) mindful of his own loud efforts in the Dharma Hall and silent efforts in the Meditation Hall?

⁴⁰⁷ *Hanu* means 1. (fr. *vhan*, to destroy) “anything which destroys or injures life,” death, disease; and 2. (not fr. *vhan*) a jaw. Thus *hanu-svanam̐* ostensibly means “the sound of his jaws,” but a hidden meaning might be “a sound [warming of] death and disease.”

⁴⁰⁸ Ostensible meaning: I would not have experienced such terrible suffering. Hidden meaning: I would not have experienced, in this manner, the purport of the four noble truths.

**aham hi jānann api rāja-śāsanam balāt kṛtaḥ kair api daivatair iva /
upānayaṁ tūrṇam imam turaṅgamaṁ tathānvagaccham vigata-śramo 'dhvani // 8.44 //**
For, knowing full-well the instruction of the king,⁴⁰⁹ I, as though I were compelled by gods of
some description, / Swiftly brought this swift horse, and in that effortless manner I followed, on
the road.⁴¹⁰ //8.44//

**vrajann ayam vāji-varo 'pi nāsprśan mahim khurāgrair vidhṛtair ivāntarā /
tathaiva daivād iva samyatānana hanu-svanam nākṛta nāpy aheṣata // 8.45 //**
This royal war-horse, also, as he went, did not touch the ground, the tips of his hooves seeming
to dangle separately in midair. / His mouth was sealed as if, again, by a divine force; he neither
neighed nor made a sound with his jaws [neither neighed nor sounded the warning of death and
disease].⁴¹¹ //8.45//

**yadā bahir gacchati pāṛthivātmaje tadābhavad dvāram apāvṛtam svayam /
tamaś ca naiśam raviṇeva pātitaṁ tato 'pi daivo vidhir eṣa grhyatām // 8.46 //**
The moment that the prince moved outwards, the way out spontaneously became open / And
the darkness of night was broken as if by the sun – hence, again, let this be grasped as action in
the presence of the gods. //8.46//

**yad apramatto 'pi narendra-śāsanād grhe pure caiva sahasraśo janaḥ /
tadā sa nābudhyata nidrayā hṛtas tato 'pi daivo vidhir eṣa grhyatām // 8.47 //**
In accordance with the instruction of the best of men, people in their thousands, in house and
town, were leaving nothing unattended;⁴¹² / In that moment all were seized by repose and not
roused to wakefulness⁴¹³ – hence, again, let this be grasped as action in the zone of the gods.
//8.47//

⁴⁰⁹ *Rāja-śāsanam*. Ostensible meaning: King Śuddhodana's command. Hidden meaning: the teaching of the king of dharma.

⁴¹⁰ A suggestion of action – non-doing action – that seems effortlessly to do itself, when the gods are on our side.

⁴¹¹ A suggestion of action that does itself in the Meditation Hall (as opposed to preaching that does itself in the Dharma Hall)?

⁴¹² Ostensible meaning: at King Śuddhodana's behest, everybody was on guard. Hidden meaning: in accordance with the Buddha's teaching, many individuals devoted themselves to mindful practice – wherein body and mind dropped off naturally.

⁴¹³ *Abudhyata* is imperfect (woke up) or imperfect passive (was awakened). In looking for the hidden meaning, we are caused to question how or whether anybody wakes up or is woken up, with or without outside intervention.

**yataś ca vāso vana-vāsa-saṁmataṁ niśṛṣṭam asmai samaye divaukasā /
divi praviddhaṁ mukuṭaṁ ca tadd hr̥taṁ tato 'pi daivo vidhir eṣa gr̥hyatām // 8.48 //**

And since, in that most opportune of moments, the robe approved for living the forest life was bestowed on him by a sky dweller, / And that headdress which he launched into the sky was borne away – hence, again, let this be grasped as action in the lap of the gods. //8.48//

**tad evam āvām nara-devi doṣato na tat-prayātaṁ prati-gantum arhasi /
na kāma-kāro mama nāsya vājinaḥ kṛtānuyātraḥ sa hi daivatair gataḥ // 8.49 //**

Therefore, O royal goddess!, do not blame the two of us for his departure. / It was neither my nor this horse's own doing; for he went with the gods in his train."⁴¹⁴ //8.49//

**iti prayānaṁ bahudhaivam adbhutaṁ niśamya tās tasya mahātmanaḥ striyaḥ /
pranaṣṭa-śokā iva vismayam yayur mano-jvaraṁ pravrajanāt tu lebhire // 8.50 //**

When thus the women heard of the starting out, which was in so many ways miraculous, of that mighty man, / They felt such amazement that the flame of sorrow seemed to go out. And yet they conceived, following on from the going forth, fever of the mind.⁴¹⁵ //8.50//

**viśāda-pāriplava-locanā tataḥ pranaṣṭa-potā kurarīva duḥkhitā /
vihāya dhairyam virurāva gautamī tatāma caivāśru-mukhī jagāda ca // 8.51 //**

Then, her eyes swimming in despondency, the grief-stricken Gautamī, like an osprey who had lost her chicks, / Gave up all semblance of composure and squealed. Tearful-faced, she gasped for the breath in which she said: //8.51//

⁴¹⁴ In the hidden meaning, a reminder that non-doing action is beyond psycho-physical duality.

⁴¹⁵ *Mano-jvaram*, “fever of the mind,” ostensibly means grief, mental pain, heartache, following the prince's going forth. The hidden meaning might be that, following their own transcendence of grief, they became zealous in practice.

**mahormimanto mṛdavo 'sitāḥ śubhāḥ pṛthak-pṛthañ mūla-ruhāḥ samudgatāḥ /
praveritās te bhuvi tasya mūrdha-jā narendra-maulī-pariveṣṭana-kṣamāḥ // 8.52 //**

“Flowing in great waves, soft, black and beautiful, each hair rising up singly, growing from its own root: / Have those locks of his, born from his head, been cast upon the ground? – locks of hair which are fit to be encircled by a king’s crown! //8.52// [Alternative translation] Flowing in great waves, soft, beautiful, and not white,⁴¹⁶ those thoughts of his, born from the summit,⁴¹⁷ have been cast upon the act of becoming⁴¹⁸ – / Each thought emerging singly, springing up from the fundamental: thoughts which are fit to encase the cranium of the best of men! //8.52//

**pralamba-bāhur mṛga-rāja-vikramo maharṣabhākṣaḥ kanakojjala-dyutiḥ /
viśāla-vakṣā ghana-dundubhi-svanas tathā-vidho 'py āśrama-vāsam arhati // 8.53 //**

Does he with his long hanging arms and lion’s stride, with his great bull-like eyes, and his splendid golden lustre, / With his broad chest and thunderous resonance – does such a man deserve a life in an ashram? //8.53//

**abhāginī nūnam iyañ vasuñ-dharā tam ārya-karmāṇam anuttamañ patim /
tatas tato 'sau guṇavān hi tādṛśo nṛpaḥ prajā-bhāgya-guṇaiḥ prasūyate // 8.54 //**

Shall this treasure-bearing earth not claim as her possessor that peerless man of noble action? / For such a protector of men, endowed as that one is in all respects with virtues, is born to her by the merits that her offspring accrue.⁴¹⁹ //8.54//

⁴¹⁶ *Asita*, “not-white,” means black. The word is thought to be a back formation from *sita*, white. In its hidden meaning, as in connection with the sage *Asita* in BC Canto 1, *asita* suggests what is real as negation of idealistic purity.

⁴¹⁷ *Mūrdha-jāḥ*, lit. “born from the head,” ostensibly means hairs; but in the hidden meaning, thoughts. At the same time, *mūrdhan* can mean the top or summit of anything. So there may be an added meaning of transcendent thoughts, thoughts of a higher order.

⁴¹⁸ The meanings of *bhū* include 1. the act of becoming or arising, 2. the earth.

⁴¹⁹ Ostensibly Queen *Gautamī* is expressing a doubt about whether law of cause and effect will hold – the Earth deserves to be possessed by such a man as *Siddhārtha*, but he has abandoned his inheritance. Below the surface, the Queen's question represents ironic affirmation of cause and effect, since beneath the *bodhi* tree he will make the earth into his own possession.

**sujāta-jālāvataṅgulī mṛdū nigūḍha-gulphau viṣa-puṣpa-komalau /
vanānta-bhūmiṃ kaṭhinām katham nu tau sa-cakra-madhyau caraṇau gamiṣyataḥ // 8.55
//**

How will his soft feet, with the web of the perfectly formed spreading between the toes – feet which, with their ankles concealed, have the tincture of the blue lotus⁴²⁰ – / How will those feet tread the hard forest ground? Those two feet, bearing a wheel in the middle: how will they go? //8.55//

**vimāna-prṣṭhe śayanāsanocitaṃ mahārha-vastrāguru-candanārcitam /
katham nu śītoṣṇajalāgameṣu tac-charīram ojasvi vane bhaviṣyati // 8.56 //**

How will his body, a body used to lying down and sitting up in the palace heights [or sitting in a state risen above disrespect]⁴²¹ – a body honoured with the most valuable of garments⁴²² and with the finest *a-guru* fragrance⁴²³ – / How will his body subsist when cold and heat and rain come in? That body so possessed of vitality: how, in the forest, will it be? //8.56//

**kulena sattvena balena varcasā śrutena lakṣmyā vayasā ca garvitaḥ /
pradātum evābhyudito na yācituṃ katham sa bhikṣām parataś cariṣyati // 8.57 //**

How will a man so proud of his family, character, strength and shining splendour – so proud of his learning, prosperity, and power – / A man so up for giving, not for taking: how will he go around begging from others? //8.57//

⁴²⁰ As it stands the 2nd pāda is enigmatic, leading EH Johnston to amend *viṣa-puṣpa* (“the poisonous flower” = the blue lotus) to *bisa-puṣpa* (“[as tender as] a lotus-fibre or a flower”). *Bisa* means shoot, or fibre of the lotus. *Puṣpa* means flower. And *komala* means 1. tender, and 2. of like colour. With EHJ's amendment to *bisa-puṣpa-komalau*, then, the 2nd pāda carries on from the 1st pāda describing the softness of the prince's feet. If the original was *viṣa-puṣpa-komalau*, its sense may in fact have been antithetical to the 1st pāda, subverting idealism with the suggestion of a flower that on the surface looks as beautiful as a blue lotus but whose name suggests another, different dimension.

⁴²¹ *Vimāna* means 1. disrespect, 2. a palace.

⁴²² Ostensibly, golden brocade; in the hidden meaning, a bhikṣu's robe sewn from discarded cloth.

⁴²³ *Aguru* means aloe incense; at the same time *a-guru* literally means “not heavy.” So in the hidden meaning the suggestion is of a body lifted up by lightness.

**śucau śayitvā śayane hiraṇ-maye prabodhyamāno niśi tūrya-nisvanaiḥ /
katham bata svapsyati so 'dya me vratī paṭaikadeśāntarite mahī-tale // 8.58 //**

How will he who, having slept on a pure golden bed, is awakened in the night by sounds of musical instruments, / How now will my vow-keeper drop off, on the surface of the earth, with a single piece of cloth in between?" //8.58// [Alternative translation] How will he who, after lying down in a pure golden act of lying down,⁴²⁴ is caused to expand⁴²⁵ in the night by sounds in the fourth state:⁴²⁶ / How now will my vow-keeper⁴²⁷ drop off, on the surface of the earth, with a single piece of cloth⁴²⁸ in between?" //8.58//

**imaṃ pralāpaṃ karuṇaṃ niśamya tā bhujaiḥ pariṣvajya paras-param striyaḥ /
vilocanebhyaḥ salilāni tatyajur madhūni puṣpebhya iveritā latāḥ // 8.59 //**

Having heard this pitiful⁴²⁹ lament, the women entwined each other with their arms / And let the tears drop from their eyes – like shaken creepers dropping beads of nectar from their flowers.⁴³⁰ //8.59//

**tato dharāyām apatad yaśodharā vicakravākeva rathāṅga-sāhvayā /
śanaś ca tat tad vilāpā viklavā muhur muhur gadgada-ruddhayā girā // 8.60 //**

Then Yaśodharā, “Bearer of Glory,” dropped to the all-bearing earth like a goose named, for her circular call, *rathāṅgā*,⁴³¹ but without the circle-making gander.⁴³² / In dismay, she stuttered bit by bit this and that lament, her voice by sobbing gagged and gagged again. //8.60//

⁴²⁴ Śayana means bed; but originally it is an -na neuter action noun which means lying down, reclining – one of the four kinds of action, along with āsana, sitting.

⁴²⁵ The meanings of *pra-vbudh* include 1. to awaken (trans.), and 2. to cause to expand or bloom.

⁴²⁶ Tūrya means 1. a musical instrument, but 2. (= turya) the fourth, forming a fourth part, the fourth state.

⁴²⁷ With *me vratī*, “my vow-observing [husband],” Yaśodharā is ostensibly being sarcastic. Below the surface, however, *vratī* accurately describes the prince as one who will keep his vow (see BC5.84) to reach the far shore.

⁴²⁸ *Paṭaika* ostensibly means what passes as an ascetic's bedding, for sleeping; in the hidden meaning, a prostration cloth, for bowing.

⁴²⁹ *Karuṇam*. See note to verse 4 above.

⁴³⁰ Again, the suggestion below the surface is of a group of individuals touched by the teaching of the truth of suffering. Though the emotion in question is grief, Aśvaghōṣa sees beauty in it.

⁴³¹ *Rathāṅga-sāhvayā* (feminine) means “[the female goose] named *rathāṅga*, or “chariot's wheel.”

⁴³² *Cakravāka* (masculine) means a male of the same species – *rathāṅga* and *cakravāka* are two names for the water-bird, variously identified as the greylag goose, or ruddy goose, or Brahmini duck, couples of which species are known in Sanskrit poetry to call out for each other mournfully during the night in a circular fashion – *aṅg*, *aṅg*. Both *ratha* and *cakra* convey the meaning of a wheel or circle. See also verse 29.

**sa mām anāthām saha-dharma-cāriṇīm apāsya dharmam yadi kartum icchati /
kuto 'sya dharmah saha-dharma-cāriṇīm vinā tapo yaḥ paribhoktum icchati // 8.61 //**
“If he wishes to perform dharma, the Law, having left me widowed, having cast aside his partner in dharma, his lawful wife, / Then where is his dharma? Where is the dharma of one who, without his partner in dharma, wishes to go ahead before her and taste ascetic practice? //8.61//

**śrṇoti nūnam sa na pūrva-pārthivān mahāsudarśa-prabhṛtīn pitā-mahān /
vanāni patnī-sahitān upeyuṣas tathā hi dharmam mad ṛte cikīrṣati // 8.62 //**
He surely has never heard of the earth-lords of ancient times, such as ‘Very Beautiful to Behold’ Mahā-su-darśa and other ancestors, / Who went into the woods accompanied by their wives – since thus he wishes, without me, to perform dharma. //8.62//

**makheṣu vā veda-vidhāna-saṁskṛtau na daṁpatī paśyati dīkṣitāv ubhau /
samam bubhukṣū parato 'pi tat-phalam tato 'sya jāto mayi dharma-matsarah // 8.63 //**
Or else he fails to see that, during sacrificial oblations, both husband and wife are consecrated, both being sanctified through Vedic rites, / And both wishing thereafter to enjoy together the fruit of that sanctification – out of such blindness is born the besotted stinginess with dharma that he has shown towards me. //8.63//

**dhruvam sa jānan mama dharma-vallabho manaḥ priyerṣyā-kalahaṁ muhur-mithaḥ /
sukham vibhīr mām apahāya roṣaṇām mahendra-loke 'psaraso jighṛkṣati // 8.64 //**
Evidently, as dharma’s beloved, he left me suddenly and in secret, knowing that my mind would be violently jealous where he, my own darling, was concerned. / Having so easily and fearlessly deserted me in my anger, he is wishing to obtain heavenly nymphs in the world of Great Indra! //8.64//

**iyam tu cintā mama kīdṛṣam nu tā vapur-guṇam bibhrati tatra yoṣitaḥ /
vane yad artham sa tapāmsi tapyate śriyam ca hitvā mama bhaktim eva ca // 8.65 //**
But this concern I do have – what kind of physical excellence do those women possess who are there? / On which account he undergoes austerities in the forest, having abandoned not only royal power but also my loving devotion. //8.65//

**na khalv iyaṁ svarga-sukhāya me sprhā na taj janasyātmavato 'pi dur-labham /
sa tu priyo mām iha vā paratra vā kathaṁ na jahyād iti me mano-rathaḥ // 8.66 //**

This longing in me is truly not for the happiness of paradise (Nor is that happiness hard to achieve for a man possessed of himself), / But how might I never be deserted by what I hold most dear? – That is the chariot of my mind.⁴³³ //8.66//

**abhāginī yady aham āyatekṣaṇaṁ śuci-smitaṁ bhartur udikṣituṁ mukham /
na manda-bhāgyo 'rhati rāhulo 'py ayaṁ kadā-cid anke parivartituṁ pituḥ // 8.67 //**

Even if I am not to be blessed with the good fortune to behold the brightly smiling face, with its long eyes, of my husband; / Does this poor unfortunate Rāhula deserve never to roll around in his father's lap? //8.67// [Alternative Translation] Even if I am not to be blessed with the good fortune to look up to the brightly smiling face, with its long eyes, of a master;⁴³⁴ / Does this poor unfortunate Rāhula deserve never to be reborn in the lap of the ancestors⁴³⁵? //8.67//

**aho nṛ-śaiṁsaṁ su-kumāra-varcasaḥ su-dāruṇaṁ tasya manasvino manaḥ /
kala-pralāpaṁ dviṣato 'pi harṣaṇaṁ śiśuṁ sutaṁ yas tyajatīdṛṣaṁ svataḥ // 8.68 //**

O how terribly hard and cruel is the mind of him, so full of mind, whose light is so gentle! / An infant son, whose burbling would gladden even an enemy, he leaves in such a manner, just as he likes. //8.68//

**mamāpi kāmāṁ hṛdayaṁ su-dāruṇaṁ śilā-mayaṁ vāpy ayaso 'pi vā kṛtam /
anāthavac chrī-rahite sukhocite vanaṁ gate bhartari yan na dīryate // 8.69 //**

My heart too must be very hard – made of stone or else wrought of iron – / In that it does not split apart, when left like an orphan, now that its protector, who was accustomed to comfort, has gone, shorn of his royal glory, to the forest.” //8.69//

⁴³³ *Ratha* means 1. chariot, 2. joy. Therefore *mano-ratha* can mean 1. the chariot of the mind, the mind as a chariot; and 2. a heart's joy. The hidden meaning might be that the chariot of every human mind is truly driven not by desire for what can be taken away, but rather by desire for what cannot be taken away.

⁴³⁴ *Bhartṛ*, depending on context, means a husband or a master.

⁴³⁵ *Pitṛ*, depending on context, means a father or an ancestor.

**itīha devī pati-śoka-mūrchitā ruroda dadhyau vilālāpa cāsakṛt /
svabhāva-dhīrāpi hi sā satī śucā dhṛtiṃ na sasmāra cakāra no hriyam // 8.70 //**

Thus did a goddess here in this world, being insensible with grief on account of her husband [or being caused by grief to grow, on account of a master],⁴³⁶ repeatedly weep, reflect, and lament. / For, steadfast as she was by nature, she in her pain was not mindful of constancy and made no show of modesty.⁴³⁷ //8.70//

**tatas tathā śoka-vilāpa-viklavām yaśodharām prekṣya vasuṃ-dharā-gatām /
mahāravindair iva vṛṣṭi-tāḍitair mukhaiḥ sa-bāṣpair vanitā vicukruśuḥ // 8.71 //**

Then, seeing her thus undone by grief and lamentation, seeing Yaśodharā alighting on the ground⁴³⁸ – the Bearer of Glory on the treasure-bearing Earth – / The women, with tearful faces like big lotuses battered by raindrops, vented their sorrow. //8.71//

**samāpta-jāpyaḥ kṛta-homa-maṅgalo nṛ-pas tu devāyatanād viniryayau /
janasya tenārta-raveṇa cāhataś cacāla vajra-dhvanineva vāraṇaḥ // 8.72 //**

The protector of men, meanwhile, having finished with muttering of prayers, being through with oblations and benedictions, had got out from the temple, the abode of gods;⁴³⁹ / And yet, struck by that sound of people suffering, still he trembled, like an elephant struck by the sound of a thunderbolt. //8.72//

**niśāmya ca chandaka-kanthakāv ubhau sutasya samśrutya ca niścayaṃ sthiram /
papāta śokābhīhato mahī-patiḥ śaci-pater vṛtta ivotsave dhvajāḥ // 8.73 //**

Having observed the two, Chandaka and Kanthaka, while being well informed as to the steadfast unity of purpose of a son, / A lord of the earth had fallen down, toppled by sorrow,⁴⁴⁰ like the flag of Indra, Lord of Might, when the carnival is over. //8.73//

⁴³⁶ *Pati-śoka-mūrchitā*, as in verse 26. The meanings of *pati* include lord, husband, and master. Again, *mūrchitā* ostensibly describes Yaśodharā as insensible, but the hidden meaning of *mūrchitā* is “caused to grow.”

⁴³⁷ In the hidden meaning, she was naturally constant, without trying to be mindful about it, and naturally modest without making any show of it. In this, she was like the beautiful women in BC5.57 who did not make a pretty sight.

⁴³⁸ In the hidden meaning, seeing her enlightened, awake to harsh reality.

⁴³⁹ In the hidden meaning, a true protector of men (a buddha) is like somebody who has already used a raft to cross over a river and therefore no longer needs a raft – nor indeed a fabrication falsely purporting to be a raft.

⁴⁴⁰ In the hidden meaning, body and mind had dropped off, under the influence of the teaching of the four noble truths.

**tato muhūrtaṁ suta-śoka-mohito janena tulyābhijanena dhāritaḥ /
nirīkṣya dr̥ṣṭyā jala-pūrṇayā hayaṁ mahī-tala-stho vilālāpa pārvivaḥ // 8.74 //**

And so, momentarily stupefied in filial grief,⁴⁴¹ buttressed by people of like ancestry,⁴⁴² / A lord of the earth, with a view that was full to overflowing,⁴⁴³ eyeballed a horse,⁴⁴⁴ whereupon, standing on the surface of the earth, the earth-lord lamented.⁴⁴⁵ //8.74//

**bahūni kṛtvā samare priyāṇi me mahat tvayā kanthaka vipriyaṁ kṛtam /
guṇa-priyo yena vane sa me priyaḥ priyo 'pi sann apriyavat praveritaḥ // 8.75 //**

“After doing for me in battle many acts of love, you, Kanthaka, have done one great act of non-love; / For the lover of merit whom I love, your beloved friend though he is, you have cast – lovelessly – into the woods. //8.75//

**tad adya mām vā naya tatra yatra sa vraja drutaṁ vā punar enam ānaya /
ṛte hi tasmān mama nāsti jīvitān vigāḍha-rogasya sad-auṣadhād iva // 8.76 //**

Therefore either take me today to the place where he is, or else go quickly and bring him back here; / For without him there is no life for me, as for a gravely ill man without good medicine.⁴⁴⁶ //8.76//

**suvarṇa-niṣṭhīvini mṛtyunā hr̥te su-duṣkaraṁ yan na mamāra saṁjayaḥ /
ahaṁ punar dharma-ratau sute gate mumukṣur ātmānam anātmavān iva // 8.77 //**

When ‘Gold-Spitting’ Suvarṇa-niṣṭhīvin was borne away by death, it was a miracle that Saṁjaya ‘The Victorious’ did not die. / I, however, am wishing, with the passing of a dharma-loving son, to be rid of myself, as if I were not in possession of myself.⁴⁴⁷ //8.77//

⁴⁴¹ *Suta-śoka* could equally mean grief for a son, or the grief of a son. *Muhūrtaṁ... mohitaḥ*, “momentarily stupefied,” might be an ironic expression of a moment of forgetting oneself.

⁴⁴² Ostensibly the king was so weak that he needed to be propped up by family members to enable him to walk. In the hidden meaning, the buddhas of the three times are on the side of one who sits as a lord of the earth.

⁴⁴³ *Dr̥ṣṭyā jala-pūrṇayā* ostensibly means “with eyes filled with tears.” In its hidden meaning “with a view filled to overflowing” might be an ironic description of a person who has abandoned all views in dealing with reality.

⁴⁴⁴ The eye, or more concretely, the eyeball represents the mind as an instrument of practice. Eyeballing the horse suggests no disunity in the psycho-physical.

⁴⁴⁵ In the hidden meaning, an earth-lord's lament is a buddha's preaching of the four noble truths.

⁴⁴⁶ Good medicine – effective medicine without harmful side-effects – is a metaphor for the Buddha's dharma.

⁴⁴⁷ The grief of Saṁjaya (or Sṛṅjaya) when his son Suvarṇa-niṣṭhīvin was borne away by death, is mentioned twice in the *Mahā-bhārata*. Ostensibly King Śuddhodana is saying his grief is greater even than that, so that he wishes to die. In the hidden meaning, a king of dharma is inclined to forget himself in sitting, dropping off body and mind.

**vibhor daśa-kṣatra-kṛtaḥ prajāpateḥ parāpara-jñasya vivasvad-ātmanaḥ /
priyeṇa putreṇa satā vinā-kṛtaṁ kathaṁ na muhyed dhi mano manor api // 8.78 //**

For, though Manu is the mighty lord of living creatures, maker of ten dominions, knower of former and latter things, son of the shining Sun, / When dispossessed of a beloved true son, how could the mind of even Manu not be bewildered?⁴⁴⁸ //8.78//

**ajasya rājñas tanayāya dhimate narādhipāyendra-sakhāya me sprhā /
gate vanaṁ yas tanaye divaṁ gato na mogha-bāṣpaḥ kṛpaṇaṁ jijīva ha // 8.79 //**

That wise son of King A-ja,⁴⁴⁹ ruler of men and friend of Indra: I envy him, / Who, when his son [Rāma] went to the forest, went himself to heaven. He did not live a miserable life of shedding tears in vain. //8.79// [Alternative Translation] I envy a wise son of a non-hereditary king,⁴⁵⁰ a son who was sovereign among men, and a friend of Indra – / A son who, when a son retired to the forest, was in heaven, a son who did not live a pitiable life of shedding tears in vain.⁴⁵¹ //8.79//

**pracakṣva me bhadra tad āśramājiraṁ hṛtas tvayā yatra sa me jalāñjaliḥ /
ime parīpsanti hi te pipāsavo mamāsavaḥ preta-gatiṁ yiyāsavaḥ // 8.80 //**

Describe for me, O friend of benign nature, the hermit's arena, that place where you have taken him who is my cupped hands for the fluid of forefathers.⁴⁵² / For these life-breaths of mine are thirsty, wishing to gain their end, wishing to go the way of the departed.⁴⁵³ //8.80//

⁴⁴⁸ Ostensibly the king is discussing Manu's loss of a son. But exactly thinking, the subject that is dispossessed is not Manu but the mind of Manu. In that case the king's question causes us to ask about bewilderment of a mind – for example, should we endeavour in the direction of non-bewilderment of mind, by developing constancy like the earth (see verse 81 below)? Or should we welcome the bewilderment that follows from the falsification of a long-cherished view?

⁴⁴⁹ *Ajasya rājñas tanaya* ostensibly means King Daśa-ratha ('Ten Chariots'), who was the son of King A-ja ('Not Born') and the father of Rāma.

⁴⁵⁰ A-ja, "not born," in the hidden meaning, describes a king who was not born into a royal line. And a non-hereditary king means, for example, a lord of the earth in sitting, who has become a lord of the earth by his or her own efforts and thanks to the teaching of a teacher who is not necessarily a blood relative. Implicit in the verse, then, is the principle that the earth-lord who is father of such a son is also, invariably, the son of such a son.

⁴⁵¹ *Na mogha-bāṣpaḥ*, lit. "not being one of vain tears," ostensibly means not shedding tears, which are in vain (i.e. not enduring vain suffering), but the suggestion below the surface is of not letting one's endurance of suffering be in vain. We can't avoid shedding tears. But those tears should not be shed in vain.

⁴⁵² *Jalāñjali* means the hollowed palms filled with water offered to ancestors. In the hidden meaning it may represent the means of transmission of that teaching which, metaphorically speaking, is the ancestors' lifeblood.

⁴⁵³ Again, in the hidden meaning, an ironic expression of desire to walk the path of forgetting the self.

iti tanaya-viyoga-jāta-duḥkham kṣiti-saḍṛśaṁ saha-jaṁ vihāya dhairyam /
daśaratha iva rāma-śoka-vaśyo bahu vilālāpa nṛ-po vi-samjña-kalpaḥ // 8.81 //

Thus, suffering the pain born of a son's loss,⁴⁵⁴ a protector of men threw away the constancy, akin to the earth, which was his natural birth-right,⁴⁵⁵ / And like Daśaratha in the grip of grief for Rāma – like he was unconscious⁴⁵⁶ – he lamented profusely. //8.81//

śruta-vinaya-guṇānvitas tatas taṁ mati-sacivaḥ pravayāḥ puro-hitaś ca /
sama-dhṛtam idam ūcatur yathāvan na ca paritapta-mukhau na cāpy aśokau // 8.82 //

Then he was addressed by a counsellor, a knowing friend possessed of learning, discipline and virtue, and by the family priest, a man advanced in years; / The two spoke fittingly these equally-weighted⁴⁵⁷ words, neither showing agonized faces nor being nonchalant. //8.82//

tyaja nara-vara śokam ehi dhairyam ku-dhṛtir ivārhasi dhīra nāśru moktum /
srajam iva mṛditām apāsya lakṣmīm bhuvi bahavo hi nṛ-pā vanāny atīyuh // 8.83 //

“Abandon sorrow, O best of men, and come back to constancy; you should not shed tears, O stout soul, like a man who lacked grit.⁴⁵⁸ / For, flinging away their fortune like a crushed garland, many rulers of men on this earth have gone into the forests. //8.83//

api ca niyata eṣa tasya bhāvaḥ smara vacanaṁ tad ṛṣeḥ purāsitasya /
na hi sa divi na cakra-varti-rāje kṣaṇam api vāsayitum sukhena śakyaḥ // 8.84 //

Moreover, this orientation of mind was predestined in him – remember those words long ago of the seer Asita, ‘the Not White One.’ / For neither in heaven nor in the domain of a wheel-rolling king could he, even for a moment, be made happily to dwell. //8.84//

⁴⁵⁴ The ostensible meaning of *tanaya-viyoga* is losing a son, or separation from a son; a hidden meaning is a son's losing – as when a Zen student forgets himself. In that case “suffering born of a son's losing,” might describe, for example, legs becoming painful during sitting practice.

⁴⁵⁵ *Kṣiti-saḍṛśaṁ saha-jaṁ... dhairyam* ostensibly means the gravity (*dhairyam*) which is innate (*saha-jaṁ*) in a hereditary earth-lord such as Śuddhodana. In the hidden meaning *dhairyam* suggests the earth-like virtues of constancy, calmness, and bearing up, which are everybody's birth-right – i.e. the buddha-nature. In the hidden meaning, to throw away such virtue is to kill the Buddha, if one should meet him on the road.

⁴⁵⁶ *Vi-samjña-kalpaḥ*, “as if unconscious,” ostensibly describes a person who remains in the grip of unconscious reaction. But exactly thinking “as if unconscious” implies being conscious. Ironically, then, the compound suggests the condition of an enlightened being who is holding up a mirror, as it were, to Nature.

⁴⁵⁷ A suggestion of reason/intelligence co-existing with experience? The two servants of the king seem to represent dual aspects of wisdom, in the same way that Kanthaka and Chandaka seem to represent the physical and the mental.

⁴⁵⁸ In the hidden meaning, you should shed tears, but not in the manner of a man who lacked grit.

**yadi tu nṛ-vara kārya eva yatnas tvaritam udāhara yāvad atra yāvaḥ /
bahu-vidham iha uddham astu tāvat tava tanayasya vidheś ca tasya tasya // 8.85 //**

But if, O best of men, an effort is emphatically to be made, quickly say the word, and we two will go to it at once. / Let the battle take place, right here right now, on many fronts, between a son of yours and the various prescriptions of fate [or between a son of yours and miscellaneous rules].⁴⁵⁹ //8.85//

**nara-patir atha tau śaśāsa tasmād drutam ita eva yuvām abhiprayātam /
na hi mama hṛdayaṁ prayāti śāntiṁ vana-śakuner iva putra-lālasasya // 8.86 //**

“On those grounds,” the lord of men then ordered them, “go quickly you two to battle, starting right here; / For my heart no more goes to quiet, than does the heart of a bird of the forest when it longs for a missing nestling.” //8.86//

**paramam iti narendra-śāsanāt tau yayatur amātya-purohitau vanaṁ tat /
kṛtam iti sa-vadhū-janaḥ sa-dāro nṛpatir api pracakāra śeṣa-kāryam // 8.87 //**

“Agreed!” the two said, in accordance with the order of the first among men.⁴⁶⁰ And to that forest went the two of them, close advisor and family priest. / “Enough said!” said the lord of men. And along with daughters and queen, he got on and did what remained to be done. //8.87//

iti buddha-carite mahā-kāvye ‘ntaḥ-pura-vilāpo nāmāṣṭamaḥ sargaḥ // 8 //

The 8th canto, titled Lamenting from within the Battlements,
in an epic tale of awakened action.

⁴⁵⁹ *Vidher...tasya tasya*. The many meanings of *vidhi* include a rule, injunction, precept, law; method, standard; manner of acting; and fate, destiny. This same counsellor seems to use *vidhi* in BC9.66-67 in the sense of a rule, standard, or manner of proceeding.

⁴⁶⁰ In the hidden meaning, to show an attitude of obedience, or submission to something outside oneself, is, in the final analysis, to be in accordance with the Buddha's teaching.

Canto 9: kumārānveṣaṇaḥ The Seeking of a Prince

Introduction

The Canto title *kumārānveṣaṇaḥ* ostensibly describes the efforts of King Śuddhodana's two emissaries to track down his son, the Prince (*kumāra*). The alternative reading is that the seeking (*anveṣana*) in question is the investigation which the Prince is determined to do by himself for himself, not taking anybody else's word for anything.

Still another possibility is to read *kumāra*, which means not only prince but also child, as both the subject and the object of the seeking – as in the famous story from ancient China where a Zen master describes real sincerity as “a child of fire coming looking for fire.”

**tatas tadā mantri-purohitau tau bāṣpa-pratodābhīhatau nṛpeṇa /
viddhau sad-aśvāv iva sarva-yatnāt sauhārda-śiḡhram yāyatur vanaṁ tat // 9.1 //**

Then the two,⁴⁶¹ knowing informant and veteran priest, smitten by a protector of men, prodded with a goad of tears,⁴⁶² / Making every effort, like two good horses spurred into action, went with good-hearted swiftness⁴⁶³ to that forest. //9.1//

**tam āśramam jāta-parīśramau tāv upetya kāle sadṛṣānuyātrau /
rājarddhim utsrjya vinīta-ceṣṭāv upeyatur bhārgava-dhiṣṇyam eva // 9.2 //**

The two arrived, tired and weary, at that abode of tiring exertion. Having arrived at a favourable moment, with what was appropriate for the journey, / The two abandoned royal pomp and, in a modest manner, arrived at the hearth of a son of Bṛḡu – they arrived at the very place of fire of a son of fire.⁴⁶⁴ //9.2//

⁴⁶¹ The two may be taken as representing every kind of duality that is spurred into action when one gets moving in the right direction.

⁴⁶² In the hidden meaning, a long whip, or goad, of tears (*bāṣpa-pratoda*) might be a metaphor for the four noble truths, whose effect is to stimulate us, by means of suffering, into practice leading towards cessation of suffering.

⁴⁶³ *Sauhāra-śiḡhram*, with the quickness, or readiness to act, associated with the compassion of a friend, or “good-heart” (*su-hṛd*).

⁴⁶⁴ BC6.1 also says that the ashram in question was that of a son of Bṛḡu. The Bṛḡus are said to be closely connected with fire. *Dhiṣṇya* means a place or abode, or a home where a hearth is. One of its meanings is a side altar consisting of earth heaped up beside a fire.

**tau nyāyatas taṁ pratipūjya vipraṁ tenārcitau tāv api cānurūpam /
kṛtāsanau bhārgavam āsana-sthaṁ chittvā kathāṁ ūcatur ātma-kṛtyam // 9.3 //**

They honoured that inspired sage, following the standard, and were saluted by him accordingly.
/ As two who had sat,⁴⁶⁵ they spoke to one who abode in the act of sitting⁴⁶⁶ – cutting out chat,
they told the son of Bhṛgu their private business. //9.3//

**śuddhaujasaḥ śuddha-viśāla-kīrter ikṣvāku-varṁśa-prabhavasya rājñāḥ /
imaṁ janaṁ vettu bhavān adhīraṁ śruta-grahe mantra-parigrahe ca // 9.4 //**

“Though we belong to a king in the line of Ikṣvāku who is pure in his bodily energy and pure in
his wide renown, / Know, good sir, that the men before you are not sure of ourselves⁴⁶⁷ in
apprehending what truth is taught⁴⁶⁸ and in comprehending the art of thought.⁴⁶⁹ //9.4//

**tasyendra-kalpasya jayanta-kalpaḥ putro jarā-mṛtyu-bhayaṁ titīrṣuḥ /
ihābhyupetaḥ kila tasya hetor āvām upetau bhagavān avaitu // 9.5 //**

A son, like ‘Victorious’ Jayanta, of that Indra-like king, wishing to transcend the terror of aging
and dying, / Has, it is said, come here. May you, venerable one, see us two as having arrived⁴⁷⁰
because of him.” //9.5//

**tau so ’bravid asti sa dīrgha-bāhuḥ prāptaḥ kumāro na tu nāvabuddhaḥ /
dharmo ’yam āvartaka ity avetya yātas tv arāḍābhimukho mumukṣuḥ // 9.6 //**

[The sage] told them: “Indeed! The young prince, he of long arms, did arrive, but not as an
unwitting youth.⁴⁷¹ / On the contrary, seeing that this dharma practised here involves
repeatedly coming back,⁴⁷² he set out towards Arāḍa, seeking freedom.” //9.6//

⁴⁶⁵ Ostensibly *kṛtāsanau* (fr. *kṛta* doing, having done + *āsana*, sitting) simply means “seated.”

⁴⁶⁶ As in the description of Asita in BC1.52, the ostensible meaning of *āsana-sthaṁ* is “remaining seated” or simply “sitting down.” Here, as again in BC1.52, the hidden meaning is to praise a sage as being devoted to sitting and as abiding in the act of sitting – having cut out idle chatter (*chittvā kathāṁ*).

⁴⁶⁷ The meaning of *adhīra* include not fixed, deficient in calm self-command, weak-minded. It is ostensibly self-deprecating but in the hidden meaning suggests freedom from the sin of certainty.

⁴⁶⁸ *Śruta-graha*, lit. “grasping what is listened to,” suggests the work of a veteran priest.

⁴⁶⁹ *Mantra-parigraha*, lit. “comprehending consultation / the instrument of thought,” suggests the work of a king's counsellor.

⁴⁷⁰ In the hidden meaning, *upeta* may be synonymous with *tathāgata* in the sense of arrived at reality.

⁴⁷¹ *Kumāraḥ* means a prince or a child or youth. The canto title *kumārānveṣanaḥ*, ostensibly describes a prince being sought, but it could equally mean a prince doing the seeking. And, in a still deeper hidden meaning, the suggestion might be of seeking out child-mind i.e. open-mindedness – investigating the buddha-nature with beginner's mind.

⁴⁷² *Āvartakaḥ*, from the root *āvṛt*, to turn around or turn back. Ostensibly, *āvartakaḥ* refers to repeated re-birth in *saṁsāra*. In the hidden meaning, a dharma practised here and now involves repeatedly coming back to the here and now.

**tasmāt tatas tāv upalabhya tattvaṁ taṁ vipram āmantrya tadaiva sadyaḥ /
khinnāvakhinnāv iva rāja-bhaktiyā prasasratus tena yataḥ sa yātaḥ // 9.7 //**

Thus, on those grounds, the two of them grasped the truth,⁴⁷³ and said goodbye at once to that inspired sage, / Whereon, as if tired and yet tireless, through their royal devotion,⁴⁷⁴ they staunchly went in that direction in which the other had gone. //9.7//

**yāntau tatas tau mṛjayā vihīnam apaśyatām taṁ vapuṣā jvalantam /
nṛpopaviṣṭam pathi vṛkṣa-mūle sūryaṁ ghanābhogam iva praviṣṭam // 9.8 //**

As thus on those grounds they were going, they saw him, who had totally neglected purification,⁴⁷⁵ shining with handsome form, / On the road, royally seated at the foot of a tree – like the sun when it has entered a canopy of cloud. //9.8//

**yānaṁ vihāyopayayau tatas taṁ purohito mantra-dhareṇa sārdham /
yathā vana-sthaṁ saha-vāmadevo rāmaṁ didṛkṣur munir aurvaśeyaḥ // 9.9 //**

Thus on those grounds the veteran, abandoning a vehicle, went in his direction, joined by the keeper of the compass of thought – / As, when Rāma was in the forest, the sage Aurvaśeya, ‘Dawn’s Descendant,’ along with the minister Vāmadeva, went to Rāma, wishing to see him.⁴⁷⁶ //9.9//

**tāv arcayām āsatur arhataḥ taṁ divīva śukrāṅgirasau mahendram /
pratyarcayām āsa sa cārhatas tau divīva śukrāṅgirasau mahendraḥ // 9.10 //**

The two fittingly honoured him, as in heaven ‘Shining’ Śukra and Āṅgīrasa caused great Indra to shine; / And he in return fittingly honoured those two, as in heaven great Indra caused Śukra and Āṅgīrasa to shine.⁴⁷⁷ //9.10//

⁴⁷³ *Upalabhya tattvam*, similarly, ostensibly means “understanding the fact of the matter,” but in the hidden meaning suggests realization of reality here and now.

⁴⁷⁴ *Rāja-bhaktiyā* ostensibly means “because of devotion to the king.” Below the surface, the suggestion is that being on the royal road (of sitting-meditation) caused them to be born along by the truth of non-doing.

⁴⁷⁵ *Mṛjayā vihīnam* ostensibly means that the prince had gone without washing; in the hidden meaning, the suggestion is that in sitting naturally, he had already gone beyond religious rites of purification.

⁴⁷⁶ The ostensible point of this verse seems to be to draw a parallel between the story of Sarvārtha-siddha and the story of Rāma as told in the Rāmāyaṇa. Below the surface, Aśvaghōṣa may have intended to convey more important meaning with the words *yānaṁ vihāya*, “abandoning a vehicle.”

⁴⁷⁷ Śukra (fr. *√śuc*, to glow), “The Shining One,” is a name of Agni, god of fire; and Agni is regarded as the chief son of Āṅgīrasa. So Śukra (“the Shining One”) and Āṅgīrasa (“son of Āṅgīrasa”) can be understood to be two names for one entity – and in this sense representative of all dualities, like body and mind, which we are required to shine light upon, and shake off.

**kṛtābhyanuññāv abhitas tatas tau niṣīdatuḥ śākya-kula-dhvajasya /
virejatus tasya ca saṁnikarṣe punar-vasū yoga-gatāv ivendoḥ // 9.11 //**

Having thus on these grounds been allowed, the two, in the presence of the flag of the Śākya family,⁴⁷⁸ sat; / And in his vicinity they shone – like the twin stars of Punar-vasu in conjunction with the moon.⁴⁷⁹ //9.11//

**taṁ vṛkṣa-mūla-stham abhijvalantaṁ puro-hito rāja-sutaṁ babhāṣe /
yathopaviṣṭaṁ divi pārijāte bṛhas-patiḥ śakra-sutaṁ jayantam // 9.12 //**

The veteran priest addressed that son of a king who abode at the foot of the tree, shining, / As in heaven ‘Lord of Prayer’ Bṛhas-pati addressed ‘Victorious’ Jayanta, son of Mighty Indra, sitting under the celestial coral tree: //9.12//

**tvac-choka-śalye hṛdayāvagāḍhe moham̐ gato bhūmi-tale muhūrtam /
kumāra rājā nayanāmbu-varṣo yat tvām avocat tad idam̐ nibodha // 9.13 //**

“Learn of the moment when a king, losing consciousness,⁴⁸⁰ is on the ground, the arrow of your sorrow having penetrated his core⁴⁸¹ – / To these words which the king, O child!, his eyes raining tears, said to you, listen well: //9.13//

**jānāmi dharmam̐ prati niścayam̐ te paraimi te bhāvinam̐ etam artham /
aham̐ tv akāle vana-samśrayāt te śokāgnināgni-pratimena dahye // 9.14 //**

‘I know your resolve with regard to dharma. I realize that this will be your goal. But at your going to the forest at the wrong time, I am consumed with a fire of sorrow that burns like a fire. //9.14//

**tad ehi dharmapriya mat-priyārtham̐ dharmārtham̐ eva tyaja buddhim̐ etām /
ayam̐ hi mā śoka-ryaḥ pravṛddho nadī-ryaḥ kūlam̐ ivābhiantī // 9.15 //**

So come back, you who holds dharma dear, because of what is dear to me. For no reason but dharma itself, abandon this idea of yours. / For this swollen stream of sorrow eats away at me as the flow of a river eats away its bank. //9.15//

⁴⁷⁸ Śākya-kula-dhvaja ostensibly means the Śākya prince himself, but in the hidden meaning “the banner of the house of Śākya[muni],” suggests a traditionally-sewn kaṣāya.

⁴⁷⁹ Ostensibly Aśvaghoṣa is picking up a simile in the Rāmāyaṇa about Punarvasu and the moon. Below the surface, the intention, again, may be to cause us to investigate what psycho-physicality is, since some understand Punarvasu to be an asterism consisting of two stars (the alpha and beta Geminorum), while some understand Punar and Vasu to be two stars forming an asterism. Punar-vasu literally means “Restoring Goods” or “Restoring Wealth,” but grammatically, as here, is dual.

⁴⁸⁰ Moham̐ gataḥ lit. means “gone/going to loss of consciousness,” i.e. being in a state of deluded bewilderment. In the hidden meaning, forgetting oneself, or dropping off body and mind.

⁴⁸¹ Ostensibly the veteran priest is referring to the King, Śuddhodana, but in the hidden meaning rājā, a king, means one who is lord of the earth in sitting, being struck by the teaching of the four noble truths.

**meghāmbu-kakṣādriṣu yā hi vṛtṭiḥ samīraṇārkaḅni-mahāśanīnām /
tām vṛtṭim asmāsu karoti śoko vikarṣaṇocchoṣaṇa-dāha-bhedaiḥ // 9.16 //**

For the action which on clouds, water, brushwood and mountains, is exerted by wind, sun, fire and the mighty thunderbolt: / Sorrow exerts that action on us – tearing us apart, causing us to become dry, burning us out and demolishing us.⁴⁸² //9.16//

**tad bhuṅkṣva tāvad vasudhādhipatyam kāle vanam yāsyasi śāstra-dṛṣṭe /
an-iṣṭa-bandhau kuru māpy upekṣām sarveṣu bhūteṣu dayā hi dharmah // 9.17 //**

So enjoy for the present sovereignty over the earth. You will return to the forest at the right moment, as per the *śāstras*, or temporal sciences. / Never show disregard for your less fortunate kin. For dharma is compassion directed towards all beings.⁴⁸³ //9.17//

**na caiṣa dharmo vana eva siddhaḥ pure 'pi siddhir niyatā yatīnām /
buddhiś ca yatnaś ca nimittam atra vanam ca liṅgam ca hi bhīru-cihnam // 9.18 //**

Neither is this dharma realized only in the woods: Its realization is assured in the city too, for those who make the effort. / Intention and energy are what count in this arena. For the forest and the uniform are a mark of fearfulness.⁴⁸⁴ //9.18//

**maulī-dharair aṁsa-viṣakta-hāraiḥ keyūra-viṣṭabdha-bhujair narendraiḥ /
lakṣmy-aṅka-madhye parivartamānaiḥ prāpto gṛha-sthair api mokṣa-dharmah // 9.19 //**

By kings bearing crowns, by kings with strings of pearls hanging over their shoulders, and their arms fortified by bands, / By kings lying cradled in Lakṣmi's lap – even by those who did remain in family life – the dharma of liberation has been attained. //9.19// [Alternative Translation] Realized by kings who possess the earth,⁴⁸⁵ by kings for whom battle is directed towards their own shoulders,⁴⁸⁶ and whose arms are fortified by bands, / By kings acting in the middle, between the dual flanks of fortune⁴⁸⁷ – and realized also by those who stay at home – is the dharma of liberation. //9.19//

⁴⁸² In the hidden meaning, being dismantled and becoming dry might be an ironic suggestion of what it is really to understand the four noble truths. See also SN Canto 17: The action which on fire, trees, ghee and water is exerted by rainclouds, wind, a flame and the sun, / Nanda exerted that action on the faults, quenching, uprooting, burning, and drying them up. //SN17.59//

⁴⁸³ Below the surface an earth-lord is preaching the Buddha's teaching in a four-phased progression – covering subjective sovereignty, objective knowledge, not doing wrong, and realization of the Buddha's dharma.

⁴⁸⁴ Ostensibly Śuddhodana is mocking solitude and the robe as marks of a coward. In the hidden meaning, he is praising them as refuges of one rightly afraid of the terrors of aging, sickness and death.

⁴⁸⁵ The meanings of *mauli/maulī* include 1. crown, and 2. earth.

⁴⁸⁶ The meanings of *hāra* include 1. string of pearls, and 2. war, battle.

⁴⁸⁷ *Lakṣmi*: 1. name of the Goddess of Fortune; 2. fortune. *Aṅka*: 1. lap; 2. side, flank. *Madhye*: 1. in the middle, 2. standing between two.

dhruvānujau yau bali-vajrabāhū vaibhrājam āṣāḍham athāntidevam /

videha-rājam janakaṁ tathaiva [pāka]-drumaṁ sena-jitaś ca rājñah // 9.20 //

‘Oblation-Offering’ Bali and ‘Thunderbolt-Armed’ Vajra-bāhu, who were the younger brothers of ‘The Immutable’ Dhruva; ‘Born of Brightness’ Vaibhrāja, ‘Born of the Midsummer Month’ Āṣāḍha, and ‘Close to the Gods’ Antideva; / Likewise the Videha King Janaka, ‘The Producer’; ‘[Ripening] Tree’ [Pāka]-druma, and ‘Army Vanquishing’ King Senajit – //9.20//

etān gr̥ha-sthān nṛpatīn avehi naiḥśreyase dharma-vidhau vinītān /

ubhe ’pi tasmād yugapad bhajasva vittādhipatyam ca nṛpa-śriyam ca // 9.21 //

These men who remained at home as kings, you should know, were steeped in the dharmapractice that leads to the highest happiness; / Therefore, enjoy both together sovereignty over what is acquired and the glory of a protector of men.⁴⁸⁸ //9.21//

icchāmi hi tvām upaguhya gāḍham kṛtābhiṣekam salilārdram eva /

dhṛtātapatram samudīkṣamāṇas tenaiva harṣeṇa vanam praveṣṭum // 9.22 //

Having contained you in a close embrace, you being besprinkled, wet with nothing but water,⁴⁸⁹ / Then seeing you in possession of the *ā-tapa-tra* (the big umbrella, the instrument of protection from the heat of *tapas*)⁴⁹⁰ – I desire, only in that state of happiness, to enter the forest.⁴⁹¹ //9.22//

ity abravīd bhūmi-patir bhavantaṁ vākyena bāṣpa-grathitākṣareṇa /

śrutvā bhavān arhati tat-priyārtham snehena tat-sneham anuprayātum // 9.23 //

Thus did the king speak to you, with words punctuated by tears; / Having listened well, for the sake of his love, you should return his affection with affection. //9.23// [Alternative Translation] Thus did a possessor of the earth speak to you, with words punctuated by tears; / Having listened well, on account of valuing that,⁴⁹² you should follow with attachment his attachment to that.⁴⁹³ //9.23//

⁴⁸⁸ Below the surface, a lord of the earth is giving good advice – not to put cart before horse or horse before cart.

⁴⁸⁹ Ostensible meaning: when you have been anointed as my successor. Hidden meaning: when water has become for you nothing but water.

⁴⁹⁰ Ostensible meaning: seeing you in possession of the royal umbrella. Hidden meaning: seeing you impervious to all forms of extremism, starting with asceticism.

⁴⁹¹ *Ichchāmi... vanam praveṣṭum*, “I wish/desire... to enter the forest,” can be read below the surface as a buddha's pointing back to nature.

⁴⁹² *Tat-priyārtham*: 1. For the sake of his love (*tat* = the king); 2. because of valuing that (*tat* = that dharma / that forest).

⁴⁹³ *Tat-sneham*: 1. His affection; 2. attachment to that.

**śokāmbhasi tvat-prabhave hy agādhe duḥkhārṇave majjati śākya-rājah /
tasmāt tam uttāraya nātha-hīnaṃ nir-āśrayaṃ magnam ivārṇave nauḥ // 9.24 //**

For in the deep sea whose water is sorrow and which has its origin in you – in the foaming sea of suffering – the Śākya king⁴⁹⁴ submerses himself; / On that basis you should allow him, who has no protector, to cross to his destination, as a boat allows one to cross who, with nothing to hold onto, is submersed in a flood. //9.24//

**bhīṣmeṇa gaṅgodara-sambhavana rāmeṇa rāmeṇa ca bhārgaveṇa /
śrutvā kṛtaṃ karma pituḥ priyārthaṃ pitus tvam apy arhasi kartum iṣṭam // 9.25 //**

The action of Bhīṣma ‘The Terrible,’ who was born from the womb of Gaṅgā,⁴⁹⁵ the action of Rāma,⁴⁹⁶ and the action of Rāma the son of Bhṛgu⁴⁹⁷ – / That action they did for the sake of what their fathers valued. Having studied that action, you also should do a father’s desire.⁴⁹⁸ //9.25//

**samvardhayitrīm samavehi devīm agastya-juṣṭām diśam aprayātām /
pranaṣṭa-vatsām iva vatsalām gām ajasram ārtām karuṇaṃ rudantīm // 9.26 //**

Have regard for the queen who fostered you, and who has yet to go south, into the region inhabited by Agastya,⁴⁹⁹ / Have regard for her who, like a loving mother-cow that lost her calf, is constantly and piteously wailing in distress. //9.26//

**haṃsena haṃsīm iva viprayuktām tyaktām gajeneva vane kareṇum /
ārtām sa-nāthām api nātha-hīnaṃ trātuṃ vadhūm arhasi darśanena // 9.27 //**

[Rescue also your wife] who is like a goose separated from the gander, who is like a cow elephant deserted in the forest by the bull; / Your unhappy young wife, who is widowed though her husband lives – you should rescue her, by your presence.⁵⁰⁰ //9.27//

⁴⁹⁴ In the hidden meaning, a king [of dharma], in Śākyamuni's line, immerses himself in the four noble truths.

⁴⁹⁵ Bhīṣma was the first son of King Śan-tanu by his first wife Gaṅga, but Bhīṣma relinquished his claim to his father's throne to honour his father's promise to his second wife, the fisherman's daughter Kāḷī. See SN7.41, SN7.44.

⁴⁹⁶ Rāma, the hero of the Rāmāyaṇa, also gave up his claim to his father's throne, going voluntarily into exile in the forest. These two examples, then, undermine the case which the king is ostensibly making.

⁴⁹⁷ Rāma son of Bhṛgu means Paraśu-rāma (Rāma with the Axe), who pleased his father by slaying Kārtavīrya. See SN9.17.

⁴⁹⁸ *Pitr*: 1. father, 2, deceased ancestor. In the hidden meaning, you should act in accordance with the mind of eternal buddhas.

⁴⁹⁹ The southern region inhabited by Agastya means the region of death; or, in the hidden meaning, the area where body and mind have dropped off.

⁵⁰⁰ In the hidden meaning, you should deliver all sentient beings, by your state of awakening.

**ekam sutam bālam an-arha-duḥkham saṁtāpam antar-gatam udvahantam /
tam rāhulam mokṣaya bandhu-śokād rāhūpasargād iva pūrṇa-candram // 9.28 //**

Your only son, a young boy not deserving of hurt, who is bearing in secret the burning heat of anguish – / Release him, Rāhula, from his grief for his own flesh and blood [or from the sorrow of family ties]⁵⁰¹; release him like the full moon from Rāhu's eclipsing grasp. //9.28//

**śokāgninā tvad virahendhanena niḥśvāsa-dhūmena tamaḥ-śikhena /
tvad-darśanāmbv icchati dahyamānam antaḥpuraṁ caiva puraṁ ca kṛtsnam // 9.29 //**

Burning with a fire of grief whose fuel is your absence, burning with a fire whose fumes are sighs, and whose flames are hell, / While it seeks the water of your presence, is not only the royalty within the battlements but the whole city.⁵⁰² //9.29//

**sa bodhisattvaḥ paripūrṇa-sattvaḥ śrutvā vacas tasya purohitasya /
dhyātvā muhūrtaṁ guṇavad guṇa-jñāḥ pratyuttaraṁ praśritaṁ ity uvāca // 9.30 //**

He the bodhisattva, the buddha-to-be, the one whose essence of being was awakening, he who in his essential being was perfect, having listened to the words of that veteran, / Meditated a moment and, as a knower of excellence, humbly spoke this excellent response: [or spoke this excellent response, full of secret meaning:]⁵⁰³ //9.30//

**avaimi bhāvaṁ tanaye pitṛṇām viśeṣato yo mayi bhūmi-pasya /
jānann api vyādhi-jarā-vipadbhyo bhītas tv agatyā sva-janaṁ tyajāmi // 9.31 //**

“I understand the feelings of fathers towards a son, particularly the king's towards me, / And yet, even so knowing, afraid as I am of sickness, aging and death, there is nothing for it but that I abandon my kith and kin. //9.31//

**draṣṭuṁ priyaṁ kaḥ sva-janaṁ hi necchen nānte yadi syāt priya-viprayogaḥ /
yadā tu bhūtvāpi ciram viyogas tato guruṁ snigdham api tyajāmi // 9.32 //**

For who would not wish to see his nearest and dearest if, in the end, there were no separation from loved ones? / But since separation, however long delayed, happens, on those grounds the guru, however sticky he is with affection, I abandon. //9.32//

⁵⁰¹ *Bandhu-śoka* could mean 1. grief for his relative, or 2. grief from being related. Cf. *pati-śoka* in the previous canto.

⁵⁰² The ostensible intention of the veteran's appeal is that the prince should extinguish the fires of people's grief by giving up and going home. The irony is that the bodhisattva will truly accomplish that task, on the contrary, by not going back to Kapilavastu yet.

⁵⁰³ The meanings of *praśrita* include 1. leaning forward deferentially, humble, modest; and 2. hidden, obscure.

**madd-hetukaṃ yat tu narādhipasya śokaṃ bhavān āha na tat priyaṃ me /
yat svapna-bhūteṣu samāgameṣu saṃtapyate bhāvini viprayoge // 9.33 //**

If, however, the gentleman present viewed me as the cause of the king's sorrow, that view would not be near and dear to me / When, in comings together which are like a dream, he is suffering,⁵⁰⁴ amid inevitable separation. //9.33//

**evaṃ ca te niścayam etu buddhir dṛṣṭvā vicitraṃ jagataḥ pracāram /
saṃtāpa-hetur na suto na bandhur ajñāna-naimittika eṣa tāpaḥ // 9.34 //**

After observing the world, in its manifold diversity, manifesting itself, you should let your mind go towards certainty, like this: / Neither the son nor a relative is the cause of suffering. This pain has its cause in ignorance. //9.34//

**yadādhvagānām iva saṃgatānām kāle viyogo niyataḥ prajānām /
prājño janaḥ ko nu bhajeta śokaṃ bandhu-pratijñāta-janair vihīnaḥ // 9.35 //**

Since separation, as for travellers meeting on a road, is, in time, inevitable for living beings, / What wise man would wallow in sorrow when rid of people with whom he was purported to be related? //9.35//

**ihaiti hitvā svajanaṃ paratra pralabhya cehāpi punaḥ prayāti /
gatvāpi tatrāpy aparatra gacchety evaṃ jane tyāgini ko 'nurodhaḥ // 9.36 //**

Here a quitter comes, having left relations elsewhere. Eluding them here as well, off he goes again. / Even after going there, again he goes, to yet another place. What attachment can there be towards such a serial deserter?⁵⁰⁵ //9.36//

**yadā ca garbhāt prabhṛti pravṛttaḥ sarvāsv avasthāsu vadhāya mṛtyuḥ /
kasmād akāle vana-saṃśrayaṃ me putra-priyas tatra bhavān avocat // 9.37 //**

And since from the womb onwards, death in every situation is poised to strike, / How could his majesty who holds his son dear, being there present, say that my giving myself to the forest was ill-timed? //9.37//

⁵⁰⁴ Since the bodhisattva addresses the veteran as *bhavān* (the gentleman present), which takes the 3rd person singular, *saṃtapyate* (he is suffering) could refer to the king or equally to the veteran himself. Either way, a wrong view is being negated in which the cause of suffering is seen as residing in others.

⁵⁰⁵ Ironic affirmation of the wandering life?

**bhavaty akālo viṣayābhipattau kālas tathaiṅvārtha-vidhau pradīṣṭaḥ /
kālo jagat karṣati sarva-kālān arcārhaḥ śreyasi sarva-kālaḥ // 9.38 //**

In devotion to worldly objects, wrong time exists. In business, equally, a right time is indicated.
/ Away from mankind and unto itself, time is dragging all moments of time. In a happier state
of higher good, all time is deserving of adoration.⁵⁰⁶ //9.38//

**rājyaṁ mumukṣur mayi yac ca rājā tad apy udāraṁ sadṛśaṁ pituś ca /
pratigrahītum mama na kṣamaṁ tu lobhād apanyānam ivāturasya // 9.39 //**

That the king wishes to cede his kingdom to me – that indeed is noble, and worthy of a father; /
But it would be no more fitting for me to accept, than for a sick man, out of greed, to accept
food that is bad for him. //9.39//

**kathaṁ nu mohāyatanam nṛ-patvaṁ kṣamaṁ prapattum viduṣā nareṇa /
sodvegatā yatra madaḥ śramaś ca parāpacāreṇa ca dharmā-pīḍā // 9.40 //**

How can kingship, as the dwelling place of delusion, be fit to be entered by a man of wisdom? /
For there reside perturbation, intemperance, and exhaustion; and transgression against
dharma through harsh treatment of others. //9.40//

**jāmbūnadaṁ harmyam iva pradīptaṁ viṣeṇa saṁyuktam ivottamānam /
grāhākulaṁ cāmbv iva sāravindaṁ rājyaṁ hi ramyaṁ vyasanāśrayaṁ ca // 9.41 //**

For, like a golden palace on fire, like the finest food laced with poison, / And like a lotus pond
full of crocodiles, kingship is attractive but it harbours calamities. //9.41//

**itthaṁ ca rājyaṁ na sukhaṁ na dharmāḥ pūrve yathā jāta-ghṛṇā narendrāḥ /
vayaḥ-prakarṣe 'parihārya-duḥkhe rājyāni muktva vanam eva jagmuḥ // 9.42 //**

No comfort, then, is kingship; nor is it an inabdicable dharma – so that ancient kings who felt
disgust, / As the drag of getting old brought forth inevitable suffering, ceded their kingdoms
and retired nowhere else but to the forest. //9.42//

**varam hi bhuktāni tṛṇāny arāṇye toṣaṁ paraṁ ratnam ivopaguhyā /
sahoṣitaṁ śrī-sulabhair na caiva doṣair adṛśyair iva kṛṣṇa-sarpaiḥ // 9.43 //**

For foraging herbs, out in the wilds, while clasping the highest contentment to one's breast like
a hidden jewel, / Is much better than living with the faults that tend easily to go, like unseen
black snakes, with royal glory. //9.43//

⁵⁰⁶ Progression through four phases is again evident here in four pādas touching on 1. devotion, 2. worldly
business, 3. relentless passing of moments of time, and 4. Time as synonymous with real existence.

**ślāghyaṃ hi rājyāni vihāya rājñāṃ dharmābhilāṣeṇa vanaṃ praveṣṭum /
bhagna-pratijñasya na tūpapannaṃ vanaṃ parityajya grhaṃ praveṣṭum // 9.44 //**

For it is praiseworthy for kings to leave their kingdoms behind them and, in their desire for dharma, to betake themselves back to the forest. / But it is not fitting for a vow-breaker to shun the forest and betake himself back to the family. //9.44//

**jātaḥ kule ko hi naraḥ sa-sattvo dharmābhilāṣeṇa vanaṃ praviṣṭaḥ /
kāṣāyam utsrjya vimukta-lajjaḥ purāṇdarasyāpi purāṃ śrayeta // 9.45 //**

For what man of character born into a good family, having betaken himself, in his desire for dharma, to the forest, / Would cast off the red-brown robe and, dead to shame, make for the city – even if the city were that of Indra, “Breaker Down of City Walls,” himself? //9.45//

**lobhādd hi mohād atha vā bhayena yo vāntam annaṃ punar ādadīta /
lobhāt sa mohād atha vā bhayena saṃtyajya kāmān punar ādadīta // 9.46 //**

For he who, out of greed, out of ignorance, or else in fear, would take back the food he has vomited, / He, out of greed, out of ignorance, or else in fear,⁵⁰⁷ would take back the desires he has renounced. //9.46//

**yaś ca pradīptāc charaṇāt kathaṃ-cin niṣkrāmya bhūyaḥ praviśet tad eva /
gārhashtyam utsrjya sa drṣṭa-doṣo mohena bhūyo 'bhilaṣed grahītum // 9.47 //**

Again, he who, after barely escaping from a burning house, would go back again into that inferno – / He, after leaving family life, having seen the faults attendant on it, would desire in his ignorance to embrace it again. //9.47//

**vahneś ca toyasya ca nāsti saṃdhiḥ śaṭhasya satyasya ca nāsti saṃdhiḥ /
āryasya pāpasya ca nāsti saṃdhiḥ śamasya daṇḍasya ca nāsti saṃdhiḥ // 9.47(b) //**

There is no combining fire and water. Nor can falsity and truthfulness co-exist. / There is no compatibility between what is noble and what is wicked. Nor are pacification and punishment reconcilable. //9.47 (b)//⁵⁰⁸

**yā ca śrutir mokṣam avāptavanto nṛpā grha-sthā iti naitad asti /
śama-pradhānaḥ kva ca mokṣa-dharmo daṇḍa-pradhānaḥ kva ca rāja-dharmaḥ // 9.48 //**

Again, as for the tradition that rulers of men realized liberation while maintaining their status in the royal family – that is not so. / How can the dharma of liberation, in which peace is paramount, be reconciled with the dharma of a king, in which the rod is paramount? //9.48//

⁵⁰⁷ The repeated phrase *atha vā bhavena*, “or else in fear,” sets the bodhisattva's thinking apart from that of the striver in SN Canto 8: “Greedy and untrained, devoid of decency and intelligence, / Truly, a wretched dog is wishing to eat again some food that he himself has vomited.” // SN8.21 //

⁵⁰⁸ EHJ omitted this verse from his translation, partly on stylistic grounds and partly because it is absent from the Chinese translation. In the Tibetan translation this verse comes after verse 49.

śame ratiś cec chithilaṃ ca rājyaṃ rājye matiś cec chama-viplavaś ca /

śamaś ca taikṣṇyaṃ ca hi nopapannaṃ śitoṣṇayor aikyam ivodakāgnyoḥ // 9.49 //

When he delights in peace and quiet, his kingship is lax; when his mind turns to kingship, the peace and quiet is spoilt. / For peacefulness and severity are incompatible – as a unity is impossible of the cold and the hot, in water and fire. //9.49//

tan niścayād vā vasudhādhipās te rājyāni muktvā śamam āptavantaḥ /

rājyād mitā vā nibhṛtendriyatvād anaiṣṭhike mokṣa-kṛtābhidhānāḥ // 9.50 //

Resolutely, therefore, those rulers of the wealth-giving earth abandoned their kingdoms and obtained peace; / Or else, firmly anchored, on the grounds of sovereign power, on the grounds of subdued senses, they affixed the name ‘liberation’ to what was not the ultimate. //9.50//

teṣāṃ ca rājye ’stu śamo yathāvat prāpto vanaṃ nāham aniścayena /

chittvā hi pāśaṃ gṛha-bandhu-saṃjñāṃ muktaḥ punar na pravivikṣur asmi // 9.51 //

Or if any of those kings during his kingship did properly realize peace, be that as it may! I, for my part, have not come to the forest with any lack of conviction. / For, having cut the snare called kith and kin, I am free, and not about to enter [that snare] again.” //9.51//

ity ātma-vijñāna-guṇānurūpaṃ mukta-spr̥haṃ hetumad ūrjitaṃ ca /

śrutvā narendrātmajam uktavantaṃ pratyuttaraṃ mantra-dharo ’py uvāca // 9.52 //

Words that reflected his facility for knowing the self, words free of eager desire, reasonable, yet powerful, / The son of the king thus spoke. Having listened, the counsellor⁵⁰⁹ also spoke his piece: //9.52//

yo niścayo mantra-dharo tavāyaṃ nāyaṃ na yukto na tu kāla-yuktaḥ /

śokāya dattvā pitaraṃ vayaḥ-sthaṃ syād dharmā-kāmasya hi te na dharmāḥ // 9.53 //

“This mantra-containing resolve⁵¹⁰ of yours is not improper; but neither is it suited to the present time. / For, to deliver your father in his old age into sorrow, for one who loves dharma as you do, might not be your dharma. //9.53//

nūnaṃ ca buddhis tava nāti-sūkṣmā dharmārthakāmeṣv avicakṣaṇā vā /

hetor adṛṣṭasya phalasya yas tvaṃ pratyakṣam arthaṃ paribhūya yāsi // 9.54 //

Assuredly, again, your judgement is not very acute, or else is dull, with regard to dharma, wealth and desires,⁵¹¹ / In that, for the sake of an unseen result, you pass over conspicuous wealth. //9.54//

⁵⁰⁹ *Mantra-dharaḥ*, counsellor, lit. means the bearer of *mantra*, or upholder of wise counsel.

⁵¹⁰ If the reading *mantra-dhara* is accepted here (neither EB Cowell nor EH Johnston accepted the reading), the compound is used as an adjective – *mantra*-containing. The meanings of *mantra* include 1. “instrument of thought,” 2. sacred speech, 3. counsel, 4. secret.

⁵¹¹ *Dharmārtha-kāma*, dharma, wealth and desires/pleasure – the triple set of worthy aims, according to one strand of ancient Indian thought.

punar-bhavo 'stīti ca ke-cid āhur nāstīti ke-cin niyata-pratijñāḥ /

evaṃ yadā saṃśayito 'yam arthas tasmāt kṣamaṃ bhoktum upasthitā śrīḥ // 9.55 //

Some say, moreover, that there is rebirth; others assert with conviction that there is not. / While this matter remains thus open to doubt, it is only natural to enjoy whatever royal rank has come our way. //9.55//

bhūyaḥ pravṛttir yadi kā-cid asti raṃsyāmahe tatra yathopapattau /

atha pravṛttiḥ parato na kā-cit siddho 'prayatnāj jagato 'sya mokṣaḥ // 9.56 //

If we do carry on hereafter in some form, we will enjoy ourselves in that life as befits our birth; / Or else, if there is no carrying on in any form beyond this life, release is already a given for this world, without any effort on our part. //9.56//

astīti ke-cit para-lokam āhur mokṣasya yogaṃ na tu varṇayanti /

agner yathā hy auṣṇyam apāṃ dravatvaṃ tadvat pravṛttau prakṛtiṃ vadanti // 9.57 //

Some say that the next world does exist but they do not affirm a means of exemption [from life carrying on there]; / For, just as heat belongs to fire and wetness belongs to water, nature,⁵¹² so they say, is there in the carrying on. //9.57//

ke-cit svabhāvād iti varṇayanti śubhāśubhaṃ caiva bhavābhavau ca /

svābhāvikaṃ sarvam idaṃ ca yasmād ato 'pi mogho bhavati prayatnaḥ // 9.58 //

Others explain that it is on the grounds of *svabhāva*, existence of things as things unto themselves,⁵¹³ that there arise the good and the ugly, being and non-being. / And since this whole world is naturally arisen from things existing unto themselves, again therefore effort is all in vain. //9.58//

yad indriyāṇāṃ niyataḥ pracāraḥ priyāpriyatvaṃ viṣayeṣu caiva /

saṃyujyate yaj jarayārttibhiś ca kas tatra yatno nanu sa svabhāvaḥ // 9.59 //

When the working of the senses is circumscribed, and pleasantness and unpleasantness reside in the objects of the senses, / And when all is bound up with old age and infirmities, what place in that has effort? Is all of that not simply the existence, as things unto themselves, of things? //9.59//

adbhir hutāśaḥ śamam abhyupaiti tejāṃsi cāpo gamayanti śoṣam /

bhinnāni bhūtāni śarīra-saṃsthāny aikyam ca dattvā jagad udvahanti // 9.60 //

The oblation-eating fire is stilled by water, and fiery flames cause water to dry up; / The disparate elements, when contained in a body, confer unity and so bear up the world. //9.60//

⁵¹² *Prakṛti*, nature, or primal stuff, or the Primary Matter. See e.g. the description of the Sage Araḍa in BC12.17.

⁵¹³ *Svabhāva*, or “existing of things as things unto themselves,” will be refuted at length, two generations after Aśvaghōṣa, by Nāgārjuna in his *Mūla-madhyama-kārikā*.

**yat pāṇi-pādodara-prṣṭha-mūrdhnā nirvartate garbha-gatasya bhāvaḥ /
yad ātmanas tasya ca tena yogaḥ svābhāvikaṁ tat-kathayanti taj-jñāḥ // 9.61 //**

When, with hands, feet, belly, back and head, a being develops in the womb, / And when there is union of that being with its soul – those who know those things describe it as a natural arising out of things unto themselves.⁵¹⁴ //9.61//

**kaḥ kaṅṭhakasya prakaroti taikṣṇyaṁ vicitra-bhāvaṁ mṛga-pakṣiṇām vā /
svabhāvataḥ sarvam idaṁ pravṛttaṁ na kāma-kāro 'sti kutaḥ prayatnaḥ // 9.62 //**

Who produces the sharpness of a thorn or the birds' and the beasts' diversity of being? / All this is brought about naturally, out of things that exist unto themselves. There is no such thing as free will. Where are the grounds, then, for making an effort? //9.62//

**sargaṁ vadantīśvaratas tathānye tatra prayatne puruṣaṣya ko 'rthaḥ /
ya eva hetur jagataḥ pravṛttau hetur nivṛttau niyataḥ sa eva // 9.63 //**

Others say, in a similar way, that creation arises from Īśvara, the Almighty. What meaning is there, in that case, in a person's effort, / When what causes the world's carrying on is the same immutable agency that causes cessation? //9.63//

**ke-cid vadanty ātma-nimittam eva prādur-bhavaṁ caiva bhava-kṣayaṁ ca /
prādur-bhavaṁ tu pravadanty ayatnād yatnena mokṣādhigamaṁ bruvanti // 9.64 //**

There are others who say that the individual soul is the cause of both coming into being and being no more; / But whereas coming into being happens, they say, without effort, only by strenuous effort, they assert, is release attained.⁵¹⁵ //9.64//

⁵¹⁴ *Svābhāvika*, here used as an adjective, has been regarded as the name of a so-called “school of Buddhism.” Neither Aśvaghōṣa nor Nāgārjuna, however, recognized the existence of any such school. For them the Buddha's teaching was not subject to analysis on sectarian lines.

⁵¹⁵ Having stated the case against bothering to make any effort, the counsellor now proceeds to hedge his bets and state the opposite case for making strenuous goal-oriented effort.

**naraḥ pitṛñām anṛṇaḥ prajābhir vedair ṛṣiñām kratubhiḥ surāṇām /
utpadyate sārddham ṛṇais tribhis tair yasyāsti mokṣaḥ kila tasya mokṣaḥ // 9.65 //**

A man becomes free of his debt to the ancestors through his offspring, to the ancient sages through the Vedas, and to the gods through acts of sacrifice. / He is born with these three debts and when from these three he is released, there, so they say, in him, is release. //9.65//

**ity evam etena vidhi-krameṇa mokṣam sa-yatnasya vadanti taj-jñāḥ /
prayatnavanto 'pi hi vikrameṇa mumukṣavaḥ khedam avāpnuvanti // 9.66 //**

In this way, say experts in the matter, by this order of proceeding, is release assured, to one who makes effort. / For if their effort, however persevering, is disorderly, seekers of release obtain only exhaustion. //9.66//

**tat saumya mokṣe yadi bhaktir asti nyāyena sevasva vidhiṁ yathoktam /
evam bhaviṣyaty upapattir asya saṁtāpa-nāśaś ca narādhipasya // 9.67 //**

Therefore, O mild-mannered man of the *soma*, if you are devoted to release, honour the standard, in the proper manner, as prescribed. / Thus will come about the realization of [the release] and the ending of the anguish of the lord of men. //9.67//

**yā ca pravṛttā tava doṣa-buddhis tapo-vanebhyo bhavanaṁ praveṣṭum /
tatrāpi cintā tava tāta mā bhūt pūrve 'pi jagmuḥ sva-grhān vanebhyāḥ // 9.68 //**

Again, as for your thinking it a fault to re-enter the palace from the ascetic woods, / Have no worry in that regard, dear son – people even in ancient times left the forests and went back home. //9.68//

**tapo-vana-stho 'pi vṛtaḥ prajābhir jagāma rājā puram ambarīṣaḥ /
tathā mahīm viprakṛtām anāryais tapovanād etya rarakṣa rāmaḥ // 9.69 //**

When he was petitioned by his subjects, though he had been abiding in the ascetic forest, King Ambarīṣa went to the city. / So too, when the Great Earth was being abused by ignoble people, did Rāma return from the ascetic forest and reign over her.⁵¹⁶ //9.69//

**tathaiva śālvādhipatir drumākhyo vanāt sasūnur nagaram viveśa /
brahmaṛṣi-bhūtaś ca muner vasiṣṭhād dadhre śriyam sāmṅkṛtir antidevaḥ // 9.70 //**

So again did Druma, the Śālva king whose name means Tree, in the company of his son, enter the city from the forest. / And, having become a *brahmaṛṣi*, a brahman seer, Antideva the Sāmṅkṛti received the royal insignia from the sage Vasiṣṭha. //9.70//

⁵¹⁶ Cf. Nanda's apology in SN Canto 7: “For the Śālva king, along with his son; and likewise Ambarīṣa and Rāma and Andha, and Rantideva, son of Sāmṅkṛti / Cast off their rags and clothed themselves again in finest fabrics; they cut their twisted dreadlocks off and put their crowns back on.” // SN7.51 //

**evam-vidhā dharma-yaśaḥ-pradīpā vanāni hitvā bhavanāny atīyuh /
tasmān na doṣo 'sti gṛhaṁ prayātuṁ tapo-vanād dharmā-nimittam eva // 9.71 //**

Such lanterns as these of the splendour of dharma quit the forests and returned to their houses.
/ There is no fault in going home, therefore, away from the ascetic forest, when the reason is
dharma itself! //9.71//

**tato vacas tasya niśamya mantriṇaḥ priyaṁ hitaṁ caiva nṛpasya cakṣuṣaḥ /
anūnam avyastam asaktam adrutaṁ dhṛtau sthito rāja-suto 'bravīd vacaḥ // 9.72 //**

Then, after he had listened to the fond and well-meaning words of a counsellor who was the eye
of a ruler of men, / Leaving nothing omitted and nothing garbled, neither getting stuck nor
getting carried away, standing firm in his resolve, the son of a king said: //9.72//

**ihāsti nāstīti ya eṣa saṁśayaḥ parasya vākyair na mamātra niścayaḥ /
avetya tattvaṁ tapasā śamena vā svayaṁ grahīṣyāmi yad atra niścitam // 9.73 //**

“As to the doubt you raise, about existence in this world and non-existence, I shall arrive at
conviction in this matter not by way of another’s words. / Seeing the truth by the heat of
asceticism, or else by cooling tranquillity, I will grasp for myself what, in this matter, is to be
ascertained. //9.73//

**na me kṣamaṁ saṁśaya-jam hi darśanaṁ grahītuṁ avyakta-paras-parāhatam /
budhaḥ para-pratyayato hi ko vrajē jano 'ndhakāre 'ndha ivāndha-deśikaḥ // 9.74 //**

For it would ill befit me to accept a worldview born of doubt, unintelligible and beset with
internal contradictions. / For what wise person would proceed on the grounds of another
person’s grounds – like a blind man in the darkness, whose guide is blind? //9.74//

**adrṣṭa-tattvasya sato 'pi kiṁ tu me śubhāśubhe saṁśayite śubhe matiḥ /
vṛthāpi khedo hi varaṁ śubhātmanaḥ sukhaṁ na tattve 'pi vigarhitātmanaḥ // 9.75 //**

Even in my present state of not having realized the truth, yet still, though good and bad be in
doubt, my inclination is to the good. / For better the toil, though the toil was in vain, of a soul
given over to the good, than the gratification of one, though onto the truth, whose attitude was
reprehensible. //9.75//

**imaṁ tu dṛṣṭvāgamam avyavasthitaṁ yad uktam āptais tad avehi sādhu iti /
prahīṇa-doṣa-tvam avehi cāptatām prahīṇa-doṣo hy anṛtaṁ na vakṣyati // 9.76 //**

Notice, pray!, that this tradition you describe is not exactly determined, and know to be truly
unerring that which is spoken by true people. / Again, know the state of a true person to be
freedom from faults, for one without faults will never speak an untruth. //9.76//

**gṛha-praveśam prati yac ca me bhavān uvāca rāma-prabhṛtīn nidarśanam /
na te pramāṇam na hi dharmā-niścayeṣv alam pramāṇāya parikṣata-vratāḥ // 9.77 //**

And as for what you said to me about going home, citing as an example Rāma and the rest, /
They are not the standard. For, in no way, as a standard for decisions in dharma, do vow-
breakers measure up. //9.77//

**tad evam apy eva ravir mahīm pated api sthiraṭvaṁ himavān giris tyajet /
adrṣṭa-tattvo viṣayonmukhendriyaḥ śrayeya na tv eva gṛhān pṛthag-janaḥ // 9.78 //**

That being so, even the sun may fall to the earth, even a Himālayan mountain may relinquish its
firmness, / But never would I, not having realized the truth, my senses oriented expectantly
towards objects, go back home as a common man. //9.78//

**aham viśeyam jvalitam hutāśanam na cākṛtārthaḥ praviśeyam ālayam /
iti pratijñām sa cakāra garvito yatheṣṭam utthāya ca nirmamo yayau // 9.79 //**

I would go into the oblation-eating fire when it is blazing, but I would not, with my task
unaccomplished, go back home.” / Thus did he declare, with pride but with no sense of me and
mine, as he stood up and, as per his declared intent, went on his way. //9.79//

**tataḥ sa-bāṣpau saciva-dvijāv ubhau niśamya tasya sthiram eva niścayam /
viṣaṅṅa-vaktrāv anugamya duḥkhitau śanair agatyā puram eva jagmatuḥ // 9.80 //**

Then the counsellor and the twice-born veteran, both in tears, having perceived his
unshakeable resolve, / Tagged along, in the grip of suffering, with despondent faces; and then
meekly, having no other course, the two of them went back to the city in question. //9.80//

**tat-snehād atha nṛpateś ca bhaktitas tau sāpekṣam pratiyayatuś ca tasthatuś ca /
dur-dharṣam ravim iva dīptam ātma-bhāsā taṁ draṣṭuṁ na hi pathi śekatur na moktum
// 9.81 //**

Out of affection for him, and out of devotion to the king, the two went worriedly on their way,
and then the two stood still; / For, as he blazed with his own light, like the blinding sun, they
were able neither to behold him on the road nor to let him go. //9.81//

**tau jñātuṃ parama-gater gatiṃ tu tasya pracchannāś cara-puruṣāñ chucīn vidhāya /
rājānaṃ priya-suta-lālasaṃ nu gatvā drakṣyāvaḥ katham iti jagmatuḥ katham-cit // 9.82
//**

In order to monitor the progress, however, of him whose progress was of the highest order, those two appointed honest men to spy for them in secret. / “How on earth are we to go and see the king, who is so devoted to his beloved son?”, they fretted, as somehow, with difficulty, the two of them progressed. //9.82//

iti buddha-carite mahā-kāvye kumārānveṣaṇo nāma navamaḥ sargaḥ // 9 //

The 9th canto, titled The Seeking of a Prince,
in an epic tale of awakened action.

Canto 10: śreṇyābhigamaṇaḥ Śreṇya Drawing Near

Introduction

Once again the title is a person and a verb, and this time the person is ostensibly the subject of the verb. The person is Śreṇya, also known as King Bimbisāra, ruler of the ancient kingdom of Magadha. The verb *abhigamana* ostensibly describes Śreṇya approaching the Prince with a view to persuading him to change his mind.

One alternative reading of the Canto title is as a co-ordinative (*dvandva*) compound of two elements: 1. Śreṇya and 2. Drawing Near. In this reading, Śreṇya is Śreṇya, and the one getting closer is the bodhisattva who, as in Canto 13, simply sits in lotus, as immovably as Mount Kailāsa.

At the same time there is a sense in which, below the surface, ironically, the words of Śreṇya himself get closer and closer to the truth, so that by the closing verses of the Canto Śreṇya is describing how people who have, in the true sense, grown old, as if they have crossed beyond a wasteland, finally breathe easy.

**sa rāja-vatsaḥ pṛthu-pīna-vakṣās tau havya-mantrādhikṛtau vihāya /
uttīrya gangām pracalat taraṅgām śrīmad-grhaṁ rājagrhaṁ jagāma // 10.1 //**

The king's beloved boy, whose chest was broad and full, after he had got rid of those two, the heads of *havya* and of *mantra*, oblations and machinations, / Crossed the billowing Ganges and went to Rāja-grha, "Kingsbury," with its splendid residences.⁵¹⁷ // 10.1//

**śailaiḥ su-guptaṁ ca vibhūṣitaṁ ca dhṛtaṁ ca pūtaṁ ca śivais tapodaiḥ /
pañcācalāṅkaṁ nagaraṁ prapede śāntaḥ svayambhūr iva nāka-prṣṭham // 10.2 //**

Well guarded, and beautified, by mountains; preserved, and purified, by healing hot springs; / In the hook of five hills, stood the city he entered – like 'Self-Existing' Brahmā,⁵¹⁸ unperturbed, entering the heights of heaven. //10.2//

⁵¹⁷ Rāja-grha was the capital of Magadha, the kingdom ruled at that time by Śreṇya, also known as Bimbisāra.

⁵¹⁸ Conventionally Svayam-bhū means either Brahmā or Śiva – or sometimes the other of the three gods in the Hindu triad, Viṣṇu.

**gāmbhīryam ojaś ca niśāmya tasya vapuś ca dīptaṁ puruṣān atītya /
visismaye tatra janas tadānīm sthāṇu-vratasyeva vṛṣa-dhvajasya // 10.3 //**

Perceiving the depth and strength of that man, and the shining form which outshone men, /
The people there at that time were filled with wonder – as if [perceiving the depth and strength
and shining form] of the one, unmoving in his vow of practice, whose emblem is the bull.⁵¹⁹
//10.3//

**taṁ prekṣya yo 'nyena yayau sa tasthau yas tatra tasthau pathi so 'nvagacchat /
drutaṁ yayau yaḥ sa jagāma dhīraṁ yaḥ kaś-cid āste sma sa cotpapāta // 10.4 //**

On seeing him, whoever was going the other way stood still; whoever was there in the road
standing still, followed along; / whoever was going hurriedly, went steadily; and anybody who
was sitting, sprang up.⁵²⁰ //10.4//

**kaś-cit tam ānarca janaḥ karābhyām sat-kṛtya kaś-cic chirasā vavande /
snigdhenā kaś-cid vacasābhyānanda naivaṁ jagāmāpratipūjya kaś-cit // 10.5 //**

Some people honoured him with joined hands; some properly paid homage, using their head;⁵²¹
/ some sang his praises with devoted words. Nobody, in this way, went without showing
religious reverence.⁵²² //10.5//

**taṁ jihriyuḥ prekṣya vicitra-veśāḥ prakīrṇa-vācaḥ pathi maunam īyuḥ /
dharmasya sāksād iva saṁnikarṣe na kaś-cid anyāya-matir babhūva // 10.6 //**

Fancy dressers when they saw him felt ashamed. Random chatterers on the road fell silent. / As
when in the physical presence of dharma,⁵²³ nobody had an irregular thought. //10.6//

**anya-kriyāṇām api rāja-mārge strīṇām nṛṇām vā bahu-māna-pūrvam /
taṁ deva-kalpaṁ nara-deva-sūnuṁ nirīkṣamāṇā na tatarpa drṣṭiḥ // 10.7 //**

Though on the royal road they were engaged in different work,⁵²⁴ adoring women and men
beheld him, / The god-like son of a man-god, but satisfaction was not realized by their admiring
gaze. //10.7//

⁵¹⁹ The god whose emblem is the bull most probably means Śiva.

⁵²⁰ Ostensible meaning: they stopped sitting and got up. Hidden meaning: they carried on sitting, and went up more.

⁵²¹ They prostrated themselves, bowing their head to the floor; and/or they used their head (for something other than a hat-rack) and paid attention to what they were doing.

⁵²² Ostensibly Aśvaghōṣa is praising all the townfolk for the attitude of religious devotion. Below the surface, is he ironically bemoaning the absence of any individual who was different (*anyaḥ* or *anyā*)?

⁵²³ The ostensible meaning of *sāksāt* (ablative of *sa* [possessing] + *akṣa* [eye]) is “before one's own eyes.” Below the surface, *dharmasya sāksāt* suggests realizing the dharma not only on the outside, but as one's own practice of sitting upright.

⁵²⁴ Ostensibly they were otherwise occupied, engaged in miscellaneous tasks. *Anya-kriyāṇām* ostensibly means “other tasks,” but in the hidden meaning, the labours of an individual who is different, the actions of a non-buddha.

bhruvau lalāṭam mukham iḅᅇaᅇ vā vapuᅇ karau vā caraᅇau gatiᅇ vā /

yad eva yas tasya dadarᅇa tatra tad eva tasyātha babandha cakᅇuᅇ // 10.8 //

Eyebrows, forehead, mouth, or organs of seeing; body or hands; feet or manner of going – /
Whatever aspect of him any of them looked at, to that very target her or his eye was bound.
//10.8//

drᅇᅇvā ca sorᅇa-bhruvam āyatākᅇam jvalac-charīram śubha-jāla-hastam /

taᅇ bhikᅇu-veᅇam kᅇiti-pālanārham saᅇcukᅇubhe rājagrᅇhasya lakᅇmīᅇ // 10.9 //

On seeing him, moreover, with the circle of hair between his eyebrows and with his widely
extending eyes, with his shining body and beautiful webbed hands, / On seeing in a beggar's
garb him who was fit to rule the earth, the Royal Grace of Rājagrha⁵²⁵ was ruffled. //10.9//

śreᅇyo 'tha bhartā magadhājirasya bāhyād vimānād vipulaᅇ janaugham /

dadarᅇa papraccha ca tasya hetuᅇ tatas tam asmaᅇ puruᅇaᅇ śāsaᅇsa // 10.10 //

And so Śreᅇya,⁵²⁶ master of the Magadha domain, from an outer palace turret, saw the great
throng, / And inquired into the motive behind it. Then a man conveyed that [motive] to him –
//10.10//

jñānaᅇ paraᅇ vā pᅇthivī-śriyaᅇ vā vipraᅇ ya ukto 'dhigamiᅇyatīti /

sa eᅇa śākyādhipates-tanū-jo nirikᅇyate pravrajito janena // 10.11 //

“Ultimate knowing, or else earthly power, inspired sages said he would realize: / It is he, the
son of the Śākyā ruler, who, having gone forth, is being admired by the people.” //10.11//

tataᅇ śrutārtho manasāgatārtho rājā babhāᅇe puruᅇam tam eva /

vijñāyatāᅇ kva pratigacchatīti tathety athainaᅇ puruᅇo 'nvagacchat // 10.12 //

Then, having learned the motive, having been motivated in his own mind, the king told that
same man: / “Let me know in what direction he is going!”⁵²⁷ The man said “So be it!” and
followed him. //10.12//

a-lola-cakᅇur yuga-mātra-darᅇī nivᅇᅇta-vāg yantrita-manda-gāᅇī /

cacāra bhikᅇāᅇ sa tu bhikᅇu-varyo nidhāya gāᅇrāᅇi calaᅇ ca cetaᅇ // 10.13 //

Looking, with eyes that did not dance, a yoke's length ahead; not speaking; moving slowly and
with restraint, / He the best of beggars, however, went begging – placing within limits his limbs
and the inconstant mind. //10.13//

⁵²⁵ Rājagrᅇhasya lakᅇmīᅇ (f.) is enigmatic. Among the meanings of lakᅇmī are 1. grace, and 2. the Good Genius or Fortune of a king personified (and often regarded as a rival of his queen). Simply thinking, the appearance of the bodhisattva-prince created a stir.

⁵²⁶ The ruler of the kingdom of Magadha, also known as Bimbi-sāra.

⁵²⁷ Below the surface, the suggestion is that the bodhisattva, even before his realization of the truth, was able to stimulate Śreᅇya's will to the truth – there being, for bodhisattvas and buddhas alike, such a thing as a right direction. That direction, verses 14 and 15, implicitly suggest, is primarily upward.

**ādāya bhaikṣaṁ ca yathopapannaṁ yayau gireḥ prasravaṇaṁ viviktam /
nyāyena tatrābhyavahr̥tya cainan mahī-dharaṁ pāṇḍavam āruroha // 10.14 //**

Having accepted whatever food was offered, he went to a solitary mountain spring, / And there, according to principle, that food he did eat, and the hill of the Pāṇḍavas he did ascend.⁵²⁸
//10.14//

**tasminn avau lodhra-vanopagūḍhe mayūra-nāda-pratipūrṇa-kuñje /
kāṣāya-vāsāḥ sa babhau nṛ-sūryo yathodayasyopari bāla-sūryaḥ // 10.15 //**

On that hill covered with *lodhra*⁵²⁹ groves, its thickets filled with the crying of peacocks, / Wearing the ochre robe, that human sun shone forth like the morning sun up above the eastern mountain.⁵³⁰ //10.15//

**tatrainam ālokya sa rāja-bhr̥tyaḥ śreṇyāya rājñe kathayāṁ cakāra /
saṁśrutya rājā sa ca bāhumānyāt tatra pratasthe nibhr̥tānuyātraḥ // 10.16 //**

That servant of the king, having seen him there, reported back to King Śreṇya. / And the king, having listened, out of great respect, set off in that direction, with only a modest retinue.
//10.16//

**sa pāṇḍavaṁ pāṇḍava-tulya-vīryaḥ śailottamaṁ śaila-samāna-varṣmā /
maulī-dharaḥ simha-gatir nṛ-simhaś calat-saṭaḥ simha ivāruroha // 10.17 //**

The hill of the Pāṇḍavas, that most exalted of rocks, he of rock-like stature and heroic power on a par with the Pāṇḍavas,⁵³¹ / A human lion, wearing the royal headdress and going with a lion's gait, like a lion with bouncing mane – that hill [King Śreṇya also] did ascend.⁵³² //10.17//

**tataḥ sma tasyopari śṛṅga-bhūtaṁ śāntendriyaṁ paśyati bodhisattvam /
paryaṅkam āsthāya virocamaṇaṁ śaśāṅkam udyantam ivābhra-kūñjāt // 10.18 //**

Then he saw, up above⁵³³ that hill, being in the nature of a peak, the bodhisattva, the power of his senses quieted, / Coming back to sitting with legs fully crossed, and shining forth, like the moon rising⁵³⁴ out of a thicket of clouds. //10.18//

⁵²⁸ *Āruroha*, from *ā-vruh*, to rise up.

⁵²⁹ A tree (*Symplocos Racemosa*) that has yellow flowers. So the hill was yellow, like a mountain with the morning sun on it, while the bodhisattva in his yellow-red robe was like the sun.

⁵³⁰ *Udaya*, which means the eastern mountain (behind which the sun rises), is lit. “going up” (*ud-* = up, *aya* = going). *Upari* means upward, up above.

⁵³¹ The story of the epic battle between the Pāṇḍavas (descended from Paṇḍu) and their cousins the Kauravas (descended from Kuru) is told in the *Mahā-bhārata* and also in the *Bhagavad-gīta*.

⁵³² *Āruroha*, again, from *ā-vruh*, to rise up

⁵³³ *Upari*, again, means upward, up above.

⁵³⁴ *Udyantam*, again, is from *ud-vi*, to go up.

**taṁ rūpa-lakṣmyā ca śamena caiva dharmasya nirmāṇam ivopadiṣṭam /
sa-vismayaḥ praśrayavān narendraḥ svayambhuvaṁ śakra ivopatasthe // 10.19 //**

To him who, with his wealth of handsome form and his calmness, was like a work of dharma built to specification, / The first among men, filled with wonder, respectfully drew near, as to ‘Self-Existing’ Brahmā the mighty Indra drew near.⁵³⁵ //10.19//

**taṁ nyāyato nyāya-vidāṁ variṣṭhaṁ sametya papraccha ca dhātu-sāmyam /
sa cāpy avocat sadṛśena sāmṇā nṛ-paraṁ manaḥ-svāsthyam an-āmayam ca // 10.20 //**

Having come, in a proper way, into the presence of the best of knowers of a proper way, the king asked after the balance of his bodily humours; / And he also, in a suitably equable manner, spoke to a protector of men, of mental well-being and freedom from disease. //10.20//

**tataḥ śucau vāraṇa-karṇa-nīle śilā-tale sarṇiṣasāda rājā /
nṛpopaviśyānumataś ca tasya bhāvaṁ vijijñāsuraṁ idam babhāṣe // 10.21 //**

Then, on a rock as grey as an elephant’s ear, on a clean slab of rock, the king sat down; / And, while sitting as a protector of men, being allowed by the other,⁵³⁶ and wanting to know the reality of that other,⁵³⁷ he spoke as follows: //10.21//

**prītiḥ parā me bhavataḥ kulena kramāgatā caiva parīkṣitā ca /
jātā vivakṣā suta yā yato me tasmād idam sneha-vaco nibodha // 10.22 //**

“I have, in connection with your noble house, a love of the highest order, transmitted from offspring to offspring, and tested well.⁵³⁸ / Hence the desire, O offspring, which is born in me to speak. Therefore, to this expression of loving devotion, give your attention.⁵³⁹ //10.22//

**āditya-pūrvaṁ vipulaṁ kulaṁ te navam vayo dīptam idam vapuś ca /
kasmād iyaṁ te matir akrameṇa bhaikṣāka evābhiratā na rājye // 10.23 //**

Mighty is your house, with a son of ‘The Infinite’ Aditi as its founder;⁵⁴⁰ young is your life; and shining is this your handsome form – / From where came this will of yours which, all of a sudden, is set not on kingship but on abject begging?⁵⁴¹ //10.23//

⁵³⁵ *Upa-vsthā* means to place oneself near, to bring oneself into the presence of. There is a dual sense of Śreṇya (1) following the bodhisattva, relatively speaking, in the right direction (upward); and (2) being near to existential perfection, as symbolized by the sun (verse 15), the moon (verse 18), and Svayam-bhū, “Self-Existence” (verses 2, 19).

⁵³⁶ *Anumatas tasya*. Ostensible meaning: with his permission. Hidden meaning: letting it do it.

⁵³⁷ *Tasya bhāvam*. Ostensible meaning: his intention/disposition. Hidden meaning: the reality of it.

⁵³⁸ In the hidden meaning, Śreṇya is presaging devotion to a one-to-one transmission in the lineage of Zen patriarchs and matriarchs.

⁵³⁹ Ostensible meaning: Listen to these affectionate words! Hidden meaning: Be mindful, in the practice of sitting-meditation – as the Buddha, putting compassion into practice, taught it.

⁵⁴⁰ The Śākya were said to be descended from Īkṣvāku, the first king of the solar dynasty. Here *āditya* (son of Aditi) means the sun.

gātraṃ hi te lohita-candanārhaṃ kāṣāya-saṃśleṣam an-arham etat /

hastaḥ prajā-pālana-yogya eṣa bhoktuṃ na cārhaḥ para-dattam annam // 10.24 //

For your body is worthy of red sandal unguents, not of contact with reddy-brown cloth. / This hand is fitted for the protection of subjects, and not for the eating of food given by others. //10.24//

tat saumya rājyaṃ yadi paitṛkaṃ tvaṃ snehāt pitur necchasi vikrameṇa /

na ca kramaṃ marṣayituṃ matis te bhukṣvārdham asmad-viṣayasya śighram // 10.25 //

So if, my friend, out of love for your father, you do not wish by forcible means to inherit your father's kingdom, / But you have no mind to hold out for a regular succession, then enjoy possession of half of my realm, right away! //10.25//

evaṃ hi na syāt svajanāvamardaḥ kāla-krameṇāpi śama-śrayā śrīḥ /

tasmāt kuruṣva praṇayaṃ mayi tvaṃ sadbhiḥ sahiyā hi satāṃ samṛddhiḥ // 10.26 //

For in this way there will be no inflicting of pain on your own kin, and royal power will come peacefully and in a timely and orderly manner. / Do me this kindness, therefore, because in association with the good is there growth of the good. //10.26//

atha tv idānīm kula-garvitatvād asmāsu viśrambha-guṇo na te 'sti /

vyūdhāny anikāni vigāhya bāṇair mayā sahāyena parān jigīṣa // 10.27 //

Or if, for the present, pride in your own noble house precludes you from placing your trust in ours, / Then piercing with arrows the massed ranks of armies, seek, with me as an ally, to conquer foreign foes. //10.27//

tad buddhim atrānyatarām vṛṇiṣva dharmārtha-kāmān vidhivad bhajasva /

vyatyasya rāgād iha hi tri-vargaṃ pretyeha ca bhraṃśam avāpnuvanti // 10.28 //

So decide, in respect of these two options, between one and the other, and pursue dharma, wealth, and pleasure in a principled manner – / For when men in this world, because of passion, overdo [any one of] the triple set, in both this world and the next they suffer ruination. //10.28//

yo hy artha-dharmau paripīḍya kāmaḥ⁵⁴² syād dharmā-kāmau paribhūya cārthaḥ /

kāmārthayoś copameṇa dharmas tyājyaḥ sa kṛtsno yadi kāṅkṣito 'rthaḥ // 10.29 //

For when pleasure overwhelms wealth and dharma, or wealth overpowers dharma and pleasure, / Or dharma spells the death of pleasure and wealth – we must abandon it, if we aspire to meaning in the round. //10.29//

⁵⁴¹ Ostensibly Śreṇya's question is a rhetorical one, expressing surprise. Below the surface, he is drawing our attention to the unfathomable nature of something ineffable.

⁵⁴² *Kāmah* is nominative singular of *kāma*, whose meanings include 1. desire, 2. pleasure, and 3. sensual love. See also note to verse 33 below.

tasmāt tri-vargasya niṣevaṇena tvaṁ rūpam etat saphalaṁ kuruṣva /

dharmārtha-kāmādhigamaṁ hy an-ūnaṁ nṛṇāṁ an-ūnaṁ puruṣārtham āhuḥ // 10.30 //
Therefore by devotion to the triple set let this splendid frame of yours bear fruit. / For the integral attainment of dharma, wealth and pleasure is for mankind, they say, the whole meaning of a human life. //10.30//

tan niṣphalau nārhasi kartum etau pīnau bhujau cāpa-vikaṣaṇārḥau /

māndhātṛvaj jetum imau hi yogyau lokān api trīn iha kiṁ punar gām // 10.31 //
So do not render fruitless these muscular arms that were meant to draw a bow; / For, like Māndhātṛ, these two [arms] are capable of conquering even the three worlds here and now, let alone the earth.⁵⁴³ //10.31//

snehena khalv etad ahaṁ bravīmi naiśvarya-rāgeṇa na vismayena /

imaṁ hi dṛṣṭvā tava bhikṣu-veṣaṁ jātānukampo 'smy api cāgatāśruḥ // 10.32 //
I say this with sheer affection – not with eager desire for dominion and not with doubt. / For, seeing this beggar's clothing of yours, I am moved to compassion and visited by tears. //10.32//

yāvat sva-vaṁśa-pratirūpa-rūpaṁ na te jarābhyety abhibhūya bhūyaḥ /

tad bhukṣva bhikṣāśrama-kāma kāmān kāle 'si kartā priya-dharma dharmam // 10.33 //

Therefore, before the beauty that befits your noble house is overpowered by the onset of ageing, / Enjoy desires,⁵⁴⁴ O desirer of the beggar's stage, and in due time, O devotee of dharma, you will practise dharma. //10.33//

śaknoti jīrṇaḥ khalu dharmam āptuṁ kāmopabhogeṣv agatir jarāyāḥ /

ataś ca yūnaḥ kathayanti kāmān madhyasya vittaṁ sthavirasya dharmam // 10.34 //
One who is old, assuredly, is able to realize dharma. In old age the drive is absent for enjoyment of sensual pleasures. / And so pleasures, they say, belong to the young; acquisition of substance to one in the middle; dharma to a mature elder.⁵⁴⁵ //10.34//

⁵⁴³ Cf. the bodhisattva's reply in the next canto: Even as heaven rained down upon him golden rain after he had conquered all four continents / And obtained half of Mighty Indra's throne, there was for Māndhātṛ in outer realms only dissatisfaction. //BC11.13//

⁵⁴⁴ *Kāmān* is accusative plural of *kāma*, translated in this Canto, as one of the triple set, as “pleasure.”

⁵⁴⁵ Ostensibly *madhyasya vittam* (wealth of the middle) and *sthavirasya dharmam* (dharma of the elder) are two different things belonging to two different age-groups. But there is no particle *ca*. So the ironic intention might be that a true elder (Sanskrit: *sthavira*; Pāli: *thera*) is of the middle, and his or her dharma is not only abstract teaching, but something really to be acquired.

**dharmasya cārthasya ca jīva-loke pratyarthi-bhūtāni hi yauvanāni /
samrakṣyamāṇāny api dur-grahāni kāmā yatas tena yathā haranti // 10.35 //**

For, in the world of the living, youthful indiscretions are the enemy of dharma and of wealth. / However well we guard against those immature acts, to get a grip on them is hard, for which reason desires duly prevail. //10.35//

**vayāmsi jīrṇāni vimarśavanti dhīrāṇy avasthāna-parāyaṇāni /
alpena yatnena śamātmakāni bhavanty agatyaiva ca lajjayā ca // 10.36 //**

The old are contemplative, steady, intent on stability; / They become peaceful with little bother – through sheer helplessness, and humbleness.⁵⁴⁶ //10.36//

**ataś ca lolaṁ viṣaya-pradhānaṁ pramattam akṣāntam adīrgha-darśi /
bahu-cchalaṁ yauvanam abhyatītya nistīrya kāntāram ivāśvasanti // 10.37 //**

And so, having outgrown the fickle years whose main concern is objects, having got over heedless, impatient, short-sighted immaturity, / Having passed beyond pretense-filled adolescence, they breathe again, as if having crossed a wasteland.⁵⁴⁷ //10.37//

**tasmād adhīraṁ capala-pramādi navaṁ vayas tāvad idaṁ vyapaitu /
kāmasya pūrvaṁ hi vayaḥ śaravyaṁ na śakyate rakṣitum indriyebhyaḥ // 10.38 //**

Just let pass, therefore, this irresolute phase, this fickle and heedless phase of juvenility; / For the first flush is the target of Desire and cannot be protected from the power of the senses.⁵⁴⁸ //10.38//

**atho cikīrṣā tava dharma eva yajasva yajñam kula-dharma eṣaḥ /
yajñair adhiṣṭhāya hi nāka-prṣṭham yayau marutvān api nāka-prṣṭham // 10.39 //**

Now if your desire is to practise nothing but dharma, then offer up the act of offering,⁵⁴⁹ as is the dharma of your noble house; / For, having gone, by means of acts of offering, up to the upper reaches of heaven, even ‘Marut-attended’ Indra, by means of acts of offering, reached those uppermost reaches. //10.39//

⁵⁴⁶ Ostensibly Śreṇya is describing people rendered impotent and timid by old age. Ironically, he is also describing those whose practice is mature, in which case *agati*, being helpless, is an expression of non-doing; and *lajjā*, modesty, is absence of pride and awareness of faults.

⁵⁴⁷ Ostensibly Śreṇya is describing old folk in retirement homes, but in the hidden meaning buddhas who have crossed beyond the suffering of saṁsāra.

⁵⁴⁸ The hidden meaning is the practical injunction not to do the wrong thing, here and now, by letting a momentary impulse pass, and not acting on it – the principle of free won't. In this sense, then, Śreṇya, has drawn very near – without recognizing just how close he has drawn to the Buddha's truth. In this sense, we can understand the Canto title, below the surface, as suggesting not only Śreṇya's misguided proposal to the prince, but also Śreṇya's drawing near to the truth.

⁵⁴⁹ *Yajasva yajñam*. Ostensible meaning: offer sacrifices! Hidden meaning: offer up acts of offering! Ostensibly Śreṇya is urging the bodhisattva, as a prince, to offer up oblations into the sacred fire. But verb and object from the same root, *yaj*, suggests the goalless offering of acting for the sake of acting.

suvarṇa-keyūra-vidaṣṭa-bāhavo maṇi-pradīpojjvala-citra-maulayaḥ /

nṛparṣayaḥ tām hi gatiṁ gatā makhaiḥ śramaṇa yām eva mahārṣayo yayuḥ // 10.40 //

For, with arms hugged by golden bands, with conspicuous crowns blazing with the light of gems,⁵⁵⁰ / Seers who were protectors of men have walked that same path, by their sacrifices, which the *maharishis*, the great seers, reached by their hard practice.” //10.40//

ity evaṁ magadha-patir vaco babhāṣe yaḥ samyag valabhid iva dhruvam babhāṣe /

tac-chrutvā na sa vicacāla rāja-sūnuḥ kailāso girir iva naika-citra-sānuḥ // 10.41 //

Thus spoke the ruler of the Magadhas, who talked straight, like “Force-destroying” Indra addressing “Immovable” Brahmā.⁵⁵¹ / Having heard that speech, the son of the king was not moved, like Mount Kailāsa⁵⁵² with its many conspicuous summits. //10.41//

**iti buddha-carite mahā-kāvye ‘śvaghoṣa-kṛte
śreṇyābhigamano nāma daśamaḥ sargaḥ // 10 //**

The 10th canto, titled Śreṇya Drawing Near,
in this epic tale of awakened action.

⁵⁵⁰ Golden bands, as previously (see e.g. BC5.50; 5.81) seem in the hidden meaning to suggest vital energy; similarly for illuminated crowns.

⁵⁵¹ Dhruvam, “the Immovable,” like Svayaṁ-bhū, “the Self-Existent,” is a name applied to Brahmā but also sometimes to Śiva and Viṣṇu.

⁵⁵² Kailāsa is thought to be derived from *kelāsa*, meaning crystal. In ancient Indian mythology, Kailāsa is the fabulous residence of Kubera, Lord of Wealth. As an actual mountain (Mount Kailash), it is a peak in the Kailash Range (Gangdisê Mountains), forming part of the Transhimalaya in Tibet, where it does seem to protrude from the earth like a giant crystal.

Canto 11: kāma-vigarhaṇaḥ Blaming Desires

Introduction

When something goes wrong in life, it is often because we have been unduly eager to go directly for a desired result without paying due attention to the means. This undue eagerness to get a result is called in Sanskrit *tṛṣṇā*, thirsting (see verse 55). Thirsting is the 8th of the 12 links in the chain of dependent arising of suffering, as will be described in Canto 14. But *tṛṣṇā*, thirsting, is a particular manifestation of *kāma*, whose meanings include volition or desire in general. *Kāma* also means pleasure, and love – especially sexual love or sensuality. In the plural, moreover, like the English “desires,” or “loves,” *kāmāḥ* can mean the objects of desire or love.

Again, among the three pollutants whose influence prevents us from seeing the truth, along with *bhavāsrava*, the pollutant of becoming, and *avidyāsrava*, the pollutant of ignorance, there is *kāmāsrava*, the pollutant of desire, or of love, or of sensuality.

Ostensibly then the title of the present Canto describes the bodhisattva, with righteous indignation, blaming desires. And the content of the Canto, on a superficial reading, supports that understanding.

On a deeper reading, however, the bodhisattva repeatedly asks the question: “Who in possession of himself would delight in those desires?” Thus the bodhisattva, implicitly, does not put the blame on desires per se – at least not from verse 20 onwards. He rather puts the blame on failure to remain in possession of oneself.

And when we investigate the problem in practice, it is demonstrably true that a desire which could lead us into trouble, in fact turns out to be harmless, so long as, remaining in possession of ourselves, we do not act on it.

Thus, the title Blaming Desires, or The Blaming of Desire – whether or not Aśvaghōṣa himself formulated the title – is another Canto title that challenges us to keep digging deeper in our investigations.

athaivam ukto magadhādhipena suhr̥n-mukhena pratikūlam artham /

svastho 'vikāraḥ kula-śauca-śuddhaḥ śauddhodanir vākyaṃ idaṃ jagāda // 11.1 //

Now when the monarch of the Magadhas, with friendly face, had addressed him thus, with contrary purport, / He whose noble house and personal integrity were pure, the son of 'Pure Mush' Śuddhodana, being well in himself and unperturbed, spoke this reply: //11.1//

**nāścaryam etad bhavato 'bhidhānam jātasya haryaṅka-kule viśāle /
yan mitra-pakṣe tava mitra-kāma syād vṛttir eṣā pariśuddha-vṛttheḥ // 11.2 //**

“This speech of yours is no surprise, born as you are into the illustrious line whose emblem is the lion⁵⁵³ – / That you, O desirer of friendship,⁵⁵⁴ whose course of action is pure should show towards a friend this considerate course of action. //11.2//

**a-satsu maitrī sva-kulānurūpā na tiṣṭhati śrīr iva viklaveṣu /
pūrvaiḥ kṛtām prīti-paramparābhis tām eva santas tu vivardhayanti // 11.3 //**

Among the untrue, friendship formed by each in keeping with his tribe does not last – like sovereign power among the faint-hearted. / But friendship forged by repeated past favours, is just that benevolence which the true cause to grow. //11.3//

**ye cārtha-kṛcchreṣu bhavanti loke samāna-kāryāḥ suhrdām manuṣyāḥ /
mitrāṇi tānīti paraimi buddhyā sva-sthasya vṛddhiṣv iha ko hi na syāt // 11.4 //**

Those in the world who, for the good-hearted in hard times are there as human beings, helping with work to be done – / Those friends I esteem, advisedly, as friends indeed. For who would not be present around one going well in a period of vigorous prosperity? //11.4//

**evam ca ye dravyam avāpya loke mitreṣu dharme ca niyojayanti /
avāpta-sārāṇi dhanāni teṣām bhraṣṭāni nānte janayanti tāpam // 11.5 //**

And, having obtained riches in the world, those who in this way commit their riches to friends and to dharma, / Have made the most of their resources – whose dissipation, in the end, generates no grief. //11.5//

**suhṛttayā cāryatayā ca rājan khalv eṣa yo mām prati niścayas te /
atrānuneṣyāmi suhṛttayaiva brūyām ahaṁ nottaram anyad atra // 11.6 //**

With nothing but friendship and nobility, O king! comes this resolution of yours towards me. / Conciliation, in this situation, I too shall express with friendship plain and simple. No other response, in this situation, could I express. //11.6//

⁵⁵³ Read like this, the Prince is returning the compliment that Śreṇya paid him in BC10.23, since the lion was an emblem of the solar race to which both kings, of Kapilavastu and Magadha, belonged. EHJ took Haryaṅka to be the same as Haryaṅga, a Bṛhad-ratha king whose name suggests the lion-legend of the Bṛhad-rathas, which is referred to in SN8.44 (*And Bṛhad-rathā, 'the Burly Heroine,' loved a lion: there is nothing women will not do.*). EHJ adds that fragmentary remains of the Buddhist dramas mention the Bṛhad-rathas' foundation of a city which seems to be Rājāgrha.

⁵⁵⁴ Mitra-kāma means “O desirer of friendship” or “O lover of friendship.” The kāma is as per the Canto title.

**ahaṃ jarā-mṛtyu-bhayaṃ viditvā mumukṣayā dharmam imaṃ prapannaḥ /
bandhūn priyān aśru-mukhān vihāya prāḡ eva kāmān aśubhasya hetūn // 11.7 //**

Having become aware of the terror of aging and dying, I with desire for release⁵⁵⁵ have taken to this dharma, / Leaving behind beloved tear-faced relatives – still more have I left behind desires, the causes of mischief! //11.7//

**nāśiṃṣebhyo hi tathā bibhemi naivāśanibhyo gaganāc cyutebhyaḥ /
na pāvakebhyo 'nila-saṃhitebhyo yathā bhayaṃ me viṣayebhya eva // 11.8 //**

For I am not so afraid of venomous snakes, or of thunderbolts falling from the sky, / Or of fires supplied with air, as I am fearful of objects in the realm of the senses.⁵⁵⁶ //11.8//

**kāmā hy anityāḥ kuśalārtha-caurā riktās ca māyā-sadṛśās ca loke /
āśāsyamānā api mohayanti cittaṃ nṛṇāṃ kiṃ punar ātma-saṃsthāḥ // 11.9 //**

For transient desires are robbers of the stuff of happiness. They are hollow, and resemble phantoms in the world. / Even in their anticipation, they delude the mind of men. How much more in their physical consummation? //11.9//

**kāmābhibhūtā hi na yānti śarma tri-piṣṭape kiṃ bata martya-loke /
kāmāḥ sa-trṣṇasya hi nāsti tṛptir yathendhanair vāta-sakhasya vahneḥ // 11.10 //**

For those in thrall to desires arrive at happiness not in triple heaven, much less in the mortal world. / A man possessed of thirst is no more satisfied by desires than wind-befriended fire is satisfied by fuel. //11.10//

**jagaty an-artho na samo 'sti kāmair mohāc ca teṣv eva janaḥ prasaktaḥ /
tattvaṃ viditvaivam an-artha-bhīruḥ prājñāḥ svayaṃ ko 'bhilaṣed an-artham // 11.11 //**

There is nothing in the world as troublesome as desires, and yet it is to them that people, out of ignorance, are attached. / Knowing the truth to be so, what trouble-wary man of wisdom would wilfully covet trouble? //11.11//

**samudra-vastrām api gām avāpya pārāṃ jigīṣanti mahārṇavasya /
lokasya kāmair na vitṛptir asti patadbhir ambhobhir ivārṇavasya // 11.12 //**

Even having taken possession of the sea-girt earth, men desire to conquer what lies beyond the great ocean. / The world is no more sated by desires than the ocean is sated by waters descending into it. //11.12//

⁵⁵⁵ *Mumukṣayā* is a desiderative form of \sqrt{muc} , to release.

⁵⁵⁶ The bodhisattva here appears to identify *kāmāḥ*, desires in the plural, with *viṣayāḥ*, objects of the senses, sensual enjoyments.

**devena vṛṣṭe 'pi hiraṇya-varṣe dvīpān samagrāmś caturo 'pi jītvā /
śakrasya cārdhāsanam apy avāpya māndhātur āsīd viṣayeṣv atṛptiḥ // 11.13 //**

Even as heaven rained down upon him golden rain after he had conquered all four continents /
And obtained half of Mighty Indra's throne, there was for Māndhātṛ in outer realms only
dissatisfaction. //11.13//

**bhuktvāpi rājyaṁ divi devatānām śatakratau vṛtra-bhayāt pranaṣṭe /
darpān mahārṣiṁ api vāhayitvā kāmēṣv atṛpto nahuṣaḥ papāta // 11.14 //**

Even having enjoyed kingship over the gods in heaven (after Indra, through fear of Vṛta, had
fled), / And even, out of pride, having caused the Mahārishis to carry him, Nahuṣa, unsatisfied
among desires, fell down.⁵⁵⁷ //11.14//

**aiḍāś ca rājā tri-divaṁ vigāhya nītvāpi devīm vaśam urvaśīm tām /
lobhād ṛṣibhyaḥ kanakaṁ jihīṣur jagāma nāśaṁ viṣayeṣv atṛptaḥ // 11.15 //**

Again, King Purū-ravas, son of Iḍā, having penetrated triple heaven and even brought into his
thrall that goddess Dawn, Urvaśī, / Was still desirous, in his greed, of carrying off the Rishis'
gold – unsatisfied, among all his possessions in sensory realms, he went to his end.⁵⁵⁸ //11.15//

**baler mahendraṁ nahuṣaṁ mahendrād indraṁ punar ye nahuṣād upeyuḥ /
svarge kṣitau vā viṣayeṣu teṣu ko viśvased bhāgya-kulākuleṣu // 11.16 //**

From Bali⁵⁵⁹ those realms passed to great Indra; from great Indra to Nahuṣa; and from Nahuṣa
back again to Indra:/ Who, whether in heaven or on the earth, could breathe easy in realms so
subject to the graces and indignities of fate? //11.16//

**cīrāmarā mūla-phalāmbu-bhakṣā jaṭā vahanto 'pi bhujāṅga-dīrghāḥ /
yair nanya-kāryā munayo 'pi bhagnāḥ kaḥ kāma-samjñān mṛgayeta śatrūn // 11.17 //**

Despite being clothed in strips of bark or rags and subsisting on roots, fruit and water; despite
wearing dreadlocks as long as snakes; / Despite having no extraneous duty, sages have still been
defeated by them – Who would pursue those enemies called desires? //11.17//

⁵⁵⁷ Nahuṣa was elected to replace Indra at top god, when Indra hid himself away after his slaying of Vṛtra (which is also referenced in BC8.13). Nahuṣa was not satisfied only with Indra's position but craved Indra's wife as well. As a result he was cursed to become a snake on earth, regaining his original form only after the Pāṇḍavas discovered him as a snake.

⁵⁵⁸ The story of the love affair between Purūravas and Urvaśī is told in Kālidāsa's drama *Vikramorvaśī*, which means Urvaśī [Won] by Vikrama, or Dawn [Won] by Valour.

⁵⁵⁹ Bali was the leader of the *asuras*, the enemies of the gods. He also was anointed as the king of gods, by Śukra (mentioned in BC1.41). After Bali's defeat by Viṣṇu, Indra was able to resume the role of king.

**ugrāyudhaś cogra-dhṛtāyudho 'pi yeṣāṁ kṛte mṛtyum avāpa bhīṣmāt /
cintāpi teṣāṁ aśivā vadhāya tad vṛttinām kiṁ punar avratānām // 11.18 //**

Again, 'Powerfully Armed' Ugrāyudha, though armed with a powerful weapon, on account of desires suffered death at the hands of Bhīṣma 'The Terrible.'⁵⁶⁰ / Even the thought of those desires is pernicious, leading to their death men empowered with such practice – to say nothing of those who go unprotected by the vow of practice. //11.18//

**āsvādam alpaṁ viṣayeṣu matvā saṁyojanotkarṣam atrptim eva /
sadbhyaś ca garhāṁ niyataṁ ca pāpaṁ kaḥ kāma-saṁjñāṁ viṣam ādadīta // 11.19 //**

Knowing enjoyment of its taste, among objects in the sensory realm, to be petty; knowing it to be highly addictive; knowing it to be dissatisfaction itself; / Knowing it to be what disgusts the good; and knowing it to be invariably bad, who would administer to himself the pernicious drug called desires? //11.19//

**kṛṣyādibhir dharmabhir anvitānām kāmātmakānām ca niśamya duḥkham /
svāsthyaṁ ca kāmeṣv akutūhalānām kāmān vihātuṁ kṣamam ātmavadbhiḥ // 11.20 //**

After they have seen the suffering of desire-driven men who are chained to duties such as ploughing and the rest / And have seen the well-being of men who are not unduly interested in desires, it is natural for people in possession of themselves to give desires up. //11.20//

**jñeyā vipat kāmini kāma-saṁpat siddheṣu kāmeṣu madam hy upaiti /
madād akāryaṁ kurute na kāryaṁ yena kṣato dur-gatim abhyupaiti // 11.21 //**

To be known as a setback, when a man is desirous, is consummation of desires; for in realizing desires he tends to become intemperate. / Being intemperate leads him to do what should not be done, not what should be done. Thus diminished, he passes in the direction of difficulty. //11.21//

⁵⁶⁰ In SN Canto 7, it is Jana-mejaya who, as a suitor of Bhīṣma's mother-in-law Kālī (aka Satyavati), incurs the wrath of Bhīṣma the Terrible – see SN7.44. But the reference to Bhīṣma's killing of Ugrāyudha is corroborated in *Harivaṁsa* as well as in the *Mahā-bhārata*.

**yatnena labdhāḥ parirakṣitās ca ye vipralabhya pratiyānti bhūyaḥ /
teṣv ātmavān yācitakopameṣu kāmeṣu vidvān iha ko rameta // 11.22 //**

Secured and maintained with much trouble, they cheat the trouble-taker, and go back whence they came. / When desires are like loans, who, being in possession of himself, being wise, being here and now, would delight in those desires?⁵⁶¹ //11.22//

**anviṣya cādāya ca jāta-tarṣā yān atyajantaḥ pariyānti duḥkham /
loke tṛṇlōkā-saḍṛṣeṣu teṣu kāmeṣu kasyātmavato ratiḥ syāt // 11.23 //**

Those who thirst after desires, having wished for them and grasped them, in failing to let go of them, maintain their grip on suffering. / When desires are like a torch of blazing straw, who in the world in possession of himself would delight in those desires? //11.23//

**an-ātmavanto hṛdi yair vidaṣṭā vināśam archanti na yānti śarma /
kruddhogra-sarpa-pratimeṣu teṣu kāmeṣu kasyātmavato ratiḥ syāt // 11.24 //**

People not possessed of themselves, being bitten in the heart by them, veer in the direction of utter loss and do not secure happiness. / When desires are like fierce angry snakes, who in possession of himself would delight in those desires? //11.24//

**asthi kṣudhārtā iva sārameyā bhuktvāpi yān naiva bhavanti tṛptāḥ /
jīrṇāsthi-kaṅkāla-sameṣu teṣu kāmeṣu kasyātmavato ratiḥ syāt // 11.25 //**

People afflicted by hunger, like dogs with a bone, however much they chew on them, never become satisfied. / When desires are like skeletons of dry bones, who in possession of himself would delight in those desires? //11.25//

**ye rāja-caurodaka-pāvakebhyaḥ sādharmaṇatvāj janayanti duḥkham /
teṣu praviddhāmiṣa-saṁnibheṣu kāmeṣu kasyātmavato ratiḥ syāt // 11.26 //**

Because of what they have in common with kings, thieves, water and fire, they engender suffering. / When desires are like lures hurled [by the hunter], who in possession of himself would delight in those desires? //11.26//

**yatra sthitānām abhito vipattiḥ śatroḥ sakāśād api bāndhavebhyaḥ /
himsreṣu teṣv āyatanopameṣu kāmeṣu kasyātmavato ratiḥ syāt // 11.27 //**

People abiding in them are surrounded on all sides by adversity – adversity from friends and family even as from a sworn enemy. / When desires are as hazardous as a hazardous abode, who in possession of himself would delight in those desires? //11.27//

⁵⁶¹ This apparently rhetorical question, the gist of which is repeated eleven times in the coming eleven verses, can be read as marking the transition to the second phase of this Canto – a phase of ironic subversion of ostensible idealism. Ostensibly, the point is that no wise person would delight in desires. In the hidden meaning, a person who is truly in possession of himself or herself (*ātmavān*), being wise, and living in the moment, might have nothing to fear from desires which, in the final analysis, are nothing but desires.

**girau vane cāpsu ca sāgare ca yān bhrañśam archanty abhilañghamānāḥ /
teṣu druma-prāgra-phalopameṣu kāmeṣu kasyātmavato ratiḥ syāt // 11.28 //**

On a mountain; in the forest; in still waters; and in the ocean – leaping the extra inch as they reach for them, people veer in the direction of falling off. / When desires are like the fruit at the top of the tree, who in possession of himself would delight in those desires? //11.28//

**tīvrāiḥ prayatnair vividhair avāptāḥ kṣaṇena ye nāśam iha prayānti /
svapnopabhoga-pratimeṣu teṣu kāmeṣu kasyātmavato ratiḥ syāt // 11.29 //**

Gained by bitter struggles on many fronts, here, in an instant, they go to naught. / When desires are like enjoyments in a dream, who in possession of himself would delight in those desires? //11.29//

**yān arcayitvāpi na yānti śarma vivardhayitvā paripālayitvā /
aṅgāra-karṣū-pratimeṣu teṣu kāmeṣu kasyātmavato ratiḥ syāt // 11.30 //**

People do not secure happiness, however much they kindle them, augment them, and tend them. / When desires are like fires of charcoal in a pit, who in possession of himself would delight in those desires? //11.30//

**vināśam īyuh kuravo yad artham vṛṣṇy-andhakā mekhala-daṇḍakās ca /
sūnāsi-kāṣṭha-pratimeṣu teṣu kāmeṣu kasyātmavato ratiḥ syāt // 11.31 //**

For their sake, the Kurus went to their end, as did the Vṛṣṇi-Andhakas, and the Mekhala-Daṇḍakas.⁵⁶² / When desires are like a butcher's knife and slaughter bench, who in possession of himself would delight in those desires? //11.31//

**sundopasundāv asurau yad artham anyonya-vaira-prasṛtau vinaṣṭau /
sauhārda-viśleṣa-kareṣu teṣu kāmeṣu kasyātmavato ratiḥ syāt // 11.32 //**

For their sake, the *asura* duo Sunda and Upasunda destroyed each other, macho hostility having prevailed. / When desires cause the break-up of friendships, who in possession of himself would delight in those desires? //11.32//

**yeṣāṃ kṛte vāriṇi pāvake ca kravyātsu cātmānam ihotsṛjanti /
sapatna-bhūteṣv aśiveṣu teṣu kāmeṣu kasyātmavato ratiḥ syāt // 11.33 //**

To water, to fire and to flesh-eaters, for the sake of desires, men in this world deliver up their bodies. / When desires are real manifestations of the enemy,⁵⁶³ who in possession of himself would delight in those unkind desires? //11.33//

⁵⁶² EH Johnston notes that of the seven vices peculiar to kings four are known as *kāma-ja* [born of desire] – namely, dicing, wining, hunting and women. These four vices are illustrated in the examples from the slaughter-bench of history cited in this and the next verse. The vice of the Kurus was dicing; the vice of the Vṛṣṇi-Andhakas was drinking. The vice of the Mekhala-Daṇḍakas is assumed to be hunting (some textual uncertainty surrounds their name – the old Nepalese manuscript has *maithila-daṇḍakāḥ*). And Sunda and Upasunda were brought down by fighting over a woman.

**kāmārtham ajñāḥ kṛpaṇam karoti prāpnoti duḥkham vadha-bandhanādi /
kāmārtham āśā-kṛpaṇas tapasvī mṛtyum śramam cārchatī jīvalokaḥ // 11.34 //**

With desires in view the ignorant one acts pitifully; he brings on himself the suffering of lethal wounds, captivity and the rest; / With desires in view the world of the living, being pitiable in its aspirations, veers wretchedly towards death and exhaustion. //11.34//

**gītair hriyante hi mṛgā vadhāya rūpārtham agnau śalabhāḥ patanti /
matsyo giraty āyasam āmiṣārthī tasmād anartham viṣayāḥ phalanti // 11.35 //**

For deer are lured to their death by songs; moths fly into the fire on account of its bright appearance; / And the bait-hungry fish swallows the iron hook. Thus do objects of desire result in trouble. //11.35//

**kāmās tu bhogā iti yan matiḥ syād bhogyā na ke-cit parigaṇyamānāḥ /
vastrādayo dravya-guṇā hi loke duḥkha-pratīkāra iti pradhāryāḥ // 11.36 //**

As for the view “But desires are enjoyments!”, no desire is to be reckoned as “to be enjoyed.” / Clothes and other such material goods in the world, are rather to be seen in terms of counteracting pain. //11.36//

**iṣṭam hi tarṣa-praśamāya toyam kṣun-nāśa-hetor aśanam tathaiva /
vātātapāmbv-āvaraṇāya veśma kaupīna-śītāvaraṇāya vāsaḥ // 11.37 //**

For water is good for the purpose of allaying thirst; food, in a very similar way, for staving off hunger; / A dwelling for protection against wind, the heat of the sun, and rain; clothing for covering the private parts and protecting against cold;⁵⁶⁴ //11.37//

⁵⁶³ *Sa-patna* means rival, adversary, enemy. As the second element (B) in a compound (A-B), *bhūta* means 1. being like A, or 2. actually being A. Is there a hidden sense in which a person in possession of himself or herself deals with desires with confidence and with enjoyment, like a sportsman or sportswoman doing battle with an opponent? If so, the irony seems to climax here, with the last in the series of ostensibly rhetorical questions.

⁵⁶⁴ EH Johnston adds a cross-reference to a section in *Majjhima-nikāya* 2 titled *Sabbāsavasutta*. In Sanskrit the title would be *Sarvāsrava-sūtra* (The Sūtra of All the Polluting Influences). With respect to clothing, for example, the sutta says: “Here a bhikkhu, reflecting wisely, uses the robe only for protection from cold, for protection from heat, for protection from contact with gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, the sun, and creeping things, and only for the purpose of concealing the private parts.”

**nidrā-vighātāya tathaiva śāyyā yānam tathādhva-śrama-nāśanāya /
tathāsanam sthāna-vinodanāya snānam mrjārogya-balāśrayāya // 11.38 //**

A place to lie down [or the act of lying down],⁵⁶⁵ likewise, for striking a blow against sleep; a vehicle [or the act of going],⁵⁶⁶ again, for taking the strain out of a journey; / A seat [or the act of sitting],⁵⁶⁷ again, for revelling in the act of abiding; and a bath [or the act of bathing],⁵⁶⁸ as a means for cleansing, and for health and strength. //11.38//

**duḥkha-pratīkāra-nimitta-bhūtās tasmāt prajānām viṣayā na bhogāḥ /
aśnāmi bhogān iti ko 'bhyupeyāt prājñāḥ pratīkāra-vidhau pravṛttaḥ // 11.39 //**

For living creatures, therefore, objects in the sensory realm are factors in counteracting pain and suffering, and not enjoyments. / What wise one would admit “I am relishing enjoyments,” while engaged in the counteraction? //11.39//

**yaḥ pitta-dāhena vidahyamānaḥ śīta-kriyām bhoga iti vyavasyet /
duḥkha-pratīkāra-vidhau pravṛttaḥ kāmeṣu kuryāt sa hi bhoga-samjñām // 11.40 //**

For he who, when burning with a bilious fever, would consider a cooling action⁵⁶⁹ to be an enjoyment – / He is the one who, while engaged in counteracting suffering, might call desires an enjoyment. //11.40//

**kāmeṣv anaikāntikatā ca yasmād ato 'pi me teṣu na bhoga-samjñā /
ya eva bhāvā hi sukhaṁ diśanti ta eva duḥkhaṁ punar āvahanti // 11.41 //**

Again, since there is nothing absolute about desires, for that reason also, I do not call those desires an enjoyment. / For the very states of being that confer pleasure, also bring, in their turn, pain. //11.41//

**gurūṇi vāsāmsy agurūṇi caiva sukhāya śīte hy asukhāya gharṁ /
candrāmśavaś candanam eva coṣṇe sukhāya duḥkhāya bhavanti śīte // 11.42 //**

For garments which are heavy (*guru*), and sticks of fragrant aloe wood (*aguru*), are agreeable in the cold but not so in the summer heat; / While moonbeams and fragrant sandalwood are agreeable in the heat but disagreeable in the cold. //11.42//

⁵⁶⁵ Śāyyā.

⁵⁶⁶ Yānam.

⁵⁶⁷ Āsanam.

⁵⁶⁸ Snānam. Thus three of the four elements are -na neuter action nouns with the dual meanings of 1. the action, and 2. the thing used for the action. Śāyyā, similarly, means both the act of sleeping and a bed.

⁵⁶⁹ One of the meanings of *kriyā* is a medical treatment or the application of a remedy. *Śīta-kriyām*, therefore, ostensibly means a cooling medical treatment, i.e. a remedy employed to counteract a fever. The first definition of *kriyā* given in the dictionary, however, is simply action. Is a hidden meaning intended in which action itself is a cooling activity?

**dvandvāni sarvasya yataḥ prasaktāny alābha-lābha-prabhṛtīni loke /
ato 'pi naikānta-sukho 'sti kaś-cin naikānta-duḥkhaḥ puruṣaḥ pṛthivyām // 11.43 //**
Since pairs of opposites – gain and loss, and the like – are attached to everything in the world, /
For that reason, again, nobody exclusively has pleasure, nor does any man on the earth
exclusively have pain. //11.43//

**dr̥ṣṭvā ca miśrām sukha-duḥkatām me rājyaṁ ca dāsyam ca mataṁ samānam /
nityam hasaty eva hi naiva rājā na cāpi samtapyata eva dāsaḥ // 11.44 //**
Again, seeing how interconnected are pleasure and pain, I deem kingship and slavery to amount
to the same; / For a king does not always smile, nor does a slave always hurt. //11.44//

**ājñā nṛ-patyē 'bhyadhiketi yat syān mahānti duḥkhāny ata eva rājñāḥ /
āsaṅga-kāṣṭha-pratimo hi rājā lokasya hetoḥ parikhedam eti // 11.45 //**
As for the point that to a protector of men accrues pre-eminent power, for that very reason are
a king's sufferings great; / For a king is like a wooden peg – he becomes worn down, for the sake
of the world. //11.45//

**rājye nṛpas tyāgini bahv-a-mitre viśvāsam āgacchati ced vipannaḥ /
athāpi viśrambham upaiti neha kiṁ nāma saukhyam cakitasya rājñāḥ // 11.46 //**
Sovereignty is fleeting and faced with many enemies: when a protector of men believes in it and
breathes easy, he is come to nought;⁵⁷⁰ / Or else, if he cannot be confident in this present realm
and rest easy, where does happiness lie, for a timorous king? //11.46//

**yadā ca jītvāpi mahīm samagrām vāsāya dr̥ṣṭam puram ekam eva /
tatrāpi caikaṁ bhavanam niṣevyam śramaḥ parārthe nanu rāja-bhāvaḥ // 11.47 //**
Even after a king has conquered the whole earth, only one city can serve as the royal seat – /
And in that city, again, only one palace can be lived in [or only one field can be cultivated].⁵⁷¹
When this has been realized, is not the royal state⁵⁷² the exhausting of oneself for others?
//11.47//

⁵⁷⁰ When Aśvaghōṣa writes of the coming to naught of a protector of men, there is generally an ironic subtext in which a practitioner is sitting on the royal road, totally forgetting himself.

⁵⁷¹ The meanings of *bhavanam* include 1. a palace, and 2. the place where something grows, a field. The meanings of *niṣevyam* include 1. to be inhabited, and 2. to be practised or cultivated.

⁵⁷² *Rāja-bhāva* ostensibly means existence as a king, but in the hidden meaning the conduct of a buddha.

**rājño 'pi vāso-yugam ekam eva kṣut-sañnirodhāya tathānna-mātrā /
śayyā tathaikāsanam ekam eva śeṣā viśeṣā nṛpater madāya // 11.48 //**

Enough, even for a king, is one set of clothes; for staving off hunger, similarly, the requisite measure of food; / Likewise one bed [or one act of lying down], and one seat [or one act of sitting].⁵⁷³ All the other special things in the possession of a protector of men, serve the purpose of mental intoxication.⁵⁷⁴ //11.48//

**tuṣṭy-artham etac ca phalaṁ yadiṣṭam ṛte 'pi rājyān mama tuṣṭir asti /
tuṣṭau ca satyāṁ puruṣasya loke sarve viśeṣā nanu nir-viśeṣāḥ // 11.49 //**

Again, if this fruit of which you speak is approved on account of contentment, even without kingship there is contentment for me. / And when contentment exists for a human being in this world, are not all special things nothing special? //11.49//

**tan nāsmi kāmān prati saṁpratāryaḥ kṣemaṁ śivaṁ mārgam anuprapannaḥ /
smṛtvā su-hṛttvaṁ tu punaḥ punar māṁ brūhi pratijñāṁ khalu pālay' eti // 11.50 //**

So not to be persuaded am I in the direction of desires, since I have entered on the peaceful, wholesome path. / But with friendship in mind, please tell me again and again: "Hold firm to your promise!" //11.50//

**na hy asmy amarṣeṇa vanaṁ praviṣṭo na śatru-bāṇair avadhūta-mauliḥ /
kṛta-sprho nāpi phalādhikebhyo gṛhṇāmi naitad vacanaṁ yatas te // 11.51 //**

For not because of impatience have I entered the forest; nor did enemy arrows cause me to cast away a crown. / Nor is it because I aspire to superior fruits that I decline this offer of yours. //11.51//

**yo dandaśūkaṁ kupitaṁ bhujāṅ-gaṁ muktvā vyavasyedd hi punar grahītum /
dāhātmikāṁ vā jvalitāṁ tṛṇolkāṁ samtyajya kāmān sa punar bhajeta // 11.52 //**

For he who, having once let go, would resolve to grasp again, an angry snake with avid fangs, / Or a fiery torch of burning hay – he, having abandoned desires, would seek them out again. //11.52//

**andhāya yaś ca sprhayed an-andho baddhāya mukto vidhanāya cādhyah /
unmatta-cittāya ca kalya-cittaḥ sprhāṁ sa kuryād viṣayātmakāya // 11.53 //**

Again, the sighted man who envies a blind man, the free man who envies a prisoner, the rich man who envies a pauper; / And the sane man who envies the madman – he would feel envy towards the devotee of objects. //11.53//

⁵⁷³ Āsanam.

⁵⁷⁴ In the ironic hidden meaning, an epic poem, for example, might serve as a needle for sitting-meditation.

**bhaikṣopabhogīti ca nānukaṁpyaḥ kṛtī jarā-mṛtyu-bhayaṁ titīrṣuḥ /
ihottamaṁ śānti-sukhaṁ ca yasya paratra duḥkhāni ca saṁvṛtāni // 11.54 //**

Not to be pitied, just because the food he enjoys is begged, is the man of action who intends to cross beyond the terror of aging and dying; / For him the highest happiness, the happiness of peace, is here and now, and miseries hereafter are rescinded. //11.54//

**lakṣmyām mahatyām api vartamānas tṛṣṇābhībhūtas tv anukāmpitavyaḥ /
prāpnoti yaḥ śānti-sukhaṁ na ceha paratra duḥkhaiḥ pratigrhyate ca // 11.55 //**

But he is to be pitied who, though dwelling in the midst of great riches, is defeated by thirsting; / He fails to realize the happiness of peace here and now and is held in the grip of sufferings to come. //11.55//

**evaṁ tu vaktuṁ bhavato ’nurūpaṁ sattvasya vṛttasya kulasya caiva /
mamāpi voḍhuṁ sadṛśaṁ pratijñāṁ sattvasya vṛttasya kulasya caiva // 11.56 //**

For you to speak like this, in any event, befits your character, conduct, and noble house; / And for me also, to keep my promise is in conformity with my character, conduct, and noble house.⁵⁷⁵ //11.56//

**ahaṁ hi saṁsāra-rasena viddho viniḥṣṛtaḥ śāntim avāptu-kāmaḥ /
neccheyam āptuṁ tri-dive ’pi rājyaṁ nir-āmayāṁ kiṁ bata mānuṣeṣu // 11.57 //**

For I, stung by saṁsāra’s sting, have gone forth desiring to obtain peace⁵⁷⁶; / Not even infallible sovereignty in triple heaven would I wish to win: how much less a kingdom among men? //11.57//

**tri-varga-sevām nṛpa yat tu kṛtsnataḥ paro manuṣyārtha iti tvam āttha mām /
an-artha ity eva mamārtha-darśanaṁ kṣayī tri-vargo hi na cāpi tarpakaḥ // 11.58 //**

As for you, O king!, saying to me that devotion in the round to the three things is the highest human aim, / Those three, in my estimation of value, are an aim without value, for the three things are subject to decay and are not satisfying at all. //11.58//

**pade tu yasmin na jarā na bhīr na ruḅ na janma naivoparamo na cādhayaḥ /
tam eva manye puruṣārtham uttamaṁ na vidyate yatra punaḥ punaḥ kriyā // 11.59 //**

Whereas that step in which there is no aging, no fear, no disease, no birth, no death, and no worries – / That alone I consider to be the highest human aim, wherein the same activity does not keep happening, again and again. //11.59//

⁵⁷⁵ *Kula*, “noble house,” includes the meanings of a family and a lineage.

⁵⁷⁶ *Śāntim avāptu-kāmaḥ*. Notice again the paradox of seeming to blame desire in general, while being motivated by desire for peace and freedom. Cf Gudo Nishijima: “In general, what we desire we should have.”

yad apy avocaḥ paripālyatām jarā navam vayo gacchati vikriyām iti /

a-nīscayo 'yam capalam hi dṛśyate jarāpy adhīrā dhṛtimac ca yauvanam // 11.60 //

As for you saying, “Wait for old age, for youth tends to loss of strength of mind,” / That is no sure thing; its precariousness is demonstrable – old age also can be irresolute and youth can be possessed of constancy. //11.60//

sva-karma-dakṣaś ca yadāntiko jagad vayahsu sarveṣv a-vaśam vikarṣati /

vināśa-kāle katham avyavasthite jarā pratikṣyā viduṣā śamepsunā // 11.61 //

And when Death who is so skilled at his work drags mankind, in all stages of life, helplessly to our end, / How, when the time of his demise is not subject to orderly arrangement, shall the wise man who seeks quiet look forward to old age? //11.61//

jarāyudho vyādhi-vikīrṇa-sāyako yadāntiko vyādha ivāśivaḥ sthitaḥ /

prajā-mṛgān bhāgya-vanāśritāms tudan vayah-prakarṣam prati ko mano-rathaḥ // 11.62 //

When Death, with old age as his weapon and diseases as his strewn projectiles, stands by like an implacable hunter, / Striking down the man-deer that seek refuge in the forest of good fortune, who can relish the prospect of a ripe old age? //11.62//

ato yuvā vā sthaviro 'tha vā śīsus tathā tvarāvān iha kartum arhati /

yathā bhaved dharmavataḥ kṛtātmanaḥ pravṛttir iṣṭā vinivṛttir eva vā // 11.63 //

So, whether as a young blood or as a venerable elder – or else as a child⁵⁷⁷ – one should act quickly, here and now, in such a way that / Being possessed of dharma, and realizing oneself, one might lead the life approved as good, the life of progressive activity⁵⁷⁸ – or indeed of cessation of activity.⁵⁷⁹ //11.63//

yad āttha cādīpta-phalām kulocitām kuruṣva dharmāya makha-kriyām iti /

namo makhebyo na hi kāmāye sukham parasya duḥkha-kriyayā yad iṣyate // 11.64 //

Again, as for you telling me, for the sake of dharma, to carry out a sacrificial act which is proper to my noble house and which will bring a brilliant result – / All hail and farewell to sacrifices! For I do not desire the happiness which is sought by an act that causes others suffering. //11.64//

⁵⁷⁷ In the hidden meaning the suggestion is of practice, at any age, with beginner's mind – or in the spirit of a child of fire who comes looking for fire.

⁵⁷⁸ *Pravṛttiḥ*, or doing.

⁵⁷⁹ *Vinivṛttiḥ*, or non-doing. Cf SN Canto 16: Comprehend, therefore, that suffering is doing (*pravṛttim*) witness the faults impelling it forward; /Realise its stopping as non-doing (*nivṛttim*); and know the path as a turning back.//SN16.42//

**param hi hantuṃ vi-vaśaṃ phalepsayā na yukta-rūpaṃ karuṇātmanaḥ sataḥ /
kratoḥ phalaṃ yady api śāśvataṃ bhavet tathāpi kṛtvā kim-u yat kṣayātmakam // 11.65
//**

For, to kill the helpless other in the desire to gain a reward would be ill becoming of a good man who was compassionate at heart, / Even if the result of the sacrifice were an everlasting reward – How much less is acting like that becoming when the essence of it is destructiveness? //11.65//

**bhavec ca dharmo yadi nāparo vidhir vratena śīlena manaḥ-śamena vā /
tathāpi naivārhati sevituṃ kratuṃ viśasya yasmin param ucyate phalam // 11.66 //**

And even without dharma as an alternative code of conduct involving a vow of practice, moral discipline, or calming of the mind, / Still it would never be right to carry out a sacrifice in which a reward is said to follow from slaughtering another creature. //11.66//

**ihāpi tāvat puruṣasya tiṣṭhataḥ pravartate yat para-himsayā sukham /
tad apy aniṣṭaṃ saghṛṇasya dhīmato bhavāntare kiṃ bata yan na dṛśyate // 11.67 //**

So long as a person is continuing to be present right here in this world, if any happiness accrues to him through harm inflicted on others, / That happiness, for one who is compassionate and wise, is unwanted: How much more unwanted is unseen happiness in another existence? //11.67//

**na ca pratāryo 'smi phala-pravṛttaye bhaveṣu rājan ramate na me manaḥ /
latā ivāmbho-dhara-vṛṣṭi-tāditāḥ pravṛttayaḥ sarva-gatā hi cañcalāḥ // 11.68 //**

I am not to be swayed in the direction of going for results. My mind, O king!, does not delight in continuities of becoming.⁵⁸⁰ / For, like creepers beaten down under a cloudburst, end-gaining actions⁵⁸¹ waver haphazardly in every direction. //11.68//

**ihāgataś cāham ito didṛkṣayā muner arāḍasya vimokṣa-vādinaḥ /
prayāmi cādyai va nṛpāstu te śivaṃ vacaḥ kṣamethāḥ mama tattva-niṣṭhuraṃ // 11.69 //**
And so here I am, having come desiring to see the sage Arāḍa, who speaks of liberation, / And there I shall go this very day. O protector of men, may you be well! Bear with words of mine which have been as harsh as reality. //11.69//

⁵⁸⁰ *Bhaveṣu*, locative plural of *bhava* – the 10th of the 12 links in the causal chain of dependent arising. See BC Canto 14.

⁵⁸¹ *Pravṛttayaḥ*, plural of *pravṛtti*, translated in verse 63 above as “the life of progressive activity” and in SN16.42 as “doing.” Cf the plural *samskāraṇ* (the 2nd in the 12 links) translated in MMK chap. 26 (see BC Canto 14) as “the doings [which are the root of *samsāra*].”

avendravad divy ava śaśvad arkavad guṇair ava śreya ihāva gām ava /

avāyur āryair ava sat-sutān ava śriyaś ca rājann ava dharmam ātmanaḥ // 11.70 //

Keep rejoicing like Indra in heaven. Keep shining forever like the sun. Keep on, by way of virtues. Keep, here in this world, to the higher good. Keep watch over the earth. / Keep your good health. Keep company with noble ones. Keep safe the sons and daughters of the good. Keep your royal power, O King, and your own dharma.⁵⁸² //11.70//

himāri-ketūdbhava-sambhavāntare yathā dvijo yāti vimokṣayaṁ tanum /

himāri-śatru-kṣaya-śatru-ghātane tathāntare yāhi vimocayan manaḥ // 11.71 //

Just as, inside the union of cold's enemy and the birth-place of a flame, twice-born [fire] gets going, releasing its physical self, / So, inside the act of slaying the enemy of the evaporation of the enemy of cold's enemy,⁵⁸³ you are to get going, allowing to release, in the direction of coming undone, your mind.⁵⁸⁴ //11.71//

nṛpo 'bravīt sāñjalir āgata-sprho yatheṣṭam āpnotu bhavān avighnataḥ /

avāpya kāle kṛta-kṛtyatām imām mamāpi kāryo bhavatā tv anugrahaḥ // 11.72 //

With hands joined as if in prayer, the protector of men spoke, inspired: "May you gain your end without hindrance, just as you desire. / But when in time you have accomplished this task, please show favour towards me too."⁵⁸⁵ //11.72//

⁵⁸² This verse features multiple plays on the imperative *ava*, from the root *√av* whose eighteen senses are said to include: to drive, impel, animate (as a car or horse); to promote, favour, to satisfy, refresh; to offer (as a hymn to the gods); to lead or bring to; (said of the gods) to be pleased with, like, accept favourably (as sacrifices, prayers or hymns); (chiefly said of kings or princes) to guard, defend, protect, govern.

⁵⁸³ One solution to this riddle is as follows: The enemy of cold (*himāri*) is fire; the enemy of the enemy of cold (*himāri-śatru*) is water, whose evaporation is described as *himāri-śatru-kṣaya*, "the evaporation of the enemy of cold's enemy." This evaporation takes place in the heat of the sun. The enemy of evaporation (*himāri-śatru-kṣaya-śatru*) is the darkness that blots out the sun. And the act of slaying that darkness is an act of knowing by which ignorance is destroyed, e.g. just sitting. The riddle thus presages the Buddha's discovery at the end of BC Canto 14 that to destroy ignorance is to demolish the whole edifice of suffering.

⁵⁸⁴ *Yāhi vimocayan manaḥ*, lit. "Go! unloosening the mind." Ostensibly the difficult riddle resolves itself into a short imperative which is not difficult to understand. Ironically, it turns out that the verbal riddle is no more difficult to solve than a cryptic crossword clue. But how many years of painful struggle are required to understand in practice the real meaning of *yāhi vimocayan manaḥ* ?

⁵⁸⁵ In the missing second half of Buddha-carita, Aśvaghōṣa relates how the Buddha does indeed return to Rāja-gr̥ha to demonstrate to Śreṇya what he has realized.

**sthiraṃ pratijñāya tatheti pārthive tataḥ sa vaiśvaṃtaram āśramaṃ yayau /
parivrajantaṃ tam udīkṣya vismito nṛpo 'pi vavrāja purim girivrajam // 11.73 //**

Having steadfastly promised to a lord of the earth, “So be it!”, [the bodhisattva] then proceeded to the ashram of an ‘all-conquering’ Viśvaṃtara.⁵⁸⁶ / After watching him with amazement as he went wandering off, the protector of men also went on his way, to his ‘mountain-fenced’ fortress, Giri-vraja.⁵⁸⁷ //11.73//

iti buddha-carite mahā-kāvye kāma-vigarhaṇo nāmaikā-daśaḥ sargaḥ // 11 //

The 11th canto, titled Blaming Desires,⁵⁸⁸
in an epic tale of awakened action.

⁵⁸⁶ Viśvaṃtara (viśva = all; tara = surpassing) is generally an epithet for a buddha, but here it refers to the sage Arāḍa.

⁵⁸⁷ Giri-vraja (“Mountain-Fenced”) is another name for Rāja-grha, the capital of Magadha.

⁵⁸⁸ It is not known with certainty whether the Canto title was chosen by Aśvaghoṣa himself or not. It is, then the irony of the Canto is that what is truly blamed, below the surface, is not being *ātmavān*, in possession of oneself.

Canto 12: arāḍa-darśanaḥ Seeing Arāḍa

Introduction

The length of the present Canto – 121 verses – is perhaps indicative of how important the Zen master Arāḍa was in the education of the Buddha-to-be.

Once again the two-word compound of the title allows plenty of ambiguity. *Darśana*, as an *-na* neuter action noun from the root *√drś*, to see, means showing or seeing. Other meanings of *darśana* include eye-sight; visiting, meeting with; experiencing, realizing; view, doctrine, philosophical system; and becoming visible or known.

Ostensibly in the Canto title *arāḍa* is the object of *darśana*; hence EH Johnston translated “Visit to Arāḍa.” The obvious alternative reading – since the bulk of the Canto is given over to Arāḍa’s setting out of his system in his own words – is “Arāḍa’s Doctrine” or “Arāḍa’s Philosophical System.”

The most important *darśana*, or realization, that the present Canto describes, however, comes towards the end of the Canto when the bodhisattva sees that sitting-meditation, on the basis of a healthy diet, is a true means to a true end, whereas ascetic self-denial is not. A Canto title that better conveyed this hidden meaning might be “Arāḍa / Seeing,” or “Arāḍa, and Realization.”

**tataḥ śama-vihārasya muner ikṣvāku-candramāḥ /
arāḍasyāśramaṁ bheje vapuṣā pūrayann iva // 12.1 //**

Then to the *vihāra* of a sage whose recreation ground was peace, the moon of the Ikṣvāku
betook himself – / To the ashram of Arāḍa he went, as if filling it with his shining form.
//12.1//

**sa kālāma-sa-gotreṇa tenālokaiva dūrataḥ /
uccaiḥ svāgatam ity uktaḥ samīpam upajagmivān // 12.2 //**

Seen from afar by that distant kinsman of Kālāma,⁵⁸⁹ / And greeted immediately with a welcome
that resounded up on high, he drew near. //12.2//

**tāv ubhau nyāyataḥ pṛṣṭvā dhātu-sāmyaṁ paras-param /
dāravyor medhyayor vṛṣyoḥ śucau deśe niṣedatuḥ // 12.3 //**

After each had asked, as was the rule, after the other’s good health, / On two spotless wooden
seats, at a clean place, the two of them sat. //12.3//

⁵⁸⁹ Arāḍa Kālāma was the name of the only person that the Buddha would later recognize as his teacher. Though this Canto also records his visit to Udraka Rāmaputra, the Buddha did not recognize that Udraka

**tam āsīnaṃ nṛpa-sutaṃ so 'bravīn muni-sattamaḥ /
bahumāna-viśālābhyāṃ darśanābhyāṃ pibann iva // 12.4 //**

That son of a protector of men, sitting!⁵⁹⁰ The best of sages sang his praises, / Eyes with admiration opened wide, as if drinking him in: //12.4//

**viditaṃ me yathā saumya niṣkrānto bhavanād asi /
chittvā sneha-mayaṃ pāśaṃ pāśaṃ dṛpta iva dvipaḥ // 12.5 //**

“It is clear to me, O moony man of *soma*, how you have come forth from a palace,⁵⁹¹ / Cutting the snare of affection like a wild elephant breaking free of a fetter. //12.5//

**sarvathā dhṛtimac caiva prājñāṃ caiva manas tava /
yas tvaṃ prāptaḥ śriyaṃ tyaktvā latāṃ viṣa-phalāṃ iva // 12.6 //**

Altogether steadfast, and wise, is your mind; / In that you have come here abandoning royal power as if it were a creeper bearing poison fruit. //12.6//

**nāścaryaṃ jīrṇa-vayasa yaj jagmuḥ pārthivā vanam /
apatyebhyaḥ śriyaṃ dattvā bhuktochhiṣṭāṃ iva srajam // 12.7 //**

No wonder is it that, in their old age, lords of the earth have gone to the forest, / Handing to their offspring royal power, like what is left of a used garland. //12.7//

**idaṃ me matam āścaryaṃ nave vayasi yad bhavān /
abhuktaiva śriyaṃ prāptaḥ sthito viṣaya-gocare // 12.8 //**

This I deem a wonder: that you in the flush of youth, / Without ever taking the reins of royal power, have come here, in the very thick of sense-objects. //12.8//

**tad vijñātum imaṃ dharmaṃ paramaṃ bhājanaṃ bhavān /
jñāna-plavam adhiṣṭhāya śīghraṃ duḥkhārṇavaṃ tara // 12.9 //**

To investigate this dharma, therefore, you are a supremely fit person. / Climbing aboard the raft of knowing, may you swiftly cross over the foaming sea of suffering. //12.9//

had been his teacher. (See *Ariyapariyesanasuttaṃ*, MN 26; The Discourse about the Noble Search. Trans. Ānandajoti Bhikkhu. See also note to verse 84 below.)

⁵⁹⁰ In the hidden meaning, Aśvaghōṣa pictured a student of a king of dharma, sitting in full lotus.

⁵⁹¹ As in many previous instances, *bhavanam* ostensibly means a palace but in the hidden meaning can mean a place of growth, and can be synonymous with *bhava*, becoming, or coming into existence, the 10th in the 12 links.

**śiṣye yady api vijñāte śāstram kālena varṇyate /
gāmbhīryād vyavasāyāc ca na parikṣyo bhavān mama // 12.10 //**

Although the teaching [as a rule] is elucidated after some time, when the student has been investigated, / From the depth of your sincerity, and the strength of your resolve, there is no need for me to examine you.” //12.10//

**iti vākyam arāḍasya vijñāya sa nararṣabhaḥ /
babhūva parama-prītaḥ provācottaram eva ca // 12.11 //**

As Arāḍa said these words, that bull among men, investigating his words, / Was highly delighted and in response, emphatically, up he spoke: //12.11//

**viraktasyāpi yad idam saumukhyaṁ bhavataḥ param /
akṛtārtho 'py anenāsmi kṛtārtha iva samprati // 12.12 //**

“Though untainted by emotion, you show this extreme good grace, / Because of which, although I have yet to realize the aim, I feel like I am just realizing the aim here and now. //12.12//

**didṛkṣur iva hi jyotir ziyāsur iva daiśikam /
tvad-darśanam aham manye titīrṣur iva ca plavam // 12.13 //**

For, as one who wishes to see esteems a light, as one who wishes to travel esteems a guide, / I esteem your way of seeing⁵⁹² – as, again, one who wishes to cross a river esteems a boat. //12.13//

**tasmād arhasi tad vaktum vaktavyam yadi manyase /
jarā-maraṇa-rogebhyo yathāyaṁ parimucyate // 12.14 //**

So please explain it, if you deem it apt to be explained, / So that, from aging, dying and disease, this being may be released.” //12.14//

**ity arāḍaḥ kumārasya mähātmyād eva coditaḥ /
samkṣiptam kathayām cakre svasya śāstrasya niścayam // 12.15 //**

Arāḍa, thus spurred by the prince's very great sincerity, / Related in brief the purport of his own teaching.⁵⁹³ //12.15//

⁵⁹² *Darśanam* sometimes means a view, an opinion; but in this context, as the three similes make clear, the meaning is more practical.

⁵⁹³ *Svasya śāstrasya niścayam*. Some commentators have taken Arāḍa as a teacher of saṁkhya philosophy, but this phrase indicates that what Arāḍa taught is what he had worked out for himself and made his own.

**śrūyatām ayam asmākaṁ siddhāntaḥ śṛṇvatām vara /
yathā bhavati saṁsāro yathā caiva nivartate // 12.16 //**

“Let this be learned, O best of listeners, as our ultimate purpose: / How saṁsāra comes into being, and how it ceases to be. //12.16//

**prakṛtiś ca vikāraś ca janma mṛtyur jaraiva ca /
tat tāvat sattvam ity uktaṁ sthira-sattva parehi tat // 12.17 //**

Prakṛti, the Primary Matter, and *Vikāra*, its Transformation; birth, death, and old age: / All that is called *Sattva*, Being. May you, O one whose being is steadfast, comprehend it! //12.17//

**tatra tu prakṛtir nāma viddhi prakṛti-kovida /
pañca bhūtāny ahaṁ-kāraṁ buddhim avyaktam eva ca // 12.18 //**

But what therein is called *Prakṛti*, the Primary Matter, know, O knower of what is primary! / As the five elements,⁵⁹⁴ self-consciousness, the intelligent, and *Avyaktam*, the Not Manifest. //12.18//

**vikāra iti budhyasva viṣayān indriyāṇi ca /
pāṇi-pādaṁ ca vādaṁ ca pāyūpasthaṁ tathā manaḥ // 12.19 //**

See as *Vikāra*, Transformation, the sense-objects and the senses, / The hands and feet, the [organ of] speech, the anus and reproductive organs – equally the mind. //12.19//

**asya kṣetrasya vijñānāt kṣetra-jña iti saṁjñi ca /
kṣetra-jña iti cātmanaṁ kathayanty ātma-cintakāḥ // 12.20 //**

Because it knows this field, the conscious is called *Kṣetra-jña*, ‘Knower of the Field.’ / At the same time, those who contemplate the *ātman*, the self,⁵⁹⁵ speak of the self as the knower of the field. //12.20//

**sa-śiṣyaḥ kapilaś ceha pratibuddhir iti smṛtaḥ /
sa-putro ’-pratibuddhas tu prajāpatir ihocyate // 12.21 //**

Kapila,⁵⁹⁶ the one studied by students, is known here as *Pratibuddhi*, the Awake; / Whereas *Prajāpati*,⁵⁹⁷ the one endowed with progeny, is called here *Apratibuddha*, the Not Awake.⁵⁹⁸ //12.21//

⁵⁹⁴ *Pañca bhūtāni*, the five elements: ether, air, fire, water, earth.

⁵⁹⁵ The meanings of *ātman* include 1. the self, as used in everyday speech in such statements as “I see myself in the mirror,” 2. the soul, as conceived in the imagination of religious types. Arāḍa's use of *ātman* is open to be read in either way.

⁵⁹⁶ “Kapila was the most eminent of the ancient Indian philosophers. His philosophical approach was unique and known as the *Saṁkhya* system. According to him truth must be supported by proof, i.e., perception or inference. Kapila denied the theory of creation of the universe by a being or God. He said the empirical universe consists of things evolved (*vyakta*) and things that are not evolved (*avyakta*). Kapila taught the two fundamentals of self or entity (*puruṣa*) and nature (*prakṛti*), or subject and object. All

jāyate jīryate caiva bādhyate mriyate ca yat /

tad vyaktam iti vijñeyam avyaktam tu viparyayāt // 12.22 //

What is born, what grows old, what is bound, what dies: / That is to be known as *Vyaktam*, the Manifest; otherwise it is *Avyaktam*, the Not Manifest. //12.22//

a-jñānam karma tṛṣṇā ca jñeyāḥ saṁsāra-hetavaḥ /

sthito 'smiṁs tritaye jantus tat sattvaṁ nātivartate // 12.23 //

Ignorance, karma, and thirsting are to be known as the causes of *saṁsāra*; / A creature set in these three ways fails to transcend the aforementioned *Sattva*, Being - //12.23//

vipratyayād ahaṁ-kārāt saṁdehād abhisamplavāt /

aviśeṣānupāyābhyāṁ saṅgād abhyavapātataḥ // 12.24 //

[It fails] because of wrong grounding, because of 'I-doing' self-consciousness, because of blurring of sight, because of blurring of boundaries, / Because of lack of discrimination and wrong means, because of attachment, and because of pulling down.⁵⁹⁹ //12.24//

tatra vipratyayo nāma viparītaṁ pravartate /

anyathā kurute kāryaṁ mantavyaṁ manyate 'nyathā // 12.25 //

Among those, 'wrong grounding' keeps setting movement in the wrong direction - / It causes to be done wrongly what is to be done; and causes to be thought wrongly what has to be thought. //12.25//

bravīmy ahaṁ ahaṁ vedmi gacchāmy ahaṁ ahaṁ sthitaḥ /

itīhaivam ahaṁ-kāras tv anahaṁ-kāra vartate // 12.26 //

I speak, I know, I go, I stand firm - / It is thus that here, O unselfconscious one!, the self-consciousness of 'I-doing' carries on. //12.26//

yas tu bhāvān a-saṁdigdhān ekī-bhāvena paśyati /

mṛt-piṇḍavad asaṁdeha saṁdehaḥ sa ihocyate // 12.27 //

But what sees not blurred things as coalesced into one mass, / Like a ball of mud - O one who is free of blur! - here that is called blurring of sight. //12.27//

experience is based on the duality of knowing subject (*puruṣa*) and the known object (*prakṛti*).” From *The First Sermon of the Buddha*; 1994 (under “Kapila, the Rationalist” pp.15), by Ven. Dr. Rewata Dhamma

⁵⁹⁷ Prajāpati, lit. “lord of creatures,” was revered as creator of the material universe having as his sons the five elements of ether, air, fire, water, and earth.

⁵⁹⁸ The opposition between Kapila and Prajāpati, then, as suggested by Arāda's description of the former as *sa-śisyaḥ* (with student/s) and the latter as *sa-putraḥ* (with his sons [= the elements]), may be seen as the opposition between the immaterial (especially the rational) and the material.

⁵⁹⁹ These eight are taken one by one in the following eight verses.

**ya evāhaṁ sa evedaṁ mano buddhiś ca karma ca /
yaś caivaiṣa gaṇaḥ so 'ham iti yaḥ so 'bhisamplavaḥ // 12.28 //**

'What I am is just this – this mind, this intelligence, this occupation. / Again, what this present group is, I am.' That is blurring of boundaries. //12.28//

**aviśeṣaṁ viśeṣa-jña pratibuddhāprabuddhayoḥ /
prakṛtīnāṁ ca yo veda so 'viśeṣa iti smṛtaḥ // 12.29 //**

What knows no distinction – O knower of distinctions! – between the Awake and the Not Awake,
/ Or among the constituent parts of the Primary Matter, is known as 'lack of discrimination.'
//12.29//

**namas-kāra-vaṣaṭ-kārau prokṣaṇābhyukṣaṇādayaḥ /
an-upāya iti prājñair upāya-jña praveditaḥ // 12.30 //**

Calling out *namas*, 'Homage!'; calling out *vaṣaṭ*, 'Into the flame!'; and sacrificial pre-sprinkling,
over-sprinkling, and the rest, / Are declared by the wise – O knower of means! – to be wrong
means. //12.30//

**sajjate yena dur-medhā mano-vāg-buddhi-karmabhiḥ /
viśayeṣv anabhiṣvaṅga so 'bhiṣvaṅga iti smṛtaḥ // 12.31 //**

That by which the dull-witted, using mind, voice, intent and actions, / Are tied fast to objects –
O one who is free of over-attachment! – that is known as over-attachment. //12.31//

**mamedam aham asyeti yad duḥkham abhimanyate /
vijñeyo 'bhyavapātaḥ sa saṁsāre yena pātyate // 12.32 //**

The suffering of 'This is mine,' 'I belong to this,' – the suffering which one invents – / Know, as
that suffering, the pulling down by which one is flung back into saṁsāra. //12.32//

**ity avidyām hi vidvān sa pañca-parvām samīhate /
tamo mohaṁ mahā-mohaṁ tāmīra-dvayam eva ca // 12.33 //**

Thus does the wise one, then, targeting ignorance, think of ignorance as fivefold: / As
obscuration, as delusion, as the Big Delusion, and as the two kinds of darkness. //12.33//

**tatrālasyaṁ tamo viddhi mohaṁ mṛtyuṁ ca janma ca /
mahā-mohaḥ tv asaṁmoha kāma ity eva gamyatām // 12.34 //**

Among these, know obscuration to be sloth, and delusion to be dying and being born; / But the
Big Delusion – O undeluded one! – understand to mean Love. //12.34//

**yasmād atra ca bhūtāni pramuhyanti mahānty api /
tasmād eṣa mahā-bāho mahā-moha iti smṛtaḥ // 12.35 //**

And since in Love even mighty beings swoon, / Therefore – O man of mighty arm! – it is known as the Big Delusion. //12.35//

**tāmisram iti cākrodha krodham evādhikurvate /
viśādam cāndha-tāmisram aviśāda pracakṣate // 12.36 //**

With the word ‘darkness’ – O one without anger! – they refer to anger. / And depression – O irrepressible one! – they call ‘blind darkness.’ //12.36//

**anayāvidyayā bālaḥ saṃyuktaḥ pañca-parvayā /
saṃsāre duḥkha-bhūyiṣṭhe janmasv abhiniṣicyate // 12.37 //**

The immature person who is possessed of this fivefold ignorance / Into saṃsāra, where suffering prevails, in birth after birth is swept.⁶⁰⁰ //12.37//

**draṣṭā śrotā ca mantā ca kārya-karaṇam eva ca /
aham ity evam āgamya saṃsāre parivartate // 12.38 //**

‘The seer, the hearer, the thinker, and the very act of doing of what is to be done – / All that is I.’ Having fallen into such thoughts, around and round he goes in saṃsāra. //12.38//

**ity ebhir hetubhir dhīman janma-srotaḥ pravartate /
hetv abhāvāt phalābhāva iti vijñātum arhasi // 12.39 //**

Thus – O perspicacious one! – in the presence of these causes, the stream of births starts flowing. / In the absence of causes, there is no effect, as you are to investigate. //12.39//

**tatra samyañ-matir vidyān mokṣa-kāma catuṣṭayam /
pratibuddhāprabuddhau ca vyaktam avyaktam eva ca // 12.40 //**

In that absence – O desirer of release! – a right-minded man may know the four: / The Awake and the Not Awake; the Manifest and the Not Manifest.⁶⁰¹ //12.40//

**yathāvad etad vijñāya kṣetra-jño hi catuṣṭayam /
ājavanjavatām hitvā prāpnoti padam akṣaram // 12.41 //**

For having properly fathomed this four, the knower of the field / Abandons the rushing torrent of births and deaths and realizes the undying step. //12.41//

⁶⁰⁰ *Abhiniṣicyate*. as when a person is swept away by a fast-flowing river. Nāgārjuna picks up *niṣicyate* and uses it in MMK26.2 – *nāma-rūpaṃ niṣicyate*, “psycho-physicality is instilled.” The root *vsic* has a liquid connotation, meaning to pour, sprinkle, or irrigate.

⁶⁰¹ Cf. the Buddha, quoted in Shobogenzo chap. 61, Kembutsu, Meeting Buddha: “If we see [both] the many forms and [their] non-form, we at once meet the Tathāgata.”

**ity arthaṁ brāhmaṇā loke parama-brahma-vādinah /
brahma-caryam carantiha brāhmaṇān vāsanti ca // 12.42 //**

For this purpose brahmins⁶⁰² here on earth, giving voice to the highest brahma⁶⁰³, / Practise here and now brahma-practice,⁶⁰⁴ and cause brahmins to dwell in it.”⁶⁰⁵ //12.42//

**iti vākyam idaṁ śrutvā munes tasya nṛpātmajaḥ /
abhyupāyam ca papraccha padam eva ca naiṣṭhikam // 12.43 //**

The prince, having listened to these words of that sage, / Asked about the means; and about the step, yes,⁶⁰⁶ which represents the end. //12.43//

**brahma-caryam idaṁ caryam yathā yāvac ca yatra ca /
dharmasyāsyā ca paryantaṁ bhavān vyākhyātum arhati // 12.44 //**

“How is this brahma-practice to be practised? And to what lengths? And where? / Again, what is the end-point of this dharma? Will you please explain in detail.” //12.44//

**ity arāḍo yathā-śāstraṁ vispaṣṭārthaṁ samāsataḥ /
tam evānyena kalpena dharmam asmai vyabhāṣata // 12.45 //**

And so Arāḍa, by the book, succinctly, making his meaning plain, / Tried again, in a different way, to explain to him that same dharma. //12.45//

**ayam ādau gṛhān muktvaḥ bhaikṣākaṁ liṅgam āśritaḥ /
samudācāra-vistīrṇaṁ śīlam ādāya vartate // 12.46 //**

“First, having left home and adopted the beggar’s emblem, / Having taken to the way of integrity which is riveted with acts done well, the one in question carries on. //12.46//

⁶⁰² In a pejorative sense a *brāhmaṇa*, or brahmin, is a man of the priestly caste responsible for divine knowledge of the supreme Spirit (*brahma*) or of the personal god (*brahmā*). In this sense, the Brahmanism of a brahmin in the Buddha's teaching is just another view to be abandoned. But, for example, in the final chapter of *Udāna-varga*, titled *Brahmāṇa-varga*, the Buddha seems to have used the term *brāhmaṇam* in an affirmative sense, for a person devoted to psycho-physical growth and development.

⁶⁰³ *Parama-brahma-vādinah* ostensibly means “speaking of the Supreme Spirit, Brahma” i.e. speaking of God. But *brahma* (from the root *√bṛh*, to become fat, to grow) has many possible meanings, including a pious effusion; a mantra, especially the sacred syllable Om; and the spiritual or celibate life (see following note).

⁶⁰⁴ *Brahma-carya*, “brahma-practice,” narrowly means celibacy – see e.g. SN11.25 where Nanda is ridiculed for practising devout abstinence (*brahma-caryam*) for the sake of non-abstinence (*a-brahma-caryāya*) with heavenly nymphs.

⁶⁰⁵ Below the surface, the suggestion may be that promoting growth in others is the highest thing we can aspire to.

⁶⁰⁶ The emphatic *eva* seems designed to remind us that in the final analysis, the point of polishing a tile might be – abandoning a Soto Zen view – to make a mirror.

**saṁtoṣaṁ param āsthāya yena tena yatas tataḥ /
viviktaṁ sevate vāsaṁ nir-dvandvaḥ śāstra-vit kṛtī // 12.47 //**

Staying close to the deepest contentment, with whatever, from wherever, / He abides in seclusion, free from dichotomies: a knower of the teaching, a man of action.⁶⁰⁷ //12.47//

**tato rāgād bhayaṁ dr̥ṣṭvā vairāgyāc ca param śivam /
nigr̥hṇann indriya-grāmaṁ yatate manasaḥ śame // 12.48 //**

He sees, on these grounds, how horror arises out of redness, but the highest happiness out of its absence, / And he mobilizes himself – curbing the senses – in the direction of quieting of the mind. //12.48//

**atho viviktaṁ kāmebhyo vyāpādādibhya eva ca /
viveka-jam avāpnoti pūrva-dhyānaṁ vitarkavat // 12.49 //**

Then he arrives at a stage secluded from desires, and also from things like malice; / He reaches the stage born of seclusion – the first dhyāna, in which there is thinking.⁶⁰⁸ //12.49//

**tac ca dhyāna-sukhaṁ prāpya tat tad eva vitarkayan /
apūrva-sukha-lābhena hriyate bālīśo janaḥ // 12.50 //**

Experiencing this state of meditative ease, while thinking various things – this but also that – / The immature person is carried away by enjoyment of the new-found happiness. //12.50//

**śamenaivaṁ vidhenāyaṁ kāma-dveṣa-vigarhiṇā /
brahma-lokam avāpnoti paritoṣeṇa vañcitaḥ // 12.51 //**

Via tranquillity of this order, which is the renouncing of loves and of hates, / At a brahma-world⁶⁰⁹ this [youngster] arrives – if, by feeling fully satisfied, he is taken in. //12.51//

⁶⁰⁷ The real meaning of this line was totally lost on those in China who spoke of “a separate transmission outside of the teaching.” For them, Zen was all about being a man of action, while thinking light of verbal teaching.

⁶⁰⁸ Arāḍa's description of the four dhyānas tallies very well with the description in SN Canto 17 of Nanda's practice and experience, viz: *Distanced from desires and tainted things, containing ideas and containing thoughts / Born of solitude and possessed of joy and ease, is the first stage of meditation, which he then entered. // SN17.42 //*

⁶⁰⁹ A spiritual state.

jñātvā vidvān vitarkāms tu manaḥ-samkṣobha-kāraṅgān /

tad-viyuktam avāpnoti dhyānaṁ prīti-sukhānvitam // 12.52 //

The wise one, in contrast, knowing thoughts to cause agitation of the mind, / Arrives at a stage divorced from that, a dhyāna containing its own joy and ease.⁶¹⁰ //12.52//

hriyamāṇas tayā prītyā yo viśeṣaṁ na paśyati /

sthānaṁ bhāsvaram āpnoti deveṣv ābhāsuresu saḥ // 12.53 //

If, carried away by this joy, he sees no higher distinction, / He occupies a resplendent station among Ābhāsura deities, the Shining Gods.⁶¹¹ //12.53//

yas tu prīti-sukhāt tasmād vivecayati mānasam /

ṭṭīyaṁ labhate dhyānaṁ sukhaṁ prīti-vivarjitaṁ // 12.54 //

The one, in contrast, who separates his mind from this joy and ease, / Obtains the third dhyāna – which has the ease without the joy.⁶¹² //12.54//

yas tu tasmin sukhe magno na viśeṣāya yatnavān /

śubha-kṛtsnaiḥ sa sāmānyaṁ sukhaṁ prāpnoti daivataiḥ // 12.55 //

He who, immersed in this ease, has no will to higher distinction, / Experiences ease as one with Śubha-kṛtsna deities, the Gods of Resplendent Wholeness.⁶¹³ //12.55//

tādṛśaṁ sukhaṁ āsādyā yo na rajyaty upekṣakaḥ /

caturthaṁ dhyānaṁ āpnoti sukha-duḥkha-vivarjitaṁ // 12.56 //

The one who, sitting in the presence of such ease, is not enamoured of it but is indifferent – / He reaches the fourth dhyāna, beyond ease and suffering.⁶¹⁴ //12.56//

⁶¹⁰ Cf SN Canto 17: Even in that, he realised, ideas about aforesaid things, and thoughts about what is or is not good, / Are something not quieted, causing disturbance in the mind, and so he decided to cut them out. // SN17.44 //...And so gradually bereft of idea and thought, his mind tranquil from one-pointedness, / He realised the joy and ease born of balanced stillness – that inner wellbeing which is the second stage of meditation. // SN17.47 //

⁶¹¹ A state of intense spiritual ecstasy. Ibid: And on reaching that stage, in which the mind is silent, he experienced an intense joy that he had never experienced before. / But here too he found a fault, in joy, just as he had in ideas. // SN17.48 //

⁶¹² Ibid: For when a man finds intense joy in anything, paradoxically, suffering for him is right there. / Hence, seeing the faults there in joy, he kept going up, into practice that goes beyond joy. // SN17.49 // And so experiencing the ease enjoyed by the noble ones, from non-attachment to joy, knowing it totally, with his body, / He remained indifferent, fully aware, and, having realised the third stage of meditation, steady. // SN17.50 //

⁶¹³ Ibid: Since the ease here is beyond any ease, and there is no progression of ease beyond it, / Therefore, as a knower of higher and lower, he realised it as a condition of resplendent wholeness which he deemed – in a friendly way – to be superlative. // SN17.51 //

⁶¹⁴ Ibid: Then, having already transcended ease and suffering, and emotional reactivity, / He realised the lucidity in which there is indifference and full awareness: thus, beyond suffering and ease, is the fourth stage of meditation. // 17.54 //

**tatra ke-cid vyavasyanti mokṣa ity abhimāninaḥ /
sukha-duḥkha-parityāgād avyāpārāc ca cetasaḥ // 12.57 //**

Some settle for that stage, thinking it, in their conceit, to be liberation – / Because of the giving up of ease and suffering, and because of the inactivity of the mind. //12.57//

**asya dhyānasya tu phalaṁ samaṁ devair bṛhat-phalaiḥ /
kathayanti bṛhat-kālaṁ bṛhat-prajñā-parīkṣakāḥ // 12.58 //**

Whereas, truly, the fruit of this act of meditating, like the abundant⁶¹⁵ fruit of the Bṛhat-phala deities, the Gods of Fat Profit, / Is immensely long-lasting – say those who investigate the vast real wisdom.⁶¹⁶ //12.58//

**samādher vyutthitas tasmād drṣṭvā doṣānīś charīriṇām /
jñānam ārohati prājñāḥ śarīra-vinivṛttaye // 12.59 //**

The man of wisdom, giving up the balancing act of that samādhi, having seen the faults of people possessed of bodies,⁶¹⁷ / Rises to the challenge which is the act of knowing – he rises up, in the direction of bodily extinction.⁶¹⁸ //12.59//

**tatas tad-dhyānam utsrjya viśeṣe kṛta-nīścayaḥ /
kāmebhya iva sat-prājñō rūpād api virajyate // 12.60 //**

Having thus let go of that meditation, and with his mind set on higher distinction, / The one who really understands what is real – like he lost interest in desires – loses interest in form.⁶¹⁹ //12.60//

**śarīre khāni yāny asya tāny ādau parikalpayan /
ghaneṣv api tato dravyeṣv ākāśam adhimucyate // 12.61 //**

Of spaces which are openings in his body, first he forms a picture; / Then in solid masses also, he affirms space. //12.61//

⁶¹⁵ Abundant, Fat, immensely and vast, are all translations of *bṛhat*, from the root $\sqrt{bṛh}$ which is discussed above in connection with *brahma*.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid. Consequently, relying on the fourth stage of meditation, he made up his mind to win the worthy state, / Like a king joining forces with a strong and noble ally and then aspiring to conquer unconquered lands. // SN17.56 //

⁶¹⁷ *Śarīriṇām*, embodied beings. Ostensibly, all earthly creatures. In the ironic hidden meaning, the unduly body-conscious.

⁶¹⁸ With this verse Arāḍa's description appears on the surface to depart from what the Buddha will later teach. Below the surface, however, throwing away concern about feeling balanced in one's being and looking good in one's form, might be a true step on the way of dropping off body and mind. Cf: *Then he cut the five upper fetters: with the sword of intuitive wisdom which is raised aloft by cultivation of the mind, / He completely severed the five aspirational fetters, which are bound up with superiority, and tied to the first person. // SN17.57 //*

⁶¹⁹ Like the women sleeping in odd postures in Canto 5.

**ākāśa-gatam ātmānaṁ saṁkṣīpya tv aparo budhaḥ /
tad evānantataḥ paśyan viśeṣam adhigacchati // 12.62 //**

Another one who is wise, in contrast, condenses into the centre the self that permeates space, /
And, seeing even that as unbounded, he thereby attains distinction.⁶²⁰ //12.62//

**adhyātma-kuśalaḥ tv anyo nivartyātmānam ātmanā /
kiṁ-cin nāstīti saṁpaśyann ākiṁcanya iti smṛtaḥ // 12.63 //**

But one who is different, one who is skilful in regard to his own self, having dropped off the self
by means of the self, / In realizing that there is nothing there, is known as a man of being
without anything.⁶²¹ //12.63//

**tato muñjād iṣikeva śakuniḥ pañjarād iva /
kṣetra-jñō niḥṣṛto dehān mukta ity abhidhīyate // 12.64 //**

Thus, like the stalk from a sheath of *muñja* grass,⁶²² like a big bird from its cage, / The Knower of
the Field, escaped from the body, is said to be liberated.⁶²³ //12.64//

**etat tat paramaṁ brahma nirlīṅgaṁ dhruvam akṣaram /
yan mokṣa itī tattva-jñāḥ kathayanti maṇiṣiṇaḥ // 12.65 //**

This is that supreme Brahma, beyond emblematic representation, constant, imperishable, /
Which those who know the truth, learned brahmins, call ‘Liberation.’⁶²⁴ //12.65//

**ity upāyaś ca mokṣaś ca mayā saṁdarśitas tava /
yadi jñātaṁ yadi rucir yathāvat pratipadyatām // 12.66 //**

Thus the means, and the liberation, I have revealed to you; / If you have understood it, and if it
pleases you, undertake it properly. //12.66//

⁶²⁰ Cf what the Buddha tells Nanda in SN Canto 16: “It may not be possible, following a single method, to kill off bad ideas that habit has so deeply entrenched; / In that case, one should commit to a second course but never give up the good work.” // SN16.70 //

⁶²¹ Ostensibly Arāḍa is describing a man with peculiar insight into the *ātman*, the self, or – for the spiritually-minded – the individual vs. the universal soul. In the hidden meaning, *anyaḥ* again points to one beyond conventional understanding. He or she realizes what is to be realized simply in being without anything.

⁶²² *Saccharum bengalense* is a species of grass that grows very tall – Arāḍa seems to be indicating a conspicuous happening of some sort.

⁶²³ If we accept the irony of the preceding verses, in which, below the surface, Arāḍa's teaching is a perfect mirror of what the Buddha himself will later teach, then this verse may be taken as the one that flags up the essential difference between Arāḍa's teaching and the dharma that the Buddha will teach.

⁶²⁴ Arāḍa in the final analysis is a believer in the Supreme Brahma, Who is above and beyond the material world.

**jaigīṣavyo 'tha janako vṛddhaś caiva parāśaraḥ /
imaṃ panthānam āsādyā muktā hy anye ca mokṣiṇaḥ // 12.67 //**

For Jaigīṣavya, 'Son of Ambition,' and Janaka, 'The Begetter', as well as Vṛddha Parāśara, 'The Old Crusher,' / By realizing this path in their sitting,⁶²⁵ were liberated – as were other liberation-seekers, being different.⁶²⁶ //12.67//

**iti tasya sa tad-vākyaṃ gṛhītvā tu vicārya ca /
pūrva-hetu-bala-prāptaḥ pratyuttaram uvāca ha // 12.68 //**

But [the bodhisattva], having taken in these words of the other, and reflected on them this way and that, / Being possessed of the power of previous causes, spoke up in reply: //12.68//

**śrutaṃ jñānam idaṃ sūkṣmaṃ parataḥ parataḥ śivam /
kṣetra-jñāsyāparityāgād avaimy etad anaiṣṭhikam // 12.69 //**

"I have listened to this wisdom of yours, which grows more subtle stage by stage, and more wholesome, / But insofar as the Knower of the Field is not abandoned, I see this wisdom as short of the ultimate. //12.69//

**vikāra-prakṛtibhyo hi kṣetra-jñāṃ muktam apy aham /
manye prasava-dharmāṇaṃ bīja-dharmāṇam eva ca // 12.70 //**

For, I consider 'the Knower of the Field,' even when freed from 'the Transformed and the Primary,' / To be engendering in nature and to be, in its very nature, a seed. //12.70//

**viśuddho yady api hy ātmā nirmukta iti kalpyate /
bhūyaḥ pratyaya-sad-bhāvād amuktaḥ sa bhaviṣyati // 12.71 //**

For even if the pure self⁶²⁷ – 'the soul' – is declared to have been released, / Once again, as long as the grounds exist, it will become not released. //12.71//

**ṛtu-bhūmy-ambu-virahād yathā bījaṃ na rohati /
rohati pratyayais tais tais tadvat so 'pi mato mama // 12.72 //**

Just as, in the absence of season, soil and water, a seed does not grow, / But does rise up when those various causal grounds are present, so also, as I see it, does ['the soul.']⁶²⁸ //12.72//

⁶²⁵ Meanings of *ā-√sad* include 1. to meet with, reach, realize; and 2. to sit, sit near.

⁶²⁶ As in so many previous instances, *anye* (others) in its hidden meaning suggests real individuals, who do not conform to easy assumptions or idealistic expectations.

⁶²⁷ By *viśuddhaḥ... ātmā*, the pure self, the bodhisattva indicates that he has in view not the self we refer to in everyday speech but the self as philosophical or religious abstraction, the soul.

⁶²⁸ Ostensibly the bodhisattva thus recognizes the existence of a soul. But in the real meaning, what he recognizes is the arising in people's deluded minds of a concept.

**yat karmājñāna-tṛṣṇānām tyāgān mokṣas ca kalpyate /
atyantas tat-parityāgaḥ saty ātmani na vidyate // 12.73 //**

And as for liberation being brought about through letting go of karma, ignorance and thirsting,
/ There is no complete abandonment of these three so long as the soul persists. //12.73//

**hitvā hitvā trayam idaṁ viśeṣas tūpalabhyate /
ātmanas tu sthitir yatra tatra sūkṣmam idaṁ trayam // 12.74 //**

By deeper and deeper abandoning of these three, higher distinction is obtained, / But where the
soul prevails, there – subtly – these three are. //12.74//

**sūkṣmatvāc caiva doṣāṇām avyāpārāc ca cetasaḥ /
dīrghatvād āyusas caiva mokṣas tu parikalpyate // 12.75 //**

And yet, because of the subtlety of the faults, because of the inactivity of the mind, / And
because of the length of a lifetime, liberation is posited. //12.75//

**ahaṁ-kāra-parityāgo yaś caiṣa parikalpyate /
saty ātmani parityāgo nāhaṁ-kārasya vidyate // 12.76 //**

As for this abandonment of the self-consciousness of ‘I-doing’ which, again, is posited – / So
long as the soul persists there has been no abandonment of ‘I-doing.’ //12.76//

**saṁkhyādibhir amuktaś ca nir-guṇo na bhavaty ayam /
tasmād asati nairguṇye nāsy mokṣo ’bhidhīyate // 12.77 //**

Again, when not freed from intellectual efforts like enumeration, this [abandonment] does not
become free of defining features; / Therefore, in the absence of freedom from defining
features,⁶²⁹ there is said to be no freedom in it. //12.77//

**guṇino hi guṇānām ca vyatireko na vidyate /
rūpoṣṇābhyām virahito na hy agnir upalabhyate // 12.78 //**

For between things defined by features and the defining features there is no gap – / Bereft of
form and heat, no fire, for example, is realized. //12.78//

**prāg dehān na bhaved dehī prāg guṇebhyas tathā guṇī /
tasmād ādau vimuktaḥ san śarīrī badhyate punaḥ // 12.79 //**

Prior to the body, no owner of a body can exist; prior to defining features, likewise, nothing
defined by features can exist. / On this basis does the possessor of a body, having been free from
the beginning, become bound again.⁶³⁰ //12.79//

⁶²⁹ “Freedom from defining features” is *nairguṇya*, translated in BC Canto 6 as “the being-without virtue.”
See BC6.24.

⁶³⁰ An ironic expression of donkey business arriving, in the everyday life of a Zen practitioner.

**kṣetra-jñō vi-śarīraś ca jñō vā syād ajña eva vā /
yadi jñō jñeyam asyāsti jñeye sati na mucyate // 12.80 //**

Again, a disembodied knower of the field must be either a knower or else unknowing. / If he is a knower, something remains that he should know, and in something remaining that he should know, he is not liberated. //12.80//

**athājña iti siddho vaḥ kalpītena kim ātmanā /
vināpi hy ātmanājñānam prasiddham kāṣṭha-kuḍyavat // 12.81 //**

Or else, if it's your conclusion that he is unknowing, then what is the point of inventing a soul? / For even when the soul is absent, not knowing is well established [or realizing is realized] – as in the case of a log or a wall. //12.81//⁶³¹

**parataḥ paratas tyāgo yasmāt tu guṇavān smṛtaḥ /
tasmāt sarva-parityāgān manye kṛtsnām kṛtārthatām // 12.82 //**

But since abandonment that goes further and further back, is known, according to tradition, to be excellent, / Therefore I suppose that from abandoning all follows complete accomplishment of the task.” //12.82//

**iti dharmam arāḍasya vīditvā na tutoṣa saḥ /
akṛtsnam iti vijñāya tata pratijagāma ha // 12.83 //**

Thus, having understood the dharma of Arāḍa, he was not satisfied. / Knowing it to be incomplete, back he went from there. //12.83//

**viśeṣam atha śuśrūṣur udrakasyāśramam yayau /
ātma-grāhāc ca tasyāpi jagṛhe na sa darśanam // 12.84 //**

So, desiring to learn of deeper distinction, he went to the ashram of Udraka.⁶³² / And his doctrine,⁶³³ which was grounded in the notion of a soul, he also did not accept. //12.84//

⁶³¹ The second half of this verse can be read in a number of ways, partly because of the ambiguity of *ātmanājñānam*, which could be *ātmanā + jñānam* (knowing) or *ātmanā + ajñānam* (not knowing) or *ātmanā + ājñānam* (realizing, noticing).

⁶³² In *The First Sermon of the Buddha*, as quoted above, Ven. Rewata Dhamma noted that Udraka himself had not attained the realm of neither perception nor non-perception. He told the Bodhisattva only what the ascetic Rāma had achieved. So when the Bodhisattva proved himself to be the equal of his master [Rāma], he offered the Bodhisattva the leadership, and practising under the Bodhisattva's guidance, he himself attained the highest jhānic state of neither perception nor non-perception.

Again, Ānandajoti Bhikkhu has pointed out, based on his translations of Ariyapariyesanasuttaṃ (MN 26) and Bodhirājakumārasuttaṃ (MN 85), that the Buddha did not refer to Udraka as having been his teacher. He rather described Udraka as having been a friend in brahma-practice (Pāli: *sabrahmacāri*).

Thus Arāḍa seems to have been the only one that the Buddha recognized as having been his teacher, and this is reflected in the relatively detailed attention given to Arāḍa's own words in this Canto.

⁶³³ *Darśanam*, view, doctrine, translated earlier (with reference to Arāḍa in verse 13) as “way of seeing”; and in the Canto title – where *darśana* could carry several possible meanings – simply as “Seeing.”

**saṃjñāsaṃjñītvayor doṣaṃ jñātvā hi munir udrakaḥ /
ākīmcanyāt paraṃ lebhe saṃjñāsaṃjñātmikāṃ gatim // 12.85 //**

For, knowing the fault in the duality of consciousness and unconsciousness, the sage Udraka had glimpsed, / Beyond being without anything, the [single] realm made up of consciousness and unconsciousness. //12.85//

**yasmāc cālāmbane sūkṣme saṃjñāsaṃjñīe tataḥ param /
nāsaṃjñī naiva saṃjñēti tasmāt tatra gata-spr̥haḥ // 12.86 //**

Since, again, there are subtle dual underpinnings in consciousness and in unconsciousness, [Udraka understood] that beyond that duality / There was neither the unconscious nor consciousness, on which grounds, being there, one was free of aspiring. //12.86//

**yataś ca buddhis tatraiva sthitānyatrāpracāriṇī /
sūkṣmāpaṭvī tatas tatra nāsaṃjñītvam na saṃjñītā // 12.87 //**

Again, because the mind, being right there, stood still, not wandering elsewhere, / Therefore in that state – that subtle, not intellectual, state of the mind – there was neither unconsciousness nor consciousness. //12.87//

**yasmāc ca tad api prāpya punar āvartate jagat /
bodhi-sattvaḥ paraṃ prepsus tasmād udrakam atyajat // 12.88 //**

But since, again, even having reached that state, [the mind] returns to the jostling world, / Therefore, desiring to reach the ultimate, the bodhisattva left Udraka. //12.88//

**tato hitvāśramaṃ tasya śreyo 'rthī kṛta-niścayaḥ /
bheje gayasya rājarṣer nagarī-saṃjñam āśramam // 12.89 //**

Thus having abandoned the ashram of that sage, seeking better, with determination, / He betook himself to the hermitage of the royal seer Gaya – to the ashram known as Nagarī. //12.89//

**atha nairāṅjanā-tīre śucau śuci-parākramaḥ /
cakāra vāsam ekānta-vihārābhiratir muniḥ // 12.90 //**

And so, on a pure bank of the Nairāṅjanā, he whose heroic endeavour was pure / Took up his dwelling as a sage who delighted in a solitary vihāra – a lonely practice-place, and the pleasure ground of devotion to a single end.⁶³⁴ //12.90//

⁶³⁴ The meanings of *ekānta* (*eka* = one + *anta* = end, border) include 1. a lonely or secret place, and 2. devotion to one object.

**[* * *] tat-pūrvam pañcendriya-vaśoddhatān /
tapaḥ [* *] vratino bhikṣūn pañca niraikṣata // 12.91 //**

Then he saw the five who had retreated there before him, raised up by their dominion over the five senses / As they upheld their vows of ascetic practice – he saw the five ascetic mendicants. //12.91//

**te copatasthur dṛṣṭvātra bhikṣavas taṁ mumukṣavaḥ /
puṇyārjita-dhanārogyam indriyārthā iveśvaram // 12.92 //**

Those bhikṣus saw him there and, desiring liberation, came up to him / As sensory objects answer to the capable one whose material riches, and freedom from disease, are earned on merit.⁶³⁵ //12.92//

**sampūjyamānas taiḥ prahvair vinayād anuvartibhiḥ /
tad-vaśa-sthāyibhiḥ śiṣyair lolair mana ivendriyaiḥ // 12.93 //**

He was greatly honoured by those [five] humble followers. Being obedient, because of training, they deferred to him, / Abiding as disciples under his dominion, like the restless senses deferring to the mind.⁶³⁶ //12.93//

**mṛtyu-janmānta-karaṇe syād upāyo 'yam ity atha /
duṣkarāṇi samārebhe tapāṁsy anaśanena saḥ // 12.94 //**

He intuited that here might be a means to end death and birth⁶³⁷ / Whereupon he undertook harsh austerities, going without food. //12.94//

**upavāsa-vidhīn naikān kurvan nara-durācarān /
varṣāṇi ṣaṭ śama-prepsur akarot kārśyam ātmanaḥ // 12.95 //**

Doing many kinds of fasting that were difficult for a man to do, / For six years, in the quest for peace, he wasted himself away. //12.95//

**anna-kāleṣu caikaikaiḥ sa kola-tila-taṇḍulaiḥ /
apāra-pāra-saṁsāra-pāraṁ prepsur apārayat // 12.96 //**

At mealtimes, with jujube fruits, sesame seeds, and grains of rice, one by one, / In his quest for the far end of saṁsāra, where there is no end to ends, he kept himself alive. //12.96//

⁶³⁵ The teaching point is that in the real world – as opposed to the realm of human ideologies – hierarchies naturally exist.

⁶³⁶ The simile ostensibly says something about the relation between the five bhikṣus and the bodhisattva, but again Aśvaghōṣa is more interested, below the surface, in describing subordination of the senses to the mind.

⁶³⁷ Ostensibly he wrongly intuited that ascetic austerities might be a means. In the hidden meaning, he rightly intuited that subordination of the senses to the mind might be a means.

dehād apacayas tena tapasā tasya yaḥ kṛtaḥ /

sa evopacayo bhūyas tejasāsyā kṛto 'bhavat // 12.97 //

Whatever was taken out of his body by that ascetic practice, / Was made up for by his amazing energy. //12.97//

kṛśo 'py akṛśa-kīrti-śrīr hlādam cakre 'nya-cakṣuṣām /

kumudānām iva śarac-chukla-pakṣādi-candramāḥ // 12.98 //

Pared down as he was, yet with his glory and majesty unimpaired, he gladdened other eyes,⁶³⁸ /
As the hairy moon-lilies are gladdened,⁶³⁹ at the beginning of the bright fortnight,⁶⁴⁰ by the autumn moon. //12.98//

tvag-asthi-śeṣo niḥśeṣair medaḥ-piṣita-śoṇitaiḥ /

kṣiṇo 'py akṣiṇa-gāmbhīryaḥ samudra iva sa vyabhāt // 12.99 //

Reduced to skin and bone, with no reserves remaining of fat or flesh or blood, / Diminished, and yet undiminished in his inner depths, like the sea, he sparkled. //12.99//

atha kaṣṭa-tapaḥ-spaṣṭa-vyārtha-kliṣṭa-tanur muniḥ /

bhava-bhīrur imām cakre buddhiṃ buddhatva-kāṅkṣayā // 12.100 //

And so the sage whose body was evidently being tormented, to no avail, by pernicious austerities, / Formed – while being wary of becoming – the following resolve, in his longing for buddhahood. //12.100//

nāyam dharmo virāgāya na bodhāya na muktaye /

jambu-mūle mayā prāpto yas tadā sa vidhir dhruvaḥ // 12.101 //

“This dharma is good neither for detachment, nor for awakening, nor for liberation. / What I realized back then, at the foot of the rose-apple tree – that is a sure method.⁶⁴¹ //12.101//

⁶³⁸ *Anya-cakṣuṣām*: ostensible meaning: to the eyes of others; hidden meaning: to eyes which were different, to eyes that were contrarian, to eyes not bound to conventional ways of seeing.

⁶³⁹ The *kumada* (= *Nymphaea pubescens*, the white water lily or hairy water lily) is seen in Sanskrit poetry as having a particularly strong connection with the moon. Hence *kaumudī* (of the hairy water lily) is another word for moonlight; and the moon is variously known as *kumuda-pati* (master of the hairy water lily), *kumada-suhr̥d* (friend of the hairy water lily), and so on. In Kālidāsa's famous poem *Vikramorvāṣīya*, the king will revive at the touch of Urvāṣī's hand, just as the hairy water lily blooms only under the moon's rays.

⁶⁴⁰ *Śuklā-pakṣa* means the bright half of a month, the fifteen days when the moon is waxing.

⁶⁴¹ See description of the prince naturally entering the first dhyāna, BC5.8 ff: Desiring to be alone with his thoughts, he fended away those amicable hangers on / And drew close to the root of a solitary rose-apple tree whose abundant plumage fluttered agreeably all around. //5.8// There he sat upon the honest, verdant earth whose horizons shimmered like emeralds; / And, while reflecting how the living world arises and perishes, he dangled on the path of standing firmly upright, which is of the mind. //5.9// In stumbling upon firm upstandingness of the mind, he was instantly released from worries, such as those associated with desires for objects; / He entered the first peaceful stage, in which there are ideas and thoughts, of the meditation whose essence is freedom from polluting influences. //5.10//

na cāsau durbalenāptuṃ śakyam ity āgatādarah /

śarīra-bala-vṛddhy-artham idaṃ bhūyo ’nvacintayat // 12.102 //

But that cannot be realized by one who is weak.” Thus did he reflect. / Still more, with a view to increasing his bodily strength, on this did he meditate further: //12.102//

kṣut-pipāsā-śrama-klāntaḥ śramād asvastha-mānasaḥ /

prāpnuyān manasāvāpyaṃ phalaṃ katham anirvṛtaḥ // 12.103 //

“Worn out by hunger, thirst and fatigue, with a mind that, from fatigue, is not well in itself, / How can one obtain the result which is to be realized by the mind – when one is not contented? //12.103//

nirvṛtiḥ prāpyate samyak satatendriya-tarpaṇāt /

saṃtarpitendriyatayā manaḥ-svāsthyam avāpyate // 12.104 //

Contentment is properly obtained through keeping the senses constantly appeased; / By full appeasement of the senses, wellness of the mind is realized. //12.104//

svastha-prasanna-manasaḥ samādhir upapadyate /

samādhi-yukta-cittasya dhyāna-yogaḥ pravartate // 12.105 //

In one whose mind is well and tranquil, *samādhi*, balanced stillness, sets in. / In one whose mind is possessed of *samādhi*, *dhyāna*, meditative practice, progresses. //12.105//

dhyāna-pravartanād dharmāḥ prāpyante yair avāpyate /

durlabhaṃ śāntam ajaraṃ paraṃ tad amṛtaṃ padam // 12.106 //

Through meditation’s progress are obtained *dharmas*, timeless teachings, by which is realized the deathless – / That hard-won, quieted, unaging, ultimate immortal step.” //12.106//

tasmād āhāra-mūlo ’yam upāya iti niścayaḥ /

āhāra-karaṇe dhīraḥ kṛtvāmita-matir matim // 12.107 //

Having therefore decided that eating food is the foundation of this means to an end, / He, the firm and constant one, whose resolve was beyond measure, resolving to take food... //12.107//

snāto nairāñjanā-tīrād uttatāra śanaiḥ kṛśaḥ /

bhaktyāvanata-śākhāgrair datta-hastas taṭa-drumaiḥ // 12.108 //

... had got out of the water – Having bathed, he climbed up the bank of the Nairāñjanā, ascending, in his wizened state, gradually, / While, lowering the tips of their branches in devotion, the trees on the shore lent him a hand. //12.108//

atha gopādhīpa-sutā daivatāir abhicoditā /

udbhūta-hṛdayānandā tatra nandabalāgamat // 12.109 //

Just then a dairy farmer's daughter, impelled by the gods, came by, / With joy swelling up in her heart – there came Nanda-balā, 'Power of Joy.' //12.109//

sita-śāṅkhojjvala-bhujā nīla-kambala-vāsini /

sa-phena-mālā-nīlāmbur yamuneva sarid-varā // 12.110 //

She wore a dark-blue shawl, and her arms were all lit up with white shells, / So that she seemed like the Yamunā, best of rivers, when its dark-blue waters are wreathed with foam. //12.110//

sā śraddhā-vardhita-prītir vikasal-locanotpalā /

śirasā praṇipatyainam grāhayām āsa pāyasam // 12.111 //

She with a gladness bolstered by trust, with the lotuses of her eyes beaming, / Bowed her head respectfully to him and made him accept milk rice. //12.111//

kṛtvā tad-upabhogena prāpta-janma-phalām sa tām /

bodhi-prāptau samartha 'bhūt samārpita-ṣaḍ-indriyaḥ // 12.112 //

He, by eating that food, caused her to attain the fruit of her birth, / And he became capable of attainment of awakening, his six senses now being fully appeased. //12.112//

paryāptāpyāna-mūrtiś ca sārdham sva-yaśasā muniḥ /

kānti-dhairye babhāraikaḥ śāśāṅkārṇavayor dvayoḥ // 12.113 //

His physical body having realized fullness, along with the glory of his person, / The sage, as one, bore the radiant charm and the deep, constant calm of the moon and of the ocean. //12.113//

āvṛtta iti vijñāya tam jahuḥ pañca-bhikṣavaḥ /

manīṣiṇam ivātmānam nirmuktaṁ pañca-dhātavaḥ // 12.114 //

Knowing that he had turned back, the five bhikṣus left him / Like the five elements departing when a thinking self has been set free.⁶⁴² //12.114//

vyavasāya-dvitiyo 'tha śādvalāstīrṇa-bhūtaḥ /

so 'śvattha-mūlam prayayau bodhāya kṛta-niścayaḥ // 12.115 //

And so with resolve as his companion, to where the earth was covered with fresh green grass, / To the foot of a fig-tree – an *aśvattha*, 'under which horses stand,'⁶⁴³ – he went, setting his heart firmly in the direction of awakening. //12.115//

⁶⁴² Ostensibly, they wrongly opined that he had given up, and went away in disgust. In a deeper reading, they truly grasped the real situation, and naturally cleared off and left him alone, without any effort on his part to get rid of them.

⁶⁴³ The tree in question (*Ficus Religiosa*) was so called because mature fig trees of that genus afforded horses plentiful shade from the sun.

**tatas tadānīm gaja-rāja-vikramaḥ pada-svanenānupamena bodhitaḥ /
mahā-muner āgata-bodhi-nīscayo jagāda kālo bhujagottamaḥ stutim // 12.116 //**

Just then the snake with the spirit of an elephant-king was awakened by the peerless sound of the sage's feet; / Realizing that the great sage was set on awakening, the black cobra Kāla, most excellent of serpents, sang the sage's praises: //12.116//

**yathā mune tvac-caraṇāvapiḍitā muhur-muhur niṣṭanatīva medinī /
yathā ca te rājati sūryavat prabhā dhruvaṁ tvam iṣṭaṁ phalam adya bhokṣyase // 12.117 //**

“As surely as the earth, O sage!, pressed down under your footsteps, rolls like thunder, / And as surely as the light of you shines forth like the sun, you today will enjoy the longed-for fruit. //12.117//

**yathā bhramantyo divi cāṣa-pañktayaḥ pradakṣiṇaṁ tvām kamalākṣa kurvate /
yathā ca saumyā divi vānti vāyavas tvam adya buddho niyataṁ bhaviṣyasi // 12.118 //**

As surely as flocks of blue jays wheeling through the sky keep you – O lotus-eyed one! – on their right wing, / And as surely as in the sky gentle breezes blow, you today will be an awakened one, a buddha.” //12.118//

**tato bhujāṅga-pravareṇa saṁstutas tṛṇāny upādāya śucini lāvakāt /
kṛta-pratijño niṣasāda bodhaye mahā-taror mūlam upāsritaḥ śuceḥ // 12.119 //**

Then, his praises having been sung by the best of serpents, [the sage] accepted from a grass-cutter some pristine grass, / And making a vow in the direction of awakening, he sat at the foot of the great tree, placing himself in the compass of the great pristine tree. //12.119//

**tataḥ sa paryaṅkam akampyam uttamaṁ babandha suptoraga-bhoga-piṇḍitam /
bhinadmi tāvad bhuvi naitad āsanaṁ na yāmi yāvat kṛta-kṛtyatām iti // 12.120 //**

Then the supreme, unshakeable cross-legged posture – in which sleeping serpents' coils are rolled into a ball – he took up, / As if to say, “I shall not break this sitting posture on the earth until I have done completely what is to be done.” //12.120//

**tato yayur mudam atulām divaukaso vavāṣire na mṛga-gaṇāḥ na pakṣiṇaḥ /
na sasvanur vana-taravo 'nilāhatāḥ kṛtāsane bhagavati nīscitātmani // 12.121 //**

Then the denizens of heaven felt unequalled joy; no sound did any beast make, nor any bird; / Though buffeted by the wind, no forest tree did creak, when the Glorious One took his sitting posture, resolute to the core. //12.121//

iti buddha-carite mahā-kāvye 'rāḍa-darśano nāma dvādaśaḥ sargaḥ // 12 //

The 12th canto, titled Seeing Arāḍa,
in an epic tale of awakened action.

Canto 13: māra-vijayaḥ Victory Over Māra

Introduction

Māra, from the root *√mr*, to die, means the Killer, the Destroyer, the Evil One. *Vijaya* is from *vi-vji*, to conquer or to emerge victorious.

And just as Chandaka is ostensibly the object of turning back in Canto 6, and Arāḍa is ostensibly the object of seeing in Canto 12, Māra is ostensibly the object against whom the bodhisattva emerges victorious in the present Canto.

In attaining this victory, however, the bodhisattva does not engage with Māra directly at all. Rather, under the bodhi tree, the bodhisattva just sits there, letting Māra be as wrong as he likes.

An alternative Canto title that more accurately conveyed this sense, then, would be “Māra, and Emerging Victorious.”

**tasmin vimokṣāya kṛta-pratijñe rājarṣi-vaṁśa-prabhava mahārṣau /
tatropaviṣṭe prajahaṛṣa lokas tatrāsa saddharma-ripus tu māraḥ // 13.1 //**

As there he sat, having formed his vow, in the direction of freedom – as that great seer, sprung from a line of royal seers, / Sat right there – the world rejoiced. But Māra, the enemy of true dharma, trembled. //13.1//

**yaṁ kāma-devaṁ pravādanti loke citrāyudhaṁ puṣpa-śaraṁ tathaiva /
kāma-pracārādhipatiṁ tam eva mokṣa-dviṣaṁ māraṁ udāharanti // 13.2 //**

Kāma-deva, “God of Love,” they call him in the world, the bearer of the brightly-coloured bow and bearer, equally, of flower-arrows; / That same despot in his playground of desire, the hater of liberation, they call Māra⁶⁴⁴. //13.2//

**tasyātmajā vibhrama-harṣa-darpās tisro rati-prīti-tṛṣaś ca kanyāḥ /
papracchur enaṁ manaso vikāraṁ sa tāṁś ca tāś caiva vaco ’bhyuvāca // 13.3 //**

His own sons, Hurry, Thrill and Pride, and his three girls, Fun, Pleasure and Thirst, / Asked him what was troubling his mind; and he said this to those boys and girls: //13.3//

**asau munir niścaya-varma bibhrat sattvāyudhaṁ buddhi-śaraṁ vikṛṣya /
jigīṣur āste viṣayān madiyān tasmād ayaṁ me manaso viṣādaḥ // 13.4 //**

“Over there a certain sage, wearing the armour of resolve, and drawing the bow of strength of mind, with its arrow of sharpness, / Is sitting, with the intention to conquer realms that belong to me – that is the reason for this despondency of my mind. //13.4//

**yadi hy asau mām abhibhūya yāti lokāya cākhyāty apavarga-mārgam /
śūnyas tato 'yaṁ viṣayo mamādyā vṛttāc cyutasyeva videha-bhartuḥ // 13.5 //**

For if he succeeds in overpowering me, and expounds to the world the path of disentanglement,
/ Then today this realm of mine is empty, like the defunct domain of an errant lord.⁶⁴⁵ //13.5//

**tad yāvad evaiṣa na labdha-cakṣur mad-gocare tiṣṭhati yāvad eva /
yāsyāmi tāvad vratam asya bhettuṁ setuṁ nadi-vega ivātivṛddhaḥ // 13.6 //**

So, while he has yet to attain the Eye, while he remains within my range, / I shall go to destroy
his vow, like the swollen torrent of a river breaking through a dike.” //13.6//

**tato dhanuḥ puṣpa-mayaṁ grhītvā śarān jagan-moha-karāṁś ca pañca /
so 'śvattha-mūlaṁ sa-suto 'bhyagacchad asvāsthya-kārī manasaḥ prajānām // 13.7 //**

Then, grabbing his bow made of flowers and his five world-deluding arrows, / He with his
offspring in tow approached the foot of the *aśvattha* tree – to the fig tree where a horse rests
easy, went he who causes people’s minds to be uneasy.⁶⁴⁶ //13.7//

**atha praśāntaṁ munim āsana-sthaṁ pāraṁ titīṣuṁ bhava-sāgarasya /
viśajya savyaṁ karam āyudhāgre kriḍan śareṇ' edam uvāca māraḥ // 13.8 //**

And so Māra addressed the sage, who was quietly sitting, still,⁶⁴⁷ wishing to cross beyond the
ocean of becoming. / Keeping his left hand on the tip of his weapon, while playing with an
arrow, Māra said this: //13.8//

⁶⁴⁴ Māra, from the root *vmr*, to die, means “the Destroyer.”

⁶⁴⁵ *Vṛttāc cyutasyeva videha-bhartuḥ*. More literally, “Like [the realm/domain] of a *videha*-lord who has fallen from good conduct.” The literal meaning of *videha* is without (*vi-*) a body (*deha*), hence deceased, defunct. But *Videha* is also the name of a country, of the capital city of that country (*Mithilā*), and of the king of that country (especially *Janaka*). EHJ noted that the *Videha* king is presumably the *Karāla-janaka* mentioned in BC Canto 4: *And 'the Dreadful Begetter' Karāla-janaka when he abducted a brahmin maiden, / Though he thus incurred ruin, never stopped attaching to his love. //BC4.80//* Perhaps it was *Aśvaghōṣa*'s intention to allude to this downfall of *Janaka* on the surface. But the line as translated suggests that *Māra*, despite his bluster, knew what a bubble his empire was – one false move and it would be gone.

⁶⁴⁶ A play on *aśvattha* (“Where a Horse Rests Easy”; name of a genus of fig tree) and *asvāsthya*, being uneasy, being not well in oneself.

⁶⁴⁷ *Āsana-sthaṁ* ostensibly means “remaining seated” but (as in the case of *Asita* in BC1.52) it carries the hidden meaning of being devoted to sitting in stillness.

**uttiṣṭha bhoḥ kṣatriya mṛtyu-bhīta cara sva-dharmaṁ tyaja mokṣa-dharmam /
bāṇais ca yajñais ca vinīya lokam lokāt padam prāpnuhi vāsavasya // 13.9 //**

“Up, up! You death-fearing kṣatriya warrior! Follow your own dharma. Set aside the dharma of liberation. / Subjugate the world, using arrows and sacrifices, and from the world obtain the position of an Indra, highest among the bright ones. //13.9//

**panthā hi niryātum ayam yaśasyo yo vāhitaḥ pūrvatamair narendraiḥ /
jātasya rājarṣi-kule viśāle bhaikṣākam aślāghyam idam prapattum // 13.10 //**

For this path is a glorious path to travel, forged by the most ancient of Indras among men; / Whereas, for one born into an illustrious house of royal seers, this way of a beggar is not a praiseworthy way to go. //13.10//

**athādyā nottiṣṭhasi niścītātman bhava sthīro mā vimucaḥ pratijñam /
mayodyato hy eṣa śaraḥ sa eva yaḥ sūrpake mīna-ripau vimuktaḥ // 13.11 //**

Or if today you will not stand up, O determined man! then be rigid! Loosen not your vow! / For this arrow that I am holding up, is the very arrow that I let loose at Sūrpaka, the fishes' foe.⁶⁴⁸ //13.11//

**sprṣṭaḥ sa cānena katham-cid aiḍaḥ somasya naptāpy abhavad vicittaḥ /
sa cābhavac chantanur asvatantraḥ kṣiṇe yuge kiṁ bata durbalo 'nyaḥ // 13.12 //**

And barely touched by this arrow, [Purū-ravas,] the son of Iḍā, though he was the grandson of the the moon-god Soma, lost his mind; / And 'Good Body' Śan-tanu also became out of control – what, then, will become in a degenerate age, of someone other, who is not so forceful?⁶⁴⁹ //13.12//

**tat kṣipram uttiṣṭha labhasva samjñām bāṇo hy ayam tiṣṭhati lelihānaḥ /
priya-vidheyeṣu rati-priyeṣu yaṁ cakravākeṣv iva notsrjāmi // 13.13 //**

Up! Up!, therefore! Quickly stand up! Come to consciousness! For here stands ready, with darting tongue, this arrow / Which, at fun-loving lovers who are head over heels in love, any more than at greylag geese,⁶⁵⁰ I do not unleash!” //13.13//

⁶⁴⁸ Sūrpaka, aka Śūrpaka seems to be identified here with the mīna-ripu “Fishes' Foe” mentioned by the striver in SN Canto 8, as part of his tirade against women: *The daughter of Sena-jit the Conqueror, so they say, coupled with a cooker of dogs; Kumud-vatī, 'the Lilly Pool,' paired up with Mīna-ripu, 'the Foe of Fishes'; / And Bṛhad-rathā, 'the Burly Heroine,' loved a lion: there is nothing women will not do. // SN8.44 //* In SN Canto 10, Nanda, in describing his own torment, appears to refer to the incident Māra has in mind: *Therefore pour on me the water of your voice, before I am burned, as was The Fishes' Foe; / For a fire of passion is going now to burn me up, like a fire rising up to burn both undergrowth and treetops. // SN10.53 //*

⁶⁴⁹ Durbalo 'nyaḥ. Ostensible meaning: a weakling (durbalaḥ) who is different (anyaḥ) from those mighty ancients. Hidden meaning: one who, being different (anyaḥ) from what people think, eschews compulsion and uses expedient means which are indirect and not forceful (durbalaḥ).

⁶⁵⁰ Greylag geese, or cakravāka ducks, like swans, are famous for naturally forming strong emotional bonds for life – so Māra sees them as not requiring the intervention of his bow and arrow.

**ity evam ukto 'pi yadā nir-āsthō naivāsanam śākyamunir bibheda /
śaram tato 'smai visasarja mārāḥ kanyāś ca kṛtvā purataḥ sutāmś ca // 13.14 //**

Not interested, even when spoken to like this, Śākyamuni, the Śākya sage, never broke his sitting posture at all, / And so Māra shot the arrow at him having sent to the fore his daughters and sons. //13.14//

**tasmīns tu bāṇe 'pi sa vipramukte cakāra nāsthām na dhṛteś cacāla /
dṛṣṭvā tathainam viśasāda mārāś cintā-parītaś ca śanair jagāda // 13.15 //**

But even when the arrow was unleashed at him, [the sage] thought nothing of it; from constancy, he did not budge. / Seeing him like this, Māra sank down into despondency and, filled with anxious thought, he said in a low voice: //13.15//

**śailendra-putrīm prati yena viddho devo 'pi śambhuś calito babhūva /
na cintayaty eṣa tam eva bāṇam kiṁ syād acitto na śaraḥ sa eṣaḥ // 13.16 //**

“When Benevolent [Śiva] – god though he was – was pierced by the arrow, he toppled into the lap of the Mountain-King’s daughter.⁶⁵¹ / This man gives not a second thought to the very same arrow! Does he maybe not have a heart? Or is it maybe not the same arrow? //13.16//

**tasmād ayaṁ nārhati puṣpa-bāṇam na harṣaṇam nāpi rater niyogam /
arhaty ayaṁ bhūta-gaṇair asaumyaiḥ samtrāsanātarjana-tāḍanāni // 13.17 //**

Therefore this one calls not for the flower-arrow, nor for a Thrilling, nor for the deployment of Fun; / This man merits, at the unlovely hands of demon throngs,⁶⁵² frights, rebukes, and beatings.” //13.17//

**sasmāra mārāś ca tataḥ sva-sainyam vighnam śame śākya-muneś cikīrṣan /
nānāśrayāś cānucarāḥ pariyoḥ śala-druma-prāsa-gadāsi-hastāḥ // 13.18 //**

No sooner then had Māra called to mind his personal army, in his wish to form for the Śākya sage an impediment to peace, / Than multifarious followers had gathered round, carrying in their hands spears, trees, javelins, bludgeons and swords. //13.18//

⁶⁵¹ The Mountain-King’s daughter means Pārvatī who, as told in Kālidāśa's epic poem *Kumāra-sambhava*, “Birth of the Prince,” made up her mind to win the love of the theretofore ascetic and aloof Śiva. The prince in Kālidāśa's title is Kārttikeya, the god of war, son of Pārvatī and Śiva.

⁶⁵² *Bhūta-gaṇa* is given in the dictionary as 1. the host of living beings, and 2. a multitude of spirits or ghosts. The latter definition is the ostensible meaning here – “demon throngs.” But in the hidden meaning Aśvaghōṣa is going to describe a number (*gaṇa*) of real individual beings (*bhūta*), inviting us to investigate the reality of each individual on a case by case basis, thereby seeing that our initial impressions are ever liable to be false.

**varāha-mīnāśva-kharoṣṭra-vaktrā vyāghrarkṣa-simha-dviradānanās ca /
ekekṣaṇā naika-mukhās tri-śirṣā lambodarās caiva pṛthūdarās ca // 13.19 //**

Having the faces of pigs, fish, horses, donkeys, and camels;⁶⁵³ having the snouts of tigers, bears, lions, and two-tusked;⁶⁵⁴ / One-eyed, many-mouthed, three-headed;⁶⁵⁵ with big bellies, just hanging, and with broad bellies, expanding;⁶⁵⁶ //13.19//

**a-jānu-sakthā ghaṭa-jānavaś ca daṁṣṭrāyudhās caiva nakhāyudhās ca /
kabandha-hastā bahu-mūrtayaś ca bhagnārdha-vaktrās ca mahā-mukhās ca // 13.20 //**

Having no knees and thighs, or having jars for knees;⁶⁵⁷ equipped with large teeth and equipped with nails;⁶⁵⁸ / Having big-bellied barrels for hands,⁶⁵⁹ and many embodiments; with faces split in half, and mouths of epic dimensions;⁶⁶⁰ //13.20//

**bhasmāruṇā lohita-bindu-citrāḥ khaṭvāṅga-hastā hari-dhūmra-keśāḥ /
lamba-sphico vāraṇa-lamba-karṇās carmāmbārās caiva nirambarās ca // 13.21 //**

Grey as an ashen dawn, spotted with red marks; carrying their skulls-and-backbones in their hands [or in their elephants' trunks⁶⁶¹]; having the smoky-coloured hair of monkeys; / With pendulous hips and pendulous elephant-ears; clothed in hides and with nothing on; //13.21//

⁶⁵³ In the hidden meaning, the line reminds us, with our two eyes, two ears and a mouth, of our shared inheritance. In our faces, human beings and the animals cited are the same. This corresponds to the universal, idealistic thesis.

⁶⁵⁴ In support of the anti-thesis, the second line causes us to question whether our human noses are the same as elephants' trunks?

⁶⁵⁵ In the hidden meaning, a description of being limited in one's view, speaking unreliable or changeable words, and being indecisive or subject to various emotional states? Hence an ironic description of everyday human life?

⁶⁵⁶ In the hidden meaning, a description that makes one think of a happy buddha, with big pot-belly.

⁶⁵⁷ Below the surface, an ironic suggestion of what it feels like after a long spell sitting in lotus?

⁶⁵⁸ *Daṁṣṭrāyudhās caiva nakhāyudhās ca* ostensibly describes monsters armed with tusks and armed with claws. But *daṁṣṭra* can also mean a human tooth, and *nakha* can also mean a human nail.

⁶⁵⁹ A suggestion of hands that are totally free from undue tension, lying in the lap of a person who is sitting?

⁶⁶⁰ A suggestion of the many forms in which a buddha manifests himself or herself for the purpose of preaching the Dharma in which two-sidedness is investigated and transcended?

⁶⁶¹ At the end of a compound *-hasta* means 1. holding in the hand, and 2. (of an elephant) holding in the trunk. Ostensibly Aśvaghōṣa is describing terrible monsters holding in their hand the skulls and spines of others, but the ironic intention is to describe nothing more or less fantastic than real elephants, using their trunks to point their own skulls and spines in the direction they want to go. (Elephants were decorated in India since ancient times with the *tilaka*, or red spot painted on the forehead.) What is the teaching point? Again, it may be to remind us that first impressions can be misleading, especially in demonizing the seemingly monstrous other.

**śvetārdha-vaktrā haritārdha-kāyās tāmṛās ca dhūmrā harayo 'sitās ca /
vyālottarāsaṅga-bhujās tathaiva praghuṣṭa-ghaṇṭākula-mekhalās ca // 13.22 //**

With half their faces white; with half their bodies green [or with half their tree-trunks green]⁶⁶²; some coloured also coppery-red; or smoky-grey or reddish-brown or black; / Some, again, with their upper limbs⁶⁶³ cloaked by snakes, and with girths fully girdled by sounding bells; //13.22//

**tāla-pramāṇās ca grhīta-śulā daṁṣṭrā-karālās ca śīṣu-pramāṇāḥ /
urabhra-vaktrās ca vihaṅgamākṣā mārjāra-vaktrās ca manuṣya-kāyāḥ // 13.23 //**

[13.23 Having the stature of palm-trees, while grasping stakes, or the stature of children, with mouths open wide and teeth sticking out; / Or having sheep's faces and birds' eyes, or cats' faces and human bodies. //13.23//]⁶⁶⁴

**prakīrṇa-keśāḥ śikhino 'rdha-muṇḍā rajjvambarā vyākula-veṣṭanās ca /
pahrṣṭa-vaktrā bhṛkuṭī-mukhās ca tejo-harās caiva mano-harās ca // 13.24 //**

With hair strewn about, with topknots, with half-shaved heads⁶⁶⁵; encompassed in lines of thread,⁶⁶⁶ and with their headdresses lying in disorder; / With delighted faces, and with grimaces, carrying off vital energy and carrying off hearts and minds.⁶⁶⁷ //13.24//

**ke-cid vrajanto bhṛśam āvavalgur anyonyam āpupluvre tathānye /
cikrīḍur ākāśa-gatās ca ke-cit ke-cic ca cerus taru-mastakeṣu // 13.25 //**

Some as they progressed sprang wildly into action; ones who were different, again, sprang up, each towards the others; / Some played in emptiness,⁶⁶⁸ while some roamed about on the tops of trees.⁶⁶⁹ //13.25//

**nanarta kaś-cid bhramayaṁs trīśūlaṁ kaś-cid vipusphūrja gadāṁ vikarṣan /
harṣeṇa kaś-cid vṛṣavan nanarda kaś-cit prajajvāla tanū-ruhebhyaḥ // 13.26 //**

One, brandishing a three-pronged weapon, danced⁶⁷⁰; one, tearing to pieces a bludgeon [or a string of sentences],⁶⁷¹ thundered; / One, in his aroused state, moved like a bull; one, from the body-grown,⁶⁷² blazed forth. //13.26//

⁶⁶² Kāya means 1. the body, 2. the trunk of a tree.

⁶⁶³ The meanings of *bhujā*, similarly, include 1. the arm, of a human body, or of a terrible monster, and 2. the branch of a not-at-all-monstrous tree.

⁶⁶⁴ This verse is probably an interpolation.

⁶⁶⁵ As when a monk is in the process of shaving his head.

⁶⁶⁶ As when clothed in a *kaṣāya*.

⁶⁶⁷ The meanings of *hṛ* include 1. to carry off, to rob, and 2. to capture or captivate.

⁶⁶⁸ *Ākāśa*: 1. free or open space, emptiness; 2. the sky.

⁶⁶⁹ In the hidden meaning, when the Buddha sat on Vulture Peak he might have roamed over the tops of trees with his eyes.

**evam-vidhā bhūta-gaṇāḥ samantāt taṁ bodhi-mūlaṁ parivārya tasthuḥ /
jighṛkṣavaś caiva jighāmsavaś ca bhartur niyogaṁ paripālayantaḥ // 13.27 //**

Such were the ‘demon throngs’ which, on all sides, stood surrounding him who was the root of bodhi,⁶⁷³ / Wanting to capture, and wanting to destroy,⁶⁷⁴ letting be done the will of the master.⁶⁷⁵ //13.27//

**taṁ prekṣya mārasya ca pūrva-rātre śākyarṣabhasyaiva ca yuddha-kālam /
na dyauś cakāṣe pṛthivī cakampe prajajvaluś caiva diśaḥ saśabdāḥ // 13.28 //**

Beholding, in the beginning of the night, that hour of the battle between Māra and the Śākya bull, / The sky did not shimmer but the earth did shake, and the four quarters did blaze forth resoundingly. //13.28//

**viṣvag vavau vāyur udīrṇa-vegasa tārā na rejur na babhau śaśāṅkaḥ /
tamaś ca bhūyo vitatāna rātriḥ sarve ca saṁcuḥsubhira samudrāḥ // 13.29 //**

From every direction the wind blew in wild gusts. The stars did not shine, the hare-marked moon did not show itself, /And Dark Night covered herself in an extra layer of darkness. While all the oceans churned. //13.29//

**mahībhṛto dharmā-parāś ca nāgā mahā-muner vighnam amṛṣyamāṇāḥ /
māraṁ prati kroḍha-vivṛtta-netrā niḥśaśvasuś caiva jajṛmbhira ca // 13.30 //**

The *nāgas*, as bearers of the Earth and committed supporters of dharma, not looking kindly on the hindrance to the great sage, / Their eyes rolling angrily in Māra’s direction, hissed and snorted, and came unwound. //13.30//

**śuddhādhivāsā vibudharṣayas tu sad-dharma-siddhy-artham iva pravṛttāḥ /
māre ’nukaṁpām manasā pracakrur virāga-bhāvāt tu na roṣam īyuh // 13.31 //**

But the divine sages of the Pure Abodes who are devoted, it seems, to the aim of perfectly attaining the True Dharma, / In their minds, out of dispassion, produced sympathy for Māra, so that they, in contrast, did not become angry. //13.31//

⁶⁷⁰ In the hidden meaning, he or she moved freely and joyfully, being in possession of the means which is the noble eightfold path, with its three prongs of *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*.

⁶⁷¹ The meanings of *gadā* include 1. a series of sentences (as analyzed by teachers of the Buddha's teaching), and 2. a club or bludgeon (as targeted by enemy fighters).

⁶⁷² The meanings of *tanū-ruha* listed in the dictionary include 1. hair, 2. feather, 3. wing, 4. son. But *tanū-ruha* literally means “body-grown” i.e., “grown on a body” (like hair or feather) or “grown out of a body” (like a son) or “developed by means of a body” (like wisdom?).

⁶⁷³ The old Nepalese manuscript has *tam bodhi-mūlam*, which refers to him (*tam*; masculine), the bodhisattva, as the root of bodhi. EH Johnston amended to *tad bodhi-mūlam*. Since *tad* is neuter, the phrase thus refers to the root (*mūlam*; neuter). The Tibetan translator evidently read the original as *taṁ bodhisattvam*. See also verses 32 and 42.

⁶⁷⁴ In the hidden meaning, wanting to grasp the true purport of the Buddha's teaching, and wanting to destroy ignorance.

**tad bodhi-mūlaṁ samavekṣya kīrṇaṁ hīrṣātmanā māra-balena tena /
dharmātmabhir loka-vimokṣa-kāmair babhūva hāhā-kṛtam antarīkṣe // 13.32 //**

When they beheld that root of bodhi beset by that army of Māra, whose essence was desire to do harm, / Those whose essence was dharma, desiring the liberation of the world, whispered “Hā!... Hā!..” into the middle space between heaven and earth.⁶⁷⁶ //13.32//

**upaplavaṁ dharma-vidhes tu tasya dṛṣṭvā sthitaṁ māra-balaṁ mahārṣiḥ /
na cukṣubhe nāpi yayau vikāraṁ madhye gavāṁ simha ivopaviṣṭaḥ // 13.33 //**

But when the great seer saw, as an affront to that method of dharma, Māra’s army standing by, / He did not budge, nor was he bothered at all – he was like a lion among cows, sitting there in the middle.⁶⁷⁷ //13.33//

**māras tato bhūta-camūm udīrṇām ājñāpayām āsa bhayāya tasya /
svaiḥ svaiḥ prabhāvair atha sāsya senā tad-dhairya-bhedāya matiṁ cakāra // 13.34 //**

Then Māra, to the phantom army he had mobilized, gave the order to strike fear into the sage; / And so that war machine of Māra’s making – in which each was possessed of his own power – made up its mind to break the sage’s composure. //13.34//

**ke-cic calan-naika-vilambi-jihvās tīkṣṇogra-damṣṭrā hari-maṇḍalākṣāḥ /
vidāritāsyāḥ sthira-śaṅku-karṇāḥ samtrāsayantaḥ kila nāma tasthuḥ // 13.35 //**

Some, with more than one tongue trembling and hanging down [or wagging and then wavering], with acutely savage bites, and yellow-red orbs for their jaundiced eyes, / With jaws gaping apart, and ears as solid as pegs, stood there purporting to be terrifying. //13.35//

**tebhyaḥ sthitebhyaḥ sa tathā-vidhebhyaḥ rūpeṇa bhāvena ca dāruṇebhyaḥ /
na vivyathe nodvivije mahārṣiḥ krīḍat-subālebhya ivoddhatebhyaḥ // 13.36 //**

From them, as they stood there like that, so horrid in their appearance and in their hearts, / The great seer did not flinch and did not shrink – any more than from naughty infants at play.⁶⁷⁸ //13.36//

⁶⁷⁵ Ostensibly *bhartr*, the master, means Māra – but not, of course, in the hidden meaning.

⁶⁷⁶ *Antarīkṣe*, “into the intermediate space between heaven and earth,” seems to suggest finding somewhere between the wild spontaneity of the earth-bearing nāgas and the holier-than-thou attitude of divine sages.

⁶⁷⁷ *Madhye... upaviṣṭaḥ*, “sitting in the middle,” reinforces the sense of finding somewhere between two extremes.

⁶⁷⁸ The descriptions that follow, then, illustrate the power of the means of simply sitting still, without flinching or shrinking.

**kaś-cit tato roṣa-vivṛtta-dṛṣṭis tasmai gadām udyamayām cakāra /
tastambha bāhuḥ sagadas tato 'sya purāṇdarasyeva purā sa-vajraḥ // 13.37 //**

Then one of them, turning his angry gaze upon [the sage], raised a club in his direction, /
Whereupon his arm with the club became immovable – as in ancient times did the arm of Indra,
'Destroyer of Strongholds,' with the thunderbolt.⁶⁷⁹ //13.37//

**ke-cit samudyamya śilās tarūnś ca viṣhire naiva munau vimoktum /
petuḥ sa-vṛkṣāḥ sa-śilās tathaiva vajrāvabhagnā iva vindhya-pādāḥ // 13.38 //**

Some, having lifted up rocks and trees, were quite unable to unleash them at the sage; /
With their trees and likewise with their rocks, down they fell – like the Vindhya foot-hills when
smashed by the thunderbolt. //13.38//

**kaiś-cit samutpatya nabho vimuktāḥ śilās ca vṛkṣās ca paraśvadhās ca /
tasthur nabhasy eva na cāvapetuḥ saṁdhyābhra-pādā iva naika-varṇāḥ // 13.39 //**

Rocks and trees and axes unleashed by some who had sprung up into the clouds, /
Stayed up there in the clouds and did not fall down – like the many-hued foot-beams of a twilight nimbus.
//13.39//

**cikṣepa tasyopari dīptam anyaḥ kaḍaṅgaram parvata-śṛṅga-mātram /
yan mukta-mātram gagana-stham eva tasyānubhāvāc chata-dhā paphāla // 13.40 //**

One who was different put above himself a blazing mass of straw, as high as the mountains'
peaks; / As soon as he released it, it just hung there in the emptiness, then shattered, at his
suggestion, into a hundred pieces. //13.40//

**kaś-cij jvalann arka ivoditaḥ khād aṅgāra-varṣam mahad utsasarja /
cūrṇāni cāmīkara-kandarāṇām kalpātyaye merur iva pradīptaḥ // 13.41 //**

One of them, burning brightly as the risen sun, unloosed from the sky a great shower of embers,
/ Like blazing Meru at the end of a kalpa spewing clouds of ash out of golden vents. //13.41//

**tad bodhi-mūle pravikīryamāṇam aṅgāra-varṣam tu sa-visphuliṅgam /
mairī-vihārād ṛṣi-sattamasya babhūva raktopala-pattra-varṣaḥ // 13.42 //**

As it scattered around the root of bodhi,⁶⁸⁰ however, that cinder-shower so full of fiery sparks /
Became, through the supreme seer's exercise of friendliness, a rain of red lotus petals.
//13.42//

⁶⁷⁹ The *Mahā-bhārata* relates several such instances of Indra finding himself temporarily incapable of movement. In perhaps similar vein, Dogen wrote in *Fukan-zazengi* of Zen ancestors being "caught by the still state."

⁶⁸⁰ *Bodhi-mūla*, "the bodhi-root," ostensibly means the root or foot of the bodhi tree. A hidden meaning, however, may be that the bodhisattva's exercise of friendliness was the root of bodhi.

śarīra-citta-vyasanātapais tair evaṁ-vidhais taiś ca nipātyamānaḥ /

naivāsanaḥ chākya-muniś cacāla sva-niścayaṁ bandhum ivopaguhyā // 13.43 //

While being assailed by these various causes of trouble and pain for body and mind, / The Śākya sage never budged from sitting – for he had embraced his own resolve like a friend. //13.43//

athāpare nirjigilur mukhebhyaḥ sarpān vijīrṇebhya iva drumbhyaḥ /

te mantra-baddhā iva tat-samīpe na śāsvasur notsasṛpur na celuḥ // 13.44 //

Others, meanwhile, spat out snakes from their mouths as from rotten tree trunks. / Those [snakes], as if spellbound in his presence, neither hissed nor reared up nor travelled around.⁶⁸¹ //13.44//

bhūtvāpare vāri-dharā bṛhantaḥ sa-vidyutaḥ sāsani-caṇḍa-ghoṣāḥ /

tasmin drume tatyajur aśma-varṣaṁ tat puṣpa-varṣaṁ ruciraṁ babhūva // 13.45 //

Others became massive rain-clouds, with lightning and fierce crashing of thunder; / They dropped on that tree a shower of stones which turned into a pleasant rain of flowers. //13.45//

cāpe 'tha bāṇo nihito 'pareṇa jajvāla tatraiva na niṣpapāta /

anīśvarasyātmani dhūyamāṇo durmarṣaṇasyeva narasya manyuḥ // 13.46 //

An arrow placed in a bow by yet another, burned right where it was; it did not go – / Like anger being kindled, ineffectually, in the soul an unforgiving man. //13.46//

pañceṣavo 'nyena tu vipramuktās tasthur viyaty eva munau na petuḥ /

saṁsāra-bhīror viṣaya-pravṛttau pañcendriyāṇīva parīkṣakasya // 13.47 //

But five arrows that one who was different did shoot stayed up there in mid-air, and did not impinge upon the sage – / Like the five senses, during pursuit of objects, when those senses belong to a saṁsāra-fearing scrutinizer. //13.47//

jighāṁsayānyaḥ prasāra ruṣṭo gadāṁ gṛhītvābhimukho mahārṣeḥ /

so prāpta-kālo vivaśaḥ papāta doṣeṣv ivānartha-kareṣu lokaḥ // 13.48 //

Bent on destruction, one who was different furiously sprang forth, wielding a bludgeon [or a string of sentences], while facing in the great seer's direction; / His time having come, into free fall he went, helplessly⁶⁸² – as helplessly as the world falling into calamitous faults. //13.48//

⁶⁸¹ Cf SN16.35: The faults do not attack a man who is standing firm in balanced stillness: like charmed snakes, they are spellbound.

⁶⁸² *Vivaśaḥ*, being helpless, suggests in its hidden meaning body and mind dropping off naturally and spontaneously, not because of my doing, but because of the right thing doing itself (*tattva-darśanāt*; MMK26.10).

**strī megha-kālī tu kapāla-hastā kartuṃ mahārṣeḥ kila citta-moham /
babhrāma tatrānīyataṃ na tasthau calātmano buddhir ivāgameṣu // 13.49 //**

A woman, in contrast – Megha-kālī, “the One as Black as a Cloud” – bore in her hand a skull [or a bowl]⁶⁸³, in order to delude the mind of the truly great seer [or the mind of a would-be mahārishi]⁶⁸⁴; / She flitted about there unrestrainedly, never standing still – like the intellect of a flibbertigibbet flitting through ancient scriptures. //13.49//

**kaś-cit pradīptaṃ praṇidhāya cakṣur netrāgnināśī-viṣavad didhakṣuḥ /
tatraiva nāsīnam ṛṣiṃ dadarśa kāmātmakaḥ śreya ivopadiṣṭam // 13.50 //**

One of them directed a blazing eye, desiring with the fire of his glare, like a venomous snake, to burn [his object] up; / He was blind to the seer sitting right there – as a sensualist is blind to a better way that has been pointed out. //13.50//

**gurvīm śīlām udyamayāms tathānyaḥ śaśrāma moghaṃ vihata-prayatnaḥ /
niḥśreyasaṃ jñāna-samādhi-gamyam kāya-klamair dharmam ivāptu-kāmaḥ // 13.51 //**

One who, again, was different, lifting up a heavy millstone, exerted himself for nothing, his efforts coming to naught; / He was like one seeking to obtain, through toilsome physical doings, the peerless dharma that is to be realized by the act of knowing and by the balanced stillness of samādhi. //13.51//

**tarakṣu-simhākṛtayas tathānye praṇedur uccair mahataḥ praṇādān /
sattvāni yaiḥ saṃcukucuḥ samantād vajrāhatā dyauḥ phalatīti matvā // 13.52 //**

Others who, likewise, were different, having the semblance of hyenas and of lions, howled with loud laughter and roared mighty roars, / At which beings on all sides made themselves small, deeming heaven, struck by the thunderbolt, to be bursting.⁶⁸⁵ //13.52//

**mṛgā gajāś cārta-ravān sṛjanto vidudruvuś caiva nililyire ca /
rātrau ca tasyām ahanīva digbhyaḥ khagā ruvantaḥ paripetur ārtāḥ // 13.53 //**

Wandering creatures of the forest,⁶⁸⁶ and elephants,⁶⁸⁷ letting out calls of suffering,⁶⁸⁸ dispersed in all directions and hid themselves away. / Again, on that night, as if it were day, from every quarter singing sky-goers⁶⁸⁹ dropped down to earth, struck by suffering. //13.53//

⁶⁸³ *Kapāla*: 1. a cup, jar; 2. the alms-bowl of a beggar; 3. the skull, cranium.

⁶⁸⁴ *Kila*: 1. indeed, truly (a particle of asservation); 2. "so said," "so reported," pretendedly.

⁶⁸⁵ An ironic suggestion of irony itself – whereby loud laughter is induced, and the bubble of religious pomposity is popped?

⁶⁸⁶ *Mṛgāḥ*. Ostensible meaning: deer. Ironic meaning: forest bhikṣus.

⁶⁸⁷ *Gajāḥ*. Ostensible meaning: elephants. Ironic meaning: big beasts in the arena of the Buddha's teaching.

⁶⁸⁸ In the hidden meaning, preaching the four noble truths.

⁶⁸⁹ *Khagāḥ*. Ostensible meaning: birds. Ironic meaning: meditators who move in emptiness.

**teṣāṃ praṇāḍais tu tathā-vidhais taiḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣv api kampiteṣu /
munir na tatrāsa na saṃcukoca ravair garutmān iva vāyasānām // 13.54 //**

But even as those individuals, by such sonorous expressions of themselves, were causing all beings to tremble, / The sage did not wobble, and did not make himself small,⁶⁹⁰ any more than would Garuḍa,⁶⁹¹ at the cawing of crows. //13.54//

**bhayāvahebhyaḥ pariṣad-gaṇebhyo yathā yathā naiva munir bibhāya /
tathā tathā dharmā-bhṛtāṃ sapatnaḥ śokāc ca roṣāc ca sasāra māraḥ // 13.55 //**

The less the sage was afraid of the fear-inducing mobs assembled there, / The more did Māra, the enemy of upholders of dharma, out of sorrow and out of rage, attack. //13.55//

**bhūtaṃ tataḥ kiṃ-cid adṛśya-rūpaṃ viśiṣṭa-bhūtaṃ gagana-stham eva /
dṛṣṭvarṣaye drugdham a-vaira-ruṣṭāṃ mārāṃ babhāṣe mahatā svareṇa // 13.56 //**

Then a certain being, being of great distinction, but having no discernible form, just hanging there in the emptiness,⁶⁹² / Saw Māra seeking to do the seer harm and, without vengefulness or fury, boomed at Māra in a mighty voice: //13.56//

**moghaṃ śramaṃ nārhasi māra kartuṃ hiṃsrātmatām utsṛja gaccha śarma /
naiṣa tvayā kampayitūṃ hi śakyo mahā-girir merur ivānilena // 13.57 //**

“Do not do, O Māra, work that is empty! Let go of hurtfulness! Come to quiet! / For this man can no more be shaken by you than the great mountain Meru can be shaken by the wind. //13.57//

**apy uṣṇa-bhāvaṃ jvalanaḥ prajahyād āpo dravatvaṃ pṛthivī sthīratvam /
aneka-kalpācīta-puṇya-karmā na tv eva jahyād vyavasāyam eṣaḥ // 13.58 //**

Even if fire were to give up being hot, water its wetness and earth its solidity, / With the good karma he has heaped up over many kalpas, this one could never abandon his resolve. //13.58//

**yo niścayo hy asya parākramaś ca tejaś ca yad yā ca dayā prajāsu /
aprāpya notthāsyati tattvam eṣa tamāṃsy ahatveva sahasra-raśmiḥ // 13.59 //**

For, such is his firmness of will, and his courage, such is his fire, and such is his compassion for living creatures, / That this one will not rise up without having realized the truth – just as the thousand-rayed sun does not rise without dispelling darkness. //13.59//

⁶⁹⁰ *Sam-vkuc* means to contract, shrink, close (as a flower). In verse 52, in its hidden meaning, *saṃcukucuh* suggests self-restraint, or modesty, in a good sense – like excellent monks in a culture where the Buddha's teaching is strong, seeing themselves as only small fish in a big pond. Here *na saṃcukuca* means he did not shrink, he was not diminished in the face of trying circumstances.

⁶⁹¹ Garuḍa, “The Devourer,” mighty chief of feathered beings.

⁶⁹² *Gagana* (like the *khā* of the sky-going birds) is another word which ostensibly means the sky but in its hidden meaning suggests a condition of absence of, for example, attachment to good posture, and absence of associated effort to hold oneself up. One who is “just hanging there in emptiness” (*gagana-stham eva*) is free of such effort.

**kāṣṭham hi mathnan labhate hutāśam bhūmim khanan vindati cāpi toyam /
nirbandhinaḥ kim-cana nāsty asādhyam nyāyena yuktaṁ ca kṛtaṁ ca sarvam // 13.60 //**
For, by twirling the fire-stick one obtains the oblation-eating flame. Again, by digging the earth one finds water. / For one who persists, nothing is impossible. Done according to principle, everything is truly done. //13.60//

**tal lokam ārtam karuṇāyamāno rogeṣu rāgādiṣu vartamānam /
mahā-bhiṣaṇ nārhati vighnam eṣa jñānausadhārtham parikhidyamānaḥ // 13.61 //**
Therefore, in his compassion for the afflicted world, as it twists and turns, through illnesses and through emotions like red passion – through breakdowns and booms – / This great man of healing deserves no impediment, as he wears himself out, in his quest for the medicine of knowing. //13.61//

**hr̥te ca loke bahubhiḥ ku-mārgaiḥ san-mārgam anvicchati yaḥ śrameṇa /
sa daiśikaḥ kṣobhayituṁ na yuktaṁ su-deśikaḥ sārtha iva pranaṣṭe // 13.62 //**
And when, by many wrong byways, the world is being carried away, he who, with effort, is willing the right path, / He who knows the terrain, should no more be harassed than should an experienced guide when a caravan has got lost. //13.62//

**sattveṣu naṣṭeṣu mahāndha-kāre jñāna-pradīpaḥ kriyamāṇa eṣaḥ /
āryasya nirvāpayituṁ na sādhu prajvālyamānas tamasīva dīpaḥ // 13.63 //**
While living beings are lost in a great darkness, he is being made into a lantern of knowing – / It is no more right for a noble Āryan to snuff him out than to snuff out a light being kindled in the dark. //13.63//

**dr̥ṣṭvā ca saṁsāra-maye mahaughe magnaṁ jagat pāram avindamānam /
yaś cedam uttārayituṁ pravṛttaḥ kaś cintayet tasya tu pāpam āryaḥ // 13.64 //**
Again, seeing the world sunk in the great flood of saṁsāra and unable to find the far shore, / He has committed to ferry this world across – what man of honour would think evil upon him? //13.64//

**kṣamā-śipho dhairya-vigāḍha-mūlaś cāritra-puṣpaḥ smṛti-buddhi-śākhaḥ /
jñāna-drumo dharma-phala-pradātā notpātanam hy arhati vardhamānaḥ // 13.65 //**
For the tree, deeply rooted in constancy, whose fibres are forbearance, whose blossom is good conduct, whose branches are awareness and good judgement, / The bestower of dharma-fruit, the tree of knowing, does not deserve to be uprooted, now that it is growing. //13.65//

**baddhām dṛḍhaiś cetasi moha-pāśair yasya prajāṁ mokṣayituṁ maṇiṣā /
tasmin jighāṁsā tava nopapannā śrānte jagad-bandhana-mokṣa-hetoḥ // 13.66 //**

His purpose is to free living creatures who are bound in mind by the tightly gripping fetters of foolishness; / Your murderous intent towards him is not appropriate when he is exhausting himself to undo the ties that bind the world. //13.66//

**bodhāya karmāṇi hi yāny anena kṛtāni teṣāṁ niyato 'dya kālaḥ /
sthāne tathāsminn upaviṣṭa eṣa yathaiva pūrve munayas tathaiva // 13.67 //**

For now is the time circumscribed by those actions which he did for the sake of awakening; / Thus, in this act of firm abiding, this one is sitting, in exactly the manner of the sages of the past. //13.67//

**eṣā hi nābhir vasudhā-talasya kṛtsnena yuktā parameṇa dhāmnā /
bhūmer ato 'nyo 'sti hi na pradeśo vegam samādher viśaheta yo 'sya // 13.68 //**

For this place here is a navel in the surface of the earth, wholly possessed of deepest-seated core power; / For there is no other place on earth that could absorb the shock waves from the coming back into balance of this one here. //13.68//

**tan mā kṛthāḥ śokam upehi śāntiṁ mā bhūn mahimnā tava māra mānaḥ /
viśrambhituṁ na kṣamam adhruvā śrīś cale pade kiṁ madam abhyupaiṣi // 13.69 //**

So do not grieve; come to quietness. Do not be proud, Māra, of your greatness. / High rank is precarious and not apt to be relied upon. Why would you, on shaky footing, get above yourself?" //13.69//

**tataḥ sa saṁśrutya ca tasya tad vaco mahā-muneḥ prekṣya ca niṣprakampatām /
jagāma māro vimano hatodyamaḥ śarair jagac cetasi yair vihanyate // 13.70 //**

And so, having listened to that speech of the other, and having witnessed the unshakability of a great sage, / Māra, deflated, his bubble pricked, went on his way, taking with him the arrows by which, in its heart and mind, the world is struck. //13.70//

**gata-praharṣā viphalī-kṛta-śramā praviddha-pāṣāṇa-kaḍaṅgara-drumā /
diśaḥ pradudrāva tato 'sya sā camūr hatāśrayeva dviṣatā dviṣac-camūḥ // 13.71 //**

All exuberance gone, its effort rendered fruitless, its stones, straw fire-bombs, and trees, all strewn about, / That army of his fled then in all directions, like a hostile army when hostility itself has done for the chain of command. //13.71//

**dravati sapariṣakte nirjīte puṣpa-ketau jayati jīta-tamaske nīrajaske maharṣau /
yuvatir iva sahāsā dyauś cakāśe sa-candrā surabhi ca jala-garbhāṁ puṣpa-
varṣaṁ papāta // 13.72 //**

As the Flower-Bannered One surrounded by his acolytes, melted away, defeated, leaving
victorious the great seer, the passion-free vanquisher of darkness, / The moonlit sky shone like
a smiling girl, and a rain of fragrant flowers, containing water, fell down. //13.72//

**iti buddha-carite mahā-kāvye 'śvaghoṣa-kṛte
māra-vijayo nāma trayodaśaḥ sargaḥ // 13 //**

The 13th canto, titled Victory Over Māra,
in this epic tale of awakened action.

Canto 14: abhisambodhiḥ The Transcendent Total Awakening

Introduction

Cantos 15 to 28 of Buddha-carita, though preserved in Tibetan and Chinese translations, are lost in the original Sanskrit. There is no extant Sanskrit, either, for the present Canto beyond verse 31.. The Sanskrit colophon is therefore missing, but the canto title can be inferred from the Chinese translation in which the five Chinese characters 阿惟三菩提 represent phonetically the Sanskrit *abhisambodhi*.

Bodhi, from the root *vbudh*, to wake, means awakening or enlightenment. The prefix *sam-* adds a sense of completeness or totality. And the prefix *abhi-* adds a sense of overarching transcendence.

**tato māra-balaṁ jitvā dhairyeṇa ca śamena ca /
paramārthaṁ vijijñāsuḥ sa dadhyau dhyāna-kovidaḥ // 14.1 //**

And so, having conquered Māra's army by the means of constancy and quietness, / Wanting to know the ultimate, he who was skilled in meditation meditated. //14.1//

**sarveṣu dhyāna-vidhiṣu prāpya caiśvaryam uttamam /
sasmāra prathame yāme pūrva-janma-paramparām // 14.2 //**

And having obtained utmost mastery over all ways of meditating, / He called to mind in the first watch of the night the succession of his previous births. //14.2//

**amutrāham ayaṁ nāma cyutas tasmād ihāgataḥ /
iti janma-sahasrāṇi sasmārānubhavann iva // 14.3 //**

“There I had this name; passing from there, I arrived here” – / Thus, thousands of births he recalled as if reliving them. //14.3//

**smṛtvā janma ca mṛtyuṁ ca tāsu tāsūpapattiṣu /
tataḥ sattveṣu kāruṇyaṁ cakāra karuṇātmakaḥ // 14.4 //**

Having remembered [his own] birth and death in those various existences, / Compassion towards all beings, on that basis, felt he whose very essence was compassion – //14.4//

**kṛtveha sva-janotsargaṁ punar anyatra ca kriyāḥ /
atrāṇaḥ khalu loko 'yaṁ paribhramati cakravat // 14.5**

“Abandoning kinsfolk here, only to carry on at the next place, doing its performances, / This world is vulnerable indeed, as it rolls round and around like a wheel.” //14.5//

**ity evaṁ smaratas tasya babhūva niyatātmanaḥ /
kadali-garbha-niḥsāraḥ saṁsāra itī niścayaḥ // 14.6 //**

While he was recollecting thus, there grew in him, who was resolute to the core, / The conviction that saṁsāra was no more durable than the fragile heart of a banana plant. //14.6//

**dvitīye tv āgate yāme so 'dvitīya-parākramaḥ /
divyaṁ lebhe paraṁ cakṣuḥ sarva-cakṣuṣmatām varaḥ // 14.7 //**

But with the coming of the second watch, he who in valiant effort was second to none / He who was most excellent among all possessed of eyes, realized the divine act of seeing, the ultimate eye. //14.7//

**tatas tena sa divyena pariśuddhena cakṣuṣā /
dadarśa nikhilam lokam ādarśa iva nirmale // 14.8 //**

On that basis, by the means of that divine seeing, that fully cleansed organ of sight, / He saw the whole Universe as if in a spotless mirror. //14.8//

**sattvānām paśyatas tasya nikṛṣṭotkrṣṭa-karmaṇām /
pracyutiṁ copapattiṁ ca vavṛdhe karuṇātmatā // 14.9 //**

As he observed the relegation and promotion of living beings possessed of the karma / Of pulling down or pulling up, his inherent compassion waxed greater. //14.9//

**ime duṣkṛta-karmāṇaḥ prāṇino yānti durgatim /
ime 'nye śubha-karmāṇaḥ pratiṣṭhante tri-piṣṭape // 14.10 //**

“These creatures of deeds badly done go to a bad place; / These others, good-doers, abide in the triple heaven. //14.10//

**upapannāḥ pratibhaye narake bhṛśa-dāruṇe /
amī duḥkhair bahu-vidhaiḥ pīḍyante kṛpaṇam bata // 14.11 //**

Deservedly finding themselves⁶⁹³ in a horrible and terribly harsh hell, / The former individuals are with many kinds of sufferings lamentably oppressed – alas!⁶⁹⁴ //14.11//

⁶⁹³ *Upa-√pad* means to come to, arrive at, enter, and at the same time (with locative) to be fit for. So the past participle *upapanna*, which is used in this verse and in connection with the other realms of saṁsāra, too, can be read as including an affirmation of karma – as wrong-doers, as do-gooders, or as ones in the middle, we pass through saṁsāra as befits our karma.

⁶⁹⁴ From here to verse 20, the description is of experience in hell, the first of the five saṁsāric realms under investigation.

**pāyante kvathitaṃ ke-cid agni-varṇam ayo-rasam /
āropyante ruvanto 'nye niṣṭapta-stambham āyasam // 14.12 //**

Some are caused to imbibe a potion, brought to the boil, of smelted fire-coloured metal⁶⁹⁵; /
Ones who are different⁶⁹⁶ are planted up a molten column of the metal – there, roaring, they are
caused to grow.⁶⁹⁷ //14.12//

**pacyante piṣṭavat ke-cid ayas-kumbhīṣv avān-mukhāḥ /
dahyante karuṇaṃ ke-cid dīpteṣv aṅgāra-rāśiṣu // 14.13 //**

Some are cooked like paste in cauldrons of the metal, their faces looking down;⁶⁹⁸ / Some are
consumed, piteously, on heaps of flaming coals.⁶⁹⁹ //14.13//

**ke-cit tīkṣṇair ayo-damṣṭrair bhakṣyante dāruṇaiḥ śvabhiḥ /
ke-cid dhr̥ṣṭair ayas-tuṇḍair vāyasair āyasair iva // 14.14 //**

Some are chewed up, harshly, by keen hounds with teeth made of the metal, / Some are
scavenged by the crowing *ayas-tuṇḍas*, ‘Metal-Beaks’ – as if by carrion crows, made of the
metal.⁷⁰⁰ //14.14//

**ke-cid dāha-pariśrāntāḥ śīta-cchāyābhikāṅkṣiṇaḥ /
asi-pattra-vanaṃ nīlaṃ baddhā iva viśanty amī // 14.15 //**

Some, tired of burning, go hankering after cool shade; / The dark forest, where leaves are
swords, like slaves in chains these enter.⁷⁰¹ //14.15//

**pātyante dāruvat ke-cit kuṭhārair baddha-bāhavaḥ /
duḥkhe 'pi na vipacyante karmabhir dhāritāsavaḥ // 14.16 //**

Some, their arms in chains, are split, like wood by axes. / Even in such hardship the ripening of
their karma is not completed; by dint of their actions, their life-breath is preserved. //14.16//

⁶⁹⁵ In the hidden meaning, the fire-coloured metal might be gold – symbolizing what is most valuable.

⁶⁹⁶ Ostensibly *anye* means “others” – some are caused to imbibe the metal, others are caused to mount a column of the metal. In the hidden meaning, all of us are caused to suffer, and ones among us who are different are caused to grow.

⁶⁹⁷ The causative of *ā-vruh* can mean: 1. to cause to mount or ascend; 2. to cause to grow, and hence, to plant. Thus, whereas ostensibly *āropyante* means “they were caused to mount” [the column] or “they were planted” [up the column], ironically *āropyante* might also mean “they were caused to grow.”

⁶⁹⁸ In the hidden meaning, as the face looks down during sitting-meditation.

⁶⁹⁹ In the hidden meaning, like beginners in a meditation hall whose legs seem to be on fire.

⁷⁰⁰ In the hidden meaning, some bodhisattvas, when they are pecked at by harsh criticism, are able to turn that negative experience into something valuable.

⁷⁰¹ In the hidden meaning, the dark forest might represent the Buddha's unfathomable dharma, and entering like a slave in chains might be the attitude of a practitioner beginning a 90-day retreat.

**sukham syād iti yat karma kṛtaṁ duḥkha-nivṛttaye /
phalaṁ tasyedam avaśair duḥkham evopabhuḥjate // 14.17 //**

The action taken with the thought that it might bring happiness, the deed that was done with a view to cessation of suffering, / Now has as its result, this, suffering itself, experienced by the helpless.⁷⁰² //14.17//

**sukhārtham aśubhaṁ kṛtvā ya ete bhṛśa-duḥkhitāḥ /
āsvādaḥ sa kim eteṣāṁ karoti sukham anv api // 14.18 //**

These who, with a view to happiness, have acted impurely and are greatly pained: / Does that enjoyment do anything for them, even slightly, in the way of happiness?⁷⁰³ //14.18//

**hasadbhir yat kṛtaṁ karma kaluṣaṁ kaluṣātmabhiḥ /
etat pariṇate kāle krośadbhir anubhūyate // 14.19 //**

That cruddy deed that was done, while laughing, by those whose nature was crud-encrusted,⁷⁰⁴ / Is in the fullness of time relived by them while lamenting. //14.19//

**yady eva pāpa-karmāṇaḥ paśyeyuḥ karmaṇāṁ phalam /
vameyur uṣṇaṁ rudhiraṁ marmasv abhihatā iva // 14.20 //**

If only wrong-doers could see the result of their actions, / They might vomit warm blood as if they had been struck in a vital part. //14.20//

**ime 'nye karmabhiś citraiś citta-vispanda-sambhavaḥ /
tiryag-yonau vicitrāyām upapannās tapasvinaḥ // 14.21 //**

These different ones, by various actions stemming from palpitations of the mind, / Fittingly find themselves, poor penitent wretches, in some form or other of non-upright, animal existence.⁷⁰⁵ //14.21//

⁷⁰² In the hidden meaning, the deed that was done, shortly after hearing of the Buddha's teaching of four noble truths, with an idealistic agenda, now has its result real understanding of the four noble truths, by those who are helpless – by those know what it means not to do.

⁷⁰³ Ostensibly the question is whether past indulgence in sensual pleasure led to lasting happiness or not? In the deeper meaning, is it possible truly to understand the four noble truths without passing, at least somewhat, through a phase of idealistic suffering?

⁷⁰⁴ *Kaluṣātman* ostensibly means “those whose essence/nature is foul.” But as the second half of a compound, *ātman* (essence, nature) can also mean the understanding, intellect or mind. The latter reading is more in line with the principle that nobody is inherently evil, though capable of doing evil deeds.

⁷⁰⁵ From here to verse 26, the description is of experience in the world of animals, the second of the five saṁsāric realms under investigation. In the hidden meaning *Tiryag-yoni*, lit. “the womb/birth of one going horizontally,” ostensibly means “born as an animal,” but in the hidden meaning might ironically suggest bodhisattva-actions practised in the horizontal plane, e.g. lying down, and performing prostrations.

**māmsa-tvag-vāla-dantārthaṃ vairād api madād api /
hanyante kṛpaṇaṃ yatra bandhūnām paśyatām api // 14.22 //**

On account of their flesh, skin, hair and teeth, out of sheer aggression and also just for fun, /
Here they are slaughtered, lamentably – even as their kind look on.⁷⁰⁶ //14.22//

**a-śaknuvanto 'py avaśāḥ kṣut-tarṣa-śrama-pīditāḥ /
go-'śva-bhūtāś ca vāhyante pratoda-kṣata-mūrtayaḥ // 14.23 //**

Powerless and helpless, oppressed by hunger, thirst, and exhaustion, / As oxen and horses,⁷⁰⁷
they are driven along, while goads injure their bodies. //14.23//

**vāhyante gaja-bhūtāś ca baliyāmsō 'pi dur-balaiḥ /
aṅkuśa-kliṣṭa-mūrdhānas tāḍitāḥ pāda-pārṣṇibhiḥ // 14.24 //**

As elephants, again, they are driven, though they are the mighty ones, by the weak / Who
torment their heads with hooks, and beat them, with foot and heel. //14.24//

**satsv apy anyeṣu duḥkheṣu duḥkhaṃ yatra viśeṣataḥ /
paraspara-virodhāc ca parādhīnatayaiva ca // 14.25 //**

Though there are other sufferings too, suffering here arises especially / From competing with
each other while in the very thick of subjection to the enemy.⁷⁰⁸ //14.25//

**kha-sthāḥ kha-sthair hi bādhyante jala-sthā jala-cāribhiḥ /
sthala-sthāḥ sthala-saṃsthaiś ca prāpya caivetaretaraiḥ // 14.26 //**

For dwellers in emptiness are jostled by dwellers in emptiness,⁷⁰⁹ dwellers in water are jostled
by those for whom water is life, / And dwellers on land are jostled by those who stand with
them on firm ground – even as they push one another forward. //14.26//

⁷⁰⁶ Ostensibly the description is of a scene during a hunt or animal sacrifice; in the hidden meaning, the scene might be a school playground.

⁷⁰⁷ At the end of a compound *-bhūta* means 1. being, or 2. being like. Ostensibly Aśvaghoṣa is describing those who are oxen and horses; in the deeper reading, he might be describing bodhisattvas passing through a phase of being driven like an ox or a workhorse under a whip.

⁷⁰⁸ In the hidden meaning, the enemy might be ignorance.

⁷⁰⁹ *Kha-sthāḥ*. Ostensible meaning: birds: Hidden meaning: Those who abide in practice of non-doing.

**upapannās tathā ceme mātsaryākṛānta-cetasah /
pitṛ-loke nir-āloke kṛpaṇam̐ bhujjate phalam // 14.27 //**

And so these ones, likewise, find themselves fittingly⁷¹⁰ – with minds given over to dissatisfaction – / In the murky world of deceased ancestors, where, lamentably, they reap their reward.⁷¹¹ //14.27//

**sūcī-chidropama-mukhāḥ parvatopama-kuṣayaḥ /
kṣut-tarṣa-janitair duḥkhaiḥ pīḍyante duḥkha-bhāginah // 14.28 //**

With mouths like the eye of a needle and mountainous bellies,⁷¹² / By sufferings born of hunger and thirst they are pained – suffering being their lot. //14.28//

**puruṣo yadi jānīta mātsaryasyedṛśam̐ phalam /
sarvathā śibi-vad dadyāc charīrāvayavān api // 14.29 //**

If a man knew that such was the result of dissatisfaction,⁷¹³ / He would by all means, like Śibi, yield up the limbs from his body as well.⁷¹⁴ //14.29//

⁷¹⁰ *Upapannāḥ*. Again, the ostensible connotation is *deservedly* – hungry ghosts are born in a dark world as retribution for bad karma. In the less pessimistic hidden meaning, any of the five realms is a *fitting* place to atone for bad karma and to heap up good karma.

⁷¹¹ From here to verse 31, the description is of experience in the world of the deceased ancestors (*pitṛ-loke*). “Deceased ancestors” ostensibly means hungry ghosts, or *pretas*, in the third of the five saṃsāric realms under investigation. In the hidden meaning, a deceased ancestor might mean a Zen patriarch, who is steeped in the noble truths of suffering which are so hard to fathom; hence the world is described as murky (*nir-āloke*).

⁷¹² In the hidden meaning, with mouths (in a meditation hall) closed, and with well-developed centres.

⁷¹³ *Mātsarya*: 1. envy, jealousy (and hence selfishness or stinginess); 2. displeasure, dissatisfaction. The ostensible meaning is that people are reborn as hungry ghosts as a result of faults like envy, jealousy, or stinginess. In the hidden meaning, we enter the world of Zen patriarchs by investigating, in the first instance, the first noble truth.

⁷¹⁴ The story of Śibi, as recounted in the Mahā-bhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa, is that the gods tested Śibi by taking the form of a hawk and a pigeon. Chased by the hawk, the pigeon fell into the lap of King Śibi. Then the King proved his generosity by offering to let the hawk eat his own flesh, rather than eating the pigeon. In SN Canto 11, Ānanda refers to the story: “*Through tender love for living creatures Śibi gave his own flesh to a hawk./ He fell back from heaven, even after doing such a difficult deed.*” // SN11.42 // In the hidden meaning, yielding up one’s limbs suggests undoing of undue muscular tension around the hips and shoulders.

**āśayā samatīkrāntā dhāryamāṇāḥ sva-karmabhiḥ /
labhante na hy amī bhoktum praviddhāny aśucīny api // 14.30 //**

For, totally exceeded by expectation,⁷¹⁵ and constrained by their own actions,⁷¹⁶ / These ones are not permitted to eat any impure droppings at all.⁷¹⁷ //14.30//

**ime 'nye naraka-prakhye garbha-saṁjñe 'śuci-hrade /
upapannā manuṣyeṣu duḥkham archanti jantavaḥ // 14.31 //**

These different ones find themselves in a place that seems like hell,⁷¹⁸ a pool of impurity called “the insides”;⁷¹⁹ / Fittingly, among human beings, they find themselves⁷²⁰ as lowly creatures experiencing suffering.⁷²¹ //14.31//

⁷²²32. At the first even at the moment of birth they are gripped by sharp hands, as if sharp swords were piercing them, at which they weep bitterly.

33. They are loved and cherished and guarded by their kindred who bring them up with every care, only to be defiled by their own various deeds as they pass from suffering to greater suffering.

34. And in this state the fools, obsessed with desire, are borne along in the ever-flowing stream, thinking all the more, ‘this is to be done and this is to be done.’

⁷¹⁵ EH Johnston regarded this wording as suspect, given “the sense clearly being that they reach the extreme limit of starvation.” Hence EHJ translated “*Reaching the limit of longing...*” Being totally surpassed (*samatīkrāntāḥ*) by hope or by expectation (*āśayā*), however, seems to convey an ironic hidden sense of the contentment of beggars who are able to find satisfaction in not much.

⁷¹⁶ Ostensible meaning: held back in the realm of hungry ghosts as a consequence of their own bad karma. Ironic meaning: being masters of self-regulation – as symbolized in Shobogenzo by a ring through the nose.

⁷¹⁷ Ostensibly this refers to the tradition that some hungry ghosts are cursed with an insatiable desire to feed on human excreta, but are unable to do so due to their small mouths and narrow throats. In the hidden meaning “impure droppings” (*praviddhāny aśucīni*) might refer, for example, to an offering of food that is impure because of not having been freely given.

⁷¹⁸ *Naraka-prakhye*. A place that seems like hell is not in fact hell – it just sometimes seems that way.

⁷¹⁹ *Garbha*: 1. a womb; 2. the inside, middle, interior of anything. The ostensible meaning is that we are born as human beings into the filthy pool which is our mother's womb. The hidden meaning is that this human life, when we are truly inside of it (rather than aspiring, say, to the Pure Land of Akṣobhya Buddha), is not so pure.

⁷²⁰ “Fittingly... they find themselves,” again translates *upapannāḥ*.

⁷²¹ From here to verse 34, the description is of experience in the human world, the fourth in the five saṁsāric realms under investigation.

⁷²² From here we no longer have the original Sanskrit. The text which follows is based on the English version which EH Johnston produced, referring to the Tibetan translation from the Sanskrit and – to a lesser extent – the Chinese translation.

35. These others, who have accumulated merit, are born in heaven, and are terribly burned by the flames of sensual passion, as by a fire.⁷²³
36. And from there they fall, still not satiated with the objects of sense, with eyes turned upwards, their brilliance gone, and wretched at the fading of their garlands.
37. And as their lovers fall helplessly, the celestial nymphs regard them pitifully and catch their clothes with their hands.
38. Some nymphs look as if they were falling to earth with their ropes of pearls swaying, as they try to hold up their lovers falling miserably from the pavilions.
39. Others, wearing ornaments and garlands of many kinds and grieved at their fall into suffering, follow them with eyes unsteady with sympathy.
40. In their love for those who are falling, the troops of celestial nymphs beat their breasts with their hands and, distressed, as it were, with great affliction, remain attached to them.
41. The dwellers in Paradise fall distressed to earth, lamenting, "Alas, grove of Citraratha⁷²⁴! Alas, heavenly lake! Alas, Mandākinī⁷²⁵! Alas, beloved!"
42. Paradise, obtained by many labours, is uncertain and transitory, and such suffering as this is caused by separation from it.
43. Alas, inexorably this is the law of action in the world; this is the nature of the world, and yet they do not see it to be such.
44. Others, who have disjoined themselves from sensual passion, conclude in their minds that their station is eternal; yet they too fall miserably from heaven.
45. In the hells is excessive torture; among animals, eating each other; among the pretas, the suffering of hunger and thirst; among human beings, the suffering of longings;
46. But in the heavens also, when one is separated from what one loves, the suffering of rebirth is excessive. For the ever-wandering world of living beings, there is no place to settle in peace.

⁷²³ From here to verse 44, the description is of experience as a god in heaven, the fifth in the five saṃsāric realms under investigation.

⁷²⁴ Citraratha, "Bright Chariot," is the name of the chief of the gandharvas who dwell, together with the celestial nymphs, in Indra's paradise.

⁷²⁵ Mandākinī, (from *manda* + *añc*) "going or streaming slowly," is the name of an arm of the earthly Ganges but especially of the Ganges which is supposed to flow through heaven.

47. This stream of the cycle of existence has no support and is ever subject to death. Living beings, thus beset on all sides, find no resting-place.”

48. Thus with the divine eye he examined the five spheres of life and found in saṁsāra no essential core, just as no heartwood is found in a banana plant when it is cut open.

49. Then as the third watch of that night drew on, the best of those who understand meditation meditated on the real nature of this world:

50. “Alas! Living creatures obtain but toil; over and over again they are born, grow old, die, pass on and are reborn.

51. Further man’s sight is veiled by passion and by the darkness of delusion, and from the excess of his blindness he does not know the way out of this great suffering.”

52. After thus considering, he reflected in his mind, “What is it, truly, whose existence causes the approach of the suffering of old age and death⁷²⁶?”

53. Penetrating the truth to its core, he understood that old age and death are produced, when there is birth.⁷²⁷

54. He saw that head-ache is only possible when the head is already in existence; for when the birth of a tree has come to pass, only then can the felling of the tree take place.⁷²⁸

55. Then the thought again arose in him, “What does this birth proceed from?” Then he saw rightly that birth arises out of becoming.⁷²⁹

56. With his divine eyesight he saw becoming arising from karma – not from a Creator or from Nature or from a self or without a cause.

57. Just as, if the first knot in a bamboo is wisely cut, everything quickly comes into order, so his knowing advanced in proper order.

58. Thereon the sage applied his mind to determining the origin of becoming. Then he saw that the origin of becoming was in taking hold.⁷³⁰

⁷²⁶ *Jarā-maraṇa-duḥkha*: the suffering of aging and death; link no. 12. Cf MMK26.8.

⁷²⁷ *Jati*: birth; link no. 11. Cf MMK26.8.

⁷²⁸ Cf. SN16.10: Even when violent winds blow, trees do not shake that never sprouted.

⁷²⁹ *Bhava*: becoming, coming into existence; link no. 10. Cf MMK26.7.

⁷³⁰ *Upādāna*: taking hold, clinging, attachment; link no. 9. Cf. MMK26.6.

59. This taking hold is taking hold in the areas of rules and rituals,⁷³¹ of desires,⁷³² of narratives of self,⁷³³ and of views⁷³⁴ – as when fire and fuel have taken hold.

60. Then the thought occurred to him, “From what cause comes taking hold?” Thereon he recognised the causal grounds of taking hold to be thirsting.⁷³⁵

61. Just as the forest is set ablaze by a little fire, when the wind fans it, so thirsting gives rise to the vast faults of sensual passion and the rest.

62. Then he reflected, “From what does thirsting arise?” Thereon he concluded that the cause of thirsting is feeling.⁷³⁶

63. Overwhelmed by feelings, the world thirsts for the means of satisfying those feelings; for in the absence of physical thirst nobody would take pleasure in drinking water.

64. Then he again meditated, “What is the source of feeling?” He, who had transcended feeling, saw the cause of feeling to be in contact.⁷³⁷

65. Contact is explained as the uniting of the object, the sense and consciousness, whence feeling is produced – just as fire is produced from the uniting of the two rubbing sticks and fuel.

66. Next he considered that contact has a cause. Thereon he recognised the cause to lie in six senses.⁷³⁸

67. The blind man does not see physical forms, since his eye does not connect them with consciousness; if sight exists, the connection takes place. Therefore there is contact, when a sense exists.

68. Further he made up his mind to understand the origin of six senses. Thereon the knower of causes knew the cause to be psycho-physicality.⁷³⁹

69. Just as the leaf and the stalk are only said to exist when there is a shoot in existence, so six senses only arise where psycho-physicality has arisen.

⁷³¹ *Śīla-vratopādāna*: attachment to rule and ritual, or discipline and vow.

⁷³² *Kāmapādāna*: attachment to an object of desire.

⁷³³ *Ātma-vādupādāna*: attachment to talk of self; attachment to a doctrine based on self; attachment to a personal narrative (as in post-modernism?).

⁷³⁴ *Dṛṣṭy-upādāna*: attachment to a view. Cf. MMK26.6.

⁷³⁵ *Tṛṣṇā*: thirsting; link no. 8. Cf. MMK26.6.

⁷³⁶ *Vedanā*: feeling; link no. 7. Cf. MMK26.5.

⁷³⁷ *Sparsā* or *saṃsparsaḥ*: contact; link no. 6. Cf. MMK26.3.

⁷³⁸ *Ṣaḍ-āyatana*: six senses; link no. 5. Cf. MMK26.3.

70. Then the thought occurred to him, “What is the cause of psycho-physicality?” Thereon he, who had passed to the further side of knowledge, knew its origin to lie in divided consciousness.⁷⁴⁰

71. When divided consciousness arises, psycho-physicality is produced. When the development of the seed is completed, the sprout assumes a bodily form.

72. Next he considered, “From what does divided consciousness come into being?” Then he knew that divided consciousness is produced by supporting itself on psycho-physicality.”⁷⁴¹

73. And so, having understood the order of causality, he thought it over; his mind turned it over this way and that way and did not turn aside to other thoughts.

74. Divided consciousness is the causal grounds from which arises psycho-physicality. Psycho-physicality, again, is the basis of divided consciousness.

75. Just as the coracle carries the bloke who carries the coracle, so divided consciousness and psycho-physicality are causes of each other.

76. Just as a red-hot iron causes grass to blaze and just as blazing grass makes an iron red-hot, of such a kind is their mutual causality.

77. Thus he understood that from divided consciousness arises psycho-physicality, from which originate senses, and from senses arises contact.

78. But out of contact, he knew feeling to be born; out of feeling, thirsting; out of thirsting, taking hold; out of taking hold, again, becoming.

79. From becoming arises birth, from birth he knew aging and death to arise. He truly realized that the birth of living beings, in new spheres in the cycle of saṃsāra, arises from causal grounds.

⁷³⁹ *Nāma-rūpa*: psycho-physicality, or (more literally but less usefully) “name and form”; link no. 4. Cf MMK26.2.

⁷⁴⁰ *Vijñāna*: consciousness, or divided consciousness; link no. 3. *Vi-vjñā* means to distinguish, discern, or discriminate. The prefix *vi-* is thought to derive from *dvi*, meaning “in two parts” as opposed to *sam-*, which expresses wholeness or union – as for example in *samādhi*. Cf MMK26.2.

⁷⁴¹ This investigation of the circularity around links 3 and 4, divided consciousness and psycho-physicality, is also seen in Nāgārjuna's version in MMK chap. 26 (see MMK26.2-4). Except that Aśvaghoṣa has first gone back against the grain but now goes forwards with the grain, whereas Nāgārjuna starts going with the grain and then doubles back.

80. Then this conclusion came firmly on him, that from the ending of birth, old age and death are ended; that from the ending of becoming, birth itself is ended; and that becoming ends through the ending of taking hold.

81. Further, taking hold is ended through the ending of thirsting; when there is no such thing as feeling, there is no such thing as thirsting; if contact is ended, feeling does not come about; from the non-existence of six senses, contact is ended.

82. Similarly, if psycho-physicality is well and truly ended, six senses everywhere are ended too; but psycho-physicality is ended through the ending of divided consciousness, and divided consciousness is ended through the ending of doings.⁷⁴²

83. Again, the great seer understood that doings are inhibited by the complete absence of ignorance.⁷⁴³ Therefore he knew properly what was to be known and stood out before the world as the Awakened One, the Buddha.⁷⁴⁴

⁷⁴² *Samskārāḥ*; link no. 2. Cf MMK26.1, and 26.10. MMK26.10 provides a key to the translation of *saṃskārāḥ*, which for many hundreds of years has been a stumbling block in China and Japan. In Nāgārjuna's statement *saṃsāra-mūlaṃ saṃskārān avidvān saṃskaroty ataḥ* ("the doings which are the root of saṃsāra thus does the ignorant one do"), both *saṃskārān* (doings) and *saṃskaroti* (does do) are from *saṃ-s-√kṛ*, which means to do, make or put together, to confect, to concoct. In short, *saṃ-s-√kṛ* means to do, and *saṃskārān* does not mean (as the Chinese translation 行 indicates) "action" in general. *Samskārān* means doings, i.e. not spontaneous and natural actions, but actions which are done out of ignorance.

⁷⁴³ *Avidyā*: ignorance; link no. 1. Cf MMK26.1.

⁷⁴⁴ For reference, here in full is ch. 26 of Nāgārjuna's *mūla-madhyama-kārikā*:

punar-bhavāya saṃskārān avidyā-nivṛtas tridhā |
 abhisamskurute yāms tair gatiṃ gacchati karmabhiḥ ||MMK26.1||
 vijñānaṃ saṃniviśate saṃskāra-pratyayaṃ gatau |
 saṃniviṣṭe 'tha vijñāne nāma-rūpaṃ niṣicyate ||2||
 niṣikte nāma-rūpe tu ṣaḍāyatana-sambhavaḥ |
 ṣaḍāyatanam āgamyā saṃsparśaḥ saṃpravartate ||3||
 cakṣuḥ pratītya rūpaṃ ca samanvāhāram eva ca |
 nāma-rūpaṃ pratītyaivaṃ vijñānaṃ saṃpravartate ||4||
 saṃnipātas trayāṇāṃ yo rūpa-vijñāna-cakṣuṣāṃ |
 sparśaḥ saḥ tasmāt sparśāc ca vedanā saṃpravartate ||5||
 vedanā-pratyayā tṛṣṇā vedanārthaṃ hi tṛṣyate |
 tṛṣyamāṇa upādānam upādatte catur-vidham ||6||
 upādāne sati bhava upādātuḥ pravartate |
 syād dhi yady anupādāno mucyeta na bhaved bhavaḥ ||7||
 pañca skandhāḥ sa ca bhavaḥ bhavāj jātiḥ pravartate |
 jarā-marāṇa-duḥkhādi śokāḥ sa-paridevanāḥ ||8||
 daurmanasyam upāyāsā jāter etat pravartate |
 kevalasyaivam etasya duḥkha-skandhasya sambhavaḥ ||9||
 saṃsāra-mūlaṃ saṃskārān avidvān saṃskaroty ataḥ |
 avidvān kārakas tasmān na vidvāms tattva-darśanāt ||10||
 avidyāyāṃ niruddhāyāṃ saṃskārāṇāṃ asaṃbhavaḥ |
 avidyāyā nirodhas tu jñānasyāyaiva bhāvanāt ||11||
 tasya tasya nirodhena tat tan nābhipravartate |

[The original canto continues to verse 108]

The 14th canto, titled The Transcendent Total Awakening,
in an epic tale of awakened action.

duḥkha-skandhaḥ kevalo 'yam evaṁ samyañ nirudhyate ||12||

The doings that lead to yet further becoming, a person engulfed in ignorance, in the three ways, does do – and by these actions, to a new sphere in the cycle of going, does go. Divided knowing, into the new sphere of going, does seep, having doings as its causal grounds. And so with the seeping in of this divided consciousness, psycho-physicality is instilled.

There again: With the instilling of psycho-physicality, there is the coming about of six senses. Six senses having arrived, there occurs contact. Depending on eye, on form, and on the bringing of the two together – depending in other words on psycho-physicality – divided consciousness occurs.

When the threesome of form, consciousness and eye are combined, that is contact; and from that contact there occurs feeling. With feeling as its causal grounds, there is thirsting – because the object of feeling is thirsted after. While thirsting is going on, taking hold takes hold in the four ways. While taking hold is taking hold, the becoming arises of the taker – because becoming, if it were free of taking hold, would be liberated and would not become becoming. Five aggregates, again, are becoming itself. Out of the becoming arises birth. The suffering and suchlike of ageing and death – sorrows, accompanied by bewailing and complaining; downheartedness, troubles – all this arises out of birth. In this way there is the coming into being of this whole aggregate of suffering.

The doings which are the root of saṃsāra thus does the ignorant one do. The ignorant one therefore is the doer; the wise one is not, on the grounds of the realization of reality. In the dispelling of ignorance, there is the non-coming-into-being of doings. At the same time, the dispelling of ignorance is on the grounds of the bringing-into-being of just this act of knowing. By the stopping of this one and that one, this one and that one no longer advance. This whole aggregate of suffering in this way is completely inhibited.

Saundarananda
of
Aśvaghōṣa

Canto 1: kapilavāstu-varṇanaḥ A Portrait of Kapilavāstu

// om namo buddhāya //
Om! Homage to the Buddha

Introduction

The opening canto of Saundara-nanda parallels the opening canto of Buddha-carita; both cantos reflect a certain ambivalence on Aśvaghōṣa's part towards the ancient Indian society into which the Buddha and his brother Nanda were born. On the one hand, being born into an aristocratic family of the kṣatriya cast, in a thriving city, was very advantageous for the development of the two princes. On the other hand, whenever Aśvaghōṣa writes of the views and practices of brahmins and ascetics, an ironic subtext is discernible not far below the surface. Ostensibly, then, the present Canto presents an idealized portrait of the city of Kapilavāstu. But when we dig for hidden meaning, there is evidence also that Aśvaghōṣa saw ancient Indian culture and society as leaving much to be desired in terms of its irrational beliefs, immoderate practices, social injustice, and so on.

**gautamaḥ kapilo nāma munir dharmabhṛtām varaḥ /
babhūva tapasi śrāntaḥ kākṣivān iva gautamaḥ // 1.1 //**

A sage named Kapila Gautama, an outstanding upholder of dharma, / Became as consumed in ascetic practice as was Kākṣivat Gautama.⁷⁴⁵ // 1.1 //

**aśīśriyad yaḥ satatam dīptam kāśyapavat tapaḥ /
āśīśrāya ca tad-vṛddhau siddhim kāśyapavat parām // 1.2 //**

Ceaselessly he shone his light, like Kāśyapa the sun, on blazing asceticism; / And in promoting that asceticism he pushed himself, like Kāśyapa the sage,⁷⁴⁶ to extreme achievement. // 1.2 //

⁷⁴⁵ Kākṣivat Gautama was an ancient Indian exemplar of ascetic practice – the kind of practice from which the Buddha turned away (see SN3.2).

⁷⁴⁶ Kāśyapa is a patronym from *kaśyapa*, 'having black teeth,' which is (1) a name of the sun, and (2) the name of one of the seven great seers of ancient India, supposed author of several hymns of the Ṛg-veda.

**havīṁṣi yaś ca svātmārthaṁ gām adhukṣad vasiṣṭhavat /
tapaḥ-śiṣṭeṣu śiṣyeṣu gām adhukṣad vasiṣṭhavat // 1.3 //**

For the offerings he served himself, he milked a cow, like Vasiṣṭha. / In schooling his disciples in asceticism, he milked a cow, like Vasiṣṭha.⁷⁴⁷ // 1.3 //

**māhātmyād dīrghatapasō yo dvitīya ivābhavat /
ṭṛtīya iva yaś cābhūt kāvyāṅgirasayor dhiyā // 1.4 //**

In high-mindedness, he was like a second Dīrgha-tapas;⁷⁴⁸ / And he was like a third in the mould of Kāvya⁷⁴⁹ and Āngiras,⁷⁵⁰ in religious thought. // 1.4 //

**tasya vistīrṇa-tapasah pārsve himavataḥ śubhe /
kṣetraṁ cāyatanaṁ caiva tapasām āśramo 'bhavat // 1.5 //**

On a bright slope of the Himālayas this man steeped in ascetic practice / Had his ashram, the domain and the very seat of ascetic practices. // 1.5 //

**cāru-vīrut-taru-vanaḥ prasnigdha-mṛdu-śadvalaḥ /
havir-dhūma-vitānena yaḥ sadābhra ivābabhau // 1.6 //**

Wooded with charming shrubs and trees and abounding in lush, soft grass, / It was so thick⁷⁵¹ with sacrificial smoke that it constantly resembled a raincloud. // 1.6 //

**mṛdubhiḥ saikataiḥ snigdhaiḥ kesarāstara-pāṇḍubhiḥ /
bhūmi-bhāgair asaṁkīrṇaiḥ sāṅgarāga ivābhavat // 1.7 //**

With soft, sandy, and smooth soil, made yellowish white by a covering of *kesara* blossoms, / And divided into areas, with no commingling,⁷⁵² it was like a body painted with cosmetic pigments.

⁷⁴⁷ Vasiṣṭha, 'the most wealthy,' is the name of another ancient Indian seer, celebrated in the vedas as the owner of the mythical cow of plenty. *Gām* means a cow, and at the same time the earth, as the milk-cow of kings. The verse sounds like praise but is ambiguous – suggesting either that Vasiṣṭha's practice was “self-serving” in that it seemed to do itself, naturally, spontaneously, effortlessly; or else “self-serving” in that he served himself, and exploited others in the process. Aśvaghōṣa's real intention may be the latter, but in his undermining of Brahminical and Buddhist views, he is always circumspect, relying on irony rather than polemics.

⁷⁴⁸ Dīrgha-tapas, 'performing long penances,' is the name of several ancient Indian seers.

⁷⁴⁹ Kāvya is the patronymic of the ancient sage Uśanas, teacher of the *asuras*, who presides over the planet Venus.

⁷⁵⁰ Another of the seven great seers, author of the hymns of the Ṛg-veda.

⁷⁵¹ A play on the word *vitāna*, which means (1) 'out of tune', dejected, empty, dull; (2) great extent, heap, abundance; (3) an oblation, sacrifice.

⁷⁵² *Asaṁkīrṇaiḥ* means not mixed, not adulterated, not polluted, not impure, not born of a mixed marriage. Beneath a camouflage of *kesara* flowers, Aśvaghōṣa may be alluding, always with due circumspection, to traditional Bhramanical conceptions around caste.

**śucibhis tīrtha-saṁkhyātaiḥ pāvanair bhāvanair api /
bandhumān iva yas tasthau sarobhiḥ sasaroruhaiḥ // 1.8 //**

Pure, esteemed for their sacred presence,⁷⁵³ edifying and cultivating,⁷⁵⁴ / Like friends, were the lakes it stood among – fluent and bearing lotuses.

**paryāpta-phala-puṣpābhiḥ sarvato vana-rājibhiḥ /
śuśubhe vavṛdhe caiva naraḥ sādhanavān iva // 1.9 //**

With abundant flowers and fruits beautifying the forests all around it, / It shone and it flourished, like a man furnished with a means. // 1.9 //

**nīvāra-phala-saṁtuṣṭaiḥ svasthaiḥ śāntair anutsukaiḥ /
ākīrṇo 'pi tapo-bhṛdbhiḥ śūnyaśūnya ivābhavat // 1.10 //**

Content to feed on wild rice and fruit, the ascetics were self-abiding, inhibited, and retiring. / Though the ashram was full of them, it seemed to be utterly empty. // 1.10 //

**agninām hūyamānānām śikhinām kūjatām api /
tīrthānām cābhiṣekeṣu śuśruve tatra nisvanāḥ // 1.11 //**

The sound of the fires receiving offerings, of the peacocks with their crested heads uttering their repetitive cry,⁷⁵⁵ / And of the sacred bathing places, during ablutions,⁷⁵⁶ was all that one heard there. // 1.11 //

**virejur hariṇā yatra suptā medhyāsu vediṣu /
salājair mādhavī-puṣpair upahārāḥ kṛtā iva // 1.12 //**

The stags there, their manes beautifully braided,⁷⁵⁷ on undefiled elevations fit to be sacrificial altars, / Seemed as though, complete with puffy rice and *mādhavi* flowers, they had been prepared as religious offerings. // 1.12 //

⁷⁵³ EH Johnston translated *tīrtha-saṁkhyātaiḥ* “famed as places of pilgrimage.” *Tīrtha* means a passage, way, ford, stairs for landing or for descent into a river, bathing-place, place of pilgrimage on the banks of sacred streams. Is there a hidden connotation of the *tīrthika*, the “way-maker” or sectarian? In the Discourse that Set the Dharma-Wheel Rolling, the Buddha says “*There is no room here for those who have gone forth as sectarians*” (*bhūmir na cātra para-tīrthika niḥsṛtānām*; *Lalita-vistara*).

⁷⁵⁴ The description of the lakes as cultivating (*bhāvanaiḥ*) presages the Buddha's exhortation, in SN Cantos 15 & 16, that Nanda should eradicate influences that pollute the mind by the means of cultivation of the mind (*bhāvanayā*). See SN15.5 and 16.5.

⁷⁵⁵ A sardonic allusion to the chanting of the ascetics with their dreadlocked hair-dos.

⁷⁵⁶ Or did one hear, in a hidden meaning, the noise of sectarianism, being expressed during religious bathing? See note to verse 8, on *tīrtha*. The meanings of *abhiṣeka* include consecrating (by sprinkling water), religious bathing, and bathing of a divinity to whom worship is offered.

⁷⁵⁷ The ostensible meaning of *suptāḥ* is asleep. At the same time the MW dictionary gives *supta* (fr. *su + ptā*) as “having beautiful braids of hair.” So on the surface Aśvaghōṣa is describing a peaceful scene (EHJ: “*the spotted deer, asleep in the enclosures sacred to worship...*”). But below the surface, Aśvaghōṣa is maybe continuing to poke fun at ascetic stags with their big hair.

**api kṣudra-mṛgā yatra śāntās ceruḥ samañ mṛgaiḥ /
śaraṇyebhya tapasvibhyo vinayañ śikṣitā iva // 1.13 //**

Even lesser creatures moved there in the same subdued⁷⁵⁸ manner as the stags, / As if from their ascetic protectors they had learned the rules of discipline. // 1.13 //

**saṁdigdhe 'py apunar-bhāve viruddheṣv āgameṣv api /
pratyaḥkṣiṇa ivākurvañs tapo yatra tapodhanāḥ // 1.14 //**

Even in the face of a precarious immunity to rebirth and notwithstanding inconsistencies in their time-honoured texts, / There and then, as if seeing with their own eyes,⁷⁵⁹ the great ascetics practised asceticism. // 1.14 //

**yatra sma mīyate brahma kaiś-cit kaiś-cin na mīyate /
kāle nimīyate somo na cākāle pramīyate // 1.15 //**

There some prayed to Brahma; none suffered the frustration of losing his way; / The soma,⁷⁶⁰ at the right moment, was measured out; and nobody, at a random moment, came to nothing.⁷⁶¹ // 1.15 //

**nirapekṣāḥ śarīreṣu dharme yatra sva-buddhayaḥ/
saṁhṛṣṭā iva yatnena tāpasās tepire tapaḥ // 1.16 //**

There, each disregarding his body, but having his own view with regard to dharma, / And almost bristling with zeal, the ascetics set about their ascetic practice of asceticism. // 1.16 //

**śrāmyanto munayo yatra svargāyodyukta-cetasāḥ /
tapo-rāgeṇa dharmasya vilopam iva cakrire // 1.17 //**

There the toiling sages, hearts straining heavenward, / Seemed by their passion for asceticism almost to do dharma a mischief. // 1.17 //

**atha tejasvi-sadanañ tapaḥ-kṣetrañ tam āśramam /
ke-cid ikṣvākavo jagmū rājaputrā vivatsavaḥ // 1.18 //**

Now, to that ashram, that seat of intensity, that domain of austerity, / There came certain sons of Ikṣvāku,⁷⁶² royal princes, wishing to stay. // 1.18 //

⁷⁵⁸ Śāntāḥ, “pacified” or “subdued,” means in other words stilted. Aśvaghoṣa is making fun of unduly careful practice – the result of trying to be mindful.

⁷⁵⁹ The key word is *iva*, “as if.” Aśvaghoṣa is damning the great ascetics with faint praise.

⁷⁶⁰ *Soma* is an intoxicating licquor, squeezed from the stalks of the climbing *soma* plant, and offered in libations to ancient Hindu gods. See also SN2.31.

⁷⁶¹ Each line contains a play on the ambiguity of *mīyate*, which is one passive form from two different roots: *√mī* (lose one's way, perish, come to nothing) and *√ma* (measure out, pray). Randomly coming to nothing may be understood as an ironic expression of *nirvāṇa*.

⁷⁶² Ikṣvāku, from *ikṣu* ‘sugar cane,’ was the first king of the solar dynasty which bears his name. Many royal families in India, including the Buddha's family, traced their lineages back to him.

**suvarṇa-stambha-varṣmāṇaḥ siṃhoreṣkā mahābhujāḥ /
pātraṁ śabdasya mahataḥ śriyāṁ ca vinayasya ca // 1.19 //**

Tall they were like golden columns, lion-chested, strong-armed, / Worthy of their great name and royal insignia and good upbringing. // 1.19 //

**arharūpā hy anarhasya mahātmānaś calātmanaḥ /
prājñāḥ prajñā-vimuktasya bhrātṛvyasya yavīyasaḥ // 1.20 //**

For deserving were they, where undeserving was he. Big-minded were they, where fickle-minded was he. / And bright were they, where brainless was he: their younger half-brother. // 1.20 //

**mātr-śulkād upagatāṁ te śriyaṁ na viṣehire
rarakṣuś ca pituḥ satyaṁ, yasmāc chiśriyire vanam // 1.21 //**

The royal authority that had come to him, as his mother's bride-price, they had not usurped;⁷⁶³ / Rather, keeping their father's promise, they had retreated to the forest. // 1.21 //

**teṣaṁ munir upādhyāyo gautamaḥ kapilo 'bhavat /
guru-gotrād ataḥ kautsās te bhavanti sma gautamāḥ // 1.22 //**

The sage Kapila Gautama became their preceptor; / And so, from the guru's surname, those Kautsas became Gautamas⁷⁶⁴ - // 1.22 //

**eka-pitror yathā bhrātṛoḥ pṛthag-guru-parigrahāt /
rāma evābhavad gārgyo vāsubhadro 'pi gautamaḥ // 1.23 //**

Just as, though they were brothers born of one father, because they had different gurus / Rāma became a Gārgya and Vāsubhadra a Gautama. // 1.23 //

**śākavṛkṣa-praticchannaṁ vāsaṁ yasmāc ca cakrire /
tasmād ikṣvāku-vaṁsyās te bhuvi śākyā iti smṛtāḥ // 1.24 //**

And since they made a dwelling concealed among śāka trees, / Therefore those descendants of Ikṣvāku were known on earth as Śākyas.⁷⁶⁵ // 1.24 //

⁷⁶³ Vi-śah means (1) to overpower, and (2) to endure. Either meaning could apply here: they did not overthrow him, or they could not endure his sovereignty.

⁷⁶⁴ I.e. the original surname of the Buddha's ancestors was Kautsa.

⁷⁶⁵ Hence the Buddha's name Śākyamuni, "Sage of the Śākyas."

**sa teṣāṁ gautamaś cakre sva-vaṁsa-sadṛsīḥ kriyāḥ /
munir ūrdhvaṁ kumārasya sagarasyeva bhārgavaḥ // 1.25 //**

Gautama performed services for them as for his own sons, / Like the Bhārgava sage later did for the child-prince Sagara;⁷⁶⁶ // 1.25 //

**kaṇvaḥ śākuntalasyeva bhāratasya tarasvinaḥ /
vālmīkir iva dhīmāṁś ca dhīmator maithileyayoḥ // 1.26 //**

Like Kaṇva did for Śākuntala's son, the intrepid Bharata;⁷⁶⁷ / And like the inspired Vālmīki did for the inspired twin sons of Maithili.⁷⁶⁸ // 1.26 //

**tad vanaṁ muninā tena taiś ca kṣatriya-puṅgavaīḥ /
śāntāṁ guptāṁ ca yugapad brahma-kṣatra-śriyaṁ dadhe // 1.27 //**

That forest, through the sage, and through those warrior heroes, / Radiated tranquillity and security – the majesty of the *brahmin* and of the *kṣatriya*, in one yoke. // 1.27 //

**ath' oda-kalaśaṁ grhya teṣāṁ vṛddhi-cikīrṣayā /
muniḥ sa viyad utpatya tān uvāca nṛpātmajan // 1.28 //**

One day, while holding a jug of water, in his desire to nurture the princes' growth / The sage went up, into the air. Then he said to them: // 1.28 //

**yā patet kalaśād asmād akṣayya-salilān mahīm /
dhārā tām anatikramya mām anveta yathā kramam // 1.29 //**

“There will fall to earth from this flowing jug, whose flowing is unbreakable, / A line of drops: Do not overstep this mark, as in step you follow me.” // 1.29 //

**tataḥ paramam ity uktvā śirobhiḥ praṇipatya ca /
rathān āruruḥ sarve śīghra-vāhān alaṅkṛtān // 1.30 //**

“Yes!” they said to this, and respectfully bowed, letting their heads fall forward. / Then all went up, onto chariots that were swiftly drawn, and well prepared. // 1.30 //

⁷⁶⁶ Sa-gara, literally "With Poison," is the name of a great solar dynasty king brought up in the ashram of a Bhārgava sage named Aurva, who intervened after Sagara's mother was poisoned by a rival queen. The story is told in Book 3 of the *Mahā-bhārata*.

⁷⁶⁷ The story of how Kanva brought up in his ashram Bharata (the son of King Duṣyanta and his wife Śākuntala) is originally told in the *Mahā-bhārata*. But the story is best known through Kālidāsa's play *The Recognition of Śākuntala*. See also verse 36.

⁷⁶⁸ Along with the *Mahā-bhārata*, the other great Sanskrit epic of ancient Indian history is the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Rāma's Journey*, the authorship of which is attributed to Vālmīki. Maithili, or the princess of Mithila, refers to Sita, Rāma's wife, esteemed in India as a standard-setter for wifely and womanly virtues. The final book of the *Rāmāyaṇa* describes how Rāma, bowing to public opinion, banishes Maithili to the forest, where the sage Vālmīki takes her into his ashram. Here the princess gives birth to twin boys, Lava and Kuśa, who become pupils of Vālmīki and are brought up in ignorance of their royal identity. Vālmīki composes the *Rāmāyaṇa* and teaches Lava and Kuśa to sing it.

**tataḥ sa tair anugataḥ syandana-sthair nabho-gataḥ /
tad āśrama-mahī-prāntam paricikṣepa vāriṇā // 1.31 //**

So they followed him in the flow,⁷⁶⁹ while, walking on air, / The ends of the earth of that ashram he sprinkled with water. // 1.31 //

**aṣṭāpadam ivālikhya nimittaiḥ surabhī-kṛtam /
tān uvāca munīḥ sthitvā bhūmi-pāla-sutān idam // 1.32 //**

He set out a plan like a chessboard, like an eightfold plan, revealed by signs;⁷⁷⁰ / Then the sage, standing still, spoke thus to those offspring of the guardians of the earth: // 1.32 //

**asmin dhārā-parikṣipte nemi-cihnita-lakṣaṇe /
nirmimīdhvam puram yūyam mayi yāte triviṣṭapam // 1.33 //**

“Within this sprinkled line of drops, wherein your wheels have left a mark, / You are to build a city, when I am gone to heaven.” // 1.33 //

**tataḥ kadā-cit te vīrās tasmin pratigate munau /
babhramur yauvanoddāmā gajā iva nirankuśaḥ // 1.34 //**

Thereafter those lads, when in time the sage passed away, / Roamed about in their unbridled youth like elephants unchecked by a driver’s hook. // 1.34 //

**baddha-godhāṅgulī-vāṇā hasta-viṣṭhita-kārmukāḥ /
śar-ādhmāta-mahā-tūṇā vyāyatābaddha-vāsasaḥ // 1.35 //**

[They roamed about] with bows in hand and leather-clad fingers on arrows, / Shafts causing sizeable quivers to swell, feathers preened and fastened on.⁷⁷¹ // 1.35 //

⁷⁶⁹ *Syandana-sthaiḥ*, translated here as “in the flow,” ostensibly means “remaining in their chariots.” But *syandana* is originally an *-na* neuter action noun meaning “moving on swiftly, running (as a chariot)” and hence a chariot. *Syandana* can also carry a liquid connotation, meaning liquefying or dissolving, which goes with the sense of water flowing drop by drop. The whole description is ostensibly of a fantastic or miraculous episode. In the hidden meaning, the suggestion is of action, moment by moment, that seems spontaneously to do itself.

⁷⁷⁰ “Sign” is the first of several senses of *nimitta* used by Aśvaghōṣa in Saundara-nanda. *Nimitta* is a key word in Canto 16, where the Buddha uses it in the context of describing mental development or cultivation (*bhāvanā*). This cultivation of the mind is itself part of the wider cultivation of the threefold *śīla*, twofold *samādhi*, and threefold *prajñā* which constitute the noble eightfold path. In some sense, then, this verse can be read as autobiographical on Aśvaghōṣa's part – his intention is to reveal to us, not so directly but by indirect prompting via clues and signs, a way of practice that leads towards the cessation of suffering.

⁷⁷¹ *Vāsas* means (1) clothes, and (2) [in compounds] the feathers of an arrow.

jijñāsamānā nāgeṣu kauśalaṁ śvāpadeṣu ca /
anucakrur vana-sthasya dauṣmanter deva-karmaṇaḥ // 1.36 //

Wishing to test their mettle among the elephants and big cats, / They emulated the god-like deeds of the forest-dwelling son of Duṣyanta.⁷⁷² // 1.36 //

tān dr̥ṣṭvā prakṛtiṁ yātān vṛddhān vyāghra-śiśūn iva /
tāpasās tad-vanaṁ hitvā himavantaṁ siṣevire // 1.37 //

Seeing their natural character emerge as those lads grew, like tiger cubs, / The ascetics abandoned that forest and retreated to the Himālayas. // 1.37 //

tatas tad-āśrama-sthānaṁ śūnyaṁ taiḥ śūnya-cetasāḥ /
paśyanto manyunā taptā vyālā iva niśāsvasuḥ // 1.38 //

Then, seeing the ashram [without ascetics,] desolate, the princes were desolate in their hearts. / In the red-hot anger of their indignation, they hissed like snakes. // 1.38 //

atha te puṇya-karmāṇaḥ pratyupasthita-vṛddhayaḥ /
tatra taj-jñair upākhyātān avāpur mahato nidhīn // 1.39 //

In time, through good conduct, they came to a maturity / In which they could obtain the great treasures that are disclosed through acts of knowing them. // 1.39 //

alaṁ dharmārtha-kāmānāṁ nikhilānāṁ avāptaye /
nidhayo naika-vidhayo bhūrayas te gatārayaḥ // 1.40 //

Sufficient for full enjoyment of dharma, wealth, and pleasure;⁷⁷³ / Abundant; and of many kinds: these were treasures beyond the reach of enemies. // 1.40 //

tatas tat-pratilambhāc ca pariṇāmāc ca karmaṇaḥ /
tasmin vāstuni vāstu-jñāḥ puraṁ śrīman nyaveśayan // 1.41 //

On the grounds of what they thus acquired, and of the fading influence of their past karma, / They who knew building, at that site, founded a splendid city. // 1.41 //

⁷⁷² The son of Duṣyanta means Bharata, legendary founder of the Indian nation and chief protagonist of the *Mahā-bhārata* – the same intrepid Bharata mentioned in verse 26. Act 7 of Kālidāsa's play *The Recognition of Śakuntala* has the boy playing roughly with a baby lion, commanding the lion to open its jaws because he wishes to count its teeth.

⁷⁷³ Dharma, wealth, and pleasure are three of the four aims of human existence (*puṛuṣārtha*) originally discussed in Book 12 of the *Mahā-bhārata*. The fourth aim is the aim that Aśvaghoṣa himself considered paramount: liberation or release (*moḁṣa*) – see SN18.63.

sarid-vistīrṇa-parikhaṁ spaṣṭāñcita-mahāpatham /

śaila-kalpa-mahā-vapraṁ girivrajam ivāparam // 1.42 //

It had a moat as broad as a river, a main street that straightened and curved, / And great ramparts rising like mountains, as if it were another Giri-vraja.⁷⁷⁴ // 1.42 //

pāṇḍurāṭṭāla-sumukhaṁ suvibhaktāntar-āpaṇam /

harmya-mālā-parikṣiptaṁ kuṣim himagirer iva // 1.43 //

With its fine frontage of white watchtowers, and a well-apportioned central market / Overlooked by crescents of large houses, it was like a Himālayan valley. // 1.43 //

veda-vedāṅga-viduṣas tasthuṣaḥ ṣaṭsu karmasu /

śāntaye vṛddhaye caiva yatra viprān ajījapan // 1.44 //

Brahmins versed in the Vedas and Vedāṅgas,⁷⁷⁵ and engaged in the six occupations,⁷⁷⁶ / There they caused to pray, for peace and for prosperity. // 1.44 //

tad-bhūmer abhiyoktṛṇām prayuktān vinivṛttaye /

yatra svena prabhāvena bhṛtya-daṇḍān ajījapan // 1.45 //

The regular soldiers⁷⁷⁷ they employed there to repel assailants from their territory / They caused, with their sovereign power, to be victorious in battle. // 1.45 //

cāritra-dhana-sampannān salajjān dīrgha-darśinaḥ /

arhato 'tiṣṭhipan yatra śūrān dakṣān kuṭumbinaḥ // 1.46 //

Householders of character and means, who were modest, far-sighted, / Worthy, stout and able, they caused to settle there. // 1.46 //

vyastais tais-tair guṇair yuktān mati-vāg-vikramādibhiḥ /

karmasu pratirūpeṣu sacivāms tān nyayūyujan // 1.47 //

Individuals possessed of particular strong points such as thinking, talking, and taking steps, / They installed in corresponding offices as counsellors and ministers. // 1.47 //

⁷⁷⁴ Giri-vraja was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Magadha. The city, which is also mentioned in SN3.15 as a place the enlightened Buddha frequented, is located in a valley surrounded by five rocky hills; hence the name Giri-vraja, or "Mountain-Fenced." It was also known in Sanskrit as Rāja-gr̥ha, "King's House," which is thought to be the derivation of the name of the city of Rajgir in the modern Indian state of Bihar (= Land of Vihāras).

⁷⁷⁵ Vedāṅgas, "limbs of the Vedas," are teachings auxiliary to original works like the *R̥g-veda* which go back to before, or at least to the very beginning of, Āryan migrations into northern India.

⁷⁷⁶ In India's ancient system of apartheid, six occupations were reserved for brahmins of the priestly caste: (1) teaching and (2) studying the Vedas; (3) offering and (4) officiating at sacrifices; (5) giving and (6) accepting gifts.

⁷⁷⁷ *Bhṛtya-daṇḍān*. *Bhṛtya* means to be maintained, a servant (see also note to SN2.33). *Daṇḍa* means rod, embodied power, army. EHJ: "their military forces."

**vasumadbhir avibhrāntair alaṁ-vidyair avismitaiḥ /
yad babhāse naraiḥ kīrṇaṁ mandaraḥ kinnarair iva // 1.48 //**

Thronged by men who were wealthy but not wanton, and cultured but not conceited, / [The city] seemed like Mt. Mandara,⁷⁷⁸ thronged by *kinnaras*.⁷⁷⁹ // 1.48 //

**yatra te hr̥ṣṭa-manasaḥ paura-prīti-cikīrṣayā /
śrīmanty udyāna-saṁjñāni yaśo-dhāmāny acikaran // 1.49 //**

There with glad hearts, desiring to bring joy to the citizens, / They commissioned those glorious abodes of beauty that we call ‘gardens.’ // 1.49 //

**śivāḥ puṣkariṇīś caiva paramāgrya-guṇāmbhasaḥ /
nājñayā cetanotkarṣād dikṣu sarvāsv acikhanan // 1.50 //**

And lovely lotus pools of finest quality water, / Not at anybody’s behest,⁷⁸⁰ but because of being uplifted, they had dug in all directions. // 1.50 //

**manoññāḥ śrīmatīḥ praṣṭhīḥ pathiṣūpavaneṣu ca /
sabhāḥ kūpavatīś caiva samantāt pratyatiṣṭhipan // 1.51 //**

Rest-houses of the first rank, welcoming and splendid, on the roads and in the woods, / And complete even with wells, they caused to go up on all sides. // 1.51 //

⁷⁷⁸ Mandara, lit. “a pearl chain consisting of 8 or 16 strings,” is the name of a sacred mountain where various deities and mythical beings were thought to reside. When the gods and *asuras* were in need of a large object with which to churn the ocean and recover the deathless nectar, the story goes, they used Mt. Mandara as a churning stick.

⁷⁷⁹ *Kinnara* is lit. “what sort of man?” *Kinnaras* are mythical beings with a human figure and the head of a horse (or with a horse’s body and the head of a man) in later times reckoned among the *gandharvas* or celestial choristers, and celebrated as musicians. *Kinnara* virtues are said to include possession of jewels, prowess in mountain climbing and the musical arts, and possession of charming smiles. *Aśvaghōṣa* seems to be referring here to this cultured aspect of *kinnara* society. *Kinnaras*, and their female counterparts *kinnarīs*, are also depicted in *Saundara-nanda* as deeply romantic and sexual beings. In SN8.12, for example, Nanda compares himself to a *kinnara* without his lover, roaming about, his semen ready, over mountain peaks.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ājñā*, here used in the sense of “order” or “behest,” appears in the title of Canto 18, *ājñā-vyākaraṇaḥ*, in which context its meaning is ambiguous, perhaps intentionally so. *Ājñā* can also mean “deep or liberating knowledge,” and “unlimited power or full autonomy.”

**hasty-aśva-ratha-saṁkīrṇam asaṁkīrṇa-janākulam /
anigūḍhārthi-vibhavaṁ nigūḍha-jñāna-pauruṣam // 1.52 //**

Crowded with elephants, horses, and chariots,⁷⁸¹ [the city⁷⁸²] was crammed with people who did not crowd each other. / Material wealth was available to the needy, not secreted; but learning and spirit ran secret and deep. // 1.52 //

**saṁnidhānam ivāṛthānām ādhānam iva tejasām /
niketam iva vidyānām saṁketam iva saṁpadām // 1.53 //**

Like a place where goals converge, where energies are focused, / Where learning activities are housed together, and where achievements come together, // 1.53 //

**vāsa-vṛkṣaṁ guṇavatām āśrayaṁ śaraṇaiṣiṇām /
ānartaṁ kṛta-śāstrāṇām ālānaṁ bāhu-śālinām // 1.54 //**

It was a homing tree for high flyers, a refuge for those seeking a place of rest, / An arena for those skilled in scientific endeavour, and a tethering post for the mighty.⁷⁸³ // 1.54 //

**samājair utsavair dāyaiḥ kriyā-vidhibhir eva ca /
alaṁcakrur alaṁ-vīryās te jagad-dhāma tat-puram // 1.55 //**

By means of meetings, festivals, and acts of giving, and by means of traditional observances, / The heroes brought that city, the light of the world, to a glorious readiness. // 1.55 //

**yasmād anyāyatas te ca kaṁ-cin nācīkaran karam /
tasmād alpēna kālena tat tadāpūpuran puram // 1.56 //**

Since they never levied any tax that was not just, / Therefore in a short time they caused the city to be full. // 1.56 //

**kapilasya ca tasya rṣes tasminn āśrama-vāstuni /
yasmāt te tat-puraṁ cakrus tasmāt kapilavāstu tat // 1.57 //**

And since, on the site of the ashram of the seer Kapila, / They had built that city, therefore it was called Kapilavāstu. // 1.57 //

⁷⁸¹ “Crowded with elephants, horses, and chariots,” is an epic tag – i.e. a stock phrase that frequently recurs in epic poetry. EHJ points out that contrary to conventional use of epic tags in older models of *kāvya* writing like the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Aśvaghoṣa, instead of unthinkingly repeating the tag, examines meaning to be found in its elements. Thus, in Aśvaghoṣa's writing the tag is not repeated – though a similar tag appears in SN3.1.

⁷⁸² The subject *tat puram* is contained in verse 55.

⁷⁸³ The four elements of this verse mirror the four elements of the previous verse, having to do with 1. goals, 2. energy, 3. learning, and 4. integral realization.

**kakandasya makandasya kuśāmbasyeva cāsrame /
puryo yathā hi śrūyante tathaiva kapilasya tat // 1.58 //**

Just as cities sited on the ashrams of Kakanda, Makanda and Kuśāmba⁷⁸⁴ / Were called after them, so that city was called after Kapila. // 1.58 //

**āpuḥ puram tat puruhūta-kalpās te tejasāryeṇa na vismayena /
āpur yaśo-gandham ataś ca śāśvat sutā yayāter iva kīrtimantaḥ // 1.59 //**

Those equals of Indra⁷⁸⁵ took charge of that city with noble ardour but without arrogance; / And they thus took on forever the fragrance of honour, like the celebrated sons of Yayāti.⁷⁸⁶ // 1.59 //

**tan nātha-vṛttair api rāja-putrair arājakaṁ naiva rarāja rāṣṭram /
tārā-sahasrair api dīpyamānair anutthite candra ivāntarīkṣam // 1.60 //**

But under the sons of kings, active though they were as protectors, that kingless kingdom lacked kingly lustre - / Like the sky, though stars are shining in their thousands, before the moon has risen. // 1.60 //

**yo jyāyān atha vayasā guṇaiś ca teṣāṁ bhrātṛṇāṁ vṛṣabha ivaujasā vṛṣāṇāṁ /
te tatra priya-guravas tam abhyaṣiñcann ādityā daśaśata-locanaṁ divīva // 1.61 //**

So the senior among those brothers, in age and in merits, like the bull which is chief among bulls in bodily power, / They anointed there, attaching to the important, like the Ādityas in heaven anointing thousand-eyed Indra. // 1.61 //

**ācāravān vinayavān nayavān kriyāvān || dharmāya nendriya-sukhāya dhṛtātapatraḥ /
tad bhrātṛbhiḥ parivṛtaḥ sa jugopa rāṣṭraṁ || samkrandano divam ivānuṣṛto marudbhiḥ
// 1.62 //**

Possessed of good conduct, discipline, prudence and industry, / Bearing the big umbrella for duty's sake, not to pander to the power of the senses, / He guarded that realm, surrounded by his brothers, / Like roaring Indra⁷⁸⁷ guarding heaven with his retinue of storm-gods. // 1.62 //

saundaranande mahākāvye kapilavāstu-varṇano nāma prathamah sargaḥ //1//

The 1st Canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda,⁷⁸⁸ titled "A Portrait of Kapilavāstu."

⁷⁸⁴ Kakanda, which means "gold," is given in the Monier-Williams dictionary as the name of a king. Kuśāmba, son of Kuśa (a different Kuśa from the Kuśa referred to in verse 26), was the founder of the ancient city of Kauśāmbī (now the village of Kosam, on the Jumna, near Allahabad).

⁷⁸⁵ Puru-hūta, lit. "invoked by many," is a name of Indra.

⁷⁸⁶ Aśvaghoṣa would seem to be referring to the sons of Yayāti as good examples on account of the modesty, or lack of personal ambition, which four of King Yayāti's five sons demonstrated when they refused his request to trade their youth with him. The fifth son, Puru, agreed to Yayāti's bargain and became the King's successor. See also SN11.46.

⁷⁸⁷ Samkrandana, "roaring," is another name of Indra.

⁷⁸⁸ Saundaranande mahākāvye may also be read "in an epic tale of beautiful joy."

Canto 2: rāja-varṇanaḥ A Portrait of the King

Introduction

The 2nd canto of Saundara-nanda, like the 2nd canto of Buddha-carita, paints an idealized picture of King Śuddhodana. In painting this picture of a non-Buddhist, or pre-Buddhist, king, Aśvaghōṣa seems to wish to inspire us to reflect on and to practice transcendent accomplishments like free giving, forbearance, valour, moral integrity, contemplativeness, and wisdom. Buddhists know these six virtues as six *pāramitā* – six transcendental virtues or six perfections. But by presenting them in connection with a king who, by biological necessity, pre-dated the prince who would be Buddha, Aśvaghōṣa seems to underline the truth that these virtues are universal. So if, as Buddhists, we believe in these virtues with a religious or sectarian attitude, revering these virtues as something special in Buddhism, we might be missing the implicit point of the present Canto.

**tataḥ kadā-cit kālena tad avāpa kula-kramāt /
rājā śuddhodhana nāma śuddha-karmā jitendriyaḥ // 2.1 //**

Some time thereafter that [realm] passed, through familial succession, / To a king named Śuddhodhana who, being pure in his actions,⁷⁸⁹ had conquered the power of the senses.⁷⁹⁰ // 2.1 //

**yaḥ sasañje na kāmeṣu śrī-prāptau na visismiye /
nāvamene parān ṛddhyā parebhyo nāpi vivyathe // 2.2 //**

Neither stuck in his desires nor conceited about gaining sovereignty, / He did not, as he grew, look down on others, and nor did he shrink from others in fear.⁷⁹¹ // 2.2 //

**baliyān sattva-sampannaḥ śrutavān buddhimān api /
vikrānto nayavāms caiva dhīraḥ sumukha eva ca // 2.3 //**

Strong and strong-minded; learned as well as intelligent; / Daring and yet prudent; determined, and cheerful with it; // 2.3 //

**vapuṣmāms ca na ca stabdho dakṣiṇo na ca nārjavaḥ /
tejasvī na ca na kṣantaḥ kartā ca na ca vismitaḥ // 2.4 //**

He had a fine form without being stiff; was dexterous but not dishonest; / Was energetic but not impatient; and active but never flustered. // 2.4 //

⁷⁸⁹ The *śuddha* (“pure”) of *śuddha-karmāḥ* (“pure in his actions”) is a play on the name Śuddhodana.

⁷⁹⁰ *Jitendriyaḥ*, which sometimes means an ascetic, as “one with conquered senses,” is almost as per the title of Canto 13, *Śilendriya-jayaḥ*, “Defeating the Power of the Senses through Integrity.” Hence *śīla*, integrity, or pure conduct, keeping the precepts (1), is the first of the six transcendent accomplishments (*pāramitā*) which the idealized portrait of King Śuddhodana seems to present.

⁷⁹¹ King Śuddhodana was thus also an exemplar of the transcendent accomplishment of *vīrya*, heroic

**ākṣiptaḥ śatrubhiḥ saṁkhye suhr̥dbhiś ca vyapāśritaḥ /
abhavad yo na vimukhas tejasā ditsayaiva ca // 2.5 //**

Challenged by his enemies in battle, and petitioned by friends, / He was not backward in responding with an intense energy, and with a willingness to give.⁷⁹² // 2.5 //

**yaḥ pūrvai rājabhir yātām yiyāsur dharmā-paddhatim /
rājyaṁ dīkṣām iva vahan vṛttenānvagamat pitṛn // 2.6 //**

Wishing to tread the dutiful path of dharma trodden by previous kings, / And bearing his kingship like a call to total dedication, he emulated the ancestors through his conduct. // 2.6 //

**yasya su-vyavahārāc ca rakṣaṇāc ca sukhaṁ prajāḥ /
śīśyire vigatodvegāḥ pitur-aṅka-gatā iva // 2.7 //**

Due to his good governance, and under his protection, his subjects rested at ease, / Free from anxiety, as if in a father's lap. // 2.7 //

**kṛtaśāstraḥ kṛtāstro vā jāto vā vipule kule /
akṛtārtho na dadṛse yasya darśanam eyivān // 2.8 //**

Whether skilled in use of book, or in use of sword; whether born into an eminent family, or not; / Anybody who came into his presence was seen to be useful.⁷⁹³ // 2.8 //

**hitāṁ vipriyam apy ukto yaḥ śuśrāva na cukṣubhe /
duś-kṛtaṁ bahv api tyaktvā sasmāra kṛtam aṅv api // 2.9 //**

When given good advice, however disagreeable, he listened and did not react; / He let go of a wrong done to him, however great,⁷⁹⁴ and remembered a service rendered, however small. // 2.9 //

**praṇatān anujagrāha vijagrāha kula-dviṣaḥ
āpānān pariagrāha nijagrāhāsthītān pathi // 2.10 //**

The meek and mild he befriended; tribal foes he apprehended; / Sufferers he comprehended; waverers he reprehended. // 2.10 //

endeavour, energy, valour (2). See also verse 15, in which *vīrya* is cited by name.

⁷⁹² This represents the transcendent accomplishment of *dāna*, giving, generosity (3).

⁷⁹³ The emphatic double negative has been translated as a positive. *Akṛtārthah* lit. "purpose not achieved," more accurately means "not successful," but there is a play on the word *kṛta*, translated in the first line as "skilled in use of."

⁷⁹⁴ This represents the transcendent accomplishment of *kṣanti*, forbearance (4).

**prāyeṇa viṣaye yasya tac-chīlam anuvartinaḥ /
arjayanto dadṛsire dhanānīva guṇān api // 2.11 //**

As the general rule in his dominion, those influenced by his integrity / Seemed to take possession of virtues as if they were securing treasures.⁷⁹⁵ // 2.11 //

**Adhyaiṣṭa yaḥ param brahma na vyaiṣṭa satatam dhr̥teḥ /
dānāny adita pātrebhyaḥ pāpaṁ nākṛta kiṁ-cana // 2.12 //**

He minded the supreme sacred word; in fortitude, he never failed; / He gave fitting gifts to deserving recipients; and no evil did he do at all. // 2.12 //

**dhr̥tyāvākṣīt pratijñām sa sad-vājīvodyatām dhuram /
na hy avāñcic cyutaḥ satyān muhūrtam api jīvitam // 2.13 //**

A promise undertaken he resolutely carried out, like a good horse carrying a load; / For he did not desire, apart from truthfulness, even a moment of life. // 2.13 //

**viduṣaḥ paryupāsiṣṭa vyakāṣiṣṭātmavattayā /
vyarociṣṭa ca śiṣṭebhyo māsīṣe candramā iva // 2.14 //**

For the intellectually bright, he was there; with his own self-containment, he shone;⁷⁹⁶ / And on people in the directed state, he positively beamed – like the moon in the last month of the rains. // 2.14 //

**avedīd buddhi-śāstrābhyām iha cāmutra ca kṣamam /
arākṣīd dhairya-vīryābhyām indriyāṇy api ca prajāḥ // 2.15 //**

Through intelligence and learning, he knew what was fitting,⁷⁹⁷ both in here and out there; / He guarded, with constancy and energy, both his senses and his subjects. // 2.15 //

**ahārṣīd duḥkham ārtānām dviṣatām corjitaṁ yaśaḥ /
acaīṣic ca nayair bhūmir bhūyasā yaśasaiva ca // 2.16 //**

He bore away the suffering of the oppressed and the boastful fame of the cruel, / And covered the earth with guiding principles and a much greater glory. // 2.16 //

**apyāsīd duḥkhitān paśyan prakṛtyā karuṇātamakaḥ /
nādhausic ca yaśo lobhād anyāyādhigatair dhanaiḥ // 2.17 //**

Seeing people suffering he overflowed with his original emotion as a man of compassion; / But he did not, through eager desire, undermine his honour by unprincipled acquisition of treasured objects. // 2.17 //

⁷⁹⁵ Linda Covill: “they looked as though they were earning virtues like money.”

⁷⁹⁶ This represents the transcendent accomplishment of *dhyāna*, meditation (5). For deeper consideration of the virtue of *ātmatvat*, “self-containment,” or “being in possession of oneself,” see BC Canto 11 where it is discussed in connection with desires.

⁷⁹⁷ This represents the transcendent accomplishment of *prajñā*, wisdom (6).

**sauhārda-dṛḍha-bhaktivān maitreṣu viguṇeṣv api /
nādidāsīd aditsīt tu saumukhyāt svam svam arthavat // 2.18 //**

In his kind-hearted iron devotion even to imperfect friends, / He had no will to take, but willingly gave, cheerful-faced, to each according to his need. // 2.18 //

**Anivedyāgram arhadbhyo nālikṣat kiṁ-cid aplutaḥ /
gām adharmeṇa nādhukṣat kṣīra-tarṣeṇa gām iva // 2.19 //**

Without offering the first portion to revered beings, and without bathing, he did not eat anything; / Neither did he milk the earth unjustly, as a cow is milked by a man thirsting for milk. // 2.19 //

**nāsrkṣad balim aprāptaṁ nārukṣan mānam aiśvaram /
āgamair buddhim ādhikṣad dharmāya na tu kīrtaye // 2.20 //**

He never scattered the food offering except when due; he never developed lordly arrogance; / Committing of the scriptures to his mind, he did for dharma, not for praise. // 2.20 //

**kleśārhan api kāś-cit tu nākliṣta kliṣta-karmaṇaḥ /
ārya-bhāvāc ca nāghukṣad dviṣato 'pi sato guṇān // 2.21 //**

A few doers of harsh deeds, though they deserved harsh treatment, he did not treat harshly; / And due to his noble nature he never cast a veil over the virtues of a true man, even one who defied him. // 2.21 //

**ākṛkṣad vapuṣā dṛṣṭiḥ prajānām candramā iva /
parasvaṁ bhuvi nāmṛkṣan mahāviṣam ivoragam // 2.22 //**

With his fine form he ripped away, as does the moon, people's views; / He never touched, in an act of becoming, what belonged to others, any more than he would touch a venomous snake slithering on the earth.⁷⁹⁸ // 2.22 //

**nārukṣad viṣaye tasya kaś-cit kaiś-cit kva-cit kṣataḥ /
adikṣat tasya hasta-stham ārtebhyo hy abhayaṁ dhanuḥ // 2.23 //**

Nowhere in his dominion did anyone hurt by anyone lament; / For the bow in his hand bestowed peace upon the afflicted. // 2.23 //

⁷⁹⁸ *Bhuvi* is the locative of *bhū*, whose meanings include 1. the act of becoming, and 2. the earth. To take account of this ambiguity, *bhuvi* is here translated twice.

**kṛtāgaso 'pi praṇatān prāg eva priya-kāriṇaḥ /
adarśat snigdhayā dṛṣṭyā ślakṣṇena vacasāśicat // 2.24 //**

Even those who transgressed, if they were submissive (and before them, of course, those who acted agreeably), / He surveyed with an affectionate eye, and steeped in loving speech. // 2.24 //

**bahvīr adhyagamad vidyā viṣayeṣv akutūhalaḥ /
sthitaḥ kārtayuge dharme dharmāt kṛcchre 'pi nāsrasat // 2.25 //**

He studied many subjects, without being interested in objects; / Abiding in dharma as it was in the golden age, he did not drift, even in a predicament, from dharma. // 2.25 //

**avardhiṣṭa guṇaiḥ śaśvad avṛdhan mitra-sampadā /
avartiṣṭa ca vṛddheṣu nāvṛtad garhite pathi // 2.26 //**

Because of his virtues, he continually grew; in his joy at the success of friends, he kept growing; / In the stream of forebears long since grown old, again he kept going... but go he did not, on a blameworthy path. // 2.26 //

**śarair aśīśamac chatrūn guṇair bandhūn arīramat /
randhrair nācūcudad bhṛtyān karair nāpīḍat prajāḥ // 2.27 //**

He quietened his enemies, using arrows; he gladdened his friends, using virtues; / His servants, when there were faults, he did not goad; the offshoots who were his subjects he did not, with doing hands, overtax.⁷⁹⁹ // 2.27 //

**rakṣanāc caiva śauryāc ca nikhilām gām avīvapat
spaṣṭayā daṇḍa-nītyā ca rātri-sattrān avīvapat // 2.28 //**

Under his protection, and because of his heroism, seeds were planted over the whole earth; / And by the transparent working of his judicial system, sessions were sat into the dark stillness of night.⁸⁰⁰ // 2.28 //

⁷⁹⁹ *Karaiḥ* is the instrumental plural of *kara*, whose meanings include 1. the act of doing, 2. “the doer” = the hand, and 3. tax. In the hidden meaning, the King was an exemplar of how to transmit the truth of non-doing.

⁸⁰⁰ The 2nd and 4th pādas of this (and the following) verse include the same causative aorist form, *avīvapat*, from the root *√vap*, which means (1) to strew, scatter, or procreate; or (2) to shear, shave, cut off, mow down. In its causative usage *√vap* means (1) to put or plant in the ground; or (2) to cause to be shorn or cut back. Ostensibly the description is of a well-functioning judicial system, in which case *avīvapat* could mean that “night-sessions” (*rātri-sattrān*) were 1. prolonged, out of due diligence, or 2. cut short, thanks to decisiveness. In the hidden meaning, “night sittings” suggests sitting-meditation practised at night.

**kulaṁ rājarṣi-vṛttena yaśo-gandham avīvapat /
dīptyā tama ivādityas tejasārīn avīvapat // 2.29 //**

By the conduct of a royal seer, he propagated through his house the fragrance of honour. / Like the son of Aditi⁸⁰¹ shining light into darkness, he with the intensity of his energy caused the enemies to scatter.⁸⁰² // 2.29 //

**apaprathat pitṛīns caiva satputra-sadṛṣair gunaiḥ /
salileneva cāmbhodo vṛttenājihladat prajāḥ // 2.30 //**

Using virtues that befitted a good son, he caused the ancestors, again, to disseminate their light; / And, like a raincloud using rain, he enlivened his offshoots, his subjects, using conduct. // 2.30 //

**dānair ajasra-vipulaiḥ somaṁ viprān asūṣavat /
rāja-dharma-sthitatvāc ca kāle sasyam asūṣavat // 2.31 //**

With inexhaustible and great acts of giving, he caused the brahmins⁸⁰³ to press out their soma⁸⁰⁴; / And by dutifully adhering to his kingly dharma, he caused corn,⁸⁰⁵ at the right moment, to ripen.⁸⁰⁶ // 2.31 //

**adharmiṣṭhām acakathan na kathām-akathāmkathaḥ/
cakravartīva ca parān dharmāyābhyudasīṣahat // 2.32 //**

He talked no talk that went against dharma, being free in himself of doubts and questions; / And, like a wheel-rolling king, he caused others to be courageous in service of dharma. // 2.32 //

⁸⁰¹ Āditya, or “son of Aditi,” is a name of the sun.

⁸⁰² Again, “propogated” in the 2nd pāda and “caused to scatter” in the 4th pāda are translations of *avīvapat*. The use of the same verb in four different contexts may be taken as a signal to the reader, or as a reminder, not to take what is written at face value.

⁸⁰³ *Vipra* as an adjective means stirred or inwardly excited, inspired, wise. As a noun it can mean any inspired sage, seer, singer, or poet, but ostensibly here it means a brahmin priest.

⁸⁰⁴ *Soma* literally means “what is pressed out.” In the hidden meaning is there an autobiographical element? Did Aśvaghōṣa see himself to be a kind of *vipra* (a sage/singer/poet) out of whom epic poetry was being squeezed out?

⁸⁰⁵ *Sasya* means 1. corn, and 2. virtue, merit.

⁸⁰⁶ “Caused to press out” and “caused to ripen” are both translations of *asūṣavat*.

rāṣṭram anyatra ca baler na sa kiṃ-cid adīapat /
bhṛtyair eva ca sodyogaṃ dviṣad-darpam adīapat // 2.33 //

No special tribute did he cause the kingdom to pay him; / But with sustained endeavour, and using only regulars,⁸⁰⁷ he caused enemy pride to be cut down. // 2.33 //

svair evādīapat cāpi bhūyo bhūyo guṇaiḥ kulam /
prajā nādīapat caiva sarva-dharma-vyavasthayā // 2.34 //

Again and again, he caused his own house to be pure, using just his own virtues;⁸⁰⁸ / At the same time, he did not let his offshoots decay,⁸⁰⁹ for all were established in all dharmas.⁸¹⁰ // 2.34 //

aśrāntaḥ samaye yajvā yajña-bhūmim amīapat /
pālanāc ca dvijān brahma nirudvignān amīapat // 2.35 //

A man of tireless sacrifice when the time was right, he caused sacrificial ground to be measured out; / And he enabled twice-born men,⁸¹¹ who under his protection were unburdened by anxiety, to know the weight of the sacred word.⁸¹² // 2.35 //

gurubhir vidhivat kāle saumyaḥ somam amīapat /
tapasā tejasā caiva dviṣat-sainyam amīapat // 2.36 //

In the presence of gurus, and obeying the rule, he caused the *soma* to be measured out on time, as a cool, mild man of *soma*,⁸¹³ / And yet, with intense ardour, with fiery energy, he saw the enemy army cut down to size.⁸¹⁴ // 2.36 //

⁸⁰⁷ *Bhṛtya* means one who is to be maintained, a dependent, servant; hence in this context the ostensible meaning is troops already on the payroll, regular troops (LC: “using just his regular troops”). In the hidden meaning, is there a suggestion that particular defilements, like pride, can all be defeated by cultivating wisdom through regular practises like performing prostrations and just sitting – without recourse to the cultivation of specific antidotes?

⁸⁰⁸ Cf. the Universal Precept of the Seven Buddhas: [Pali] *sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ, kusalassa upasampadā, sacittapariyodapanam etaṃ buddhāna’ sāsanaṃ*. [Chinese] 諸惡莫作 衆善奉行 自淨其意 是諸佛教. The not doing of any wrong, Undertaking what is good, **Cleansing one's own mind** – This is the teaching of buddhas.

⁸⁰⁹ “Caused to pay” and “caused to be cut down” in verse 33, and “caused to be pure” and “let decay” in verse 34, are all translations of the same word *adīapat*, derived from the roots *vdā* (to cause to pay), or *vdā* = *vdō* (to cause to be cut down), or *vdā* = *vdai* (to cause to be pure), or *vdī* (to shine forth), or *vdī* (to cause to decay).

⁸¹⁰ *Sarva-dharma-vyavasthayā* (“being established in all dharmas”) means being grounded in the teaching which is the central teaching of the Lotus Sutra, namely, “all dharmas are real form,” or “all things are reality.” (Chinese/Japanese: 諸法實相 *shoho-jisso*.)

⁸¹¹ *Dvi-ja*, “twice born,” generally means a brahmin, considered to have been born again at his initiation ceremony. Aśvagoṣa might equally have in mind the kind of re-birth that Nanda manifests at the beginning of SN Canto 12, when he begins to demonstrate real confidence in the Buddha's teaching of a better way (i.e. a way that is better than both hedonism and Brahmanism).

⁸¹² *Brahma... amīapat* could mean to know the weight of the sacred word, or could mean to anchor the

**prajāḥ parama-dharma-jñāḥ sūkṣmaṁ dharmam avīvasat /
darśanāc caiva dharmasya kāle svargam avīvasat //2.37 //**

As knower of the dharma that is paramount, he caused his offshoots to abide in dharma in a small way, / And yet caused them, because of experiencing dharma, to let heaven wait.⁸¹⁵ //2.37 //

**vyaktam apy artha-kṛcchreṣu nādharmiṣṭham atiṣṭhipat /
priya ity eva cāśaktaṁ na samrāgād avīvṛdhat // 2.38 //**

Even the obvious candidate in a crisis, he did not appoint if it went against dharma; / Nor, out of nothing more than fondness, did he dotingly promote incompetence. // 2.38 //

**tejasā ca tviṣā caiva ripūn dr̥ptānabībhasat /
yaśo-dīpena dīptena pṛthivīm ca vyabībhasat // 2.39 //**

With intense energy and with light he exposed to view his enemies, the conceited; / And with a blazing lantern of brightness, he caused the world to shine. // 2.39 //

**ānṛsamśyān na yaśase tenādāyi sadārthine /
dravyaṁ mahad api tyaktvā na caivākīrti kiṁ-cana // 2.40 //**

He gave out of kindness, not for his glorification, and always to meet a need; / Giving up even a thing of great substance, he mentioned nothing of it. // 2.40 //

**tenārīr api duḥkhārto nātyāji śaraṇāgataḥ /
jītvā dr̥ptān api ripūn na tenākāri vismayaḥ // 2.41 //**

He did not shun one afflicted by suffering, even an enemy, who had taken refuge; / And having conquered his enemies, the conceited, he did not become proud on that account. // 2.41 //

sacred word (*brahma*) in the ground – see note on *amīmapat* appended to the following verse.

⁸¹³ In later Cantos, the Buddha frequently addresses Nanda in the vocative case as *saumya*, which is generally translated "my friend!" but which literally means "man of the *soma*!" This is because the qualities attributed to the *soma*, and to the moon-god with whom sacrificial drinking of the *soma* was associated, are those of being in the first instance cool and moist; and by extension placid, gentle, mild, happy, pleasant, cheerful. In this verse, therefore, *saumyaḥ*, "man of *soma*," has connotations that are diametrically opposed to intense ardour and fiery energy.

⁸¹⁴ "Caused to be measured out" and "enabled to know the weight" in verse 36, and "caused to be measured out" and "saw cut down to size" in verse 37, are all translations of the same word, *amīmapat*, a causative aorist form which can be derived from at least four roots: *√mā* (to measure, build, erect), *√mi* (to know, to fix in the ground), *√mā* (to reap) and *√mī* (to diminish). The resulting ambiguity may be intended, again, to alert the reader to the ambiguity and irony which run through the whole of Saundara-nanda.

⁸¹⁵ "Caused to abide" and "caused to let wait" are translations of the same word *avīvasat*, derived from the root *√vas* (to cause to stay or wait). The wording invites the reader to understand that the king caused his subjects to dwell in heaven in future, while simultaneously allowing – for the more practically inclined – an alternative reading.

na tenābhedi māryādā kāmād dveṣād bhayād api //
tena satsv api bhogeṣu nāsevīndriya-vṛttitā // 2.42 //

No rule did he break, out of love, hate, or fear; / Even while abiding in pleasurable circumstances, he did not remain in thrall to the power of the senses. // 2.42 //

na tenādarśi viṣamaṁ kāryaṁ kva-cana kiṁ-cana //
vipriya-priyayoḥ kṛtye na tenāgāmi nikriyāḥ // 2.43 //

He was never seen to do shoddily anything anywhere that needed to be done; / When required by friend and non-friend to act, he did not fall into inaction. // 2.43 //

tenāpāyi yathā-kalpaṁ somaś ca yaśa eva ca /
vedaś cāmnāyi satataṁ vedokto dhārma eva ca // 2.44 //

He drank and guarded,⁸¹⁶ as prescribed, the *soma* and his honour; / And he was constantly mindful of the Vedas, as well as the dharma proclaimed in the Vedas.⁸¹⁷ // 2.44 //

evam-ādibhir atyakto babhūvāsulabhair guṇaiḥ /
aśakya-śakya-sāmanthaḥ śākyarājaḥ sa śakravat // 2.45 //

Not eschewed by such uncommon virtues as these / Was he who on no side could be vanquished – the unshakable Śākya King, like Śakra.⁸¹⁸ // 2.45 //

atha tasmin tathā kāle dhārma-kāmā divaukaśaḥ /
vicerur diśi lokasya dhārma-caryā didṛkṣavaḥ // 2.46 //

Now at that time dharma-loving denizens of the heavens / Moved into the orbit of the human world, wishing to investigate dharma movements. // 2.46 //

⁸¹⁶ *Apāyi* is aorist passive from the root *vpā*, which means: (1) to drink; (2) to watch, keep, preserve. So one verb is used in two meanings for two objects. The implicit teaching point might be that context is everything.

⁸¹⁷ Again, the implicit teaching point might be, with respect to ancient wisdom, that its practical application is everything. Intellectual knowledge of ancient wisdom, on its own, is useless.

⁸¹⁸ *Śakra-vat*, "like the Mighty One," means like Indra, king of the gods in ancient Indian mythology. But the sound of the word might be more important than the meaning in this verse, whose primary function seems to be to round off, in a poetically pleasing manner, the long list of the king's virtues. Hence the euphonic combination of *a-śakya* (impossible), *śakya* (to be subdued or shackled), *Śākya* (name of the people of whom the Buddha's father was king), and *Śakra* (Mighty Indra). *Samantaḥ* means "on all sides," but can also be read as "a vassal, a feudatory prince." Thus, reading the 3rd pāda as *aśakyaḥ śakya-sāmanthaḥ*, EHJ translated: "This invincible king of the Shakyas, to whom the vassal princes were submissive, was endowed like Shakra with these and other rare virtues."

**dharmātmānaś carantas te dharmajjñāsayā jagat /
dadṛśus taṁ viśeṣeṇa dharmātmānaṁ narādhipam // 2.47 //**

Those essences of dharma, moving, with the desire to know dharma, over the earth, / Saw that leader of men whose essence was particularly given over to dharma. // 2.47 //

**devebhyas tuṣitebhyo 'tha bodhisattvaḥ kṣitiṁ vrajan /
upapattiṁ praṇidadhe kule tasya mahīpateḥ // 2.48 //**

Then the bodhisattva came down to earth, and rather than among Tuṣita gods, / He put down birth-roots in the family of that earth-lord. // 2.48 //

**tasya devī nṛdevasya māyā nāma tad ābhavat /
vīta-krodha-tamo-māyā māyeva divi devatā // 2.49 //**

That man-god at that time had a goddess, a queen whose name was Māyā; / She was as devoid of anger, darkness and the māyā which is deceit as was the goddess Māyā in heaven. // 2.49 //

**svapne 'tha samaye garbham āviśantaṁ dadarśa sā /
ṣaḍ-dantaṁ vāraṇaṁ śvetam airāvataṁ ivaujasā // 2.50 //**

In a dream during that period she saw entering her womb / A white six-tusked elephant, mighty as Airāvata.⁸¹⁹ // 2.50 //

**taṁ vinirdidiśuḥ śrutvā svapnaṁ svapna-vido dvijāḥ /
tasya janma kumārasya lakṣmī-dharma-yaśo-bhṛtaḥ //2.51 //**

When they heard this dream, brahmins⁸²⁰ who knew dreams predicted / The birth of a prince who would bring honour, through wealth or through dharma. //2.51 //

**tasya sattva-viśeṣasya jātau jāti-kṣayaiṣiṇaḥ /
sācalā pracacālorvī taraṅgābhigateva nauḥ // 2.52 //**

At the birth of this exceptional being whose mission was the end of re-birth / The earth with its immoveable mountains moved, like a boat being battered by waves. // 2.52 //

**sūrya-raśmibhir akliṣṭaṁ puṣpa-varṣaṁ papāta khāt /
dig-vāraṇa-karādhūtād vanāc caitrarathād iva // 2.53 //**

A rain of flowers, unwilted by the sun's rays, fell from the sky / As if shaken from the trees of Citra-ratha's forest by the trunks of the elephants of the four quarters.⁸²¹ // 2.53 //

⁸¹⁹ Airāvata, "produced from the ocean," is the name of Indra's elephant, who holds up the eastern quarter.

⁸²⁰ Dvijāḥ, lit. "the twice-born."

⁸²¹ Citra-ratha, "having a bright chariot," is the name of the king of the *gandharvas* – the heavenly guardians of *soma*.

divi dundubhayo nedur dīvyatām marutām iva/

didīpe ' bhyadhikam sūryaḥ śivaś ca pavano vavau // 2.54 //

Drums sounded in heaven, as though the storm-gods were rolling dice; / The sun blazed inestimably, and the wind blew benignly. // 2.54 //

tutuṣus tuṣitās caiva śuddhāvāsās ca devatāḥ /

saddharma-bahumānena sattvānām cānukampayā // 2.55 //

Gods in Tuṣita Heaven became calm and content, as did gods of the clear blue Śuddhāvāsa yonder,⁸²² / Through thinking highly of true dharma, and through fellow feeling among sentient beings. // 2.55 //

samāyayau yaśaḥ-ketuṁ śreyaḥ-ketu-karaḥ paraḥ/

babhrāje śāntayā lakṣmyā dharmo vigrahavān iva // 2.56 //

To one who was a lamp of honour came a supreme bringer of the brightness of betterment:⁸²³ / He shone with tranquil splendour like dharma in a separate bodily form. // 2.56 //

devyām api yaviyasyām aranyām iva pāvakaḥ/

nando nāma suto jajñe nityānanda-karaḥ kule // 2.57 //

To the king's younger queen, also, like fire in the notch of a fire-board, / A son was born named Nanda, Joy, a bringer of constant joy to his family. // 2.57 //

dīrgha-bāhur mahā-vakṣāḥ śinhāmso vṛṣabhekṣaṇaḥ

vapuṣāgryeṇa yo nāma sundaropapadam dadhe // 2.58 //

Long in the arm, broad in the chest, with shoulders of a lion and eyes of a bull, / He because of his superlative looks bore the epithet "handsome." // 2.58 //

madhumāsa iva prāptaś candro nava ivoditaḥ /

aṅgavān iva cānaṅgaḥ sa babhau kāntayā śriyā // 2.59 //

Like a first month in spring having arrived; like a new moon having risen; / Again, like the non-physical⁸²⁴ having taken a physical form, he radiated sheer loveliness. // 2.59 //

⁸²² Śuddhāvāsa, "the pure abode," is the name of a region of the sky in the realm of form/matter. Gods who live there would therefore tend to be on the other side of the science vs religion debate from the Tuṣita gods, who belong to a heaven in the realm of desire/volition/spirit. So it may be that Aśvaghoṣa mentioned the Śuddhāvāsa gods for the sake of balance. In a similar way the 1st pāda of the previous verse seems to relate to a spiritual happening in heaven, whereas the 2nd pāda has a less religious mood, describing storm-gods playing (against Albert Einstein's expectations) dice.

⁸²³ Śreyaś means the better state, better, a better way. EBJ translated "the highest good" and LC "Excellence." See also SN5.49, and several verses in SN Canto 12, where the Buddha encourages Nanda to have confidence in a better way.

⁸²⁴ Anaṅga, "the non-physical" or "the bodiless," is an epithet of Kāma-deva, the god of love, whom Śiva rendered bodiless as a punishment, after a cupid's arrow had caused Śiva to fall out of love with ascetic practice and into love with the beautiful Pārvatī.

**sa tau saṁvardhayām āsa narendrah parayā mudā
arthah sajjana-hastastho dharmakāmau mahān iva // 2.60 //**

The king with exceeding gladness brought up the two of them, / As great wealth in the hands of a good man promotes dharma and pleasure. // 2.60 //

**tasya kālena sat-putrau vavṛdhāte bhavāya tau
āryasyārambha-mahato dharmārthāv iva bhūtaye // 2.61 //**

Those two good sons, in time, grew up to do the king proud, / Just as, when his investment is great, dharma and wealth pay a noble person well. // 2.61 //

**tayoḥ sat-putrayor madhye śākya-rājo rarāja saḥ /
madhya-deśa iva vyakto himavat-pāripātrayoḥ // 2.62 //**

Being in the middle, with regard to those two good sons, the Śākya king reigned resplendent, / Like the Madhya-deśa, the Middle Region, adorned by the Himālaya and Pāriyātra mountains.⁸²⁵ // 2.62 //

**tatas tayoh saṁskṛtayo krameṇa narendra-sūnvoḥ kṛta-vidyayoś ca /
kāmeṣv ajasraṁ pramamāda nandaḥ sarvārtha-siddhas tu na saṁrarañja // 2.63 //**

Then, gradually, those two sons of the king became educated, in practical arts and in learning. / Nanda frittered all his time on idle pleasures; but Sarvārtha-siddha, Accomplisher of Every Aim, was not mottled by the redness of passions. // 2.63 //

**sa prekṣyaiva hi jīrṇam āturaṁ ca mṛtaṁ ca
vimṛśan jagad anabhijñam ārtacittaḥ /
hṛdaya-gata-para-ghṛṇo na viṣaya-ratim agamaj
janana-maraṇa-bhayam abhito vijighāmsuḥ // 2.64 //**

For he had seen for himself an old man, a sick man, and a corpse, / After which, as with a wounded mind he witnessed the unwitting world, / He was disgusted to the core and found no pleasure in objects / But wished totally to terminate the terror of being born and dying. // 2.64 //

⁸²⁵ The Pāriyātra is another name for the Vindhya mountains that lie to the south of the Ganges basin.

**udvegād apunar-bhave manaḥ praṇidhāya
sa yayau śayita-varāṅganād anāsthāḥ /
niśi nṛpati-nilayanād vana-gamana-kṛtamanāḥ
sarasa iva mathita-nalināt kala-hamsaḥ // 2.65 //**

Having focused his agitated mind on the end of becoming, / He fled the king's palace,
indifferent to the most beautiful of women sleeping there; / Determined to go to the forest, he
fled in the night, / Like a goose from a lake of ruined lotuses. // 2.65 //

// saundaranande mahā-kāvye rāja-varṇano nāma dvitīyaḥ sargaḥ//2//
The 2nd canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled "A Portrait of the King."

Canto 3: tathāgata-varṇanaḥ A Portrait of the Tathāgata

Introduction

The forty-two verses of this short Canto give as full an answer as can be given in forty-two verses to the questions: How did the bodhisattva Gautama become the Tathāgata, the Realized One? And what thereafter did he teach? The answer to the second question is presented not only in the abstract but also in a description of how the citizens of Kapilavāstu, under the Buddha's guiding influence, all lived in peace, exemplifying in their lives what it means to keep ten precepts.

**tapase tataḥ kapilavāstu haya-gaja-rath'-augha-saṅkulaṁ /
śrīmad-abhayam-anurakta-janaṁ sa vihāya niścita-manā vanaṁ yayau // 3.1 //**

For ascetic practice, then, he left Kapilavāstu – a teeming mass of horses, elephants and chariots, / Majestic, safe, and loved by its citizens. Leaving the city, he started resolutely for the forest. // 3.1 //

**vividhāgamāṁs tapasi tāṁś ca vividha-niyamāśrayān munīn /
prekṣya sa viśaya-tṛṣṇā-kṛpaṇān anavasthitam tapa iti nyavartata // 3.2 //**

In the approach to ascetic practice of the various traditions, and in the attachment of sages to various restraints, / He observed the miseries of thirsting after an object. Seeing asceticism to be unreliable, he turned away from it. // 3.2 //

**atha mokṣa-vādinam arāḍam upaśama-matiṁ tathoḍrakaṁ /
tattva-kṛta-matir upāśya jahāv ayam apy amārga iti mārga-kovidhaḥ // 3.3 //**

Then Arāḍa, who spoke of freedom, and likewise Uḍraka, who inclined towards quietness, / He served, his heart set on truth, and he left. He who intuited the path intuited: “This also is not it.” // 3.3 //

**sa vicārayan jagati kiṁ nu paramam iti taṁ tam āgamaṁ /
niścayam anadhigataḥ parataḥ paramaṁ cacāra tapa eva duṣ-karaṁ // 3.4 //**

Of the different traditions in the world, he asked himself, which one was the best? / Not obtaining certainty elsewhere, he entered after all into ascetic practice that was most severe. // 3.4 //

**atha naiṣa mārga iti vikṣya tad api vipulaṁ jahau tapaḥ /
dhyāna-viśayam avagamyā paraṁ bubhujē varāṇnam amṛtatva-buddhaye // 3.5 //**

Then, having seen that it was not the path, he also abandoned that extreme asceticism. / Understanding the realm of meditation to be supreme, he ate good food in readiness to realise the deathless. // 3.5 //

sa suvarṇa-pīna-yuga-bāhur ṛṣabha-gatir āyatekṣaṇaḥ /

plakṣam avaniruhā abhyagamat paramasya nīcaya-vidher bubhutsayā // 3.6 //

With golden arms fully expanded and as if in a yoke, with lengthened eyes, and bull-like gait, / He came to a fig tree, growing up from the earth, with the will to awakening that belongs to the supreme method of investigation. // 3.6 //

upaviśya tatra kṛta-buddhir acala-dhṛtir adri-rājavat /

māra-balam ajayad ugram atho bubudhe padaṁ śivam ahāryam avyayaṁ // 3.7 //

Sitting there, mind made up, as unmovingly stable as the king of mountains, / He overcame the grim army of Māra and awoke to the step which is happy, irremovable, and irreducible. // 3.7 //

avagamyā taṁ ca kṛta-kāryam amṛta-manaso divaukaśaḥ /

harṣam atulam agaman muditā vimukhī tu māra-pariṣat pracukṣubhe // 3.8 //

Sensing the completion of his task, the denizens of heaven whose heart's desire is the deathless nectar / Buzzed with unbridled joy. But Māra's crew was downcast and trembled. // 3.8 //

sa-nagā ca bhūḥ pravacāla huta-vaha-sakhaḥ śivo vavau /

nedur api ca sura-dundubhayaḥ pravavarṣa cāmbu-dhara-varjitaṁ nabhaḥ // 3.9 //

The earth with its mountains shook, that which feeds the fire blew benignly, / The drums of the gods resounded, and from the cloudless sky rain fell.⁸²⁶ // 3.9 //

avabudhya caiva paramārtham ajaram anukampayā vibhuḥ /

nityam amṛtam upadarśayituṁ sa varāṇasī-parikarāṁ ayāt purīm // 3.10 //

Awake to the one great ageless purpose, and universal in his compassion, / He proceeded, in order to display the eternal deathless nectar, to the city sustained by the waters of the Varāṇā and the Asī – to Vārāṇasī. // 3.10 //

atha dharma-cakram ṛta-nābhi dhṛti-mati-samādhi-nemimat /

tatra vinaya-niyamāram ṛṣir jagato hitāya pariṣady avartayat // 3.11 //

And so the wheel of dharma – whose hub is uprightness, whose rim is constancy, determination, and balanced stillness, / And whose spokes are the rules of discipline – there the Seer turned, in that assembly, for the welfare of the world. // 3.11 //

iti duḥkham etad iyam asya samudaya-latā pravartikā /

śāntir iyam ayam upāya iti pravibhāgaśaḥ param idaṁ catuṣṭayam // 3.12 //

“This is suffering; this is the tangled mass of causes producing it; / This is cessation; and here is a means.” Thus, one by one, this supreme set of four, // 3.12 //

⁸²⁶ Ostensibly rain falling from the cloudless sky is something fantastic, a miracle. In the hidden meaning, it is a suggestion of the dependently-arisen reality (see e.g. SN17.20-21) in which there is no such thing,

abhidhāya ca tri-parivartam atulam anivartyam uttamaṁ /

dvādaśa-niyata-vikalpam ṛśir vinināya kauṇḍina-sagotram āditaḥ // 3.13 //

The seer set out, with its three divisions⁸²⁷ of the unequalled, the incontrovertible, the ultimate; / And with its statement of twelvefold determination;⁸²⁸ after which he instructed, as the first follower, him of the Kauṇḍinya clan.⁸²⁹ // 3.13 //

sa hi doṣa-sāgaram agādham upadhi-jalam ādhi-jantukam /

krodha-mada-bhaya-taraṅga-calam pratatāra lokam api ca vyatārayat // 3.14 //

For the fathomless sea of faults, whose water is falsity, where fish are cares, / And which is disturbed by waves of anger, lust, and fear; he had crossed, and he took the world across too. // 3.14 //

sa vinīya kāśiṣu gayeṣu bahu-janam atho giri-vraje /

pitryam api parama-kāruṅiko nagaram yayāv anujighrṅṣayā tadā // 3.15 //

Having instructed many people at Kāśī and at Gaya as also at Giri-vraja, / He made his way then to the city of his fathers, in his deeply compassionate desire to include it. // 3.15 //

viṣayātmakasya hi janasya bahu-vividha-mārga-sevinaḥ /

sūrya-sadṛśa-vapur abhyudito vijahāra sūrya iva gautamas tamaḥ // 3.16 //

To people possessed by ends, serving many and various paths, / Splendour had arisen that seemed like the sun: Gautama was like the sun, dispelling darkness. // 3.16 //

abhitas tataḥ kapilavāstu parama-śubha-vāstu-saṁstutam /

vastu-mati-śuci śivopavanaṁ sa dadarśa niḥspṛhatayā yathā vanaṁ // 3.17 //

Seeing then all sides of Kapilavāstu – which was famed for its most beautiful properties, / And was pure and clean in substance and design, and pleasantly wooded – he looked without longing, as though at a forest. // 3.17 //

as a thing unto itself, as a cloud.

⁸²⁷ The three divisions of the noble eightfold path, as clarified in SN16.30-33, are 1. the threefold discipline of integrity (*śīla*; using the voice and body well, and earning a living well); 2. threefold wisdom (*prajñā*; insight into the four noble truths, thinking straight, and initiative); and 3. twofold tranquillity (*samādhi*; awareness and balanced stillness).

⁸²⁸ *Dvādaśa-niyata-vikalpam* – perhaps better translated as “with its combinations of twelve causal connections.” EHJ translated “with its... twelve separate statements;” and LC “with its twelve connecting statements”). *Dvādaśa* means twelve. *Niyata* means fastened; fixed; connected with, dependent on. *Vikalpa* means alternation, alternative, option, variation, combination. However the phrase is translated, it refers to to the twelvefold teaching of dependent arising described in detail in BC Canto 14.

⁸²⁹ Kauṇḍinya is cited first in the long list of names of courageous individual practitioners that the Buddha holds up, from SN16.87, as examples for Nanda to emulate. Kauṇḍinya is also known as Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya, “Kauṇḍinya Who Knows” (Pali: Aññā Koṇḍañña), because at the end of the first turning of the Dharma-wheel, the Buddha is said to have declared, “Kauṇḍinya surely knows! Kauṇḍinya surely knows!”

aparigrahaḥ sa hi babhūva niyata-matir ātmanīśvaraḥ /

naika-vidha-bhaya-kareṣu kim-u svajana-svadeśajana-mitra-vastuṣu // 3.18 //

For he had become free of belonging; he was sure in his thinking, the master of himself. / How much less did he belong to those causes of manifold worry – family, countrymen, friends and property? // 3.18 //

pratipūjayā na sa jaharṣa na ca śucam avajñāyāgamat /

niscita-matir asi-candanayor na jagāma duḥkha-sukhayoś ca vikriyām // 3.19 //

Being revered gave him no thrill, and neither did disrespect cause him any grief. / His direction was decided, come sword or sandalwood, and whether the going was tough or easy he was not diminished. // 3.19 //

atha pārthivaḥ samupalabhya sutam upagataṁ tathāgataṁ /

tūrṇam abahu-turagānugataḥ suta-darśanotsukatayābhiniriyayau // 3.20 //

And so the king learned that his son had arrived as the *Tathāgata*, the One Arrived Thus; / With but a few horses straggling behind him,⁸³⁰ out the king charged, in his eagerness to see his son. // 3.20 //

sugatas tathāgatam avekṣya nara-patim adhīram-āśayā /

śeṣam api ca janam aśru-mukhaṁ viniṣayā gaganam utpapāta ha // 3.21 //

The *Sugata*, the One Gone Well, saw the king coming thus,⁸³¹ composure lost in expectation, / And saw the rest of the people too, with tearful faces; wishing to direct them, up he took himself, into the sky. // 3.21 //

sa vicakrame divi bhuvīva punar upaviveśa tasthivān /

Nīścala-matir aśayiṣṭa punar bahudhābhavat punar abhūt tathaikadhā // 3.22 //

He strode over heaven as if over the earth; and sat again, in the stillness of having stopped. / Without changing his direction, he lay down; he showed many changing forms⁸³² while remaining, in this manner, all of one piece. // 3.22 //

⁸³⁰ In BC10.16, King Śreṇya is described as *nibhṛtānuyātraḥ*, “having only a modest retinue.” The implication here, similarly, seems to be that going with a retinue of only a few horses was a mark of modesty.

⁸³¹ “Coming thus,” is *tathāgatam*, a play on *tathāgata* which, as an epithet of the Buddha, is open to very many readings.

⁸³² *Bahudhābhavat* can quite literally be translated as nothing more supernatural than “he manifested himself (*abhavat*) in many ways (*bahudhā*).” At the same time with these descriptions Aśvaghōṣa seems to be inviting the religiously-inclined to invent their own more unlikely scenarios. Hence EHJ: “*He divided Himself into many forms and then became one again.*”

salile kṣitāv iva cacāra jalam iva viveśa medinīm /

megha iva divi vavarṣa punaḥ punar ajvalan nava ivodito raviḥ // 3.23 //

He walked over water as if on dry land, immersed himself in the soil as though it were water, /
Rained as a cloud in the sky, and shone like the newly-risen sun. // 3.23 //

yugapaj jvalan jvalanavac ca jalam avasṛjaś ca meghavat /

tapta-kanaka-sadṛśa-prabhayā sa babhau pradīpta iva sandhyayā ghanah // 3.24 //

Simultaneously glowing like a fire and passing water like a cloud,⁸³³ / He gave off a light
resembling molten gold, like a cloud set aglow by daybreak or by dusk. // 3.24 //

tam udīkṣya hema-maṇi-jāla-valayinam ivotthitaṁ dhvajam /

pṛītim agamad atulām nṛpatir janatā natāś ca bahumānam abhyayuḥ // 3.25 //

Looking up at him in the network of gold and pearls that seemed to wrap around him like an
upraised flag,⁸³⁴ / The king became joyful beyond measure and the assembled people, bowing
down, felt deep appreciation. // 3.25 //

atha bhājanī-kṛtam avekṣya manuja-patim ṛddhi-sampadā /

paura-janam api ca tat-pravaṇam nijagāda dharma-vinayam vināyakaḥ // 3.26 //

And so, seeing that he had made a vessel of the ruler of men, through the wealth of his
accomplishments, / And that the townsfolk also were amenable, the Guide gave voice to the
dharma and the discipline. // 3.26 //

nṛpatis tataḥ prathamam āpa phalam amṛta-dharma-siddhaye /

dharmam atulam adhigamya muner munaye nanāma sa yato gurāv iva // 3.27 //

Then the royal hero reaped the first fruit for the fulfillment of the deathless dharma. / Having
obtained unthinkable dharma from the sage, he bowed accordingly in the sage's direction, as to
a guru. // 3.27 //

bahavaḥ prasanna-manaso 'tha janana-maraṇārti-bhīravaḥ /

śākya-tanaya-vṛṣabhāḥ kṛtino vṛṣabhā ivānala-bhayāt pravavrajuḥ // 3.28 //

Many then who were clear in mind – alert to the agony of birth and death – / Among mighty
Śākya-born men of action, went forth into the wandering life, like bulls that had been startled
by fire. // 3.28 //

⁸³³ The 2nd of four pādas often harbours subversive content, as the element opposed to the innocence of idealism in a four-phased dialectic progression. *Jalam ava-vṣṛj* literally means “to let loose water.” Hence EHJ translated “*shedding water like a cloud.*” But in the hidden meaning (just as Jesus wept) the Buddha pissed.

⁸³⁴ This is the first of several verses in Saundara-nanda in which Aśvaghōṣa alludes to the colour of the buddha-robe (see e.g. SN18.20). It is described as being yellow-red, and therefore, in the right light, having a golden hue. The robe is comparable to a net in that it is a patchwork of panels, stitched together in back-stitches whose heads sometimes look like little pearls.

vijahus tu ye 'pi na gr̥hāni tanaya-pitr̥-mātr̥-apekṣayā /

te 'pi niyama-vidhim ā-maraṇāj jagṛhuṣ ca yukta-manasaś ca dadhrire // 3.29 //

But even those who did not leave home, out of regard for children or father or mother: / They also, until their death, embraced the preventive rule and, with ready minds, they held to it:⁸³⁵
// 3.29 //

na jihīnsa sūkṣmam api jantum api para-vadhōpajīvanaḥ /

kiṁ bata vipula-guṇaḥ kula-jaḥ sadayaḥ sadā kim-u muner upāsakaḥ // 3.30 //

No living creature, no matter how small, was subjected to violence, even by a person who killed for a living, / Still less by a man of great virtue, good family and unfailing gentleness – and how much less by a servant of the Sage?⁸³⁶ // 3.30 //

akṛśodyamaḥ kṛśadhano 'pi para-paribhavāsaho 'pi san /

nānya-dhanam apajahāra tathā bhujagād ivānya-vibhavādd hi vivyathe // 3.31 //

The man not shy of hard work and yet still short of money, though he could not bear the other's slights, / Did not, even so, carry off the other's goods; for he shrank from others' riches as from a snake.⁸³⁷ // 3.31 //

vibhavānvito 'pi taruṇo 'pi viṣaya-capalendriyo 'pi san /

naiva ca para-yuvatīr agamat paramaṁ hi tā dahanato 'py amanyata // 3.32 //

Even the man of money and youth with senses excited by objects of his affection – / Even he never approached others' wives, for he deemed them to be more dangerous than a burning fire.⁸³⁸ // 3.32 //

anṛtam jagāda na ca kaś-cid ṛtam api jajalpa nāpriyaṁ /

ślakṣṇam api ca na jagāv ahitaṁ hitam apy uvāca na ca paiśunāya yat // 3.33 //

Nobody told an untruth, nor made true but nasty gossip, / Nor crooned slick but malicious words, nor spoke kindly words that had a backbiting motive.⁸³⁹ // 3.33 //

⁸³⁵ The final word can also be read as *dadhyire*, in which case *yukta-manasaś ca dadhyire* means “And, with ready minds, they meditated.” EHJ's rejection of this reading, on the grounds that meditation is not suitable for householders, is not well founded. The context, however, which is observance of the ten precepts, does seem to point more to *dadhrire* than *dadhyire*.

⁸³⁶ Precept one: not to inflict needless harm on living beings.

⁸³⁷ Precept two: not to steal.

⁸³⁸ Precept three: not to engage in illicit sexual relations.

⁸³⁹ Precepts four, five, six and seven: not to engage in four kinds of false speech.

manasā lulobha na ca jātu para-vasuṣu ḡṛddha-mānasaḥ /

kāma-sukham asukhato vimṛśan vijahāra tṛpta iva tatra saj-janaḥ // 3.34 //

No greedy-minded person, in his heart, had any designs on the treasures of others; / Seeing sensual happiness to be no happiness, the wise went freely on their way, as if satisfied in that area already.⁸⁴⁰ // 3.34 //

na parasya kaś-cid apaghātam api ca sa-ghṛṇo vyacintayat /

mātr-pitr-suta-suhr̥t-sadṛśam sa dadarśa tatra hi parasparam janaḥ // 3.35 //

Nobody showed any hostility towards the other; rather, they looked on others with positive warmth, / As mother, father, child or friend: for each person there saw in the other himself.⁸⁴¹ // 3.35 //

niyatam bhaviṣyati paratra bhavad api ca bhūtam apy atho /

karma-phalam api ca loka-gatir niyateti darśanam avāpa sādhu ca // 3.36 //

That the fruit of conduct, inevitably, will be realized in the future, is being realized now, and has been realized in the past; / And that thus is determined how one fares in the world: this is an insight that, again, each experienced unerringly.⁸⁴² // 3.36 //

iti karmaṇā daśa-vidhena parama-kuśalena bhūriṇā /

bhramśini śīthila-guṇo 'pi yuge vijahāra tatra muni-saṁśrayāj janaḥ // 3.37 //

By this most skillful and powerful tenfold means, by the means of their conduct, / Although virtue was lax in a declining age, the people there, with the Sage's help, fared well. // 3.37 //

na ca tatra kaś-cid upapatti-sukham abhilalāṣa tair guṇaiḥ /

sarvam aśivam avagamyā bhavaṁ bhava-saṁkṣayāya vavṛte na janmane // 3.38 //

But nobody there, because of his virtues, expected happiness in a resulting birth; / Having learned that all becoming is pernicious, people worked to eradicate becoming, not to become something. // 3.38 //

⁸⁴⁰ Precept eight: not to covet.

⁸⁴¹ Precept nine: not to show hostility.

⁸⁴² Precept ten: not to have any doubt about cause and effect.

akathamkathā gr̥hiṇa eva parama-pariśuddha-dr̥ṣṭayaḥ /

srotasi hi vavṛtīre bahavo rajasas tanutvam api cakrīre pare // 3.39 //

Even householders were free from endless doubting, their views washed spotlessly away: / For many had entered the stream,⁸⁴³ and others⁸⁴⁴ had reduced the passions to a trickle.⁸⁴⁵ // 3.39 //

vavṛte 'tra yo 'pi viśayeṣu vibhava-sadṛśeṣu kaś-cana /

tyāga-vinaya-niyamābhirato vijahāra so 'pi na cacāla sat-pathāt // 3.40 //

Even one there who had been given over to ends like wealth⁸⁴⁶ / Was now content with free giving, discipline, and restraint: he also fared well, not straying from the true path. // 3.40 //

api ca svato 'pi parato 'pi na bhayam abhavan na daivataḥ /

tatra ca susukha-subhikṣa-guṇair jahṛṣuḥ prajāḥ kṛta-yuge manor iva // 3.41 //

Neither from within the self, nor from without, did any terror arise; nor from fate. / By dint of their true happiness and material plenty and practical merits, the citizens there rejoiced as in the golden age of Manu.⁸⁴⁷ // 3.41 //

⁸⁴³ *Srotasi hi vavṛtīre.* *vṛt* with locative more literally means to advance in, to flow along in. Stream-entry is the first of four levels of awakening, or fruits of dharma, that Nanda is described as realizing in Canto 17, “having shaken off every vestige of the personality view” (SN17.27). The personality view is the first of ten fetters, viz: 1. personality view, 2. doubting, 3. clinging to rules and rituals, 4. sensual desire, 5, ill will; 6. desire for form, 7. desire for the formless or immaterial, 8. conceit, 9. restlessness, 10. ignorance. One who is free from fetters 1-3 is a stream-winner, having entered the stream to nirvāna.

⁸⁴⁴ Alternate translation: “Afterwards they reduced the passions to a trickle” – *pare* means 1. “others” and 2. “afterwards.”

⁸⁴⁵ *Rajasas*, “the passions” here suggests sensual desire and ill will, the fourth and fifth of the ten fetters. One who, besides the first three fetters, has overcome fetters 4-5 in their grosser form, is a “once-returner.” He or she has attained the second fruit of dharma but, not yet being completely free of fetters 4-5, is still subject to one more return to the sensuous world. One who is fully freed from fetters 1-5 has attained the third fruit as a “non-returner.” The first five fetters are called “lower fetters,” since they tie us to sensuous realms, whereas the five upper fetters (see SN17.57) tie us to spiritual or aspirational realms. One who has cut all ten fetters, ending with ignorance, has attained the fourth fruit of arhathood (see SN17.57; 17.72).

⁸⁴⁶ Cf. SN2.60 and 2.61. Aśvaghoṣa's attitude to wealth at first glance seems contradictory. But on closer investigation, there is no contradiction: as a means, wealth is useful; but pursuit of wealth as an end is errant behaviour.

⁸⁴⁷ Manu means archetypal Man, progenitor of the human race.

**iti muditam anāmayam nirāpat kuru-raghu-pūru-puropamam puram tat /
abhavad abhaya-daisike maharṣau viharati tatra śivāya vīta-rāge // 3.42 //**

Thus exulting in freedom from disease and calamity, that city was the equal of Kuru,⁸⁴⁸ Raghu and Pūru, / With the great dispassionate Seer serving there, for the good of all, as a guide to peace.⁸⁴⁹ // 3.42 //

iti saundaranande mahākāvyē tathāgata-varṇano nāma tṛtīyaḥ sargaḥ //3//

The 3rd Canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled “A Portrait of the Tathāgata.”

⁸⁴⁸ Kuru was the name of an ancient Indo-Aryan tribe, and of their kingdom (see also SN9.17 and 9.20).

⁸⁴⁹ *Abhaya*, peace, or absence of fear, is opposed to *bhayam* (“terror”) in the previous verse. *Vi-hṛ*, translated previously as “to fare well,” has a sense of freedom of movement, or carefree adventure, which has been lost in the translation of this verse (see also SN5.20).

Canto 4: bhāryā-yācitakaḥ A Wife's Appeal

Introduction

Bhāryā, the feminine of *bhārya*, from the root *vbhr*, to bear, literally means a woman to be borne or supported or cherished or nourished or maintained; hence, a wife. *Yācitaka*, which as an adjective means borrowed and as a noun means something borrowed, is from the root *vyāc*, which means to ask or beg.

When we examine the content of the Canto so as to understand the meaning of *bhāryā-yācitaka* in context, we find the scent of sensuality thick in the air, until Nanda sets out, hesitantly, to catch up with the Buddha on the road. In order to make this transition – in order to be released from his wife's loving embrace – Nanda makes a bargain with his wife Sundarī that he will be back before her make-up is dried. Hence, in EH Johnston's translation, *bhāryā-yācitakaḥ* is "The Wife's Bargain." Reflecting the original meaning of *vyāc*, Linda Covill translates *bhāryā-yācitakaḥ* "His Wife's Request," taking Sundarī to be the subject who begs Nanda to come back. In verse 32, however, it is rather Nanda who begs Sundarī to allow him to go and see the Buddha – as if he were asking to borrow some time away, a leave of absence. In this context, the inelegant "What He Begged His Wife for" would fit.

As in many other canto titles, then, the noun-verb combination of this Canto title is open to numerous readings. What is not in doubt, in the overall context of the epic tale of Handsome Nanda, is that Nanda's wife was very beautiful, and that the love between Nanda and Sundarī was not only platonic but was also conspicuously sensual. Thus the memory of Sundarī continued to exert a strong pull on Nanda's body and mind long after he had left home to take to the wandering life. If we ever thought that a celibate life in the modern world has become a harder path to follow than it would have been in a more innocent antiquity, then the descriptions of love in the present Canto vividly challenge that view.

**munau bruvāṇe 'pi tu tatra dharmam dharmam prati jñātiṣu cādṛteṣu /
prāsāda-saṁstho madanaika-kāryaḥ priyā-sahāyo vijahāra nandaḥ // 4.1 //**

But even when the Sage was there speaking the dharma, and even though other family members heeded the dharma, / Nanda passed the time in the company of his wife, staying in the palace penthouse, solely occupied with love. // 4.1 //

**sa cakravākyeva hi cakravākas tayā sametaḥ priyayā priyārhaḥ /
nācintayad vaiśramaṇaṁ na śakraṁ tat-sthāna-hetoḥ kuta eva dharmam // 4.2 //**

For joined with his wife like a greylag gander with a greylag goose,⁸⁵⁰ and fitted for love, / He turned his thoughts neither to Vaiśraṇa nor to Śakra: how much less, in that state, did he think about dharma? // 4.2 //

**lakṣmyā ca rūpeṇa ca sundarīti stambhena garveṇa ca māninīti /
dīptyā ca mānena ca bhāminīti yāto babhāṣe trividhena nāmnā // 4.3 //**

For her grace and beauty, she was called Lovely Sundarī; for her headstrong pride, Sulky Māninī; / And for her sparkle and spirit, Beautiful Bhāminī. So that she was called by three names. // 4.3 //

**sā hāsa-hamsā nayana-dvirephā pīna-stanātyunnata-padma-kośā /
bhūyo babhāse sva-kuloditena strī-padminī nanda-divākareṇa // 4.4 //**

She of smiles like the bars of a bar-headed-goose, of eyes like black bees, and swelling breasts like the upward jutting buds of a lotus, / Shimmered all the more, a lotus-pool in female form, with the rising of a kindred luminary, the sun-like Nanda.⁸⁵¹ // 4.4 //

**rūpeṇa cātyanta-manohareṇa rūpānurūpeṇa ca ceṣṭitena /
manuṣya-loke hi tadā babhūva sā sundarī strīṣu nareṣu nandaḥ // 4.5 //**

For, with inordinately good looks, and moves to match those heart-stealing looks, / There was in the human world at that time, among women, [only] Sundarī, and among men, Nanda. // 4.5 //

**sā devatā nandana-cāriṇīva kulasya nandī-jananaś ca nandaḥ /
atītya martyān anupetya devān sṛṣṭāv abhūtām iva bhūta-dhātrā // 4.6 //**

She, like a goddess wandering in Indra's Gardens of Gladness,⁸⁵² and Nanda, the bringer of joy to his kin, / Seemed, having gone beyond mortals, and yet not become gods, to be a Creator's creation in progress. // 4.6 //

⁸⁵⁰ Male and female greylag geese feature prominently in Sanskrit romantic literature. Their Sanskrit name, *cakravāka*, arises from the way they call to each other, the male gently honking, the female responding, the male replying, and so on; a cycle or 'wheel' (*cakra*) of song. Their gentle, musical '*aang aang aang*' is said to be one of the most enchanting calls in the natural world.

⁸⁵¹ "Sun-like Nanda" alludes to Nanda's heritage as a descendant of Ikṣvāku, founder of the solar dynasty (see SN1.18).

⁸⁵² Nandana, lit. "Gladdening" is the name of Indra's paradise. This is the setting for Canto 10, where the Buddha introduces the gob-smacked Nanda to the all-surpassing beauty of the celestial nymphs, the *apsarases*.

**tām sundarīm cen na labheta nandaḥ sā vā niṣeveta na taṁ nata-bhrūḥ /
dvandvaṁ dhruvaṁ tad vikalaṁ na śobhetānyonya-hīnāv iva rātri-candrau // 4.7 //**

If Nanda had not won Sundarī, or if she of the arched eyebrows had not gone to him, / Then, deprived of each other, the two would surely have seemed impaired, like the night and the moon.⁸⁵³ // 4.7 //

**kandarpa-ratyor iva lakṣya-bhūtaṁ pramoda-nāndyor iva nīḍa-bhūtam /
prahaṛṣa-tuṣṭyor iva pātra-bhūtaṁ dvandvaṁ sahāraṁsta tad andha-bhūtam // 4.8 //**

As though a target⁸⁵⁴ of the god of Love and his mistress Pleasure; as though a nest of Ecstasy and Joy; / As though a bowl of Excitement and Contentment; blindly the couple took their pleasure together.⁸⁵⁵ // 4.8 //

**parasparodvīkṣaṇa-tat-parākṣaṁ paraspara-vyāhṛta-sakta-cittam /
parasparāśleṣa-hṛtāṅgarāgaṁ parasparaṁ tan-mithunaṁ jahāra // 4.9 //**

Having eyes only for each other's eyes, minds hanging on each other's words, / Mutual embraces rubbing away the pigments that scented their bodies, the couple carried each other away. // 4.9 //

**bhāvānuraktau giri-nirjhara-sthau tau kiṁnarī-kiṁpuruṣāv ivobhau /
cikrīḍatuś cābhivirejatuś ca rūpa-śriyānyonyam ivākṣipantau // 4.10 //**

Like a kiṁnara meeting a kiṁnarī by a cascading mountain torrent, in love with love, / The two of them flirted and shone, as if vying to outdo one another in alluring radiance. // 4.10 //

**anyonya-saṁrāga-vivardhanena tad-dvandvam anyonyam arīramac ca /
klamāntare 'nyonya-vinodanena salīlam anyonyam amīmadac ca // 4.11 //**

By building up each other's passion, the pair gave each other sexual satisfaction; / And by playfully teasing each other during languid intervals, they gladdened each other again. // 4.11 //

⁸⁵³ In Sanskrit the night (*rātri*) is feminine and the moon (*candra*) is masculine.

⁸⁵⁴ The paper manuscript has *lakṣma* (= *deva-lakṣma*, "divine characteristic") rather than *lakṣya* ("target"); in a note to his English translation EHJ thought perhaps the former reading should be retained. Either reading fits with a four-phased interpretation of the verse along the lines of (1) something divine/spiritual/romantic/idealized, or a target, (2) a concrete place of refuge free from pursuit of targets, (3) a practical utensil like a bhikṣu's bowl, having both spiritual meaning and actual substance, and (4) a meeting of subject and object.

⁸⁵⁵ Each of the three dual compounds is a masculine-feminine combination: *kandarpa* (Love) is masculine, *rati* (Pleasure) is feminine; *pramoda* (Ecstasy) is masculine, *nāndī* (Joy) is feminine. *prahaṛṣa* (Excitement) is masculine, *tuṣṭi* (Contentment) is feminine.

**vibhūṣayām āsa tataḥ priyām sa siṣeviṣus tām na mṛjāvahārtham /
svenaiva rūpeṇa vibhūṣitā hi vibhūṣaṇānām api bhūṣaṇām sā // 4.12 //**

Wishing to cherish his beloved, he bedecked her there in finery, but not with the aim of making her beautiful – / For she was so graced already by her own loveliness that she was rather the adorning of her adornments.⁸⁵⁶ // 4.12 //

**dattvātha sā darpaṇam asya haste mamāgrato dhāraya tāvad enam /
viśeṣakam yāvad ahaṁ karomīty uvāca kāntam sa ca tam babhāra // 4.13 //**

She put a mirror in his hand; “Just hold this in front of me / While I do my face,” she said to her lover, and up he held it. // 4.13 //

**bhartus tataḥ śmaśru nirīkṣamānā viśeṣakam sāpi cakāra tāḍṛk /
niśvāsa-vātena ca darpaṇasya cikitsayitvā nijaghāna nandaḥ // 4.14 //**

Then, beholding her husband’s stubble she began to paint her face just like it, / But, with a breath on the mirror, Nanda soon took care of that. // 4.14 //

**sā tena ceṣṭā-lalitena bhartuḥ śāṭhyena cāntar-manasā jahāsa /
bhavec ca ruṣṭā kila nāma tasmai lalāṭa-jihmām bhru-kuṭīm cakāra // 4.15 //**

At this wanton gesture of her husband, and at his wickedness, she inwardly laughed; / But, pretending to be furious with him, she cocked her eyebrows and frowned. // 4.15 //

**cikṣepa karṇotpalam asya cāmse kareṇa savyena madālasena /
pattrāṅgulim cārdha-nimīlitākṣe vaktre ’sya tām eva vinirdudhāva // 4.16 //**

With a left hand made languid by love, she took a flower from behind her ear and threw it at his shoulder; / Again, as he kept his eyes half-shut, she sprinkled over his face the scented make-up she had been using to powder herself.⁸⁵⁷ // 4.16 //

**tataś calan nūpura-yoktritābhyām nakha-prabhodbhāsitarāṅgulibhyām /
padbhyām priyāyā nalinopamābhyām mūrdhnā bhayān nāma nanāma nandaḥ // 4.17 //**

Then, at his wife’s lotus like feet, which were girt in trembling ankle bracelets, / Their toes sparkling with nail gloss, Nanda bowed his head, in mock terror.⁸⁵⁸ // 4.17 //

⁸⁵⁶ LC: “for she was so adorned by her own beauty that it was she who lent loveliness to her jewels.”

⁸⁵⁷ “The scented make-up she had been using to powder herself” represents *pattrāṅgulim*, given in the MW dictionary as “a decoration consisting in lines or streaks drawn on the face and body with musk and other fragrant substances.” *Aṅguli* means finger. And *pattra*, leaf, would seem to allude to *tamāla-pattra* (see verse 20 below) which means 1. a leaf of the *tamāla* plant (*Xanthochymus pictorius*), and hence 2. a mark on the forehead made with the juice of this plant.

⁸⁵⁸ Note the euphony, totally lost in translation, of *nāma nanāma nandaḥ*.

**sa mukta-puṣponmiṣitena mūrdhnā tataḥ priyāyāḥ priya-kṛd babhāse /
suvarṇa-vedyām anilāvabhagnaḥ puṣpātibhārād iva nāga-vṛkṣaḥ // 4.18 //**

As his head emerged from beneath the discarded flower, he made as if to regain his lover's affections; / He looked like an ornamental nāga tree, overburdened with blossoms, that had toppled in the wind onto its golden pedestal. // 4.18 //

**sā taṁ stanodvartita-hāra-yaṣṭir utthāpayām āsa nipīḍya dorbhyām /
katham kṛto 'sīti jahāsa coccair mukhena sācī-kṛta-kuṇḍalena // 4.19 //**

Pressing him so close in her arms that her pearls lifted off from her swelling breasts, she raised him up; / "What are you doing!?" she cried laughingly, as her earrings dangled across her face. // 4.19 //

**patyus tato darpaṇa-sakta-pāṇer muhur-muhur vaktram avekṣamāṇā /
tamāla-patṛrādra-tale kapole samāpayām āsa viśeṣakam tat // 4.20 //**

Then, looking repeatedly at the face of her husband, whose hand had clung to the mirror, / She completed her face-painting, so that the surface of her cheeks was wet with *tamāla* juice.⁸⁵⁹ // 4.20 //

**tasyā mukham tat sa-tamāla-patṛam tāmrādharauṣṭham cikurāyatākṣam /
raktādhikāgram patita-dvirepham sa-śaivalam padmam ivābabhāse // 4.21 //**

Framed by the *tamāla* smudges, her face with its cherry red lips, and wide eyes extending to her hair, / Seemed like a lotus framed by duck-weed, with crimson tips, and two big bees settled on it. // 4.21 //

**nandas tato darpaṇam ādareṇa bibhrat tadā maṇḍana-sākṣi-bhūtam /
viśeṣakāvekṣaṇa-kekarākṣo laḍat-priyāyā vadanam dadarśa // 4.22 //**

Attentively now, Nanda held the mirror, which was bearing witness to a work of beauty. / Squinting to see the flecks she had painted, he beheld the face of his impish lover. // 4.22 //

**tat-kuṇḍalādaṣṭa-viśeṣakāntam kāraṇḍava-kliṣṭam ivāravindam /
nandaḥ priyāyā mukham ikṣamāṇo bhūyaḥ priyānanda-karo babhūva // 4.23 //**

The make-up was nibbled away at its edges by her earrings so that her face was like a lotus that had suffered the attentions of a *kāraṇḍava* duck. / Nanda, by gazing upon that face, became all the more the cause of his wife's happiness. // 4.23 //

⁸⁵⁹ Lit. "She finished face-painting on the cheek with its surface wet with *tamāla* leaf."

**vimāna-kalpe sa vimāna-garbhe tatas tathā caiva nananda nandaḥ /
tathāgataś cāgata-bhaikṣa-kālo bhaikṣāya tasya praviveśa veśma // 4.24 //**

While Nanda, inside the palace, in what almost amounted to a dishonour,⁸⁶⁰ was thus enjoying himself, / The Tathāgata, the One Thus Come, come begging time, had entered the palace, for the purpose of begging. // 4.24 //

**avānmukho niṣpranayaś ca tasthau bhrātur gṛhe 'nyasya gṛhe yathaiva /
tasmād atho preṣya-jana-pramādād bhikṣām alabdhvaiva punar jagāma // 4.25 //**

With face turned down, he stood, in his brother's house as in any other house, not expecting anything; / And then, since due to the servants' oversight, he received no alms, he went again on his way. // 4.25 //

**kā-cit pipeṣānuvilepanaṁ hi vāso 'ṅganā kā-cid avāsayac ca /
ayojayat snāna-vidhiṁ tathānyā jagranthur anyāḥ surabhīḥ srajaś ca // 4.26 //**

For one woman was grinding fragrant body oils; another was perfuming clothes; / Another, likewise, was preparing a bath; while other women strung together sweet-smelling garlands. // 4.26 //

**tasmin gṛhe bhartur ataś carantyaḥ krīḍānurūpaṁ lalitaṁ niyogam /
kāś-cin na buddhaṁ dadṛśur yuvatyo buddhasya vaiṣā niyataṁ maṇīṣā // 4.27 //**

The girls in that house were thus so busy doing work to promote their master's romantic play / That none of them had seen the Buddha – or so the Buddha inevitably concluded. // 4.27 //

**kā-cit sthitā tatra tu harmya-prṣṭhe gavākṣa-pakṣe praṇidhāya cakṣuḥ /
viniṣpatantaṁ sugataṁ dadarśa payoda-garbhād iva dīptam arkam // 4.28 //**

One woman there, however, on glancing through a round side-window on the upper storey of the palace, / Had seen the Sugata, the One Gone Well, going away – like the blazing sun emerging from a cloud. // 4.28 //

**sā gauravaṁ tatra vicārya bhartuḥ svayā ca bhaktyārhatayārhataś ca /
nandasya tasthau purato vivakṣus tad-ājñāyā ceti tadā cacakṣe // 4.29 //**

Thinking in that moment of the importance of the Worthy One to the master of the house, and through her own devotion to the Worthy One, / She stood before Nanda, intending to speak. And then, with his permission,⁸⁶¹ up she spoke: // 4.29 //

⁸⁶⁰ This can be read as a play on the word *vimāna*, which means 1. disrespect, dishonour, and 2. palace.

⁸⁶¹ *Ājñā* here means permission or consent. Elsewhere in Saundara-nanda *ājñā* means deep or liberating knowledge. Its use in the title of the final canto may be a final instance of deliberate ambiguity.

**anugrahāyāsyā janasya śaṅke gurur gṛhaṁ no bhagavān praviṣṭaḥ /
bhikṣām alabdhvā giram āsanam vā śūnyād aranyād iva yāti bhūyaḥ // 4.30 //**

“To show favour to us, I suppose, the Glorious One, the Guru, came into our house; / Having received neither alms, nor welcoming words, nor a place to sit, he is going away, as if from an empty forest.” // 4.30 //

**śrutvā maharṣeḥ sa gṛha-praveśam satkāra-hīnam ca punaḥ prayānam /
cacāla citrābharaṇāmbara-srak kalpa-drumo dhūta ivānilena // 4.31 //**

When he heard that the great Seer had entered his house and departed again without receiving a welcome, / [Nanda] in his brightly-coloured gems and garments and garlands, flinched, like a tree in Indra’s paradise shaken by a gust of wind. // 4.31 //

**kṛtvāñjalim mūrdhani padma-kalpaṁ tataḥ sa kāntām gamanam yayāce /
kartum gamiṣyāmi gurau praṇāmaṁ mām abhyanujñātum ihārhasīti // 4.32 //**

He brought to his forehead hands joined in the shape of a lotus bud, and then he begged⁸⁶² his beloved to be allowed to go: / “I would like to go and pay my respects to the Guru. Please permit me, this once.” // 4.32 //

**sā vepamānā parisasvaje taṁ śālam latā vāta-samīriteva /
dadarśa cāśru-pluta-lola-netrā dīrgham ca niśvasya vaco ’bhyuvāca // 4.33 //**

Shivering, she twined herself around him, like a wind-stirred creeper around a teak tree; / She looked at him through unsteady tear-filled eyes, took a deep breath, and told him: // 4.33 //

**nāham yiyāsor guru-darśanārtham arhāmi kartum tava dharma-pīḍām /
gacchārya-putraihi ca śīghram eva viśeṣako yāvad ayaṁ na śuṣkaḥ // 4.34 //**

“Since you wish to go and see the Guru, I shall not stand in the way of your dharma-duty. / Go, noble husband! But come quickly back, before this paint on my face is dry. // 4.34 //

**saced bhaves tvam khalu dīrgha-sūtro daṇḍam mahāntam tvayi pātayeyam /
muhur-muhus tvam śayitam kucābhyām vibodhayeyam ca na cālapeyam // 4.35 //**

If you dawdle, I will punish you severely: / As you sleep I shall with my breasts, repeatedly wake you, and then not respond. // 4.35 //

**athāpy anāśyāna-viśeṣakāyām mayyeṣyasi tvam tvaritam tatas tvam /
nipīdayiṣyāmi bhuja-dvayena nirbhūṣaṇenārdra-vilepanena // 4.36 //**

But if you hurry back to me before my face-paint is dry, / Then I will hold you close in my arms with nothing on except fragrant oils.” // 4.36 //

⁸⁶² *Yayāce*, “he begged,” like the *yācita* of the Canto title, is from the root *vṛyāc*.

ity evam uktaś ca nipīḍitaś ca tayāsavarṇa-svanayā jagāda /

evam kariṣyāmi vimuñca caṇḍe yāvad gurur dūra-gato na me saḥ // 4.37 //

Thus implored, and squeezed, by a dissonant-sounding [Sundarī], [Nanda] said: / "I will, my little vixen. Now let me go, before the Guru has gone too far." // 4.37 //

tataḥ stanodvartitata-candanābhyām mukto bhujābhyām na tu mānasena /

vihāya veṣam madanānurūpaṁ tat-kārya-yogyam sa vapur babhāra // 4.38 //

And so, with arms made fragrant by her swollen sandal-scented breasts, she let him go – but not with her heart. / He took off clothes that were suited to love and took on a form that befitted his task. // 4.38 //

sā taṁ prayāntaṁ ramaṇaṁ pradadhyau pradhyāna-śūnya-sthita-nīścalākṣī /

sthitocca-karṇā vyapavidha-śaṣpā bhrāntaṁ mṛgaṁ bhrānta-mukhī mṛgīva // 4.39 //

She contemplated her lover leaving with brooding, empty, unmoving eyes, / Like a doe standing with ears pricked up as she lets grass drop down; and as, with a perplexed expression, she contemplates the stag wandering away. // 4.39 //

didṛkṣayākṣipta-manā munes tu nandaḥ prayāṇaṁ prati tatvare ca /

vivṛtta-dṛṣṭiś ca śanair yayau tāṁ karīva paśyan sa laḍat-kareṇum // 4.40 //

With his mind gripped by desire to set eyes upon the Sage, Nanda hurried his exit; / But then he went ponderously, and with backward glances – like an elephant looking back at a playful she-elephant. // 4.40 //

chātodarīm pīna-payodharorūṁ sa sundarīm rukma-darīm ivādreh /

kākṣeṇa paśyan na tatarpa nandaḥ pibann ivaikena jalaṁ kareṇa // 4.41 //

Between her swelling cloud-like breasts⁸⁶³ and [the buttresses] of her full thighs, Sundarī's lean abdomen was like a golden fissure in a rock formation: / Looking at her could satisfy Nanda no better than drinking water out of one hand. // 4.41 //

taṁ gauravaṁ buddha-gataṁ cakarṣa bhāryānurāgaḥ punar ācakarṣa /

so 'nīścayān nāpi yayau na tasthau turaṁs taraṅgeṣv iva rāja-haṁsaḥ // 4.42 //

Reverence for the Buddha drew him on; love for his wife drew him back: / Irresolute, he neither stayed nor went, like a king-geese pushing forwards against the waves. // 4.42 //

adarśanaṁ tūpagataś ca tasyā harṁyāt tataś cāvataṭāra tūrṇam /

śrutvā tato nūpura-nisvanaṁ sa punar lalambe hṛdaye gṛhītaḥ // 4.43 //

Once she was out of sight, he descended from the palace quickly – / Then he heard the sound of ankle bracelets, and back he hung, gripped in his heart again. // 4.43 //

⁸⁶³ Payo-dhara, "containing water or milk," means 1. a cloud, and 2. a woman's breast.

**sa kāma-rāgeṇa niṅṛhyamāṇo dharmānurāgeṇa ca kṛśyamāṇaḥ /
jagāma duḥkhena vivartyamānaḥ plavaḥ pratisrota ivāpagāyāḥ // 4.44 //**

Held back by his love of love, and drawn forward by his love for dharma, / He struggled on,
being turned about⁸⁶⁴ like a boat on a river going against the stream. // 4.44 //

**tataḥ kramair dīrghatamaīḥ pracakrame kathaṁ nu yāto na gurur bhaved iti /
svajeya tām caiva viśeṣaka-priyām kathaṁ priyām ārdra-viśeṣakām iti // 4.45 //**

Then his strides became longer, as he thought to himself, “Maybe the Guru is no longer there!”
/ “Might I after all embrace my love, who is so especially loveable, while her face-paint is still
wet?” // 4.45 //

**atha sa pathi dadarśa mukta-mānaṁ piṭṛ-nagare ’pi tathā gatābhimānam /
daśa-balam abhito vilambamānaṁ dhvajam anuyāna ivaindram arcyamānam // 4.46 //**

And so on the road [Nanda] saw the One in Whom Absence Was Thus, the Tathāgata,⁸⁶⁵ devoid
of pride and – even in his father’s city – haughtiness thus absent; / Seeing the Possessor of Ten
Powers stopping and being honoured on all sides, [Nanda] felt as if he were following Indra’s
flag.⁸⁶⁶ // 4.46 //

// saudaranande mahā-kāvye bhāryā-yācitako nāma caturthaḥ sargaḥ //4//

The 4th canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled “A Wife’s Appeal.”

⁸⁶⁴ Gawronski suggested amendment to *nivartyamāmaḥ* (“being turned back”), as opposed to *vivartyamāmaḥ* (“being turned round”). For his Sanskrit text, EH Johnston retained *vivartyamāmaḥ* and in a note to his English translation several years later EHJ asserted “I still think my explanation correct; for it is based on the way a boat behaves when propelled against the stream.” Subsequently, a fragment of manuscript was found in Central Asia by Friedrich Weller, showing *vivartyamāmaḥ* and thus tending to confirm that EHJ’s intuition had indeed been correct.

⁸⁶⁵ *Tathāgata* is not explicitly used here as an epithet of the Buddha, but the description of the Buddha as being “similarly free” of haughtiness is a play on the meaning of the words *tathā* (similarly) and *gata* (gone, absent). When combined in the epithet *tathāgata*, these words *tathā* and *gata* (or *tathā* and *āgata*) can mean the Thus-Come, or the One Who Arrived Like This, or the One Who Arrived at Reality, or the Realised One. These are translations that suggest in the Buddha the presence of something ineffable. The use of *tathāgata* in today’s verse, on the contrary, seems to point not to the presence of something but rather to the absence of something – the One in Whom Absence Was Like This.

⁸⁶⁶ Weller’s fragment has parts of an additional closing verse, numbered 45. So the Nepalese manuscripts had two earlier verses which Weller’s Central Asian manuscript lacked, and the Central Asian manuscript had a final verse which the Nepalese manuscript lacked.

Canto 5: nanda-pravrājanaḥ Nanda Is Caused to Go Forth.

Introduction

In the title of the present Canto *pravṛājana*, which means banishment or exile, is derived from the causative of *pra-√vraj*, which means to go forth, i.e. to leave home and take to the life of a wandering mendicant. So *nanda-pravrājanaḥ* means “Nanda Is Caused to Go Forth [as a Monk].”⁸⁶⁷

At the same time, Nanda means joy or happiness; and so the ironic hidden meaning of the Canto title – ironic insofar as the title of the whole poem can be read as “An Epic Tale of Beautiful Happiness” (*saundara-nanda mahā-kavyā*) – is “The Banishment of Joy.”

There is beauty in Aśvaghōśa’s description of the shaven-headed Nanda, whom he compares to a rain-sodden lotus protruding limply from a pond, but for Nanda the shaving of his head does indeed represent the banishment of all joy. For Nanda, there is no happiness in it. Rather great joy and ultimate happiness follow much later in the process when, as described in cantos 17 and 18, Nanda succeeds in gaining mastery over the Buddha’s teaching of the four noble truths.

**athāvātīryāśva-ratha-dvipebhyaḥ śākyā yathā-sva-rddhi-ḡṛhīta-veśāḥ /
mahā-panebhyo vyavahāriṇaś ca mahā-munau bhakti-vaśāt praṇemuḥ // 5.1 //**

Then the Śākyas, each clothed in accordance with his wealth and accomplishments, got down from their horses, chariots, and elephants, / And the traders came out of their big shops: by dint of their devotion, they bowed down before the great Sage. // 5.1 //

**ke-cit praṇamyānuayur muhūrtaṁ ke-cit praṇamyārtha-vaśena jagmuḥ /
ke-cit svayaivāyatane tu tasthuḥ kṛtvāñjalīn vīkṣaṇa-tat-parākṣāḥ // 5.2 //**

Some bowed and then followed for a while; some bowed and went, being compelled to work. / But some remained still at their own dwelling-places,⁸⁶⁸ their hands joined and eyes observing him in the distance. // 5.2 //

**buddhas tatas tatra narendra-mārge srota mahad-bhaktimato janasya /
jagāma duḥkhena vigāhamāno jalāgame srota ivāpagāyāḥ // 5.3 //**

The Buddha then, and there, on the royal road, struggled on / Into the gushing throng of the greatly devoted, as if entering the torrent of a river in the rains. // 5.3 //

⁸⁶⁷ EH Johnston translated “The Initiation of Nanda” and Linda Covill “Nanda is Made to Ordain.”

⁸⁶⁸ The Nepalese manuscripts have *ke-cit svakeṣv āvasatheṣu tasthuḥ* “Some stood/remained still at their own dwelling-places.” Weller’s fragment has *ke-cit svayaivāyatane tu tasthuḥ*. This might be translated “But some remained still at their very own (*svaya + eva*) seats (*āyatane*),” thus being even more suggestive, in its hidden meaning, of sitting-meditation itself. The MW dictionary gives *āvasatha* as dwelling-place, abode, habitation, and *āyatana* as resting-place, support, seat, place, home, house.

atho mahadbhiḥ pathi saṁpatadbhiḥ saṁpūjyamānāya tathāgatāya /

kartuṁ praṇāmaṁ na śaśāka nandas tenābhireme tu guror mahimnā // 5.4 //

And so, with the great and the good rapidly converging on the road, to honour the Tathāgata, / Nanda was unable to make a bow; but still he could delight in the Guru's greatness. // 5.4 //

svaṁ cāvasaṅgaṁ pathi nirmumuḥsur bhaktiṁ janasyānya-mateś ca rakṣaṇ /

nandaṁ ca gehābhimukhaṁ jighr̥kṣaṇ mārگاṁ tato 'nyaṁ sugataḥ prapede // 5.5 //

Wishing to shake off adherents⁸⁶⁹ to him on the road, while tending the devotion of people who were differently minded,⁸⁷⁰ / And wishing to take Nanda in hand, who was turning for home, the One Gone Well therefore took a different⁸⁷¹ path. // 5.5 //

tato viviktaṁ ca vivikta-cetāḥ sanmārگا-vin mārگاṁ abhipratasthe /

gatvāgrataś cāgryatamāya tasmai nāndī-vimuktāya nanāma nandaḥ // 5.6 //

He of the solitary and separate mind, a knower of the true path, took a solitary and separate path; / And Nanda whose name was Joy, going out in front, could bow to him, the One gone beyond joy, who was furthest out in front. // 5.6 //

śanair vrajann eva sa gauraveṇa paṭāvṛtāṁso vinatārdha-kāyaḥ /

adho-nibaddhāñjalir ūrdhva-netraḥ sagadgaḍaṁ vākyam idaṁ babhāṣe // 5.7 //

Walking forward meekly, with respectful seriousness, with cloak over one shoulder, body half-stooped, / Hands held down and eyes raised up, Nanda stuttered these words: // 5.7 //

prāsāda-saṁstho bhagavantam antaḥ-praviṣṭam aśrauṣam anugrahāya /

atas tvarāvān aham abhyupeto grhasya kakṣyā mahato 'bhyasūyan // 5.8 //

“While I was in the palace penthouse, Glorious One, I learned that you came in for our benefit; / And so I have come in a hurry, indignant with the many members of the palace household. // 5.8 //

tat sādhu sādhu-priya mat-priyārtham tatrāstu bhikṣūttama bhaikṣa-kālaḥ /

asau hi madhyaṁ nabhaso yiyāsuḥ kālaṁ pratismārayatīva sūryaḥ // 5.9 //

Therefore, rightly, O Favourer of the Righteous, and as a favour to me, be there [at the palace], O Supreme Seeker of Alms, at the time for eating alms, / For the sun is about to reach the middle of the sky, as if to remind us of the time.” // 5.9 //

⁸⁶⁹ Or more literally “adherence” – *avasāṅgaṁ* is singular.

⁸⁷⁰ *Anya-mateḥ*, “other-minded,” on the surface means heretical, non-Buddhist, skeptical, disbelieving, in a perjorative sense, but Aśvaghōṣa's real intention may be that the Buddha discouraged blind belief and valued the efforts of individuals to think his teaching out for themselves.

⁸⁷¹ For further examples in Saundara-nanda of this use of *anya*, which means not only “other” or “different” but also “odd, individual, singular, alternative, unconventional,” see especially SN Canto 10.

**ity evam uktaḥ praṇatena tena snehābhīmānonmukha-locanena /
tādṛṇ nimittaṃ sugataś cakāra nāhāra-kṛtyaṃ sa yathā viveda // 5.10 //**

Thus addressed by the bowing [Nanda], whose expectant eyes looked up with tender affection, /
The One Gone Well made a sign such that Nanda knew he would not be taking a meal. // 5.10 //

**tataḥ sa kṛtvā munaye praṇāmaṃ gṛha-prayāṇāya matim cakāra /
anugrahārthaṃ sugatas tu tasmai pātraṃ dadau puṣkara-pattra-netraḥ // 5.11 //**

Then, having made his bow to the Sage, he made up his mind to head home; / But, as a favour,
the One Gone Well, with lotus petal eyes, handed him his bowl. // 5.11 //

**tataḥ sa loke dadataḥ phalārthaṃ pātrasya tasyāpratimasya pātram /
jagrāha cāpa-grahaṇa-kṣamābhyāṃ padmopamābhyāṃ prayataḥ karābhyāṃ // 5.12 //**

The Incomparable Vessel was offering his own vessel, to reap a fruit in the human world, / And
so Nanda, outstretched, held the bowl with lotus-like hands, which were better suited to the
holding of a bow. // 5.12 //

**parānmukhas tv anya-manaskam ārād vijñāya nandaḥ sugataṃ gatāstham /
hasta-stha-pātro 'pi gṛhaṃ yiyāsuḥ sasāra mārgān munim ikṣamāṇaḥ // 5.13 //**

But as soon as he sensed that the mind of the One Gone Well had gone elsewhere and was not on
him, Nanda backtracked⁸⁷²; / Wanting, even with the bowl in his hands, to go home, he sidled
away from the path – while keeping his eye on the Sage. // 5.13 //

**bhāryānurāgeṇa yadā gṛhaṃ sa pātraṃ gṛhītvāpi yiyāsur eva /
vimohayām āsa munis tatas taṃ rathyā-mukhasyāvarena tasya // 5.14 //**

Then, at the moment that he in his yearning for his wife, despite holding the bowl, was about to
head for home, / Just then the Sage bamboozled him, by blocking his entrance to the highway.
// 5.14 //

**nirmokṣa-bijaṃ hi dadarśa tasya jñānaṃ mṛdu kleśa-rajaś ca tīvram /
kleśānukūlaṃ viṣayātmakaṃ ca nandaṃ yatas taṃ munir ācakarṣa // 5.15 //**

For he saw that in Nanda the seed of liberation, which is wisdom, was tenuous; while the fog of
the afflictions was terribly thick; / And since he was susceptible to the afflictions and sensual by
nature, therefore the Sage reined him in. // 5.15 //

⁸⁷² *Parānmukha* means 1. having the face turned away or averted, turning the back upon; 2. being averse from, hostile to. Since the relevant portion of the text is missing or illegible in both palm-leaf and paper manuscripts, the ending could be *parānmukhaḥ* or *parānmukham* (as per Shastri's conjecture). EHJ notes that (a) Shastri's *parānmukham* may be correct; and (b) *parānmukhaḥ* (read here as “turning the back upon” i.e. back-tracking) might also mean “averse from following the Buddha.”

**saṁkleśa-pakṣo dvividhaś ca dṛṣṭas tathā dvikalpo vyavadāna-pakṣaḥ /
ātmaśrayo hetu-balādhikasya bāhyāśrayaḥ pratyaya-gauravasya // 5.16 //**

There are understood to be two aspects to defilement; correspondingly, there are two approaches to purification:⁸⁷³ / In one with stronger motivation from within, there is self-reliance; in one who assigns weight to conditions, there is outer-dependence. // 5.16 //

**ayatnato hetu-balādhikas tu nirmucyate ghaṭṭita-mātra eva /
yatnena tu pratyaya-neya-buddhir vimokṣam āpnoti parāśrayeṇa // 5.17 //**

The one who is more strongly self-motivated loosens ties⁸⁷⁴ without even trying, on receipt of the slightest stimulus; / Whereas the one whose mind is led by conditions struggles to find freedom, because of his dependence on others. // 5.17 //

**nandaḥ sa ca pratyaya-neya-cetā yaṁ śīśriye tan-mayatām avāpa /
yasmād imaṁ tatra cakāra yatnaṁ taṁ sneha-pankān munir ujjihīṣaṇ // 5.18 //**

And Nanda, whose mind was led by conditions, became absorbed into whomever he depended on; / The Sage, therefore, made this effort in his case, wishing to lift him out of the mire of love. // 5.18 //

**nandas tu duḥkhena viceṣṭamānaḥ śanair agatyā gurum anvagacchat /
bhāryā-mukhaṁ vīkṣaṇa-lola-netraṁ vicintayann ārdra-vīṣeṣakaṁ tat // 5.19 //**

But Nanda followed the Guru meekly and helplessly, squirming with discomfort, / As he thought of his wife's face, her eyes looking out restlessly, and the painted marks still moist. // 5.19 //

⁸⁷³ Vyavadāna, "purification," is from the root *ava-√do*, which means to cut off or cut out. Cf. Udānavarga 28.1: *sarva-pāpasyākaraṇaṁ kuśalasyopasaṁpadaḥ / svacitta-paryavadanam etad buddhasya śāsanam //* The corresponding Pali (Dhammapāda 183) is *sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṁ, kusalassa upasampadā / sacittapariyodapanam etan buddhāna' sāsanaṁ //* In Chinese: 諸惡莫作 眾善奉行 自淨其意 是諸佛教. MW gives the Sanskrit *paryavadāna* as "complete destruction or disappearance." The Pali *pariyodapanam* and the Chinese 淨, however, both mean purification or cleansing.

The not doing of any wrong,
Undertaking what is good,
Cleansing one's own mind –
This is the teaching of buddhas.

⁸⁷⁴ *Nirmucyate* is originally passive – he is easily freed, he naturally comes undone.

**tato munis taṁ priya-mālya-hāraṁ vasanta-māsena kṛtābhihāram /
nīnāya bhagna-pramadā-vihāraṁ vidyā-vihārābhīmataṁ vihāram // 5.20 //**

And so the Sage led him, lover of garlands of pearls and flowers, whom the month of Spring, [Love's friend,]⁸⁷⁵ had appropriated, / To a playground where women were a broken amusement – to the *vihāra*,⁸⁷⁶ beloved as a pleasure-ground of learning. // 5.20 //

**dīnaṁ mahā-kāruṇikas tatas taṁ dr̥ṣṭvā muhūrtaṁ karuṇāyamānaḥ /
kareṇa cakrāṅka-talena mūrdhni pasparśa caivedam uvāca cainam // 5.21 //**

Then the Greatly Compassionate One, watching him in his moment of misery and pitying him, / Put a hand, with wheel-marked palm, on his head and spoke to him thus: // 5.21 //

**yāvan na hīmsraḥ samupaiti kālaḥ śamāya tāvat kuru saumya buddhim /
sarvāvavasthāsu hi vartamānaḥ sarvābhisāreṇa nihanti mṛtyuḥ // 5.22 //**

“While murderous Time has yet to come calling, set your mind, my friend, in the direction of peace. / For operating in all situations, using all manner of attacks, Death kills. // 5.22 //

**sādhāraṇāt svapna-nibhād asārāl lolaṁ manaḥ kāma-sukhān niyaccha /
havyair ivāgneḥ pavaneritasya lokasya kāmair na hi tṛptir asti // 5.23 //**

Restrain the restless mind from sensual pleasures, which are common, dream-like, and insubstantial; / For no more than a wind-fanned fire is sated by offerings are men satisfied by pleasures. // 5.23 //

**śraddhā-dhanaṁ śreṣṭhatamaṁ dhanebhyaḥ prajñā-rasas tṛpti-karo rasebhyaḥ /
pradhānam adhyātma-sukhaṁ sukhebhyaḥ 'vidyā-ratir duḥkhatamā ratibhyaḥ // 5.24 //**

Most excellent among gifts is the gift of confidence. Most satisfying of tastes is the taste of real wisdom. / Foremost among comforts is being comfortable in oneself. The bliss of ignorance is the sorriest bliss.⁸⁷⁷ // 5.24 //

⁸⁷⁵ *Vasanta*, lit. "the brilliant (season)," Spring, is often personified and considered as a friend or attendant of *Kāma*-deva, god of Love.

⁸⁷⁶ *Vihāra*, which means walking for pleasure or amusement, and hence a place of recreation or pleasure-ground, was the name given to a hall where monks met or walked about. It came to mean the grounds of a monastery or temple.

⁸⁷⁷ The alternative reading *vidyā-ratir duḥkhatamā ratibhya* means “delight in [intellectual] knowledge is the sorriest delight.” So, if '*vidya*' is read, with the silent prefix *a-*, then the sentence means that ignorance is the sorriest bliss; but without the silent prefix, the sentence means that knowledge is the sorriest bliss. The ambiguity may well be intentional.

**hitasya vaktā pravaraḥ suhr̥dbhyo dharmāya khedo guṇavān śramebhyaḥ /
jñānāya kṛtyam paramam kriyābhyaḥ kim indriyāṇām upagamya dāsyam // 5.25 //**

The kindest-hearted friend is he who tells one what is truly salutary. The most meritorious effort is to exhaust oneself in pursuit of the truth. / Supreme among labours is to work towards true understanding. Why would one enter into service of the senses? // 5.25 //

**tan niścitam bhī-klama-śug-viyuktaṁ pareṣv anāyattam ahāryam anyaiḥ /
nityam śivam śānti-sukham vṛṇīṣva kim indriyārthārtham anartham ūḍhvā // 5.26 //**

Select then that which is conclusive, which is beyond fear, fatigue and sorrow, and which is neither dependent on others nor removable by others: / Select the lasting and benign happiness of extinction. What is the point of enduring disappointment, by making an object of sense-objects? // 5.26 //

**jarā-samā nāsty amṛjā prajānām vyādheḥ samo nāsti jagaty anarthaḥ /
mṛtyoḥ samam nāsti bhayam pṛthivyām etat trayam khalv avaśena sevyaṁ // 5.27 //**

Nothing takes away people's beauty like aging, there is no misfortune in the world like sickness, / And no terror on earth like death. Yet these three, inevitably, shall be obeyed. // 5.27 //

**snehena kaś-cin na samo 'sti pāśaḥ sroto na tṛṣṇā-samam asti hāri /
rāgāgninā nāsti samas tathāgnis tac cet trayam nāsti sukham ca te 'sti // 5.28 //**

There is no fetter like love, no torrent that carries one away like thirst, / And likewise no fire like the fire of passion. If not for these three, happiness would be yours. // 5.28 //

**avaśya-bhāvī priya-viprayogas tasmāc ca śoko niyataṁ niṣevyaḥ /
śokena conmādam upeyivāṁso rājarṣayo 'nye 'py avaśā viceluḥ // 5.29 //**

Separation from loved ones is inevitable, on which account grief is bound to be experienced. / And it is through grief that other seers who were princes have gone mad and fallen helplessly apart. // 5.29 //

**prajñā-mayaṁ varma badhāna tasmān no kṣānti-nighnasya hi śoka-bāṇaḥ /
mahac ca dagdhum bhava-kakṣa-jālam saṁdhukṣayālpāgnim ivātma-tejaḥ // 5.30 //**

So bind on the armour whose fabric is wisdom, for the arrows of grief are as naught to one steeped in patience; / And kindle the fire of your own energy to burn up the great tangled web of becoming, just as you would kindle a small fire to burn up undergrowth collected into a great heap.⁸⁷⁸ // 5.30 //

⁸⁷⁸ *Bhava* means becoming, the 10th in the 12 links in the dependent arising of suffering (see BC Canto 14), and one of the three (or four) categories of polluting influences. *Kakṣa* means dry wood, underwood (often the lair of wild beasts), spreading creepers, tangled undergrowth. *Jāla* means a net or a web, or (at the end of a compound) a collection, multitude, mass. *Mahat... bhava-kakṣa-jālam*, then, means (metaphorically) a great tangled web of becoming; at the same time *mahat... kakṣa-jālam* means (more literally) tangled undergrowth collected into a great heap. To convey the metaphorical and literal

**yathauśadhair hasta-gataiḥ savidyo na daśyate kaś-cana pannagena /
tathānapekṣo jita-loka-moho na daśyate śoka-bhujamgamena // 5.31 //**

Just as a man concerned with science, herbs in hand, is not bitten by any snake, / So a man without concern, having overcome the folly of the world, is not bitten by the snake of grief. // 5.31 //

**āsthāya yogaṁ parigamya tattvaṁ na trāsam āgacchati mṛtyu-kāle /
ābaddha-varmā sudhanuḥ kṛtāstro jigīṣayā śūra ivāhava-sthaḥ // 5.32 //**

Staying with practice and fully committed to what is, at the hour of death he is not afraid – / Like a warrior-hero standing in battle, clad in armour, and equipped with a good bow, with skill in archery, and with the will to win.” // 5.32 //

**ity evam uktaḥ sa tathāgatena sarveṣu bhūteṣv anukampakena /
dhṛṣṭaṁ girāntarḥṛdayena sīdāns tatheti nandaḥ sugataṁ babhāṣe // 5.33 //**

Addressed thus by the One Thus Come, the Tathāgata, in his compassion for all living beings, / Nanda while sinking inside said boldly to the Sugata, the One Well Gone: “So be it!” // 5.33 //

**atha pramādāc ca tam ujjihīṣan matvāgamasyaiva ca pātra-bhūtam /
pravrajāyānanda śamāya nandaṁ ity abravān maitra-manā maharṣiḥ // 5.34 //**

And so wishing to lift him up out of heedlessness, and deeming him to be a vessel worthy of the living tradition, / The Great Seer, with kindness in his heart, said: “Ānanda!⁸⁷⁹ Let Nanda go forth towards tranquillity.” // 5.34 //

**nandaṁ tato ’ntarmanasā rudantam ehīti vaideha-munir jagāda /
śanais tatas taṁ samupetya nandaṁ na pravrajīṣyāmy aham ity uvāca // 5.35 //**

Then the sage of Videha⁸⁸⁰ said to Nanda, who was weeping inside: “Come!” / At this Nanda approached him meekly and said “I won’t go forth.” // 5.35 //

**śrutvātha nandaśya maṇīṣitaṁ tad buddhāya vaideha-muniḥ śaśaṁsa /
samśrutya tasmād api tasya bhāvaṁ mahā-munir nandaṁ uvāca bhūyaḥ // 5.36 //**

On hearing Nanda’s idea, the Videha sage related it to the Buddha; / And so, after hearing from him also as to Nanda’s actual state, the Great Sage spoke to Nanda again: // 5.36 //

meanings combined in the one Sanskrit phrase, I have translated it twice.

⁸⁷⁹ The bhikṣu Ānanda, a cousin of the Buddha and Nanda, is the protagonist of SN Canto 11, in which he guides Nanda to understand the folly of aspiring to a heavenly bliss which can only ever be temporary.

⁸⁸⁰ The sage of Videha is an epithet of Ānanda. Videha corresponds to the area north of the Ganges which is now known as Tirhut, in the state of Bihar (Land of Vihāras).

**mayy agraje pravrajite 'jitātmane bhrātrṣv anupravrajiteṣu cāsmān /
jñātīmś ca dṛṣṭvā vratino gr̥ha-sthān saṁvinna-vit te 'sti na vāsti cetaḥ // 5.37 //**

“O you who have yet to conquer yourself! Given that I, your elder brother, have gone forth, and your cousins have gone forth after me, / And seeing that our relatives who remain at home are committed to practice, are you minded to be conscious of consciousness, or are you not? // 5.37 //

**rājarṣayas te viditā na nūnaṁ vanāni ye śīśriyire hasantaḥ /
niṣṭhīvyā kāmān upaśānti-kāmāḥ kāmeṣu naivaṁ kṛpaṇeṣu saktāḥ // 5.38 //**

Evidently the royal seers are unbeknown to you who retreated smiling into the forests; / Having spat out desires, they were desirous of tranquillity and thus not stuck in lower order desires. // 5.38 //

**bhūyaḥ samālokyā gr̥heṣu doṣān niśāmya tat-tyāga-kṛtaṁ ca śarma /
naivāsti moktuṁ matir ālayaṁ te deśaṁ mumūrṣor iva sopasargam // 5.39 //**

Again, you have experienced the drawbacks of family life⁸⁸¹ and you have observed the relief to be had from leaving it, / And yet you, like a man in a disaster area who is resigned to his death, have no intention of giving up and leaving house and home. // 5.39 //

**saṁsāra-kāntāra-parāyaṇasya śive kathaṁ te pathi nāruruḥṣā /
āropyamāṇasya tam eva mārḡaṁ bhraṣṭasya sārthād iva sārthikasya // 5.40 //**

How can you be so devoted to the wasteland of saṁsāra and so devoid of desire to take the auspicious path / When – like a desert trader who drops out from a caravan – you have been set on that very path? // 5.40 //

**yaḥ sarvato veśmani dahyamāne śayīta mohān na tato vyapeyāt /
kālagñinā vyādhi-jarā-śikhena loke pradīpe sa bhavet pramattaḥ // 5.41 //**

One who in a house burning on all sides, instead of getting out of there, would lie down in his folly to sleep, / Only he might be heedless, in a world burning in the fire of Time, with its flames of sickness and aging. // 5.41 //

**praṇīyamānaś ca yathā vadhāya matto hasec ca pralapec ca vadhyaḥ /
mṛtyau tathā tiṣṭhati pāśa-haste śocyāḥ pramādyan viparīta-cetāḥ // 5.42 //**

Again, like the condemned man being led, drunkenly laughing and babbling, to the stake, / Equally to be lamented is one whose mind is upside-down, cavorting while Death stands by, with noose in hand. // 5.42 //

⁸⁸¹ *Gr̥heṣu doṣān* lit. means “the faults in homes” or “the faults in families.”

**yadā narendrās ca kuṭumbinaś ca vihāya bandhūnś ca parigrahānś ca /
yayus ca yāsyanti ca yānti caiva priyeṣu anityeṣu kuto 'nurodhaḥ // 5.43 //**

When kings and humble householders, leaving relations and possessions behind, / Have gone forth, will go forth, and even now are going forth, what is the point of pandering to fleeting fondnesses? // 5.43 //

**kiṁ-cin na paśyāmi ratasya yatra tad-anya-bhāvena bhaven na duḥkham /
tasmāt kva-cin na kṣamate prasaktir yadi kṣamas tad-vigamān na śokaḥ // 5.44 //**

I do not see any pleasure which might not, by turning into something else, become pain. / Therefore no attachment bears scrutiny - unless the grief is bearable that arises from the absence of its object. // 5.44 //

**tat saumya lolam parigamya lokam māyopamaṁ citram ivendrajālam /
priyābhidhānaṁ tyaja moha-jālam chettuṁ matis te yadi duḥkha-jālam // 5.45 //**

So, my friend, knowing the human world to be fickle, a net of Indra, a web of fictions, like a gaudy magic show, / Abandon the net of delusion you call 'my love,' if you are minded to cut the net of suffering. // 5.45 //

**varam hitodarkam āniṣṭam annam na svādu yat syād ahitānubaddham /
yasmād aham tvā viniyojayāmi śive śucau vartmani vipriye 'pi // 5.46 //**

Unfancied food that does one good is better than tasty food that may do harm: / On that basis I commend you to a course which, though unpalatable, is wholesome and honest. // 5.46 //

**bālasya dhātrī vinigṛhya loṣṭam yathoddharatyāsyā puṭa-praviṣṭam /
tathojjihīrṣuḥ khalu rāga-śalyam tat tvām avocaṁ paruṣam hitāya // 5.47 //**

Just as a nurse keeps firm hold of an infant while taking out soil it has put in its mouth, / So, wishing to draw out the dart of passion, have I spoken to you sharply for your own good. // 5.47 //

**aniṣṭam apy auśadham āturāya dadāti vaidyaś ca yathā nigṛhya /
tadvan mayoktam pratikūlam etat tubhyam hitodarkam anugrahāya // 5.48 //**

And just as a doctor restrains a patient then gives him bitter medicine; / So have I given you, in order to help you, this disagreeable advice with beneficial effect. // 5.48 //

**tad yāvad eva kṣaṇa-saṁnipāto na mṛtyur āgacchati yāvad eva /
yāvad vayo yoga-vidhau samartham buddhim kuru śreyasi tāvad eva // 5.49 //**

Therefore, while you are meeting the present moment, while death has yet to come, / So long as you have the energy for practice, decide on better." // 5.49 //

ity evam uktaḥ sa vināyakena hitaiṣiṇā kāruṇikena nandaḥ /

kartāsmi sarvaṁ bhagavan vacas te tathā yathā jñāpayasīty uvāca // 5.50 //

Addressed thus by his benevolent and compassionate guide, / Nanda said, "I shall do, Glorious One, all that you say, just as you teach it." // 5.50 //

ādāya vaideha-munis tatas taṁ nināya samśliṣya viceṣṭamānam /

vyayojayac cāśru-pariplutākṣaṁ keśa-śriyaṁ chatra-nibhasya mūrdhnaḥ // 5.51 //

At this the sage of Videha reclaimed him, and held him close as he led him off writhing, / And then, while [Nanda's] eyes welled with tears, he separated the crowning glory of his hair from the royal umbrella of his head. // 5.51 //

atho nataṁ tasya mukhaṁ sabāṣpaṁ pravāsyamāneṣu śiro-ruheṣu /

vakrāgra-nālaṁ nalināṁ taḍāge varṣodaka-klinnam ivābabhāse // 5.52 //

As his hair was thus being banished, his tearful downcast face / Resembled a rain-sodden lotus in a pond with the top of its stalk sagging down. // 5.52 //

nandas tatas taru-kaṣāya-virakta-vāsāś cintāvaśo nava-grhīta iva dvipendraḥ /

pūrṇaḥ śaśī bahula-pakṣa-gataḥ kṣapānte bālātapena pariṣikta ivāvabhāse // 5.53 //

Thence, in drab garb with the dull yellow-red colour of tree bark, and despondent as a newly-captured elephant, / Nanda resembled a waning full moon at night's end, sprinkled by the powdery rays of the early morning sun. // 5.53 //

saundaranande mahā-kāvye nanda-pravrājano nāma pañcama sargaḥ //5//

The 5th canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled "Nanda Is Caused to Go Forth." /

Canto 6: bhāryā-vilāpaḥ A Wife's Lament

Introduction

Bhāryā, as in the title of Canto 4, means wife, but can be read literally as carrying the hidden meanings of either “one to be borne [as a burden]” or “one to be cherished [as an object of love].” *Vilāpa*, wailing or lamenting, is from the root *vi-√lap*, to utter moaning sounds, wail, lament.

Thus, though EH Johnston translated *bhāryā-vilāpaḥ* as Sundarī's Despair, the word *vilāpa* suggests not only despair as a mental phenomenon but also the physical expression of grief, or the psycho-physical act of giving voice to suffering. In those terms, the Buddha's turning of the Dharma-wheel was a thunderous example of *vilāpa*.

The present Canto, then, can be read as a study in suffering, carried out by Aśvaghoṣa with loving attention to detail, in which Sundarī is one to be cherished. Sundarī, moreover, is not the only one to be cherished. She has one friend, in particular, who at the end of the Canto passes the pragmatic test of truth, by telling Sundarī what it does Sundarī good to hear – regardless of whether or not the information relayed is strictly accurate.

**tato hr̥te bhartari gauraveṇa prītau hr̥tāyām aratau kṛtāyām /
tatraiva harmyopari vartamānā na sundarī saiva tadā babhāse // 6.1 //**

And so, with her husband riven away through his respect for the Guru, bereft of her happiness, left joyless, / Though she remained at the same spot, high up in the palace, Sundarī no longer seemed to be herself. // 6.1 //

**sā bhartur abhyāgamana-pratikṣā gavākṣam ākramya payodharābhyām /
dvāronmukhī harmya-talāl lalambe mukhena tiryāṅ-nata-kuṇḍalena // 6.2 //**

Anticipating her husband's approach, she leant forward, her breasts invading the bulls-eye window. / Expectantly she looked out from the palace roof towards the gateway, her earrings dangling down across her face. // 6.2 //

**vilamba-hārā cala-yoktrakā sā tasmād vimānād vinatā cakāṣe /
tapaḥ kṣayād apsarasām vareva cyutaṅ vimānāt priyam iḥsamāṇā // 6.3 //**

With her pearl necklaces hanging down, and straps dishevelled, as she bent down from the palace, / She looked like the most gorgeous of the heavenly nymphs (the *apsarases*) gazing from her celestial abode at her lover, as he falls down, having used up his ascetic credit. // 6.3 //

sā kheda-saṁsvinna-lalāṭakena niśvāsa-niṣpīta-viśeṣakeṇa /

cintā-calākṣeṇa mukhena tasthau bhartāram anyatra viśaṅkamānā // 6.4 //

With a cold sweat on her beautiful brow, her face-paint drying in her sighs, / And her eyes restless with anxious thoughts, there she stood, suspecting her husband, somewhere else. // 6.4 //

tataś cira-sthāna-pariśrameṇa sthitaiva paryaṅka-tale papāta /

tiryak ca śiśye pravikīrṇa-hārā sapādukaikārdha-vilamba-pādā // 6.5 //

Tired out by a long time standing in that state, she dropped, just where she stood, onto a couch, / And lay across it with her necklaces scattered and a slipper half hanging off her foot. // 6.5 //

athātra kā-cit pramadā sabāṣpām tām duḥkhitām draṣṭum anīpsamānā /

prāsāda-sopāna-tala-praṇādaṁ cakāra padbhyām sahasā rudantī // 6.6 //

One of her women, not wishing to see Sundarī in such tearful distress, / Was making her way down from the palace penthouse, when she burst into tears, and made a commotion with her feet on the stairs. // 6.6 //

tasyāś ca sopāna-tala-praṇādaṁ śrutvaiva tūrṇam punar utpapāta /

prītyām prasaktaiva ca saṁjahaṛṣa priyopayānaṁ pariśaṅkamānā // 6.7 //

Hearing the sound on the stairs of that woman's feet [Sundarī] quickly jumped up again; / Transfixed with joy, she bristled with excitement, believing it to be the approach of her beloved. // 6.7 //

sā trāsayantī valabhī-puta-sthān pārāvatān nūpura-nisvanena /

sopāna-kukṣim prasasāra harṣād bhraṣṭam dukūlāntam acintayantī // 6.8 //

Scaring the pigeons in their rooftop roosts with the jangling of her ankle bracelets, / She dashed to the stairwell, without worrying, in her excitement, about what extremity of her diaphonous raiments might be falling off. // 6.8 //

tām aṅganām prekṣya ca vipralabdhā niśvasya bhūyaḥ śayanaṁ prapede /

vivarṇa-vaktrā na rarāja cāśu vivarṇa-candreva himāgame dyauḥ // 6.9 //

On seeing the woman she was crestfallen; she sighed, threw herself again onto the couch, / And no longer shone: with her face suddenly⁸⁸² pallid she was as grey as a pale-mooned sky in early winter. // 6.9 //

⁸⁸² EHJ notes that *āśu* is often used in epic and Buddhist Sanskrit merely to strengthen the force of the verb, like 'right' and 'straight' in English, rather than with its proper sense of 'quickly.'

**sā duḥkhitā bhartur adarśanena kāmēna kopēna ca dahyamānā /
kṛtvā kare vaktram upopaviṣṭā cintā-nadīm śoka-jalām tatāra // 6.10 //**

Distressed at not seeing her husband, burning with desire and fury, / She sat down with face in hand and steeped herself in the river of worries, whose water is sorrow. // 6.10 //

**tasyāḥ mukhaṁ padma-sapatna-bhūtaṁ pāṇau sthitaṁ pallava-rāga-tāmre /
chāyāmayasyāmbhasi paṅkajasya babhau nataṁ padmam ivopariṣṭāt // 6.11 //**

Her lotus-rivalling face, resting on the hennaed stem of her hand, / Was like a lotus above the reflection in the water of its mud-born self, drooping down. // 6.11 //

**sā strī-svabhāvena vicintya tat-tad dr̥ṣṭānurāge ’bhimukhe ’pi patyau /
dharmāśrite tattvam avindamānā saṅkalpya tat-tad vilalāpa tat-tat // 6.12 //**

She considered various possibilities, in accordance with a woman’s nature; then, failing to see the truth that her husband had taken refuge in the dharma, while obviously still impassioned and in love with her, she constructed various scenarios and uttered various laments: // 6.12 //

**eṣyāmy anāśyāna-viśeṣakāyām tvayīti kṛtvā mayi taṁ pratijñām /
kasmān nu hetor dayita-pratijñāḥ so ’dya priyo me vitatha-pratijñāḥ // 6.13 //**

“He promised me: ‘I’ll be back before your make-up is dry’; / From what cause would such a cherisher of promises as my beloved is, be now a breaker of promises? // 6.13 //

**āryasya sādhoḥ karuṇātmakasya man-nitya-bhīror atidakṣiṇasya /
kuto vikāro ’yam abhūta-pūrvaḥ svenāparāgeṇa mamāpacārāt // 6.14 //**

In him who was noble, good, compassionate, always in awe of me, and all too honest, / How has such an unprecedented transformation come about? Through a loss of passion on his part? From a mistake of mine? // 6.14 //

**rati-priyasya priya-vartino me priyasya nūnaṁ hṛdayaṁ viraktam /
tathāpi rāgo yadi tasya hi syān mac-citta-rakṣī na sa nāgataḥ syāt // 6.15 //**

The heart of my lover – lover of sexual pleasure and of me – has obviously waned in its passion, / For if he did still love me, having regard for my heart, he would not have failed to return. // 6.15 //

**rūpeṇa bhāvena ca mad-viśiṣṭā priyeṇa dr̥ṣṭā niyataṁ tato ’nyā /
tathā hi kṛtvā mayi mogha-sāntvaṁ lagnām satīm mām agamad vihāya // 6.16 //**

Another woman, then, in beauty and in nature better than me, my beloved has surely beheld; / For, having soothed me as he did with empty words, the guy has gone and left me, attached to him as I am. // 6.16 //

**bhaktim sa buddham prati yam avocat tasya prayatum mayi so 'padesah /
munau prasado yadi tasya hi syan mrtyor ivograd anrtad bibhyat // 6.17 //**

As for that devotion to Buddha of which he spoke, it was just a line to me for leaving; / For if he were clearly settled on the Sage he would fear untruth no less than a grisly death. // 6.17 //

**sevartham adarsanam anya-citto vibhushayantyā mama dhārayivā /
bibharti so 'nyasya janasya tam cen namo 'stu tasmai cala-sauhrdaya // 6.18 //**

While I put my make-up on, he held the mirror as a service to me, and thought of another! / If he holds it now for that other so much for his fickle affection! // 6.18 //

**neccanti yah śokam avaptum evam śraddhatum arhanti na tā narānam /
kva cānuvṛttir mayi sāsya pūrvam tyāgaḥ kva cāyam janavat kṣaṇena // 6.19 //**

Any woman who does not wish to suffer grief like this should never trust a man. / How could he treat me before with such regard and then in a twinkling leave me like this, like anybody?" // 6.19 //

**ity evam-ādi priya-viprayuktā priye 'nyad āśankya ca sā jagāda /
sambhrāntam āruhya ca tad-vimānam tām strī sabāṣpā giram ity uvāca // 6.20 //**

This she said and more, love-lorn, and suspecting her love of loving another. / Then the giddy weeping woman, having dizzily climbed the palace stairs, tearfully told her these words: // 6.20 //

**yuvāpi tāvat priya-darśano 'pi saubhāgya-bhāgyābhijanānvito 'pi /
yas tvām priyo nābhycarat kadā-cit tam anyathā pāsyaṣi katarāsi // 6.21 //**

"Though he may be young, good-looking, full of noble ancestry, and filled with charm and fortune, / Never did your husband cheat on you. You are being silly, and judging him amiss. // 6.21 //

**mā svāminam svāmini doṣato gāḥ priyam priyārham priya-kāriṇam tam /
na sa tvad anyām pramadām avaiti svacakravākyā iva cakravākaḥ // 6.22 //**

Ma'am! Do not accuse your loving husband, a doer of loving deeds who merits your love; / He never even looks at any woman other than you, like greylag gander with kindred greylag goose. // 6.22 //

**sa tu tvad-artham grha-vāsam īpsan jijīviṣus tvat-paritoṣa-hetoḥ /
bhrātrā kil' āryeṇa tathāgatena pravrajito netra-jalārdra-vaktraḥ // 6.23 //**

For you, he wished to stay at home; for your delight, he wished to live; / But his noble brother, the Tathāgata, so they say, has banished him, his face made wet by tears, into the wandering life. // 6.23 //

**śrutvā tato bhartari tām pravṛttiṁ sa-vepathuḥ sā sahasotpapāta /
pragrhya bāhū virurāva coccair hṛdīva digdhābhihatā kareṇuḥ // 6.24 //**

Then, on hearing what had happened to her husband, all of a sudden, up she leapt, shaking; /
She clasped her arms and screamed out loud like a she-elephant shot in the heart by a poisoned
arrow. // 6.24 //

**sā rodanāroṣita-rakta-dṛṣṭiḥ saṁtāpa-saṁkṣobhita-gātra-yaṣṭiḥ /
papāta śīrṇākula-hāra-yaṣṭiḥ phalātibhārād iva cūta-yaṣṭiḥ // 6.25 //**

Her eyes puffed-up and reddened by tears, the slender trunk of her body trembling with
anguish, / She broke and scattered strings of pearls, as down she fell, like a mango branch
weighed down by too much fruit.⁸⁸³ // 6.25 //

**sā padma-rāgaṁ vasaṇaṁ vasānā padmānanā padma-dalāyatākṣī /
padmā vipadmā patiteva lakṣmīḥ śuśoṣa padma-srag ivātapena // 6.26 //**

Wearing clothes suffused with lotus colours, with lotus face, and eyes as long as lotus petals, /
She was like a Lotus-Hued Lakṣmī, who had fallen from her lotus [pedestal].⁸⁸⁴ And she withered
like a lotus-garland left in the sun. // 6.26 //

**saṁcintya saṁcintya guṇāṁś ca bhartur dīrghaṁ niśāsvāsa tatāma caiva /
vibhūṣaṇa-śrī-nihite prakoṣṭhe tāmre karāgre ca vinirdudhāva // 6.27 //**

She thought and thought about her husband's good points, sighing long and hard and gasping /
As out she flung the arms that bore her gleaming jewels and [hennaed] hands, with reddened
fingertips.⁸⁸⁵ // 6.27 //

**na bhūṣaṇārtho mama saṁpratīti sā dikṣu cikṣepa vibhūṣaṇāni /
nirbhūṣaṇā sā patitā cakāṣe viśīrṇa-puṣpa-stabakā lateva // 6.28 //**

“Now I don't have any need for ornaments!” she cried, as she hurled her jewels in all directions.
/ Unadorned and drooping, she resembled a creeper shorn of blossoms. // 6.28 //

⁸⁸³ A triple play on the word *yaṣṭiḥ* seems designed to emphasize the tenuousness of life in *saṁsāra*. *Yaṣṭiḥ* means a twig or branch, and by extension anything thin or slender, including in this verse Sundari's slender frame, and a string for pearls.

⁸⁸⁴ *Vipadmā patitā* lit. means “fallen, being deprived of her lotus.” The goddess of beauty, Lakṣmī, is portrayed in statues set on top of a lotus pedestal.

⁸⁸⁵ EHJ translated *tāmre karāgre* as reddened fingers, LC as hennaed fingertips. *Aśvaghōṣa* may have had both meanings in mind, but it is noteworthy that gasping, abduction of the arms, and going red, are all symptoms of an infantile fear reflex called (after Ernst Moro, the Austrian paediatrician who identified it) “the Moro reflex.”

**dhṛtaḥ priyeṇāyam abhūn mameti rukma-tsaruṁ darpaṇam ālilinge /
yatnāc ca vinyasta-tamāla-patrau ruṣṭeva dhṛṣṭaṁ pramamāja gaṇḍau // 6.29 //**

She clasped the golden-handled mirror, and reflected, “My husband held this up for me.” / And the tamāla paint she had applied so carefully, she rubbed aggressively off her cheeks, as if the paint had angered her. // 6.29 //

**sā cakravākīva bhṛśaṁ cukūja śyenāgra-pakṣa-kṣata-cakravākā /
vispardhamāneva vimāna-saṁsthaiḥ pārāvataiḥ kūjana-lola-kaṇṭhaiḥ // 6.30 //**

Like a greylag goose, when a hawk has wounding talons on the gander’s wing, she hooted mightily, / As if in competition with the cooing pigeons on the palace roof, whose throats were all atremble. // 6.30 //

**vicitra-mṛdvāstarāṇe ’pi suptā vaiḍūrya-vajra-pratimaṇḍite ’pi /
rukmaṅga-pāde śayane mahārhe na śarma lebhe pariceṣṭamānā // 6.31 //**

She lay down to sleep in soft and gorgeous bedclothes, on a bed bedecked with cats-eye gems and diamonds, / But in her costly crib with golden legs, she tossed and turned, and no respite did she obtain. // 6.31 //

**saṁdṛśya bhartuś ca vibhūṣaṇāni vāsāṁsi vīṇā-prabhṛtīmś ca līlāḥ /
tamo viveśābhinanāda coccaiḥ paṅkāvātīrṇeva ca saṁsasāda // 6.32 //**

She eyed her husband’s ornaments; his clothes, guitar and other items of amusement; / Thus she entered deeply into darkness: she raised a shriek, and then, as if descending into a mire, sank down. // 6.32 //

**sā sundarī śvāsa-calodarī hi vajrāgni-sambhinna-darī-guheva /
śokāgnināntar-hṛdi dahyamānā vibhrānta-citteva tadā babhūva // 6.33 //**

Her belly trembled out of breathlessness, like a cave being rent inside by fiery thunderbolts. / As, in her innermost heart, she burned with the fire of grief, Sundarī seemed at that moment to be going out of her mind. // 6.33 //

**ruroda mamlau virurāva jaglau babhrāma tasthau vilalāpa dadhyau /
cakāra roṣaṁ vicakāra mālyāṁ cakarta vaktraṁ vicakarṣa vastram // 6.34 //**

She howled, then wilted, screamed, then swooned; she reeled, stood rooted, wailed then brooded. / She vented anger and rended garlands; she scratched her face and slashed her clothes. // 6.34 //

**tām cāru-dantīm prasabham rudantīm samśrutya nāryaḥ paramābhitaptāḥ /
antar-gṛhād āruruhur vimānaṁ trāsena kimnarya ivādri-ṛṣṭham // 6.35 //**

Hearing the howling of the lovely-toothed one – for O, how l⁸⁸⁶ovely were her teeth! – the ladies-in-waiting suffered utmost torment; / They climbed from inside the palace up to the roof, like nervous *kimnarīs* ascending a mountain peak. // 6.35 //

**bāṣpeṇa tāḥ klinna-viṣaṅga-vaktrā varṣeṇa padminya ivārdrā-padmāḥ /
sthānānurūpeṇa yathābhimānaṁ nililyire tām anu-dahyamānāḥ // 6.36 //**

Their despondent faces wet with tears, like lotus ponds with rain-soaked lotus buds, / They settled down along with her, according to rank and as they wished, and along with her they burned in grief. // 6.36 //

**tābhir vṛtā harmya-tale ’ṅanābhiś-cintā-tanuḥ sā sutanur babhāse /
śata-hradābhiḥ pariveṣṭiteva śaśāṅka-lekhā śarad-abhra-madhye // 6.37 //**

On the palace roof, enfolded by her women, the slender Sundarī, gaunt with worry, / Seemed like a streak of crescent moon enshrouded among the autumn clouds by a hundred rays of lightning. // 6.37 //

**yā tatra tāsām vacasopapannā mānyā ca tasyā vayasādhikā ca /
sā ṛṣṭhatas tām tu samālilīṅge pramṛjya cāśrūṇi vacāmsy uvāca // 6.38 //**

There was one among them there, however, who was senior in years, and good with words, a well-respected woman: / Holding Sundarī from behind in a firm embrace and wiping tears away, she spoke as follows: // 6.38 //

**rājarṣi-vadvās tava nānurūpo dharmāśrite bhartari jātu śokaḥ /
ikṣvāku-vaṁśe hy abhikāṅkṣitāni dāyādyā-bhūtāni tapo-vanāni // 6.39 //**

“Grief does ill become you, the wife of a royal seer, when your husband has taken refuge in dharma; / For in the lineage of Ikṣvāku, an ascetic forest is a desired inheritance. // 6.39 //

**prāyeṇa mokṣāya viniṣṛtānām śākya-rṣabhāṅām veditāḥ striyas te /
tapo-vanānīva gṛhāṇi yāsām sādhvī-vrataṁ kāmavad āśritānām // 6.40 //**

Well you know of wives of Śākya bulls gone forth in search of freedom: / As a rule, they turn their houses almost into ascetic groves and they observe the vow of chastity, as if it were a pleasure. // 6.40 //

⁸⁸⁶ The original contains a play on *rudantīm*. “Howling” is *rudantīm*. “Lovely toothed-one” is *cārudantīm*.

**yady anyayā rūpa-guṇādhikatvād bhartā hṛtas te kuru bāṣpa-mokṣam /
manasvinī rūpavatī guṇāḍhyā hṛdi kṣate kātra hi nāśru muñcet // 6.41 //**

If your husband had been stolen by another, due to her superior looks and qualities, then tears you should let flow; / For how could any beautiful and virtuous wife, who abounds in excellence, refrain from shedding teardrops when her heart was broken? // 6.41 //

**athāpi kim-cid vyasanam prapanno mā caiva tad bhūt sadṛśo 'tra bāṣpaḥ /
ato viśiṣṭam na hi duḥkham asti kulodgatāyāḥ pati-devatāyāḥ // 6.42 //**

Or had he met with some disaster – and may no such thing ever be! – then yes, tears; / Because there is no greater sorrow for a woman of noble birth who dignifies her husband as if he were a god. // 6.42 //

**atha tv idānīm laḍitaḥ sukkena sva-sthaḥ phala-stho vyasanāny adṛṣtvā /
vīta-sprho dharmam anuprapannaḥ kim viklave rodiṣi harṣa-kāle // 6.43 //**

But on the contrary, he now is roving happily, meeting no disasters, but enjoying a healthy and fruitful life. / Free from eager longing, he is following dharma: at a time for celebration, why are you in such a state of weeping consternation?" // 6.43 //

**ity evam uktāpi bahu-prakāram snehāt tayā naiva dhṛtiṁ cakāra /
athāparā tām manaso 'nukūlam kālopapannaṁ praṇayād uvāca // 6.44 //**

Though this woman, with her [unctious] kindness,⁸⁸⁷ thus put forward many sorts of argument, [Sundarī] could not be satisfied at all. / Then another woman, with a sense of intimacy, said what helped her mind and fit the occasion.⁸⁸⁸ // 6.44 //

**bravīmi satyaṁ su-viniścitaṁ me prāptaṁ priyaṁ drakṣyasi śīghram eva /
tvayā vinā sthāsyati tatra nāsau sattvāśrayaś cetanayeva hīnaḥ // 6.45 //**

“Truly and categorically, I am telling you that soon enough you’ll see your husband back again. / Dispossessed of you, the fellow will survive out there no longer than living things survive when dispossessed of consciousness. // 6.45 //

**añke 'pi lakṣmyā na sa nirvṛtaḥ syāt tvaṁ tasya pārśve yadi tatra na syāḥ /
āpatsu kṛcchrāsv api cāgatāsu tvām paśyatas tasya bhaven na duḥkham // 6.46 //**

Even in the lap of luxury he could not be happy, lacking you there by his side; / And even in the direst pickle, not a thing could trouble him, as long as you were in his sight. // 6.46 //

⁸⁸⁷ *Snehāt* originally means “out of oiliness” and hence both “unctuously” and “tenderly.”

⁸⁸⁸ The words of this more intimate friend, therefore, are a precursor to the words of the Buddha and Ānanda in Cantos 10 & 11, whereas the eloquent but ineffectual words of the more formal woman may be seen as a precursor to the words of the striver in Cantos 8 & 9.

**tvaṁ nirvṛtiṁ gaccha niyaccha bāṣpaṁ taptāśru-mokṣāt parirakṣa cakṣuḥ /
yas tasya bhāvas tvayi yaś ca rāgo na raṁsyate tvad-virahāt sa dharme // 6.47 //**

Be happy. Don't keep crying. Spare your eyes from shedding molten tears. / The way he feels for you, and his passion, are such that he, bereft of you, will find no pleasure in the dharma. // 6.47 //

**syād atra nāsau kula-sattva-yogāt kāṣāyam ādāya vihāsyatīti /
anātmanādāya gṛhṇomukhasya punar vimoktuṁ ka ivāsti doṣaḥ // 6.48 //**

Some might say that having worn the ochre robe, he won't relinquish it, by dint of noble birth combined with strength of character. / But, he put it on unwillingly, while looking forward to going home: what fault is there in taking it back off?" // 6.48 //

**iti yuvati-janena sāntvyamānā hr̥ta-hṛdayā ramaṇena sundarī sā /
dramiḍam abhimukhī pureva rambhā kṣitim agamat parivāritāpsarobhiḥ // 6.49 //**

Thus consoled by her little women when her husband had purloined her heart, / Sundarī came to earth, just as Rambhā,⁸⁸⁹ with her heart turned towards Dramiḍa, came once upon a time, enfolded in the midst of sister *apsarases*. // 6.49 //

saundaranande mahā-kāvye bhāryā-vilāpo nāma ṣaṣṭhaḥ sargaḥ //6//

The 6th canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled "A Wife's Lament."

⁸⁸⁹ Rambhā was reputedly the most gorgeous of all the *apsarases*, or celestial nymphs; she is also mentioned in SN7.36.

Canto 7: nanda-vilāpaḥ Nanda's Lament

Introduction

If the hidden meaning of the previous Canto title is “One to Be Cherished, Giving Voice to Suffering,” then the ironic hidden meaning of the present Canto title might be “Joy Expressing Suffering.”

As in his description of the suffering Sundarī, Aśvaghōṣa's description of the suffering Nanda has a physical component, an emotional component (with mention of sorrow, tearful remembering, and burning desire), but especially a psychological and intellectual component in which Nanda thinks one defeatist thought after another, before arriving at a defeatist conclusion. Since Sundarī is the one who was abandoned, since her physical suffering is described more vividly, and since her emotional suffering has less of a sexual component than Nanda's does, our feelings towards Sundarī seem to be guided more in the direction of empathic distress. But there is only so much empathic distress that one can take. The desired effect on the reader in the present Canto seems to be to nurture in us the wish to sweep away (a) all Nanda's defeatist thoughts, along with (b) all the tiresome cultural references with which he seeks to justify his defeatist conclusion.

**liṅgaṁ tataḥ śāstr-vidhi-pradiṣṭaṁ gātreṇa bibhran na tu cetasā tat /
bhāryā-gatair eva mano-vitarkair jehriyamāṇo na nananda nandaḥ // 7.1 //**

Bearing the insignia, then, whose form was fixed by his teacher – bearing it with his body but not with his mind – / And being constantly carried off by thoughts of his wife, he whose name was joy was not joyful. // 7.1 //

**sa puṣpa-māsasya ca puṣpa-lakṣmyā sarvābhisāreṇa ca puṣpa-ketoḥ /
yāniya-bhāvena ca yauvanasya vihāra-saṁstho na śamaṁ jagāma // 7.2 //**

Amid the wealth of flowers of the month of flowers, assailed on every side by the flower-bannered god of love,⁸⁹⁰ / And with feelings that are familiar to the young, he stayed in a *vihāra* but found no peace. // 7.2 //

**sthitaḥ saḥ dīnaḥ sahakāra-vīthyām ālīna-saṁmūrccita-ṣaṭpadāyām /
bhṛśaṁ jajrmbhe yuga-dīrgha-bāhur dhyātvā priyām cāpam ivācakaṛṣa // 7.3 //**

Standing, distraught, by a row of mango trees amid the numbing hum of hovering insects, / He with his lengthy arms and yoke-like shoulders, thought of his beloved and forcibly stretched himself open, as if drawing a bow. // 7.3 //

⁸⁹⁰ “Flower-bannered one” is an epithet of Kāma-deva, god of love.

**sa pītaka-kṣodam iva pratīcchaṁś cūta-drumbhyas tanu-puṣpa-varṣam /
dīrgham niśāsvāsa vicintya bhāryām nava-graho nāga ivāvaruddhaḥ // 7.4 //**

Receiving from the mango trees a rain of tiny flowers like saffron powder, / He thought of his wife and heaved long sighs, like a newly-captured elephant in a cage. // 7.4 //

**śokasya hartā śaraṇāgatānām śokasya kartā pratigarvitānām /
aśokam ālambya sa jāta-śokaḥ priyām priyāśoka-vanām śuśoca // 7.5 //**

He had been, for those who came to him seeking refuge, an abater of sorrow, and, for the conceited, a creator of sorrow, / Now he leant against ‘the tree of freedom from sorrow,’ the *a-śoka* tree,⁸⁹¹ and he became a sorrower: he sorrowed for a lover of *a-śoka* groves, his beloved wife. // 7.5 //

**priyām priyāyāḥ pratanuṁ priyaṅguṁ niśāmya bhītām iva niṣpatantīm /
sasmāra tām aśru-mukhīm sabāṣpaḥ priyām priyaṅgu-prasavāvadātām // 7.6 //**

A slender *priyaṅgu* creeper, beloved of his beloved, he noticed shying away, as if afraid, / And tearfully he remembered her, his lover with her tearful face, as pale as a *priyaṅgu* flower. // 7.6 //

**puṣpāvanaddhe tilaka-drumasya dṛṣṭvānya-puṣṭām śikhare niviṣṭām /
saṁkalpayām āsa śikhām priyāyāḥ śuklāṁśuke ’ṭṭālam apāśritāyāḥ // 7.7 //**

Seeing a cuckoo resting on the flower-covered crest of a *tilaka* tree,⁸⁹² / He imagined⁸⁹³ his lover leaning against the watchtower, her curls and tresses resting on her white upper garment. // 7.7 //

**latām praphullām atimuktakasya cūtasya pārśve parirabhya jātām /
niśāmya cintām agamat kadaivaṁ śliṣṭā bhaven mām api sundarīti // 7.8 //**

A vine with ‘flowers whiter than pearls,’ the *ati-muktaka*, having attached itself to the side of a mango tree, was thriving: / Nanda eyed the blossoming creeper and fretted “When will Sundarī cling to me like that?” // 7.8 //

⁸⁹¹ The *Aśoka* tree, which is indigenous to India, Burma and Malaya, flowers throughout the year but is especially famed for the beauty of the orange and scarlet clusters which it produces in January and February. It has some romantic connotations with female beauty – for example, the traditions that it will only flower in places where a woman's foot has trodden, and that a tree will bloom more vigorously if kicked by a beautiful young woman. *Aśoka*, meaning “without sorrow,” is also the name of the celebrated King *Aśoka*.

⁸⁹² The *tilaka* tree, aka *Clerodendrum phlomoides* (*Symplocos racemosa*), as may be guessed from the context, produces clusters of white flowers.

⁸⁹³ *Samkalpa* here evidently means imagine. The verbal root *√klṛp* originally means to produce, to arrange, to fix, or to frame; and hence to produce or frame in the mind, to invent, to imagine. See SN13.49-53.

**puṣpaiḥ karālā api nāga-vṛkṣā dāntaiḥ samudgair iva hema-garbhaiḥ /
kāntāra-vṛkṣā iva duḥkhitasya na cakṣur ācikṣipur asya tatra // 7.9 //**

The budding teeth of yawning *nāga* trees⁸⁹⁴ erupted there like ivory caskets filled with gold, /
But they drew his anguished eye no better than desert scrub. // 7.9 //

**gandham vanto 'pi ca gandhaparṇā gandharva-veśyā iva gandhapūrṇāḥ /
tasyānya-cittasya śugātmakasya ghrāṇaṁ na jahrur hṛdayaṁ pratepuḥ // 7.10 //**

The *gandha-parṇa* trees emitted their fragrance like a *gandharva's* girlfriend, brimming with
perfume,⁸⁹⁵ / But for him whose mind was elsewhere, and who was sorrowful to the core, they
did not win the nose: they pained the heart. // 7.10 //

**samrakta-kaṅṭhaiś ca vinīla-kaṅṭhaiś tuṣṭaiḥ prahrṣṭair api cānyapuṣṭaiḥ /
lelihyamānaiś ca madhu dvirephaiḥ svanaḍ vanaṁ tasya mano nunoda // 7.11 //**

Resounding with the throaty cries of impassioned peacocks,⁸⁹⁶ with the satisfied celebrating of
cuckoos, / And with the relentless supping of nectar by bees, the forest encroached upon his
mind. // 7.11 //

**sa tatra bhāryāraṇi-sambhavena vitarka-dhūmena tamaḥ-śikhena /
kāmagṇināntar-hṛdi dahyamāno vihāya dhairyaṁ vilalāpa tat-tat // 7.12 //**

As there he burned with a fire arisen from the fire board of his wife, a fire with fancies for
smoke and darkest hell for flames, / As he burned in his innermost heart with a fire of desire,
fortitude failed him and he uttered various laments: // 7.12 //

**adyāvagacchāmi su-duṣkaraṁ te cakruḥ kariṣyanti ca kurvate ca /
tyaktvā priyāṁ aśru-mukhīm tapo ye ceruś cariṣyanti caranti caiva // 7.13 //**

“Now I understand what a very difficult thing those men have done, will do, and are doing /
Who have walked, will walk, and are walking the way of painful asceticism, leaving behind their
tearful-faced lovers. // 7.13 //

**tāvad dṛḍhaṁ bandhanam asti loke na dāraṁ tāntavam āyasaṁ vā /
yāvad dṛḍhaṁ bandhanam etad eva mukhaṁ calākṣaṁ lalitaṁ ca vākyam // 7.14 //**

There is no bond in the world, whether of wood or rope or iron, / As strong as this bond: an
amorous voice and a face with darting eyes. // 7.14 //

⁸⁹⁴ The *nāga* tree is the same ornamental tree referred to in SN4.18.

⁸⁹⁵ *Gandha* means perfume or smell, as in the name of the tree *gandha-parṇa* (“fragrant leaved”). In Sanskrit epic poetry the *gandharvas* are the celestial musicians who form the orchestra at the banquets of the gods; they belong, together with the *apsarasas*, to Indra's heaven.

⁸⁹⁶ *Kaṅṭha* means throat, neck, or guttural sound emanating therefrom. And *vinīla-kaṅṭha*, “a blue neck,” is a peacock. So the 1st pāda is lit. “with the the blue-necks with their impassioned neck[-sound].”

**chittvā ca bhittvā ca hi yānti tāni sva-pauruṣāc caiva suhr̥d-balāc ca /
jñānāc ca raukṣyāc ca vinā vimoktuṃ na śakyate sneha-mayas tu pāśaḥ // 7.15 //**

For having been cut or broken – by one’s own initiative or by the strength of friends – those bonds cease to exist; / Whereas the fetter made of love, except through wisdom and toughness, cannot be undone. // 7.15 //

**jñānaṃ na me tac ca śamāya yat syān na cāsti raukṣyaṃ karuṇātmako ’smi /
kāmātmakaś cāsmi guruś ca buddhaḥ sthito ’ntare cakra-gater ivāsmi // 7.16 //**

That wisdom is not in me which might make for peace, and since I am of a kindly nature, toughness also is lacking. / I am sensual by nature and yet the Buddha is my guru: I am stuck as if inside a moving wheel. // 7.16 //

**ahaṃ gṛhītavāpi hi bhikṣu-liṅgaṃ bhrātṛṣiṇā dvir-guruṇānuśiṣṭaḥ /
sarvāsv avasthāsu labhe na śāntiṃ priyā-viyogād iva cakravākaḥ // 7.17 //**

For though I have adopted the beggar’s insignia, and am taught by one who is twice my guru, as elder brother and enlightened sage, / In every circumstance I find no peace – like a greylag gander separated from its mate. // 7.17 //

**adyāpi tan me hṛdi vartate ca yad darpaṇe vyākulite mayā sā /
kṛtānṛta-krodhakam abravīn mām kathaṃ kṛto ’sīti śaṭhaṃ hasantī // 7.18 //**

Even now it continues to run through my mind how after I clouded the mirror / She pretended to be angry and said to me, as she wickedly laughed, ‘What are you doing!’ // 7.18 //

**yathaiṣy anāśyāna-viśeṣakāyāṃ mayīti yan mām avadac ca sāsru /
pāriplavākṣeṇa mukhena bālā tan me vaco ’dyāpi mano ruṇaddhi // 7.19 //**

Again, the words she spoke to me, while her girlish eyes were swimming with tears, ‘Before this paint on my face is dry, come back’: those words, even now, block my mind. // 7.19 //

**baddhvāsanaṃ pāda-ja-nirjharasya svastho yathā dhyāyati bhikṣur eṣaḥ /
saktaḥ kva-cin nāham ivaiṣa nūnaṃ śāntas tathā tṛpta ivopaviṣṭaḥ // 7.20 //**

This beggar meditating at ease, who has crossed his legs in the traditional manner, and is of the waterfall, arising out of the foot [of the hill]⁸⁹⁷: / Surely he is not as attached as I am to anybody, since he sits so calmly, with an aura of contentment. // 7.20 //

⁸⁹⁷ A play may be intended on the word *pāda*, whose meanings include 1. a human foot (as placed upon the opposite thigh when assuming the traditional sitting posture under discussion) and 2. a hill at the foot of a mountain.

**puṁs-kokilānām avicintya ghoṣaṁ vasanta-lakṣmyām avicārya cakṣuḥ /
śāstraṁ yathābhyasyati caiṣa yuktaḥ śaṅke priyākarṣati nāsyā cetah // 7.21 //**

Deaf to the cuckoos' chorus, his eyeballs never grazing upon the riches of spring, / This fellow concentrates so intently upon the teaching, that I suspect no lover is tugging at his heart. // 7.21 //

**asmai namo 'stu sthira-niścayāya nivṛtta-kautūhala-vismayāya /
śāntātmane 'ntar-gata-mānāsāya caṅkramyamāṇāya nir-utsukāya // 7.22 //**

Credit to him who is firm in his resolve, who has retreated from curiosity and pride, / Who is at peace in himself, whose mind is turned inward, who does not strive for anything, as he walks up and down... // 7.22 //

**nirīkṣamāṇāya jalaṁ sa-padmaṁ vanaṁ ca phullaṁ parapuṣṭa-juṣṭam /
kasyāsti dhairyaṁ nava-yauvanasya māse madhau dharmā-sapatna-bhūte // 7.23 //**

And beholds the lotus-covered water and the flowering forest where cuckoos come calling! / What man in the prime of youth could keep such constancy in those months of spring which are, as it were, the rival of dharma? // 7.23 //

**bhāvena garveṇa gatena lakṣmyā smitena kopena madena vāgbhiḥ /
jahruḥ striyo deva-nṛpa-rṣi-saṅghān kasmādd hi nāsmad-vidham ākṣipeyuḥ // 7.24 //**

With their way of being, their pride, their way of moving, their grace; with a smile or show of indignation, with their exuberance, with their voices, / Women have captivated hosts⁸⁹⁸ of gods and kings and seers: how then could they fail to bewilder a bloke like me? // 7.24 //

**kāmābhībhūto hi hiraṇya-retāḥ svāhām siṣeve maghavān ahalyām /
sattvena sargeṇa ca tena hīnaḥ strī-nirjitaḥ kiṁ bata mānuṣo 'ham // 7.25 //**

Overcome by desire, the fire god Hiraṇya-retas, 'Golden Sperm,'⁸⁹⁹ succumbed to sex with his wife 'Oblation,' Svāhā,⁹⁰⁰ as did 'The Bountiful' Indra⁹⁰¹ with nymph Ahalyā; / How much easier to be overwhelmed by a woman am I, a man, who lacks the strength and resolve of the gods. // 7.25 //

⁸⁹⁸ This is an example of Aśvaghōṣa using as a collective noun for miscellaneous beings the word *saṅgha*, which he nowhere uses in the 'Buddhist' sense given in the MW dictionary – “a clerical community, congregation, church, (esp.) the whole community or collective body or brotherhood of monks (with Buddhists).”

⁸⁹⁹ Hiraṇya-retas is an epithet of the fire-god Agni.

⁹⁰⁰ Svāhā means an oblation or offering to the gods. As a proper noun, Oblation personified, Svāhā is the wife of the fire-god Agni, and is thought to preside over burnt-offerings; her body is said to consist of the four Vedas, and her limbs are the six *vedāṅgas* or limbs of the Vedas.

⁹⁰¹ Maghavat, “the Bountiful,” is an epithet of Indra.

**sūryaḥ saraṇyūm prati jātarāgas tat-prītaye taṣṭa iti śrutam naḥ /
yām aśva-bhūto 'śva-vadhūm sametya yato 'śvinau tau janayām babhūva // 7.26 //**

Our tradition has it that the sun god Sūrya, roused to passion for the dawn goddess Saraṇyū, let himself be diminished for the sake of pleasure with her; / He became a stallion so as to cover her as a mare, whereby she conceived the two charioteers.⁹⁰² // 7.26 //

**strī-kāraṇam vaira-viśakta-buddhyor vaivasvatāgnyoś calitātma-dhṛtyoḥ /
bahūni varṣāni babhūva yuddham kaḥ strī-nimittam na caled ihānyaḥ // 7.27 //**

When the mind of Vaivasvata, son of the Sun, and the mind of the fire god Agni turned to enmity, when their grip on themselves was shaken, / There was war between them for many years, because of a woman. What lesser being, here on earth, would not be caused to stray by a woman? // 7.27 //

**bheje śvapākīm munir akṣamālām kāmād vasiṣṭhaś ca sa sad-variṣṭhaḥ /
yasyām vivaśvān iva bhū-jalādaḥ sutaḥ prasūto 'sya kapiñjalādaḥ // 7.28 //**

And through desire the sage Vasiṣṭha,⁹⁰³ who even among the upstanding was eminent, had his way with an outcaste,⁹⁰⁴ Akṣa-mālā, 'String of Beads,'⁹⁰⁵ / To whom was born his son Kapiñjalāda, an eater of earth and water to rival the Sun. // 7.28 //

**parāśaraḥ śāpa-śaras tatha rṣiḥ kālīm siṣeve jhaṣa-garbha-yonim /
suto 'sya yasyām suṣuve mahātmā dvaipāyano veda-vibhāga-kartā // 7.29 //**

So too did the seer Parāśara, user of curses as arrows, have intercourse with Kālī,⁹⁰⁶ who was born from the womb of a fish; / The son he conceived in her was the illustrious Dvaipāyana,⁹⁰⁷ classifier of the Vedas. // 7.29 //

⁹⁰² The Ṛg-veda tells the tale of how the sun god and dawn goddess, taking the form of a stallion and a mare, brought into being "the two charioteers" who appear in the sky before the dawn in a golden carriage drawn by horses, or by birds.

⁹⁰³ Vasiṣṭha is the legendary owner of the cow of plenty. See SN1.3.

⁹⁰⁴ Śva-pakī is lit. "a woman who cooks dogs."

⁹⁰⁵ Akṣa-mālā, so called because she wore a rosary, is a name of Vasiṣṭha's wife Arundhatī.

⁹⁰⁶ Kālī, "Black Colour," is a name of Satyavatī (see verse 41 below). According to the *Mahā-bhārata*, she and Parāśara were the mother and father of Vyāsa, author of the Vedas.

⁹⁰⁷ Dvaipāyana, "Island-Born," so called because his birthplace was a small island in the Ganges, is a name of Vyāsa, author or compiler of the Vedas.

**dvaipāyano dharmā-parāyaṇāś ca reme samañ kāśiṣu veśya-vadhvā /
yayā hato 'bhūc cala-nūpureṇa pādena vidyul-latayeva meghaḥ // 7.30 //**

Dvaipāyana, equally, while having dharma as his primary object, enjoyed a woman at a brothel in Kāśi;⁹⁰⁸ / Struck by her foot, with its trembling ankle bracelet, he was like a cloud being struck by a twist of lightning. // 7.30 //

**tathāṅgirā rāga-parīta-cetāḥ sarasvatīm brahma-sutaḥ siṣeve /
sārasvato yatra suto 'sya jajñe naṣṭasya vedasya punaḥ pravaktā // 7.31 //**

So too did brahma-begotten Aṅgiras,⁹⁰⁹ when his mind was seized by passion, have sex with Sarasvatī;⁹¹⁰ / To her was born his son Sarasvata, who gave voice again to missing Vedas. // 7.31 //

**tathā nrpa-rṣer dilipasya yajñe svarga-striyām kāśyapa āgatāsthaḥ /
srucam grhītvā sravad ātma-tejaś cikṣepa vahnāv asito yato 'bhūt // 7.32 //**

Likewise Kāśyapa, at a sacrifice under the aegis of the royal seer Dilipa, while fixated on a celestial nymph, / Took the ceremonial ladle and cast into the fire his own streaming semen, whence was conceived Asita.⁹¹¹ // 7.32 //

**tathāṅgado 'ntam tapaso 'pi gatvā kāmābhībhūto yamunām agacchat /
dhimattaram yatra rathitaram sa saraṅga-juṣṭam janayām babhūva // 7.33 //**

Aṅgada,⁹¹² equally, though he had gone to the ends of ascetic practice, went overwhelmed by desire to Yamunā⁹¹³ / And in her he begat the super-bright Rathītara, 'The Super Charioteer,' and friend of the spotted deer. // 7.33 //

**niśāmya śāntām nara-deva-kanyām vane 'pi śānte 'pi ca vartamānaḥ /
cacāla dhairyān munir ṛṣya-śrṅgaḥ śailo mahī-kampa ivocca-śrṅgaḥ // 7.34 //**

Again, on catching sight of the princess Śāntā, 'Tranquillity,' though he had been living in tranquillity in the forest, / The sage Ṛṣya-śrṅga, 'Antelope Horn,' was moved from steadfastness, like a high-horned mountain in an earthquake. // 7.34 //

⁹⁰⁸ Kāśi broadly corresponds to modern-day Varanasi. See also SN3.15.

⁹⁰⁹ Aṅgiras is celebrated as the inspired bard/seer who authored the hymns of the *Ṛg-veda*. "Brahma-begotten" refers to the legend that Angiras was born from Brahma's mouth.

⁹¹⁰ Sarasvatī, "Abounding in Ponds," was the name of a river, and of a goddess associated with that river.

⁹¹¹ Kāśyapa is regarded as another of the authors of the *Ṛg-veda*, and Asita (also called Asita Devala) is known as one of his male progeny.

⁹¹² Aṅgada was a brother of Rāma.

⁹¹³ Yamunā also was originally the name of a river.

**brahmaṛṣi-bhāvārtham apāsya rājyaṁ bheje vanaṁ yo viṣayeṣv anāsthaḥ /
sa gādhi-jaś cāpahṛto ghṛtācyā samā daśaikam divasaṁ viveda // 7.35 //**

And the son of Gādhin who, in order to become ‘the Brahman Seer,’⁹¹⁴ renounced his kingdom and retired to the forest, having become indifferent to sensual objects: / He was captivated by the nymph Ghṛtācī,⁹¹⁵ reckoning a decade with her as a single day. // 7.35 //

**tathaiva kandarpa-śarābhimṛṣṭo rambhām prati sthūla-śirā mumūrcha /
yaḥ kāma-roṣātmatayānapekṣaḥ śaśāpa tām apratiḡrhyamāṇaḥ // 7.36 //**

So too, when hit by an arrow fired by Love, did Sthūla-śiras, ‘Thick Head,’ lose his senses over Rambhā.⁹¹⁶ / He with his libidinous and wrathful nature was reckless: when she refused him he cursed her. // 7.36 //

**pramadvarāyām ca ruruḥ priyāyām bhujaṅgamenāpahṛtendriyāyām /
saṁdṛśya saṁdṛśya jaghāna sarpān hriyaṁ na roṣeṇa tapo rarakṣa // 7.37 //**

And Ruru, after his beloved Pramadvarā had been robbed of her senses by a snake, / Exterminated snakes wherever he saw them: he failed, in his fury, to maintain his reserve or his ascetic practice. // 7.37 //

**naptā śaśānkasya yaśo-guṇāṅko budhasya sūnur vibudha-prabhāvaḥ /
tathorvaśīm apsarasaṁ vicintya rāja-rṣir unmādam agacchad aiḍaḥ // 7.38 //**

As grandson of the hare-marked moon, as son of ‘The Learned’ Budha and the goddess Iḍā, and as one marked by personal honour and virtue, [Purū-ravas] had the special powers of the lunar and the very learned;⁹¹⁷ / But thinking of the *apsaras* Urvaśī, this royal seer also went mad. // 7.38 //

**rakto girer mūrdhani menakāyām kāmātmakatvāc ca sa tāla-jaṅghaḥ /
pādena viśvāvasunā sa-roṣaṁ vajreṇa hintāla ivābhijaghne // 7.39 //**

And when ‘Long Shanks’ Tāla-jaṅgha, on top of a mountain, was reddened, in his libidinous state, with passion for the *apsaras* Menakā, / From the foot of ‘All-Beneficent’ Viśvā-vasu he got an angry kick, like a thunderbolt striking a *hin-tāla* palm.⁹¹⁸ // 7.39 //

⁹¹⁴ Refers to Viśva-mitra “Friend of All,” who was born into the warrior caste of kṣatriyas but after a requisite number of years of ascetic self-denial eventually gained the epithet “Brahman Seer,” signifying a purported elevation from the kṣatriya into the brahmin caste.

⁹¹⁵ Ghṛtācī, “Abounding in Ghee,” is the name of another notable nymph.

⁹¹⁶ Rambhā was reputed to be the most beautiful of all the beautiful nymphs in Indra's paradise; she is the nymph referred to at the end of SN Canto 6.

⁹¹⁷ The son of Budha is Purū-ravas, a royal seer of the lunar race whose love affair with the nymph Urvaśī is much celebrated in Indian art and literature – most notably in Kālidāsa's drama *Vikramorvaśī* (“Urvaśī [Won] by Valour”). But the story of the love between Purū-ravas and Urvaśī is as old as the *R̥g-veda*, one hymn of which consists of a dialogue between the two lovers. See also verse 42.

⁹¹⁸ Tāla-jaṅgha literally means “Having Legs as Long as a Palm Tree,” and so the metaphor of lightning striking a palm tree is a play on Tāla-jaṅgha's name.

nāsaṁ gatāyāṁ paramāṅganāyāṁ gaṅgā-jale 'naṅga-parīta-cetāḥ /

janhuś ca gaṅgāṁ nṛpatir bhujābhyāṁ rurodha maināka ivācalendraḥ // 7.40 //

When his favourite female drowned in the waters of the Ganges, King Jahnu, his mind possessed by disembodied Love,⁹¹⁹ / Blocked the flow of the Ganges with his arms, as if he were Mount Maināka, the paragon of non-movement.⁹²⁰ // 7.40 //

nṛpaś ca gaṅgā-virahāj jughūrṇa gaṅgāmbhasā sāla ivātta-mūlaḥ /

kula-pradīpaḥ pratipasya sūnuḥ śrīmat-tanuḥ śantanur asvatantraḥ // 7.41 //

And King 'Good Body' Śan-tanu, when separated from goddess Gaṅgā, shook like a *sāla* tree whose roots the Ganges was washing away: / The son of Pratipa and light of his family, he of the body beautiful, became uncontrollable.⁹²¹ // 7.41 //

hṛtām ca saunandakinānuśocan prāptām ivorvīm striyam urvaśīm tām /

sad-vṛtta-varmā kila somavarmā babhrāma cittodbhava-bhinna-varmā // 7.42 //

Again, when the avatar Saunandakin⁹²² took away his Urvaśī, "She of the Wide Expanse," the wife whom, like the wide earth, Soma-varman⁹²³ had made his own, / 'Moon-Armoured' Soma-varman whose armour, so they say, had been virtuous conduct, roamed about grieving, his armour pierced by mind-existent Love.⁹²⁴ // 7.42 //

⁹¹⁹ The first line includes an alliterative play on the word *aṅga*, which means a limb of the body or the body itself, and sounds like *gaṅga*, "Swift Goer," the name of the river we call the Ganges. "Favourite female" is *paramāṅgana* lit. "chief [woman] of well-rounded limbs"; and "disembodied Love" is *an-aṅga*, the Bodiless One – i.e. the god of love Kāma whom Śiva angrily disembodied when Śiva's love for Pārvatī came into conflict with his ascetic practice.

⁹²⁰ Many Indian legends link the royal sage Jahnu with the River Ganges; one legend says that Jahnu drank up the waters of the Ganges. This version as described by Aśvaghōṣa seems to have more of a connotation of the kind of blocked flow, or fixity, that is liable to accompany ascetic practice.

⁹²¹ Despite his devastation when the goddess Gaṅga left him to return to the Ganges whence she came, King Śan-tanu was able to perk up again when he set eyes on Satyavatī the fisherwoman, also known as Kālī (see verse 44 below).

⁹²² Saunandakin means "Bearer of the Saunanda," Saunanda being the name of the club born by Bala-rāma, who was the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa and said to be the 8th avatar of Viṣṇu. Bala is mentioned again in SN10.8.

⁹²³ Soma-varman, "Moon-Armoured" is another epithet of the protagonist of verse 39, Purū-ravas; the epithet reflects his provenance as founder of the lunar dynasty.

⁹²⁴ Cittodbhava, "He whose Existence Is Mind," again means Kāma-deva, god of Love, who was rendered bodiless as a punishment for bothering Śiva.

**bhāryām mṛtām cānumamāra rājā bhīma-prabhāvo bhuvi bhīmakaḥ saḥ /
balena senāka iti prakāśaḥ senā-patir deva ivātta-senaḥ // 7.43 //**

A king who followed his departed wife in death was 'The Dreaded' Bhīmika – he who was dread power on earth; / He who was famed, because of his military might, as Senāka, 'The Missile of War'; he who was, with his war machine, like a God of War.⁹²⁵ // 7.43 //

**svargaṁ gate bhartari śantanau ca kālīm jihīṣan jana-mejayaḥ saḥ /
avāpa bhīṣmāt samavetya mṛtyum na tad-gataṁ manmatham utsarja // 7.44 //**

Again, when Kālī's husband Śan-tanu had gone to heaven, Jana-mejaya, 'Causer of Trembling among Men,' in his desire to marry Kālī, / Came up against Bhīṣma 'The Terrible,' and accepted death from him, rather than relinquish his love for her.⁹²⁶ // 7.44 //

**śaptaś ca pāṇḍu madanena nūnaṁ strī-saṁgame mṛtyum avāpsyasīti /
jaḡāma mādrīm na maharṣi-śāpād asevyā-sevī vimamarśa mṛtyum // 7.45 //**

And Pāṇḍu 'The Pale One' having been cursed by Passion to die on coupling with a woman, / Went nonetheless with Mādrī: he heeded not the death that would result from the great seer's curse, when he tasted what he was forbidden to taste.⁹²⁷ // 7.45 //

⁹²⁵ Senā-pati, "Army Leader" or "Lord of the Lance," is an epithet of Kārttikeya. *Senā-pati-deva*, "army-leading god," therefore means Kārttikeya, the ancient Indian god of war, the son of Śiva and Pārvatī, who directs the fight against demons.

⁹²⁶ Bhīṣma was the son of King Śan-tanu and his first wife Gaṅga (see verse 41). When Śan-tanu remarried the fisherwoman known as Kālī (or Satyavatī), the latter therefore became Bhīṣma's step-mother, and Bhīṣma evidently did not take kindly to Jana-mejaya's designs on her. Jana-mejaya, incidentally, like the Ruru mentioned in verse 37, had it in for snakes and set about exterminating them en masse.

⁹²⁷ Pāṇḍu's mother Ambālikā, the story goes, was instructed by the Satyavatī/Kālī of the previous verse, to keep her eyes closed in childbirth so as not to bear a blind son. When Ambālikā eventually opened her eyes and saw the formidable form of her offspring, she became pale. That is how Pāṇḍu got his name, "the Pale," or, more exactly, "the [One whose mother became] Pale." When he became a king, Pāṇḍu married the princess Mādrī along with another princess named Kuntī. While out hunting in the woods Pāṇḍu had the misfortune to shoot the sage Kindama while the latter had taken the form of a deer and was mating with a doe. The wounded sage Kindama placed a curse on Pāṇḍu. Aśvaghōṣa says that the curse was placed *madanena*, which could mean "by [the sage, one of whose names was] Madana, 'Passion' " or could mean "by [the god of] Passion," or possibly could mean "because of passion." Since Pāṇḍu had shot the sage in flagrante, the curse was that if Pāṇḍu himself had sex with any woman, he would die. Pāṇḍu then remorsefully renounced his kingdom and lived with his wives as a celibate ascetic. After 15 years of ascetic celibacy, however, when his second wife Kuntī was away, Pāṇḍu was irresistibly drawn to his first wife Mādrī. As soon as Pāṇḍu set about enjoying what he was not to enjoy, he fulfilled the sage's curse and died. Mādrī, out of repentance and grief, committed so-called 'sati,' burning herself alive on her husband's funeral pyre.

**evaṁ-vidhā deva-nṛpa-rṣi-saṅghāḥ strīṇām vaśam kāma-vaśena jagmuḥ /
dhiyā ca sāreṇa ca durbalaḥ san priyām apaśyan kim-u viklavo 'ham // 7.46 //**

Hordes⁹²⁸ of gods and kings and seers such as these have fallen by dint of desire into the thrall of women. / Being weak in understanding and inner strength, all the more discouraged, when I cannot see my beloved, am I. // 7.46 //

**yāsyāmi tasmād gṛham eva bhūyaḥ kāmaṁ kariṣye vidhivat sa-kāmam /
na hy anya-cittasya calendriyasya liṅgaṁ kṣamaṁ dharma-pathāc cyutasya // 7.47 //**

Therefore I shall go back home again and properly make love, as I please! / For the insignia do not sit well upon a backslider from the path of dharma, whose senses are restless and whose mind is elsewhere. // 7.47 //

**pāṇau kapālam avadhāya vidhāya mauṇḍyaṁ mānaṁ nidhāya vikṛtaṁ paridhāya vāsaḥ /
yasyoddhavo na dhṛtir asti na śāntir asti citra-pradīpa iva so 'sti ca nāsti caiva // 7.48 //**

When a man has taken the bowl in his hand, has shaved his head, and, putting pride aside, has donned the patched-together robe,⁹²⁹ / And yet he is given to pleasure and lacking in firmness and tranquillity, then like a lamp in a picture, he is there and yet he is not. // 7.48 //

**yo niḥsrtaś ca na ca niḥsrta-kāma-rāgaḥ kāṣāyam udvahati yo na ca niṣkaṣāyaḥ /
pātraṁ bibharti ca guṇair na ca pātra-bhūto liṅgaṁ vahann api sa naiva gṛhī na bhikṣuḥ
// 7.49 //**

When a man has gone forth, but the red taint of desire has not gone forth from him; when he wears the earth-hued robe but has not transcended dirt; / When he carries the bowl but is not a vessel for the virtues; though he bears the insignia, he is neither a householder nor a beggar. // 7.49 //

**na nyāyyam anvayavataḥ parigrhya liṅgaṁ bhūyo vimoktum iti yo 'pi hi me vicāraḥ /
so 'pi praṇāsyati vicintya nṛpa-pravīrāms tān ye tapo-vanam apāśya gṛhāṇy atiyuḥ //
7.50 //**

I had thought it improper for a man with noble connections, having adopted the insignia, to discard them again: / But even [such a scruple] fades away, when I think about those royal heroes who abandoned an ascetic grove and went home. // 7.50 //

⁹²⁸ Saṅghāḥ. See note to verse 24.

⁹²⁹ The four verbs in this line are all from the root *vdhā*, to put or place, viz: *ava-vdhā*, to place down; *vi-vdhā*, to put in order; *ni-vdhā*, to put or keep down; *pari-vdhā*, to put on. Hence, a more accurate reflection of the original might be: "When a man has put the bowl in his hand, has put his head in order, and, putting pride aside, has put on the patched-together robe...."

**śālvādhipo hi sa-suto 'pi tathāambarīṣo rāmo 'ndha eva sa ca sām̐skṛti-rantidevaḥ /
cīrāṇy apāsya dadhire punar aṁśukāni chittvā jaṭās ca kuṭilā mukuṭāni babhruḥ // 7.51
//**

For the Śālva king,⁹³⁰ along with his son; and likewise Ambarīṣa and Rāma and Andha,⁹³¹ and Rantideva, son of Sāṅkṛti⁹³² / Cast off their rags and clothed themselves again in finest fabrics; they cut their twisted dreadlocks off and put their crowns back on. // 7.51 //

**tasmād bhikṣārthaṁ mama gurur ito yāvad eva prayātas
tyaktvā kāṣāyaṁ gṛham aham itas tāvad eva prayāsyē /
pūjyaṁ liṅgaṁ hi skhalita-manaso bibhrataḥ kliṣṭa-buddher
nāmutrārthaḥ syād upahata-mater nāpy ayaṁ jīva-lokaḥ // 7.52 //**

Therefore as soon my guru has gone from here to beg for alms, I will give up the ochre robe and go from here to my home; / Because, for a man who bears the honoured insignia with unsound judgement, stammering mind and weakened resolve, no ulterior purpose might exist, nor even the present world of living beings.” // 7.52 //

saundaranande mahākāvye nanda-vilāpo nāma saptamaḥ sargaḥ //7//

The 7th canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled “Nanda’s Lament.”

⁹³⁰ The Śālva king was a noted enemy of Viṣṇu, whose pseudonyms include "Śālva's Enemy."

⁹³¹ Ambarīṣa was a royal seer, as presumably were Rāma and Andha.

⁹³² Rantideva – another ancient Indian hero who was not necessarily a good role model for devotees of the Buddha – was a king of the lunar dynasty famed for spending his riches in performing grand sacrifices; the blood which issued from the bodies of the slaughtered victims was changed into a river called Charmaṇ-vatī “Containing Hides." It is the modern River Chambal.

Canto 8: *strī-*vighātaḥ** **A Tirade against Women**

Introduction

Strī means a woman or (at the beginning of a compound) women. *Vighāta*, like the *vighātana* of BC Canto 4, is from the root *vi-vhan*, which means to strike, to ward off, or to hinder. Hence the meanings of the noun *vighāta* include 1. a blow, 2. warding off, 3. an impediment, an obstacle, and 4. failure.

The present Canto describes a certain Buddhist striver striking a verbal blow against women in general. Hence the ostensible meaning of *strī-vighātaḥ* is (1.) A Tirade against Women or (as per Linda Covill) “The Attack on Women.”

In BC Canto 4, the ostensible sense is of the Prince warding away the amorous advances of women, but below the surface that Canto points us in the direction of rejecting the generalizations that an immature man makes about “women.” We are prompted instead to consider on a case by case basis what each individual woman stands for. Hence, as the title of BC Canto 4, *strī-vighātana* ostensibly means (2.) Warding Women Away, but in the hidden meaning Warding Away [the Concept] ‘Women.’

EH Johnston translated the present Canto title (3.) Woman the Obstacle. With appropriate punctuation, this title could also convey a hidden meaning – Woman, the Obstacle – in which case the obstacle is not women but certain people’s prejudices in regard to women.

Finally, the present Canto title *strī-vighāta* could be translated (4.) Women – Failure, in which case the failure in question is simply the striver’s failure to have the influence on Nanda that he wants to have.

In general, we know well enough by now, nothing that *Aśvaghōṣa* writes is to be taken at face value. Everything is to be examined critically. But this is especially true when *Aśvaghōṣa* is putting words in the mouth of somebody – like the immature ‘Hurry Up’ *Udāyin* in BC Canto 4 – who has pretensions of knowing a thing or two. Again, we saw in SN Canto 6 how a senior female servant, who was well respected and good with words, tried to take *Sundarī* firmly in hand and to tell her what was good for her. But the matronly advice she offered was too direct and it did not work. If anything, it only made *Sundarī*’s suffering worse. What helped *Sundarī* was the words and attitude of a less preachy female confidante whose predictions were not strictly accurate but whose indirect approach was more skillful and helpful. The striver introduced in the present Canto is the male counterpart of the bossy but ineffectual female servant who was good with words. The striver thinks of himself as wise, but only through his own conceit. *Aśvaghōṣa*’s real agenda is to use the Buddhist striver to satirize all male upholders of misogynist views.

**atha nandam adhīra-locanaṁ gr̥ha-yānotsukam utsukotsukam /
abhigamya śivena cakṣuṣā śramaṇaḥ kaś-cid uvāca maitrayā // 8.1 //**

Then, while Nanda was looking forward, with unsteady eyes and the eagerest of expectations, to going home, / A certain striver with a benevolent air approached him and said, in a friendly way: // 8.1 //

**kim idaṁ mukham aśru-durdinaṁ hṛdaya-sthaṁ vivṛṇoti te tamaḥ /
dhṛtim ehi niyaccha vikriyāṁ na hi bāṣpaś ca śamaś ca śobhate // 8.2 //**

“Why this face so clouded with tears, that reveals a darkness in your heart? / Come to constancy, restrain your emotion, for tears and tranquillity do not sit well together. // 8.2 //

**dvi-vidhā samudeti vedanā niyataṁ cetasi deha eva ca /
śruta-vidhy-upacāra-kovidā dvi-vidhā eva tayoś cikitsakāḥ // 8.3 //**

Pain invariably arises in two ways: in the mind and in the body. / And for those two kinds of pain, there are healers skilled in education and in medicine. // 8.3 //

**tad iyaṁ yadi kāyikī rujā bhiṣaje tūrṇam anūnam ucyatām /
viniguhya hi rogam āturo nacirāt tīvram anartham ṛchhati // 8.4 //**

So if this pain is physical be quick to tell a doctor all about it, / For when a sick man conceals his illness it turns before long into something serious. // 8.4 //

**atha duḥkham idaṁ mano-mayaṁ vada vakṣyāmi yad atra bheṣajam /
manaso hi rajas-tamasvino bhiṣajo 'dhyātma-vidaḥ parīkṣakāḥ // 8.5 //**

But if this suffering is mental tell me, and I will tell you the cure for it; / Because, for a mind enshrouded in gloom and darkness, the healer is a seeker who knows himself.⁹³³ // 8.5 //

**nikhilena ca satyam ucyatām yadi vācyāṁ mayi saumya manyase /
gatayo vividhā hi cetasāṁ bahu-guhyāni madākulāni ca // 8.6 //**

Tell the whole truth, my friend, if you think it fit to be told, to me; / For minds have many ways of working and many secrets, wherein concealment is complicated by conceit.⁹³⁴ // 8.6 //

⁹³³ The dramatic irony here, which we readers see but the striver himself does not see, is that the healer who knows himself is the Buddha, aided by Ānanda. The preachy striver – who understands the kind of pain of separation described in Cantos 4-7 to be either physical or else mental – is not such a person.

⁹³⁴ Here *madākulāni* has been read as *madā* (conceit) + *ākula* (confused/complicated). The elements of this compound could equally literally have been read *mada* + *ākula* (“full of intoxication” or “complicated by infatuation”). The translation “complicated by conceit” hints, again, at the ironic subtext whereby, in negating Nanda's vanity, the striver only succeeds in showing his own vanity.

iti tena sa coditas tadā vyavasāyaṁ pravivakṣur ātmanaḥ /

avalambya kare kareṇa taṁ praviveśānyatarad vanāntaram // 8.7 //

Pressed in this way by [the striver], while wanting to explain his own decision, / [Nanda] clung to him, with hand in his hand, and went into another corner of the forest. // 8.7 //

atha tatra śucau latā-grhe kusumodgāriṇi tau niṣedatuḥ /

mṛdubhir mṛdu-māruteritair upagūḍhāv iva bāla-pallavaiḥ // 8.8 //

And so there the two of them sat in a vibrant bower of flower-spewing creepers / Whose soft young shoots, stirring in a soft breeze, seemed to be hiding them away. // 8.8 //

sa jagāda tataś cikīrṣitaṁ ghana-niśvāsa-grhītam antarā /

śruta-vāg-viśadāya bhikṣave viduṣā pravrajitena dur-vacam // 8.9 //

Then, in between the heavy sighs that intermittently gripped him, he expressed his intention, / Which was a hard one for a man who has knowingly gone forth to express. He told it to the beggar who was so adept at hearing and talking.⁹³⁵ // 8.9 //

sadrśaṁ yadi dharma-cāriṇaḥ satataṁ prāṇiṣu maitra-cetasah /

adhṛtau tad iyaṁ hitaiṣitā mayi te syāt karuṇātmanaḥ sataḥ // 8.10 //

“Evidently, it befits a devotee of dharma who is always friendly towards any living being, / That the benevolence inherent in your compassionate nature might be shown to me in my inconstancy! // 8.10 //

ata eva ca me viśeṣataḥ pravivakṣā kṣama-vādini tvayi /

na hi bhāvam imaṁ calātmāne kathayeyaṁ bruvate ’py asādhave // 8.11 //

And that is why I would like especially to speak to you who preach propriety; / For what I am feeling now I would not tell to a man who was out of balance in himself and who, though a good talker, was not a true person. // 8.11 //

tad idaṁ śrṇu me samāsato na rame dharma-vidhāv ṛte priyām /

giri-sānuṣu kāminīm ṛte kṛta-retā iva kiṁnaraś caran // 8.12 //

Hear me then when I say, in short, that without my beloved I do not enjoy the practice of dharma; / I am like a *kiṁnara* without his lover roaming about, his semen ready, over mountain peaks. // 8.12 //

vana-vāsa-sukhāt parān-mukhaḥ prayiyāsā grham eva yena me /

na hi śarma labhe tayā vinā nṛpatir hīna ivottama-śriyā // 8.13 //

I am averse to the happiness of the forest life, and simply want to go home; / For without her I obtain no comfort, like a king without his sovereignty.” // 8.13 //

⁹³⁵ Ostensibly Aśvaghōṣa is praising the striver as one who both talked and listened well. In the ironic hidden meaning, the suggestion might be that the striver was one who talked the talk but failed to walk

atha tasya niśamya tad vacaḥ priya-bhāryābhimukhasya śocataḥ /

śramaṇaḥ sa śiraḥ prakampayan nijagādātma-gataṁ śanair idam // 8.14 //

When he heard those words of Nanda who, with his mind on his beloved wife, was burning with pain, / The striver, softly, while allowing his head to shake, said to himself: // 8.14 //

kṛpaṇaṁ bata yūtha-lālaso mahato vyādha-bhayād viniḥṣṭaḥ /

pravivikṣati vāgurāṁ mṛgaś capalo gīta-raveṇa vañcitaḥ // 8.15 //

“What a pity! In its longing for the herd, a rushing stag that has escaped the mortal danger of the hunter’s arrow, / Is about to enter the hunter’s trap, deceived by a call that the hunter sang. // 8.15 //

vihagaḥ khalu jāla-saṁvṛto hita-kāmena janena mokṣitaḥ /

vicaran phala-puṣpa-vad vanaṁ pravivikṣuḥ svayam eva pañjaram // 8.16 //

Truly, a bird that was caught in a net and set free by a benevolent person, / Desires, as it flits about the fruiting and blossoming forest, to fly of its own volition into a cage. // 8.16 //

kalabhaḥ kariṇā khalūddhr̥toḥ bahu-pankād viṣamān nadī-talāt /

jala-tarṣa-vaśena tām punaḥ saritaṁ grāhavatīm titīṣṭati // 8.17 //

A baby elephant, truly, after an adult elephant has pulled it up out of the deep mud of a dangerous riverbed, / Is wishing, in its thirst for water, to enter again that crocodile-infested creek. // 8.17 //

śaraṇe sa-bhujāṅgame svapan pratibuddhena pareṇa bodhitaḥ /

taruṇaḥ khalu jāta-vibhramaḥ svayam ugraṁ bhujagaṁ jighṛkṣati // 8.18 //

In a shelter where slithers a snake, a sleeping boy, awoken by an elder who is already awake, / Has become agitated and, truly, he is about to grab the horrible reptile himself. // 8.18 //

mahatā khalu jāta-vedasā jvalitād utpatito vana-drumāt /

punar icchati nīḍa-tṛṣṇayā patitum tatra gata-vyatho dvijaḥ // 8.19 //

Truly, having flown up and away from a tree that is blazing in a great forest fire, / A chick in⁹³⁶ its longing for the nest is wishing to fly there again, its former alarm forgotten. // 8.19 //

the walk – as demonstrated by his spectacular failure to abandon a view on “women.”

⁹³⁶ The final word of the verse in Sanskrit is *dvi-jaḥ*, lit. “one twice born,” which means 1. a bird, which is twice born in the sense of being born first in an egg laid by the mother, and then born again on hatching from the egg; and 2. a person, and especially a brahmin, who has in some sense been reborn, for example in an initiation or confirmation ceremony in the Āryan tradition. So in placing *dvi-jaḥ* as the last word of this verse, the striver might be appealing again to Nanda's sense of what is proper for an Āryan man of noble birth. This would be in keeping with the striver's stance as a preacher of propriety (*kṣama-vādin*; verse 11).

**avaśaḥ khalu kāma-mūrcchayā priyayā śyena-bhayād vinā-kṛtaḥ /
na dhṛtiṁ samupaiti na hriyaṁ karuṇaṁ jīvati jīva-jīvakaḥ // 8.20 //**

Truly, a pheasant separated from its mate through fear of a hawk, and so stupefied by desire as to be helpless, / Is lacking in resolve and lacking in reserve: the pathetic little beggar⁹³⁷ is living a pitiful life. // 8.20 //

**akṛtātmatayā tṛṣṇānvito ghrṇayā caiva dhiyā ca varjitāḥ /
aśanaṁ khalu vāntam ātmanā kṛpaṇaḥ śvā punar attum icchati // 8.21 //**

Greedy and untrained, devoid of decency and intelligence, / Truly, a wretched dog is wishing to eat again some food that he himself has vomited.” // 8.21 //

**iti manmatha-śoka-karṣitaṁ tam anudhyāya muhur nirīkṣya ca /
śramaṇaḥ sa hitābhikāṅkṣayā guṇavad vākyam uvāca vipriyam // 8.22 //**

So saying, the striver contemplated [Nanda] for a while, beholding him tormented by the sorrows of love. / Then in his eagerness to be of benefit, the striver spoke fine words, which were unpleasant to hear. // 8.22 //

**avicārayataḥ śubhāśubhaṁ viṣayeṣv eva nivīṣṭa-cetasaḥ /
upapannam alabdha-cakṣuṣo na ratiḥ śreyasi ced bhavet tava // 8.23 //**

“For you who draws no distinction between good and bad, whose mind is settled on objects of the senses, / And who is without the eye of attainment, naturally, no delight could there be in being better.⁹³⁸ // 8.23 //

**śravaṇe grahaṇe ’tha dhāraṇe paramārthāvagame manaḥ-śame /
aviṣakta-mateś calātmano na hi dharme ’bhiratir vidhīyate // 8.24 //**

Again, to him whose thinking is not firmly fixed – in the matters of hearing, grasping, retaining and understanding the supreme truth, and in the matter of mental peace – / To him who easily changes his mind,⁹³⁹ joy in dharma is not apportioned. // 8.24 //

⁹³⁷ *Jīva-jīvakaḥ* means 1. a particular species of bird, a kind of pheasant, and 2. what the dictionary defines as "a Buddhist ascetic."

⁹³⁸ *Śreyas*, as the Buddha uses the term, especially in SN Cantos 12 and 13, is the thing that Nanda eventually comes to believe in: better, betterment, a better way – a better way, that is, than hedonism, and also a better way than striving in pursuit of illusory targets. This verse, however, can be understood as full, from beginning to end, of Aśvaghoṣa's irony, so that, unbeknowns to himself, the striver is just expressing the enlightenment of sitting buddha, which is free of conceit, and so there is no delight in being better than others (*na ratiḥ śreyasi*).

⁹³⁹ *Calātmanaḥ* generally has a negative connotation: e.g. fickle-minded (SN1.20), out of balance in himself (SN8.11), but here again Aśvaghoṣa's irony might be at play.

**viṣayeṣu tu doṣa-darśinaḥ parituṣṭasya śucer amāninaḥ /
śama-karmasu yukta-cetasah kṛta-buddher na ratir na vidyate // 8.25 //**

But that joy is certainly known⁹⁴⁰ to one who sees the faults in objects of the senses,⁹⁴¹ who is contented, pure, and unassuming, / Whose mind is versed in the religious acts that generate peace and whose understanding therein is formed. // 8.25 //

**ramate tṛṣṭito dhana-śriyā ramate kāma-sukhena bālīśah /
ramate praśamena saj-janaḥ paribhogān paribhūya vidyayā // 8.26 //**

A covetous man delights in opulence; a fool delights in sensual pleasure; / A true person delights in tranquillity, having transcended sensual enjoyments by virtue of his knowledge. // 8.26 //

**api ca prathitasya dhīmataḥ kula-jasyārcita-liṅga-dhāriṇaḥ /
sadrśī na grhāya cetanā praṇatir vāyu-vaśād girer iva // 8.27 //**

What is more, when a man of good repute, a man of intelligence and breeding, bears the honoured insignia / His consciousness inclines towards home no more than a mountain bends in the wind. // 8.27 //

**sprhayet para-samśritāya yaḥ paribhūyātma-vaśām sva-tantratām /
upaśānti-pathe śive sthitaḥ sprhayet doṣavate grhāya saḥ // 8.28 //**

Only a man who aspires to dependence on another, spurning autonomy and self-reliance, / Would yearn, while he was on the auspicious path to peace, for life at home with all its faults. // 8.28 //

**vyasanābhīhato yathā viśet parimuktaḥ punar eva bandhanam /
samupetya vanam tathā punar grha-samjñam mṛgayeta bandhanam // 8.29 //**

Just as a man released from prison might, when stricken by some calamity, betake himself back to prison, / So might one who has retired to the forest seek out again that bondage called home. // 8.29 //

**puruśaś ca vihāya yaḥ kalim punar icchet kalim eva sevitum /
sa vihāya bhajeta bālīśah kali-bhūtām ajitendriyaḥ priyām // 8.30 //**

The man who has left his strife behind and yet would like nothing better than to go back again to his strife: / He is the fool who would leave behind and then return, with his senses still unconquered, to the strife that is a wife. // 8.30 //

⁹⁴⁰ The emphatic double negative, *na ratir na vidyate*, has here been translated as a positive.

⁹⁴¹ Does this include seeing a fault in women, for being objects of men's sexual desire?

**sa-viṣā iva saṁśritā latāḥ parimṛṣṭā iva soraḡā guhāḥ /
vivṛtā iva cāsayo dhṛtā vyasanāntā hi bhavanti yoṣitaḥ // 8.31 //**

Like poisonous clinging creepers, like swept-out caves still harbouring snakes, / Like uncovered blades being held in the hand, women are calamitous in the end. // 8.31 //

**pramadāḥ samadā mada-pradāḥ pramadā vīta-madā bhaya-pradāḥ /
iti doṣa-bhayāvahās ca tāḥ katham arhanti niṣevaṇaṁ nu tāḥ // 8.32 //**

Sexy members of the female gender engender sexual desire, whereas unsexy ones are fearsome.⁹⁴² / Since they bring with them either a fault or fear, in what way do they merit attention? // 8.32 //

**svajanaḥ svajanena bhidyate suhṛdaś cāpi suhṛj-janena yat /
paradoṣa-vicakṣaṇāḥ śathās tad anāryāḥ pracaranti yoṣitaḥ // 8.33 //**

So that kinsman breaks with kinsman and friend with friend, / Women, who are good at seeing faults in others,⁹⁴³ behave deceitfully and ignobly. // 8.33 //

**kula-jāḥ kṛpaṇī bhavanti yad yad ayuktaṁ pracaranti sāhasam /
praviśanti ca yac camū-mukhaṁ rabhasās tatra nimittam aṅganāḥ // 8.34 //**

When men of good families fall on hard times, when they rashly do unfitting deeds, / When they recklessly enter the vanguard of an army, women in those instances are the cause. // 8.34 //

**vacanena haranti valgunā niśitena praharanti cetasā /
madhu tiṣṭhati vāci yoṣitāṁ hṛdaye hālahalaṁ mahad-viṣam // 8.35 //**

They beguile with lovely voices, and attack with sharpened minds: / There is honey in women's speech, and lethal venom in their hearts. // 8.35 //

**pradahan dahano 'pi gṛhyate vi-śarīraḥ pavano 'pi gṛhyate /
kupito bhujago 'pi gṛhyate pramadānāṁ tu mano na gṛhyate // 8.36 //**

A burning fire can be held, the bodiless wind can be caught,⁹⁴⁴ / An angry snake can be captured, but the mind of women cannot be grasped. // 8.36 //

⁹⁴² The word used here for woman, *pramadā*, etymologically is already sexually charged (*pra* = emphatic; *madā* = sexual desire), so that the dictionary gives *pramadā* as "a young and wanton woman, any woman." The similar-sounding word *pra-da* means engendering. The first line then, is an alliterative play on these words, and at the same time a succinct distillation of an absurd view.

⁹⁴³ Who is the one who is seeing the fault, not in himself, but in others?

⁹⁴⁴ For example, a fire can be held by means of a flaming torch, and the wind can be caught by a sail.

**na vapur vimṛśanti na śriyaṁ na matiṁ nāpi kulaṁ na vikramam /
praharanty aviśeṣataḥ striyaḥ sarito grāha-kulākulā iva // 8.37 //**

Without pausing to consider looks or wealth, or intelligence or breeding or valour, / Women attack no matter what, like a ragged assortment of crocodiles in a river. // 8.37 //

**na vaco madhuraṁ na lālanam smarati strī na ca sauhṛdam kva-cit /
kalitā vanitaiva cañcalā tad ihāriṣv iva nāvalambyate // 8.38 //**

No charming speech, nor soothing caresses,⁹⁴⁵ nor any affection do women ever remember. / The female, even when cajoled, is flighty: so rely on one no more than you would your enemies in this world. // 8.38 //

**adadatsu bhavanti narma-dāḥ pradadatsu praviśanti vibhramam /
praṇateṣu bhavanti garvitāḥ pramadās tṛptatarāś ca māniṣu // 8.39 //**

Women flirt with men who give them nothing; with generous men, they get restless. / They look down with disdain on the humble, but towards the arrogant show simpering contentment. // 8.39 //

**guṇavatsu caranti bhartṛ-vad guṇahīneṣu caranti putravat /
dhanavatsu caranti tṛṣṇayā dhanahīneṣu caranty avajñayā // 8.40 //**

They lord it over men of merit, and submit like children to men who are devoid of merit. / When men with money are around, they act rapaciously; men who are short of money they treat with contempt. // 8.40 //

**viṣayād viṣayāntaram gatā pracaraty eva yathāhṛtāpi gau /
anavekṣita-pūrva-sauhṛdā ramate 'nyatra gatā tathāṅganā // 8.41 //**

Just as a cow, having gone from one pasture to another pasture, keeps right on grazing, however she's restrained, / So a woman, without regard for any affection she felt before, moves on and takes her pleasure elsewhere. // 8.41 //

**praviśanty api hi striyaś citām anubadhnanty api mukta-jīvitāḥ /
api bibhrati caiva yantraṇā na tu bhāvena vahanti sauhṛdam // 8.42 //**

For though women ascend their husband's funeral pyre, though they follow at the cost of their own life, / Though, the restraints placed upon them they can indeed bear, they are not truly capable of genuine friendship. // 8.42 //

⁹⁴⁵ As an amendment to the paper manuscript's original *na rādranam*, Shastri conjectured *na lālanam*. E.H.J. accepted this amendment but queried *na cādarām*, which would give "No charming speech, nor showing of respect..."

**ramayanti patīn katharī-cana pramadā yāḥ pati-devatāḥ kva-cit /
cala-cittatayā sahasraśo ramayante hṛdayaṁ svam eva tāḥ // 8.43 //**

Women who sometimes, in some small way please their husband, by treating him like a god, / A thousand times more, in their fickle-mindedness, please their own heart. // 8.43 //

**śva-pacāṁ kila senajit-sutā cakame mīna-ripuṁ kumudvatī /
mṛga-rājam atho bṛhad-rathā pramadānām agatir na vidyate // 8.44 //**

The daughter of Sena-jit the Conqueror, so they say, coupled with a cooker of dogs;⁹⁴⁶ Kumudvatī, 'the Lilly Pool,' paired up with Mīna-ripu, 'the Foe of Fishes'; / And Bṛhad-rathā, 'the Burly Heroine,' loved a lion: there is nothing women will not do.⁹⁴⁷ // 8.44 //

**kuru-haihaya-vṛṣṇi-vaṁśa-jā bahu-māyā-kavaco 'tha śambarah /
munir ugratapās ca gautamaḥ samavāpur vanitoddhataṁ rajaḥ // 8.45 //**

Scions of the Kurus, Haihayas and Vṛṣṇis, along with Śambara whose armour was mighty magic,⁹⁴⁸ / And the sage Ugra-tapas Gautama – 'the Gautama of Grim Austerities' – all incurred the dust of passion which a woman raises. // 8.45 //

**akṛtajñam anāryam asthiraṁ vanitānām idam īdṛśaṁ manaḥ /
katham arhati tāsu paṇḍito hṛdayaṁ sañjayituṁ calātmasu // 8.46 //**

Ungrateful, ignoble, unsteady: such is the mind of women. / What man of wisdom could allow his heart to be fastened onto such fickle creatures? // 8.46 //

**atha sūkṣmam atidvayāśivaṁ laghu tāsām hṛdayaṁ na paśyasi /
kim-u kāyam asad-grhaṁ sravad vanitānām aśuciṁ na paśyasi // 8.47 //**

So you fail to see how pernicious, in their intense duplicity, are their little lightweight hearts? / Do you not see, at least, that the bodies of women are impure, oozing houses of foulness? // 8.47 //

**yad ahany-ahani pradhāvanair vasanaś cābharaṇaś ca saṁskṛtam /
aśubhaṁ tamasāvṛtekṣaṇaḥ śubhato gacchasi nāvagacchasi // 8.48 //**

Day after day, by means of ablutions, garments, and jewels, they prettify an ugliness / Which you, with eyes veiled by ignorance do not see as ugliness: you see it as beauty. // 8.48 //

⁹⁴⁶ *Sva-paca*, lit. "a dog-cooker," means a member of a tribe said to cook dogs, an outcaste.

⁹⁴⁷ EHJ was unable to trace the sources of these tales of female bestiality, but thought that Mīna-rupu, the Fishes' Foe (also mentioned or alluded to in SN10.53), might here have taken the form of a crocodile.

⁹⁴⁸ Śambara is the name of a demon formerly slain by Indra; in epic and later poetry he is an enemy of Kāma-deva, the god of love.

**atha vā samavaiṣi tat-tanūm aśubhām tvaṁ na tu saṁvid asti te /
surabhiṁ vidadhāsi hi kriyām aśuces tat-prabhavasya śāntaye // 8.49 //**

Or else you do see that their bodies are foul but intelligence is lacking in you: / For the fragrant task in which you are engaged is extinction of the impurity that originates in them.⁹⁴⁹ 8.49 //

**anulepanam añjanam srajo maṇi-muktā-tapanīyam aṁśukam /
yadi sādhu kim-atra yoṣitām sahaṣam tāsū vicīyatām śuci // 8.50 //**

Cosmetic paste and powder, garlands, gems and pearls, gold and fine fabric: / What have these fine things, if fine they are, got to do with women? Let us examine what inherently in women is so immaculate. // 8.50 //

**malapañka-dharā dig-ambarā prakṛti-sthair nakha-danta-romabhiḥ /
yadi sā tava sundarī bhaven niyataṁ te 'dya na sundarī bhavet // 8.51 //**

Dirty and unclothed,⁹⁵⁰ with her nails and teeth and body-hair in their natural state: / If she were like that, your Sundarī, whose name means 'Beautiful Woman,' surely wouldn't be such a beautiful woman to you now. // 8.51 //

**sravatīm aśuciṁ sprśec ca kaḥ saghr̥ṇo jarjara-bhāṇḍavat striyam /
yadi kevalayā tvacāvṛtā na bhaven makṣika-pattra-mātrayā // 8.52 //**

What man who was capable of disgust would touch a woman, leaking and unclean like an old bucket, / If she were not scantily clad in skin as thin as a flying insect's wing? // 8.52 //

**tvaca-veṣṭitam asthi-pañjaram yadi kāyam samavaiṣi yoṣitām /
madanena ca kṛṣyase balād aghr̥ṇaḥ khalv adhṛtiś ca manmathaḥ // 8.53 //**

If you see that women's bodies are bony skeletons wrapped around with skin / And yet you are forcibly drawn by passion, truly then, Love is immune to disgust and lacking in all restraint. // 8.53 //

**śubhatām aśubheṣu kalpayan nakha-danta-tvaca-keśa-romasu /
avicakṣaṇa kiṁ na paśyasi prakṛtiṁ ca prabhavam ca yoṣitām // 8.54 //**

In nails and in teeth, in skin, and in hair, both long and short, which are not beautiful, you are inventing beauty. / Dullard! Don't you see what women originally are made of and what they originally are? // 8.54 //

⁹⁴⁹ Cf. "Not doing any wrong, undertaking what is good, cleansing one's own mind – this is the teaching of buddhas." (*sarva-pāpasyākaraṇam kuśalasyopasaṁpadaḥ / svacitta-paryavadanam etad buddhasya śāsanam // [Udānavarga 28.1]*)

⁹⁵⁰ "Unclothed" is *dig-ambarā*, lit. "clothed in sky/space."

tad avetya manaḥ-śarīrayor vanitā doṣavatīr viśeṣataḥ /

capalaṁ bhavanotsukaṁ manaḥ pratisaṁkhyāna-balena vāryatām // 8.55 //

So then, reckon women, in mind and in body, to be singularly implicated with faults; / And hold back, by the power of this reckoning, the mind which strains so impulsively for home. // 8.55 //

śrutavān matimān kulodgataḥ paramasya praśamasya bhājanam /

upagamyā yathā tathā punar na hi bhettuṁ niyamaṁ tvam arhasi // 8.56 //

You are educated, intelligent, and well-bred – a fitting vessel for supreme tranquillity; / As such, you ought not in any way to break the contract into which you have entered. // 8.56 //

abhijana-mahato manasvinaḥ priya-yaśaso bahu-mānam icchataḥ /

nidhanam api varaṁ sthirātmanaś cyuta-vinayasya na caiva jīvitam // 8.57 //

For the man of spirit and noble birth; for the man who cherishes honour and strives to earn respect; / For the man of grit – better death for him than life as a backslider. // 8.57 //

baddhvā yathā hi kavacaṁ pragṛhīta-cāpo nindyo

bhavaty apasṛtaḥ samarād ratha-sthaḥ /

bhaikṣākam abhyupagataḥ parigrhya liṅgam

nindyas tathā bhavati kāma-hṛtendriyāśvaḥ // 8.58 //

For just as he is blameworthy who, having girded his armour on and taken up a bow, then flees in his warrior's chariot away from the battle; / So he too is blameworthy who, having accepted the insignia and taken to begging, then allows the stallion of his senses to be carted away by desire. // 8.58 //

hāsyo yathā ca paramābharaṇāmbara-srag

bhaikṣaṁ caran dhṛta-dhanuś cala-citra-mauliḥ /

vairūpyam abhyupagataḥ para-piṇḍa-bhojī hāsyas

tathā grha-sukhābhimukhaḥ sa-tṛṣṇaḥ // 8.59 //

And just as it would be ridiculous to go begging, while bedecked in the finest ornaments, clothes and garlands, while holding an archer's bow, and with a head full of passing fancies, / So too is it ridiculous to subsist on offerings, having consented to shapelessness, while longing thirstily for the comforts of home. // 8.59 //

yathā sv-annaṁ bhuktvā parama-śayāniye 'pi śayit

varāho nirmuktaḥ punar aśuci dhāvet paricitam /

tathā śreyaḥ śrṅṅvan praśama-sukham āsvādya

guṇavad vanaṁ śāntaṁ hitvā grham abhilaṣet kāma-tṛṣitaḥ // 8.60 //

Just as a hog, though fed on the best of food and lain on the finest bedding, would, when set free, run back to his familiar filth; / So, having tasted the excellent pleasure of cessation while learning the better way, would a man of thirsting libido abandon the tranquil forest and yearn for home. // 8.60 //

**yatholkā hasta-sthā dahati pavana-prerita-śikhā
yathā pādākrānto daśati bhujagaḥ krodha-rabhasaḥ /
yathā hanti vyāghraḥ śísur api grhīto gr̥ha-gataḥ
tathā strī-saṁsargo bahu-vidham anarthāya bhavati // 8.61 //**

Just as a flaming torch, when fanned by the wind, burns the hand that holds it, / Just as a snake, being swift to anger, bites the foot that steps on it, / Just as a tiger, though caught as a cub, mauls the one who took it in, / So too does association with women, in many ways, make for disaster. // 8.61 //

**tad vijñāya manaḥ-śarīra-niyatān nārīṣu doṣān imān,
matvā kāma-sukhaṁ nadī-jala-calaṁ kleśāya śokāya ca /
dṛṣṭvā durbalam āma-pātra-sadṛśaṁ mṛtyūpasṛṣṭaṁ jagan
nirmokṣāya kuruṣva buddhim atulām utkaṅṭhituṁ nārhasi // 8.62 //**

Therefore, know these faults to be mentally and physically bound up with women; / Understand how sensual pleasure, as it flows away like river water, makes for affliction and for sorrow; / See the world, in the shadow of Death, to be fragile as an unbaked pot; / And make the peerless decision that leads to release – instead of causing the neck to stiffen up through sorrowful yearning.”⁹⁵¹ // 8.62 //

saundaranande mahākāvye strī-vighāto nāmāṣṭamaḥ sargaḥ //8//
The 8th canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled “A Tirade against Women.”

⁹⁵¹ *Utkaṅṭhitum* means to lift up (*ud-*) the neck (*kaṅṭha*) – with a connotation of being eager, or being on the point of doing something – and hence to long for, or to sorrow for.

Canto 9: madāpavādaḥ Negation of Vanity

Introduction

Apavāda means speaking ill of, blaming, denouncing, denying, negating. The compound *madāpavāda* could be 1. *mada* + *apavāda* or 2. *madā* + *apavāda*. In other words, the fault spoken ill of, could be either 1. *mada*, which means over-exuberance, intoxication, infatuation;⁹⁵² or 2. *madā*, whose meanings include a. lust, ruttishness; and b. pride, arrogance, presumption, conceit. Ostensibly, then, *madāpavāda* could mean either (1.), as per Linda Covill, “The Denunciation of Infatuation”; or (2b.), as per EH Johnston, “The Denunciation of Conceit”; or even (2a.), The Denunciation of Lust.

Verses 29 and 30, which discuss intoxication, lend support to the former reading of *mada* as (1.) intoxication. And verse 50, which compares Nanda to an elephant in rut, supports the latter reading of *madā* as (2a.) ruttishness or lust. But the main thrust of the striver’s argument in the present Canto is directed against (2b.) the vanity of youth. Thus in verse 7 the striver explicitly targets Nanda’s conceit (*abhimāna*) in regard to physical strength and in verse 8 he addresses Nanda as “taker of pride in strength!” (*bala-drpta*).

The main irony of this Canto, if we take *madā* as meaning vanity or conceit, is that the conceitedness which is the object of the striver’s denunciations, is also the cause of his own presumptuous preachiness. Just as in BC Canto 10 (Blaming Desires), an overarching desire for liberation causes the bodhisattva to blame desires, in the present Canto it seems to be the Buddhist striver’s overweening vanity that causes him to negate vanity. So it might be the old story of the pot calling the kettle black – in which case the Canto title “Denunciation of Conceit” or “Negation of Vanity” might equally be translated “Denunciation out of Conceit” or “Negation born of Vanity.”

**athaivam ukto 'pi sa tena bhikṣuṇā jagāma naivopaśamaṁ priyāṁ prati /
tathā hi tām eva tadā sa cintayan na tasya śuśrāva viśamjñā-vad vacaḥ // 9.1 //**

Though the beggar reproached him in such a manner, [Nanda] did not arrive at any kind of tranquillity with regard to his beloved; / So much did he think about her that he failed, as if he were unconscious, to hear a word the other said. // 9.1 //

⁹⁵² Aśvaghōṣa in fact seems elsewhere to use *mada* as synonymous with *madā* in the sense of lust. See for example SN3.14: *krodha-mada-bhaya-taraṅga-calam*, “disturbed by waves of anger, lust, and fear.”

**yathā hi vaidyasya cikīrṣataḥ śivaṁ vaco na gr̥ṇhāti mumūrṣur āturaḥ /
tathaiva matto bala-rūpa-yauvanair hitaṁ na jagrāha sa tasya tad-vacaḥ // 9.2 //**

For, just as an invalid who wants to die does not accept the kind advice of a doctor who intends to do him good; / So Nanda, bubbling with strength and looks and youth, did not accept that salutary advice of the striver. // 9.2 //

**na cātra citraṁ yadi rāga-pāpmanā mano 'bhibhūyeta tamo-vṛtātmanaḥ /
narasya pāpmā hi tadā nivartate yadā bhavaty anta-gataṁ tamas tanu // 9.3 //**

It is not surprising, in such a case, that one whose mind is shrouded in darkness should be overpowered by the wrongness that arises out of a tainted desire; / For a person's wrongness ceases only when the darkness of ignorance, having reached its limit, begins to diminish. // 9.3 //

**tatas tathākṣiptam avekṣya taṁ tadā balena rūpeṇa ca yauvanena ca /
gr̥ha-prayāṇaṁ prati ca vyavasthitaṁ śaśāsa nandaṁ śramaṇaḥ sa śāntaye // 9.4 //**

And so, observing Nanda to be caught up, as he was, in his own strength and looks and youth, / Seeing him all set to go home, the striver chastised Nanda, in the name of tranquillity. // 9.4 //

**balaṁ ca rūpaṁ ca navāṁ ca yauvanaṁ tathāvagacchāmi yathāvagacchasi /
ahaṁ tv idaṁ te trayam avyavasthitaṁ yathāvabuddho na tathāvabudhyase // 9.5 //**

“Your strength and looks and youthfulness I recognize as you do; / But that these three are impermanent you do not realise as I do. // 9.5 //

**idaṁ hi rogāyatanaṁ jarāvaśaṁ nadī-taṭānokaha-vac calācalam /
na vetsi dehaṁ jala-phena-durbalaṁ balasthatām ātmani yena manyase // 9.6 //**

For this body is a domicile for disease and in the face of senility it teeters helplessly, like a tree⁹⁵³ with its roots on a riverbank. / Because you do not know it to be as fragile as froth on water, therefore you feel there to be abiding strength in you. // 9.6 //

**yad ānna-pānāsana-yāna-karmaṇām asevanād apy atisevanād api /
śarīram āsanna-vipatti dṛśyate bale 'bhimānas tava kena hetunā // 9.7 //**

When, through failure to eat and drink, or sit down, or move about, and also through over-indulgence in those acts, / The body manifestly goes to ruin, what reason is there for you to have the conceit of physical strength? // 9.7 //

⁹⁵³ An-oka-ha, “not leaving its home,” means a tree.

himātapa-vyādhi-jarā-kṣud-ādibhir yadāpy anarthair upanīyate jagat /

jalaṁ śucau māsa ivārka-raśmibhiḥ kṣayaṁ vrajan kiṁ bala-dṛpta manyase // 9.8 //

By cold and heat, by sickness and aging, and by hunger and other such adversities, the living are being reduced / Like water in the hot season by the sun's rays. In these circumstances, what are you thinking, O taker of pride in strength! as you wander towards your end? // 9.8 //

tvag-asthi-māmsa-kṣataj-ātmakaṁ yadā śarīram āhāra-vaśena tiṣṭhati /

ajasram ārtam satata-pratikriyam balānvito 'smīti katham vihanyase // 9.9 //

When a body made of skin, bone, flesh and blood owes its very existence to the taking of food, / When it is always ailing, needing continuous intervention, how can you labour under an illusion like 'I am inherently strong'? // 9.9 //

yathā ghaṭam mṛn-mayam āmam āsrito naras titīṣet kṣubhitam mahārṇavam /

samucchrayam tadvad asāram udvahan balaṁ vyavasyed viṣayārtham udyataḥ // 9.10 //

Like a man who aspires to cross the stormy ocean in an unbaked earthen pot, / Is he who would assume the sapless accretion of his body to be strong as he carries it around, striving after an object. // 9.10 //

śarīram āmād api mṛn-mayād ghaṭād idam tu niḥsāratamaṁ mataṁ mama /

ciram hi tiṣṭhed vidhivad dhṛto ghaṭaḥ samucchrayo 'yam sudhṛto 'pi bhidyate // 9.11 //

But even more fragile than an unbaked earthen pot, in my opinion, is this body; / For a pot that is properly kept might survive for many ages whereas this accretion crumbles even if well maintained. // 9.11 //

yad āmbu-bhū-vāyv-analāś ca dhātavaḥ sadā viruddhā viṣamā ivoragāḥ /

bhavanty anarthāya śarīram āsritāḥ katham balaṁ roga-vidho vyavasyasi // 9.12 //

When the elements of water, earth, wind and fire are in constant opposition, like antagonistic snakes, / When they meet in a body only to make for calamity, how can you, in your propensity to sickness, be convinced of your strength? // 9.12 //

prayānti mantraiḥ praśamaṁ bhujāṅgamā na mantra-sādhyas tu bhavanti dhātavaḥ /

kva-cic ca kaṁ-cic ca daśanti pannagāḥ sadā ca sarvaṁ ca tudanti dhātavaḥ // 9.13 //

Snakes are lulled by charms,⁹⁵⁴ but the elements are not apt to be charmed. / Snakes bite some people some of the time; the elements strike all people all of the time. // 9.13 //

⁹⁵⁴ Mantraiḥ means by charms or by mantras.

**idaṁ hi śayyāsana-pāna-bhojanair guṇaiḥ śarīraṁ ciraṁ apy avekṣitam /
na marṣatyat ekam api vyatikramaṁ yato mahāśi-ṛṣa-vat prakupyati // 9.14 //**

For this body, though long tended with good habits of sleeping and sitting, and of eating and drinking, / Does not forgive a single step too far – at which it rears up in anger, like a great venomous snake. // 9.14 //

**yadā himārto jvalanaṁ niṣevate himaṁ nidāghābhīhato 'bhikāṅkṣati /
kṣudhānvito 'nnaṁ salilaṁ tṛṣānvito balaṁ kutaḥ kiṁ ca kathaṁ ca kasya ca // 9.15 //**

Pained by cold, one turns to fire; oppressed by heat, one longs for cold; / When hungry, one longs for food; when thirsty, for water. Where then is strength? What is it? How is it? Whose is it? // 9.15 //

**tad evaṁ ājñāya śarīraṁ āturaṁ balānvito 'smīti na mantum arhasi /
asāram asvantam anīcītaṁ jagaj jagaty anitye balam avyavasthitam // 9.16 //**

So see a body as ailing and do not think 'I am possessed of strength.' / The world is insubstantial, inauspicious,⁹⁵⁵ and uncertain, and in an impermanent world, power is undependable. // 9.16 //

**kva kārta-vīryasya balābhīmāninaḥ sahasra-bāhor balam arjunasya tat /
cakarta bāhūn yudhi yasya bhārgavaḥ mahānti śrṅgāṇy aśanir girer iva // 9.17 //**

Where is the power of Kṛta-vīrya's son, the thousand-armed Arjuna, who fancied himself to be so strong?⁹⁵⁶ / In battle, Bhārgava, 'The Scion of the Bhṛgu,' severed his arms like a thunderbolt lopping off the lofty horns of a mountain.⁹⁵⁷ // 9.17 //

⁹⁵⁵ EHV noted that he thought that Speyer's *asvāntam* = *anātmakam* (unreal), rather than *asvantam* (inauspicious), might be the correct reading.

⁹⁵⁶ Arjuna (son of Kuntī; see note to SN7.45) was an ambidextrous master-archer, renowned as the greatest warrior on earth. He is one of the Pāṇḍava heroes of the Mahā-bhārata. The Bhagavad Gita is addressed by Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna, on the eve of the great battle between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kurus.

⁹⁵⁷ Bhārgava, lit. 'Belonging to the Bhṛgu,' is a name of Paraśu-rāma "Rāma with the Axe," who according to one version of Indian mythology was Arjuna's nemesis.

**kva tad balaṁ kaṁsa-vikaṛṣiṇo hares turaṅga-rājasya puṭāvabhedinaḥ /
yam eka-bāṇena nijaghnivān jarāḥ kramāgatā rūpam ivottamaṁ jarā // 9.18 //**

Where is the strength of Hari Kṛṣṇa, ‘The Kaṁsa-tormentor,’⁹⁵⁸ who broke the Horse-King’s jaw?⁹⁵⁹ / With one arrow from Jaras⁹⁶⁰ he was brought down, like utmost beauty brought down, in due order, by old age. // 9.18 //

**diteḥ sutasyāmara-roṣa-kāriṇaś camū-rucer vā namuceḥ kva tad balam /
yam āhave kruddham ivāntakaṁ sthitaṁ jaghāna phenāvayavena vāsavaḥ // 9.19 //**

Where is the strength of Namuci son of Diti, light of an army and provoker of the gods? / He stood his ground in battle, furious as death, but Indra⁹⁶¹ slew him with a spattering of foam.⁹⁶² // 9.19 //

**balaṁ kurūṇāṁ kva ca tat tadābhavad yudhi jvalitvā tarasaujasā ca ye /
samit-samiddhā jvalanā ivādhvare hatāsavo bhasmani paryavasthitāḥ // 9.20 //**

And where is the power once possessed by the Kurus who blazed in combat with speed and stamina / And then lay in ashes, like sacrificial fires whose firewood has burned, their life-breath snuffed out? // 9.20 //

**ato viditvā bala-vīrya-mānināṁ balānvitānām avamarditaṁ balam /
jagaj jarā-mṛtyu-vaśaṁ vicārayan bale ’bhimānaṁ na vidhātum arhasi // 9.21 //**

Know, therefore, that the strength of powerful men, who fancy themselves imbued with strength and drive, is ground down; / And do not, as you survey a world in the sway of aging and death, take pride in strength. // 9.21 //

**balaṁ mahad vā yadi vā na manyase kuruṣva yuddhaṁ saha tāvad indriyaiḥ /
jayaś ca te ’trāsti mahac ca te balaṁ parājayaś ced vitathaṁ ca te balam // 9.22 //**

Whether or not you think your strength is great, just do battle against the senses! / If you are victorious in this, your strength is great; if you are defeated, your strength is nothing. // 9.22 //

⁹⁵⁸ Kaṁsa, a king of Mathurā, was a relation (uncle or cousin) of Kṛṣṇa, and became his implacable enemy; hence Kṛṣṇa’s epithets include *kaṁsa-vikaṛṣin* (Kaṁsa-tormentor) and *kaṁsa-jit* (Kaṁsa-slayer). The Hari of Hari Kṛṣṇa is thought to derive from the root *vhr*, “to take away [evil].”

⁹⁵⁹ EHJ notes that the story of how Kṛṣṇa broke the jaw of the horse Keshin is recorded in Canto 10 of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, which focuses on devotion (*bhakti*) to various incarnations of Viṣṇu but especially to Kṛṣṇa.

⁹⁶⁰ *Jaras* (masculine) is the name of a hunter who wounded Kṛṣṇa. *Jaras* (feminine) means old age.

⁹⁶¹ Vāsava, “descended from the Vasus (the Good Ones),” is a name of Indra.

⁹⁶² *Ṛg-veda* 8.14.13: “With waters’ foam you tore off, O Indra!, the head of Namuci, subduing all contending hosts.”

**tathā hi vīrāḥ puruṣā na te matā jayanti ye sāsva-ratha-dvipān arīn
yathā matā vīratarā maṇiṣiṇo jayanti lolāni ṣaḍ-indriyāṇi ye // 9.23 //**

Less heroic are those men thought who conquer enemies armed with horses, chariots and elephants, / Than those heroic thinkers are thought who conquer the restless six senses. // 9.23 //

**ahaṁ vapuṣmān iti yac ca manyase vicakṣaṇaṁ naitad idaṁ ca gṛhyatām /
kva tad-vapuḥ sā ca vapuṣmatī tanur gadasya śāmyasya ca sāraṇasya ca // 9.24 //**

Again, that you think 'I am good looking' is not astute. Let this be grasped: / Where are the good looks, where the beautiful bodies, of Gada, Śāmba, and Sāraṇa?⁹⁶³ // 9.24 //

**yathā mayūraś cala-citra-candrako bibharti rūpaṁ guṇavat sva-bhāvataḥ /
śarīra-saṁskāra-guṇād ṛte tathā bibharṣi rūpaṁ yadi rūpavān asi // 9.25 //**

Just as a peacock, flashing the eye in its tail, naturally carries its excellent looks, / That is how, without any distinction got from grooming the body,⁹⁶⁴ you must carry your looks – if after all you are good-looking. // 9.25 //

**yadi pratīpaṁ vṛṇuyān na vāsasā na śauca-kāle yadi saṁsprṣed apaḥ /
mṛjā-viśeṣaṁ yadi nādādīta vā vapur vapuṣman vada kīdrśaṁ bhavet // 9.26 //**

If its unpleasantness were not covered with clothes, if it never touched water after excretion, / Or if it never received a good washing, tell me, O handsome one! what might a body be like? // 9.26 //

**navam vayaś cātma-gataṁ niśāmya yad gṛhonmukhaṁ te viṣayāptaye manaḥ /
niyaccha tac chaila-nadīrayopamaṁ drutaṁ hi gacchaty anivarti yauvanam // 9.27 //**

Again, perceiving the prime of life to be a personal belonging, your mind looks forward to going home and gaining its sensual end: / Curb that mind! for, like a river coursing down a rocky mountain, youth passes swiftly and does not return. // 9.27 //

⁹⁶³ It has not been possible to ascertain who these three were – which in itself, in a way, supports the striver's argument.

⁹⁶⁴ *Samskāra* is from the verb *saṁs-√kr*, lit. “to do/make/form/put (*√kr*) together (*saṁ-*).” The many meanings of *saṁs-√kr* thus include to put together, to compose, to form well, emphatically to do; to prepare, make ready, dress; to adorn, embellish, refine, elaborate, make perfect. In the context of this verse, then, *śarīra-saṁskāra* means “adorning/grooming the body.” But the phrase brings to mind the instruction in the Great Sutta on Mindfulness (DN22) that the practitioner should breathe in and breathe out while “causing the body's doings to cease” (Pali: *passambhayaṁ kāya-saṁkhāraṁ* – in Sanskrit, *praśamayan kāya-saṁskārān*).

**ṛtur vyatītaḥ parivartate punaḥ kṣayaṁ prayātaḥ punar eti candramāḥ /
gataṁ gataṁ naiva tu saṁnivartate jalaṁ nadīnām ca nṛṇām ca yauvanam // 9.28 //**

A season that has passed comes around again, the moon wanes and waxes again, / But gone, gone, never to return is the water of rivers, and the youth of men. // 9.28 //

**vivarṇita-śmaśru valī-vikuñcitaṁ viśīrṇa-dantaṁ śīthila-bhru niṣprabham /
yadā mukhaṁ drakṣyasi jarjaraṁ tadā jarābhibhūto vimado bhaviṣyasi // 9.29 //**

When you are white whiskered and wrinkled, with broken teeth and sagging brows; when you are lacking in lustre; / When, humbled by age, you see your face grown old, then you will sober up. // 9.29 //

**niṣevya pānaṁ madanīyam uttamaṁ niśā-vivāseṣu cirād vimādyati /
naras tu matto bala-rūpa-yauvanair na kaś-cid aprāpya jarāṁ vimādyati // 9.30 //**

Having wasted nights and greeted dawns drinking the most intoxicating liquor, one finally comes around, / But drunk on strength, looks and youth, no man ever comes round – until he reaches old age. // 9.30 //

**yathekṣur atyanta-rasa-prapīḍito bhuvī praviḍḍho dahanāya śuṣyate /
tathā jarā-yantra-nipīḍitā tanur nipīta-sārā maraṇāya tiṣṭhati // 9.31 //**

Just as sugar-cane, when all its juice has been squeezed out, is thrown on the ground to dry, ready for burning, / So, pressed in the vice of aging and drained of energy, does the body wait to die. // 9.31 //

**yathā hi nṛbhyāṁ kara-pattram īritaṁ samucchritaṁ dāru bhinatty anekadhā /
tathocchritāṁ pātayati prajāṁ imāṁ ahar-niśābhyāṁ upasaṁhitā jarā // 9.32 //**

Just as a saw worked by two men cuts a tall tree into many pieces, / So old age, pushed and pulled by day and night, topples people here and now who are high and mighty. // 9.32 //

**smṛteḥ pramoṣo vapuṣaḥ parābhavo rateḥ kṣayo vāc-chruti-cakṣuṣāṁ grahaḥ /
śramasya yonir bala-vīryayor vadho jarā-samo nāsti śarīriṇām ripuḥ // 9.33 //**

Robber of memory; destroyer of looks; ender of pleasure; seizer of speech, hearing and sight; / Birthplace of fatigue; slayer of strength and manly vigour: for those with a body, there is no enemy to rival aging. // 9.33 //

**idaṁ viditvā nidhanasya daiśikaṁ jarābhidhānaṁ jagato mahad-bhayaṁ /
ahaṁ vapuṣmān balavān yuveti vā na mānam āroḍhum anāryam arhasi // 9.34 //**

Knowing this great terror of the world named ‘aging’ to be a pointer on the way to death, / Do not rise to the ignoble conceit of an ‘I’ that is beautiful, or young, or strong. // 9.34 //

**aham mamety eva ca rakta-cetasaḥ śarīra-samjñe tava yaḥ kalau grahaḥ /
tam utsrjaivam yadi śāmyatā bhaved bhayaṁ hy aham ceti mameti cārchatī // 9.35 //**
With your mind tainted by 'I' and 'mine,' you are latching onto the strife called a body. / Let go
of that, if peace is to come about, for 'I' and 'mine' usher in danger. // 9.35 //

**yadā śarīre na vaśo 'sti kasya-cin nirasyamāne vividhair upaplavaiḥ /
katham kṣamaṁ vettum aham mameti vā śarīra-samjñāṁ gṛham āpadām idam // 9.36 //**
When no-one has dominion over a body that is ravaged by manifold misfortunes, / How can it
be right to recognize as 'I' or as 'mine' this house of calamities called a body? // 9.36 //

**sa-pannage yaḥ ku-gr̥he sadāśucau rameta nityaṁ prati-samskṛte 'bale /
sa duṣṭa-dhātāv aśucau calācale rameta kāye viparīta-darśanaḥ // 9.37 //**
One who would delight in a flimsy snake-infested hovel that was always unclean and constantly
needing repair:⁹⁶⁵ / He is the man of perverted view who would delight in a body with its
corrupted elements and unclean, unstable state. // 9.37 //

**yathā prajābhyaḥ ku-nṛpo balād balīn haraty aśeṣaṁ ca na cābhirakṣati /
tathaiva kāyo vasanādi-sādhanam haraty aśeṣaṁ ca na cānuvartate // 9.38 //**
Just as a bad king takes forcibly from his subjects his full toll of taxes, and yet does not protect;
/ So the body takes its full toll of provisions such as clothes and the like, and yet does not obey.
// 9.38 //

**yathā prarohanti tṛṇāny ayatnataḥ kṣitau prayatnāt tu bhavanti śālayaḥ /
tathaiva duḥkhāni bhavanty ayatnataḥ sukhāni yatnena bhavanti vā na vā // 9.39 //**
Just as in soil, grass sprouts readily but rice is grown through sustained effort, / So too does
sorrow arise readily whereas happiness is produced with effort, if at all. // 9.39 //

**śarīram ārtam parikarṣataś calam na cāsti kim-cit paramārthataḥ sukham /
sukham hi duḥkha-pratikāra-sevayā sthite ca duḥkhe tanuni vyavasyati // 9.40 //**
For him who drags around a hurting, perishable body, there is no such thing, in the supreme
sense, as happiness; / For what he determines to be happiness, by taking counter-measures
against suffering, is only a condition wherein suffering remains minimal. // 9.40 //

**yathānapekṣyāgryam apīpsitam sukham prabād hate duḥkham upetam any api /
tathānapekṣyātmani duḥkham āgataṁ na vidyate kim-cana kasya-cit sukham // 9.41 //**
Just as the intrusion of even a slight discomfort spoils enjoyment of the greatest longed-for
pleasure, / In a similar way, nobody ever enjoys any happiness by disregarding suffering that is
upon him. // 9.41 //

⁹⁶⁵ This can be read as a typical expression of the pessimistic, interventionist view of human health,
posture, et cetera. See also verse 9.

**śarīram idṛg bahu-duḥkham adhruvaṁ phalānurodhād atha nāvagacchasi /
dravat phalebhyo dhṛti-raśmibhir mano nigṛhyatām gaur iva śasya-lālasā // 9.42 //**

You fail to see the body as it is – full of suffering and inconstant – because of fondness for its effects: / Let the mind that chases after effects, like a cow after corn, be restrained by the reins of steadfastness. // 9.42 //

**na kāma-bhogā hi bhavanti tṛptaye havīṁṣi dīptasya vibhā-vasor iva /
yathā yathā kāma-sukheṣu vartate tathā tatheccchā viṣayeṣu vardhate // 9.43 //**

For sensual enjoyments, like offerings fed into a blazing fire, do not make for satisfaction; / The more one indulges in sensual pleasures, the more the desire for sensual objects grows. // 9.43 //

**yathā ca kuṣṭha-vyasanena duḥkhiṭaḥ pratāpayan naiva śamaṁ nigacchati /
tathendriyārtheṣv ajitendriyaś caran na kāma-bhogair upaśāntim ṛcchati // 9.44 //**

Again, just as a man suffering from the blight of leprosy does not obtain a cure by way of application of heat, / Similarly, one who goes among sense objects with his senses unconquered does not tend towards peace by way of sensual enjoyments. // 9.44 //

**yathā hi bhaiṣajya-sukhābhikāṅkṣayā bhajeta rogān na bhajeta tat-kṣamam /
tathā śarīre bahu-duḥkha-bhājane rameta mohād viṣayābhikāṅkṣayā // 9.45 //**

For just as desire for pleasure from one's medicine might cause one to accept one's infirmity instead of taking proper measures against it, / So, because of desire for one's object, might one ignorantly rejoice in that receptacle of much suffering which is a body. // 9.45 //

**anartha-kāmaḥ puruṣasya yo janaḥ sa tasya śatruḥ kila tena karmanā /
anartha-mūlā viṣayāś ca kevalā nanu praheyā viṣamā yathārayaḥ // 9.46 //**

One who wishes adversity on a man is said, because of that action, to be his enemy. / Should not sense objects, as the sole root of adversity,⁹⁶⁶ be shunned as dangerous enemies? // 9.46 //

⁹⁶⁶ The striver's words sound in places very much like the Buddha's teaching – until we investigate the two in detail. For example, if in the Buddha's teaching there is a sole root of adversity, does it lie in the object, or in the tendency to thirst for that object? Aśvaghōṣa's intention, in formulating the striver's arguments as he does, may be to stimulate us to ask such questions and to conduct such investigations – not innocently believing the striver's words just because the striver was a Buddhist monk in personal contact with the Buddha himself.

ihaiḥa bhūtvā ripavo vadhātmaḥ prayānti kāle puruṣasya mitratām /

paratra caiveha ca duḥkha-hetavo bhavanti kāmā na tu kasya-cic chivāḥ // 9.47 //

Those who were his deadly enemies in this world can in time become a man's friend; / But not benign for anybody, in this or other worlds, are the desires which are the causes of suffering. // 9.47 //

yathopayuktaṁ rasa-varṇa-gandhavad vadhāya kimpāka-phalaṁ na puṣṭaye /

niṣevyamānā viṣayās calātmano bhavanty anarthāya tathā na bhūtaye // 9.48 //

Just as eating a tasty, colourful and fragrant *kimpāka* fruit leads to death not nourishment, / So an imbalanced person's devotion to objects makes for misfortune, and not for well-being. // 9.48 //

tad etad ājñāya vipāpmanātmanā vimokṣa-dharmādy-upasāhitaṁ hitam /

juṣasva me saj-jana-saṁmataṁ mataṁ pracakṣva vā niścayam udgiran giram // 9.49 //

As an innocent, then, heed this good advice pertaining to liberation, dharma, and so forth; / Affirm my opinion, with which the righteous⁹⁶⁷ concur. Or else speak up and state your agenda." // 9.49 //

iti hitam api bahv apīdam uktaḥ śruta-mahatā śramaṇena tena nandaḥ /

na dhṛtim upayayau na śarma lebhe dvirada ivātimado madāndha-cetāḥ // 9.50 //

Though reproached at length in this salutary fashion by a striver so great in hearing what is heard, / Nanda neither found firmness nor took comfort: he was like a tusker in full rut, mind blinded by lust.⁹⁶⁸ // 9.50 //

nandasya bhāvam avagamyā tataḥ sa bhikṣuḥ pāriplavaṁ gṛha-sukhābhimukhaṁ na dharme /

sattvāsāyānuśaya-bhāva-parīkṣakāya buddhāya tattva-viduṣe kathayām cakāra // 9.51 //

Then, having assured himself that Nanda's being was not in the dharma but was turned unsteadily towards the comforts of home, / That beggar reported back to the investigator of living creatures' dispositions, tendencies and ways of being, to the Buddha, knower of reality. // 9.51 //

saundaranande mahākāvyē madāpavado nāma navamaḥ sargaḥ //9//

The 9th canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled "Negation of Vanity."

⁹⁶⁷ As the first element in the compound, *sadjana* could refer to true people or to a true person in the singular. In the latter case, the striver might be heard as suggesting – without justification – that he is speaking on behalf of the Buddha.

⁹⁶⁸ In this compound, *madāndha* (whether read as *madā* + *andha* or as *mada* + *andha*) evidently means blinded by sexual desire, wantonness, lust, ruttishness, or rut (as of an elephant).

Canto 10: svarga-nidarśanaḥ A Vision of Heaven

Introduction

Svarga means heaven or paradise. *Nidarśana* is an *-na* action noun from the root *ni-√dṛś*, which is used causatively to mean “to cause to see, to indicate, to impart knowledge, to teach.” So *nidarśana* means pointing to, showing, indicating, or teaching. *Nidarśana* can also mean an object indicated for the purpose of teaching, i.e. an example, illustration, or proof. Again, *nidarśana* can mean a vision, as in a dream-vision (*svapna-nidarśana*). Thus “The Vision of Paradise” (as per EH Johnston) and “A Lesson in Heaven” (as per Linda Covill) are two of several possible translations of the Canto title.

In the Canto, with pragmatic helpfulness reminiscent of the female confidante who comforts Sundarī at the end of Canto 6, the Buddha presents Nanda with a vision of heaven. It is a convenient fiction, a skillful means, whereby the hitherto lack-lustre Nanda is caused to mobilize his energy with his eyes on a prize. Insofar as Nanda understands the prize to be sexual union with celestial nymphs, the goal he sets himself is an illusory one. The Buddha is evidently not worried about this. Rather, as Nanda’s story unfolds we understand that what was important for Nanda initially, by any means, however unconventional, was to shake off downheartedness and somehow to start directing his energy somewhere.

Such is the ostensible gist of the Canto. Below the surface, meanwhile, since the vision of heaven is a fantasy, Aśvaghōṣa is given free rein to conjure apparently far-fetched images which, on closer inspection, have practical hidden meaning. This provides a deeper layer of convenient fiction, like a dream within a dream. The fantastic descriptions of trees and birds in heaven in the first half of the present Canto thus have much in common with the fantastic descriptions of troops in Māra’s army in Canto 13 of *Buddha-carita*. The fabulous visions turn out on closer investigation to be very much grounded in practical reality. Thus, as a Chinese Zen master observed, “Flowers in space open on the ground.”⁹⁶⁹

**śrutvā tataḥ sad-vratam utsisṛkṣuṁ bhāryām didṛkṣuṁ bhavanaṁ vivikṣuṁ /
nandaṁ nirānandam apeta-dhairyam abhyujjihīṛṣur munir ājuhāva // 10.1 //**

Thus did he hear about Nanda’s desire to abandon sincere practice, to see his wife, and to go home; / And so the Sage summoned the joyless⁹⁷⁰ and weak-willed Nanda, wishing to take him up. // 10.1 //

⁹⁶⁹ See Shobogenzo chap. 43, *Kuge*.

⁹⁷⁰ *Nir-ānandam* describes Nanda as without (*nir-*) joy (*ānanda*). Besides the play on the name of Nanda himself, there is a hidden connotation of describing Nanda before the intervention of Ānanda, which will be described in the next Canto.

**taṁ prāptam aprāpta-vimokṣa-mārgaṁ papraccha citta-skhalitaṁ sucittaḥ /
sa hrīmate hrī-vinato jagāda svaṁ niścayaṁ niścaya-kovidāya // 10.2 //**

When [Nanda], having not yet arrived at liberation's path, arrived, he of the beautiful mind questioned him, whose mind was faltering. / Bowed down by humiliation, [Nanda] confessed to the one who was full of humility; he told his intention to a master intention-knower. // 10.2 //

**nandaṁ viditvā sugatas tatas taṁ bhāryābhidhāne tamasi bhramantam /
pāṇau grhītvā viyad utpapāta manim jale sādthur ivojjihīṣuḥ // 10.3 //**

And so the Sugata, the One Gone Well, seeing Nanda wandering in the darkness called "wife," / Took his hand and flew up into the sky, wishing to take him up – like an honest man in the water bearing up a pearl. // 10.3 //

**kāṣāya-vastrau kanakāvadātau virejatus tau nabhasi prasanne /
anyonya-saṁśliṣṭa-vikīrṇa-pakṣau saraḥ-prakīrṇāv iva cakravākau // 10.4 //**

A shining gold they shone with their ochre robes, in the clear sky, / Like a pair of greylag geese rising up from a lake, embracing one another with outstretched wings. // 10.4 //

**tau devadār ūttama-gandha-vantaṁ nadī-saraḥ-prasravaṇaughā-vantam /
ājagmatuḥ kāñcana-dhātu-mantaṁ devarṣi-mantaṁ hima-vantam āśu // 10.5 //**

Filled with the heady fragrance of the divine deodar,⁹⁷¹ full of rivers and lakes, and springs and gulches, / And filled with golden ore was the Himālayan mountain full of divine seers at which the two arrived, immediately.⁹⁷² // 10.5 //

**tasmin girau cāraṇa-siddha-juṣṭe śive havir dhūma-kṛtōtariye /
agamyā-pārasya nirāśrayasya tau tasthatur dvīpa ivāmbarasya // 10.6 //**

On that auspicious mountain – which was frequented by celestial singers and saints and blanketed in smoke from burnt offerings – / As if on an island in an unsupported sky, where no far shore is reached, the two stood.⁹⁷³ // 10.6 //

⁹⁷¹ The deodar tree is *deva-dāru*, lit. "god-wood" or "divine-timber." It thus carries the connotation of something spiritual.

⁹⁷² Four elements of the verse can be seen as following a fourfold dialectical progression – 1. something spiritual (thesis), 2. something material (antithesis), 3. a material like gold which people imbue with value and meaning (synthesis), and 4. a Himālayan mountain where great yogis have traditionally sat in full lotus (transcendent action in the moment).

⁹⁷³ Similarly – 1. the spiritual presence of celestial beings; 2. the material presence of smoke from fires; 3. negation of end-gaining and affirmation of individual autonomy in action; 4. remaining upright in empty space, in what feels like a condition of zero gravity, wherein even the negation of dualism is negated.

**śāntendriye tatra munau sthite tu sa-vismayaṁ dikṣu dadarśa nandaḥ /
darīś ca kuñjāś ca vanaukasaś ca vibhūṣaṇaṁ rakṣaṇam eva cādreḥ // 10.7 //**

While the Sage, his sense-power stilled, remained there standing,⁹⁷⁴ Nanda looked all around in amazement / At the caverns and bowers and forest-dwellers that were the mountain's jewels and its guardians. // 10.7 //

**bahv āyate tatra site hi śrṅge saṁkṣipta-barhaḥ śayito mayūrah /
bhujē balasyāyata-pīna-bāhor vaiḍūrya-keyūra ivābabhāse // 10.8 //**

For there on a great long horn of white rock, lay a peacock with its tail feathers arrayed / So as to resemble, on the long and muscular arm of Bala, an armband of cat's-eye gems.⁹⁷⁵ // 10.8 //

**manaḥśilā-dhātuśilāśrayeṇa pītā-kṛtāmso virarāja simhaḥ /
saṁtapta-cāmīkara-bhakti-citraṁ rūpy-āṅgadaṁ śīrṇam ivāmbikasya // 10.9 //**

A lion with shoulders made orange from contact with the orange-red ore of 'the mind-rock,' arsenic,⁹⁷⁶ / Looked like Āmbika's⁹⁷⁷ crumpled armband of wrought silver streaked with refined gold. // 10.9 //

**vyāghraḥ klama-vyāyata-khelaḡāmī lāṅgūla-cakreṇa kṛtāpasavyaḥ /
babhau gireḥ prasravaṇaṁ pipāsuraḥ dīpta-pitṛbhyo 'mbha ivāvātīrṇaḥ // 10.10 //**

A tiger moved unhurriedly and expansively, its tail curling around its right [shoulder], / As it went to drink at a mountain spring: it looked like an offering to the ancestors, being made by somebody who has arrived at water.⁹⁷⁸ // 10.10 //

⁹⁷⁴ *Tatra*, being there, is as in the description of the Buddha in the final verse of SN Canto 3. Cf. also the description in BC Canto 12 and 13 of the bodhisattva under the bodhi tree, just sitting there (*tatropaviṣṭe*; BC13.1), while Māra does his worst.

⁹⁷⁵ Bala means Bala-rāma, the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa and third of the Rāmas, regarded as the 8th avatar of Viṣṇu. In contrast to his brother, Kṛṣṇa, who is shown as dark blue or black, Bala is generally depicted as being fair skinned (hence the comparison to a long horn of white rock), and as wearing armlets.

⁹⁷⁶ Orange-red arsenic ore, or realgar, is *manaḥ-śilā*, lit. "mind-rock." The compound might be a clue to something that Aśvaghōṣa is intending to draw to the reader's attention in this Canto, namely the material basis for even the most exotic and outlandish mental phenomena. What we imagine always has its basis in what we have experienced – flowers in space open on the ground. Therefore, investigating how a buddha imagines heaven to be, we can learn something about how a buddha experiences the world – as, for example, governed absolutely by cause and effect.

⁹⁷⁷ The name Āmbika is a conjecture, but evidently the reference is to some mythical figure; the point might be that a lion's mane (something real, albeit imagined to exist in Indra's heaven) resembled something mythical or legendary – a flower on the ground opened in space.

⁹⁷⁸ The tail curling around the right shoulder may allude to the traditional method of wearing a kaṣāya, with the right shoulder bare. Arriving at water might suggest the state of a tathāgata, one who has arrived at reality.

**calat-kadambe himavan-nitambe tarau pralambe camaro lalambe /
chettum vilagnaṁ na śaśāka bālaṁ kulodgatāṁ prītim ivāryavṛttaḥ // 10.11 //**

A yak had got stuck in a dangling *kadamba* tree swaying on the Himālayan hillside: / Unable to free its tangled tail, it was like a man of noble conduct who cannot break away from a kindness that has been shown in his House.⁹⁷⁹ // 10.11 //

**suvarṇa-gaurās ca kirāta-saṅghā mayūra-pittojjvala-gātra-lekhāḥ /
śārdūla-pāta-pratimā guhābhyo niṣpetur udgāra ivācalasya // 10.12 //**

Communities of golden mountain-men, the Kirātas,⁹⁸⁰ their limbs streaked with shining peacock gall, / Rushed out from their caves like flying tigers,⁹⁸¹ as if spewed out of the unmoving mountain. // 10.12 //

**darī-carīṇām atisundarīṇām manohara-śroṇi-kucodarīṇām /
vṛndāni rejur diśi kinnarīṇām puṣpotkacānām iva vallarīṇām // 10.13 //**

Hanging out in nooks and crannies, and going beyond Beauty⁹⁸² with their heart-stealing hips, breasts and bellies, / Were the bebies of *kinnarīs* who appeared in every quarter, like creepers with flowers in their upward winding curls. // 10.13 //

**nagān nagasyopari devadārūn āyāsayantāḥ kapayo viceruḥ /
tebhyaḥ phalaṁ nāpur ato 'pajagmur mogha-prasādebhya ivesvarebhyaḥ // 10.14 //**

Pestering the godly deodars,⁹⁸³ monkeys roved from peak to peak; / Obtaining from those trees no fruit, they went away,⁹⁸⁴ as if from powerful masters whose favour is futile.⁹⁸⁵ // 10.14 //

⁹⁷⁹ In the hidden meaning, *kula* means e.g. the lineage of Zen patriarchs – where freedom is described, ironically, as being caught in the grip of stillness.

⁹⁸⁰ Kirāta mountain men were said to be golden; they were famous, or infamous, for their abandonment of all religious rites and views – and so, in the Brahmanical tradition, they were regarded as heretics. The final word of the verse, *ācala*, as an adjective, means “not moving” or “immoveable”; as a noun it means a mountain. See also SN3.7.

⁹⁸¹ These tigers may be contrasted with the tiger in verse 10 that moves unhurriedly. That tiger might symbolize mindful or careful practice (at the 1st phase). These tigers might symbolize an attitude of transcendent carelessness (in the 3rd phase).

⁹⁸² *Ati-sundarī*, “beyond beauty” or “exceedingly beautiful,” includes the hint that Nanda is on the way to getting over the Beauty who is *Sundarī* herself.

⁹⁸³ *Deva-dāru*, as in verse 5, lit. means “divine tree.” Because of its heady fragrance, the deodar tree was assigned a certain divinity, to which the behaviour of greedy monkeys is here comically opposed.

⁹⁸⁴ Going away suggests, at the 3rd phase, action in which nothing is to be gained (see the metaphor of walking away in SN16.4).

⁹⁸⁵ This can be read as a reminder, at the 4th phase, that praying for the Buddha's benevolence without directing one's own energy in sitting-meditation, is as useless as praying to a doctor without taking the medicine he or she has prescribed.

tasmāt tu yūthād alasāryamāṇām niṣpīḍitālaktaka-rakta-vaktrām /

śākhā-mṛgīm eka-vipanna-dṛṣṭīm dṛṣṭvā munir nandam idaṁ babhāṣe // 10.15 //

But lagging behind that troop was one whose face was red as pressed red resin – / A female monkey⁹⁸⁶ with one eye missing. Seeing her, the Sage spoke this to Nanda: // 10.15 //

kā nanda rūpeṇa ca ceṣṭayā ca sāmpāsyataś cārutarā matā te /

eṣā mṛgī vaika-vipanna-dṛṣṭiḥ sa vā jano yatra gatā taveṣṭiḥ // 10.16 //

“Which, Nanda, in beauty and in manner, is the lovelier in your eyes: / This one-eyed monkey, or the person who is the focus of your wishing?” // 10.16 //

ity evam uktaḥ sugatena nandaḥ kṛtvā smitaṁ kiṁ-cid idaṁ jagāda /

kva cottama-strī bhagavan vadhūs te mṛgī naga-kleśa-karī kva caiṣā // 10.17 //

Addressed thus by the One Gone Well, Nanda said, with a slight smirk: / “How can a gap be measured,⁹⁸⁷ Glorious One!, between that most excellent of women your sister-in-law, and this tree-tormenting monkey?” // 10.17 //

tato munis tasya niśamya vākyam hetv-antaram kiṁ-cid avekṣamāṇaḥ /

ālambya nandaṁ prayayau tathaiva krīḍā-vanam vajra-dharasya rājñāḥ // 10.18 //

Then the Sage, hearing his protestation, and having in mind a slightly unconventional means,⁹⁸⁸ / Took hold of Nanda as before and proceeded to the pleasure-grove of the royal bearer of the thunderbolt.⁹⁸⁹ // 10.18 //

ṛtāv-ṛtāv ākṛtim eka-eka kṣaṇe-kṣaṇe bibhrati yatra vṛkṣāḥ /

citrām samastām api ke-cid anye ṣaṇṇām ṛtūnām śriyam udvahanti // 10.19 //

There one by one, season by season, and moment by moment, trees convey their individual form; / While some odd ones⁹⁹⁰ also bring out the combined manifold glory of all six seasons. // 10.19 //

⁹⁸⁶ Śākhā-mṛgī is the feminine form of śākhā-mṛga, lit. “branch creature.”

⁹⁸⁷ Kva.. kva... implies excessive incongruity – Where is this? Where is that? In other words, how distant is this from that?

⁹⁸⁸ Hetv-antaram: “a different means,” i.e., a means different from what one might expect, an unconventional means. This use of antara mirrors Āsvaghoṣa's frequent use of anya with a subtext that affirms the individual and unconventional – see note to verse 19.

⁹⁸⁹ Vajra-dhara, “bearing the thunderbolt,” is an epithet of Indra.

⁹⁹⁰ Anye means other. At the same time it means different, odd, individual, atypical, not conforming to ideas and expectations. This use of the Sanskrit word anya may thus be understood as similar to the use of the Chinese/Japanese character 非 (hi-), non-, in the phrase 非仏 (hi-butsum), “non-buddha.” A non-buddha, in its ironic hidden meaning, as explored in Shobogenzo chap. 28, is a buddha as a real individual.

**puṣyanti ke-cit surabhīr udārā mālāḥ srajaś ca granthitā vicitrāḥ /
karṇānukūlān avatamsakānīś ca pratyarthi-bhūtān iva kuṇḍalānām // 10.20 //**

Some produce garlands and wreaths⁹⁹¹ which are fragrant and affecting, with variously interwoven strands,⁹⁹² / And small round creations⁹⁹³ suited to the ear which are akin to earrings' opponents. // 10.20 //

**raktāni phullāḥ kamalāni yatra pradīpa-vṛkṣā iva bhānti vṛkṣāḥ /
praphulla-nīlotpala-rohiṇo 'nye sonmīlitākṣā iva bhānti vṛkṣāḥ // 10.21 //**

Trees there that abound in red lotuses look like trees ablaze. / Different trees,⁹⁹⁴ growing full-blown blue lotuses,⁹⁹⁵ seem to have their eyes open. // 10.21 //

**nānā-virāgāṇy atha pāṇḍarāni suvarṇa-bhakti-vyavabhāsītāni /
atāntavāny eka-ghanāni yatra sūkṣmāni vāsāmsi phalanti vṛkṣāḥ // 10.22 //**

In various colourless hues, or else white; beautifully illuminated with golden dividing lines; / Beyond the weaving together of strands, being nothing but a unity; are the exquisite robes that trees there bear as fruit.⁹⁹⁶ // 10.22 //

**hārān maṇīn uttama-kuṇḍalāni keyūra-varyāṇy atha nūpurāni /
evaṁ-vidhāny ābharaṇāni yatra svargānurūpāni phalanti vṛkṣāḥ // 10.23 //**

Pearl necklaces and gemstones, supreme earrings, choicest armlets, and ankle bracelets, / Are the kinds of ornament, fit for heaven, that trees there bear as fruit.⁹⁹⁷ // 10.23 //

⁹⁹¹ *Mālā* and *sraja*, wreath and garland, are the names of metres used in Sanskrit poetry.

⁹⁹² The meanings of *granthita* include 1. strung, tied together or in order; 2. artificially composed or put together (as in the plot of a play); 3. closely connected with each other, difficult to be distinguished from each other; 4. having knots, knotty. These definitions all work as descriptions of Aśvaghōṣa's poetry, with the variously interwoven strands of, for example, its recurring metaphors.

⁹⁹³ *Avatamsaka* (from the root *vtams*, to decorate) is a garland, a ring-shaped ornament. Below the surface, Aśvaghōṣa may be suggesting a well-constructed verse whose 4th pāda brings a sense of completion.

⁹⁹⁴ *Anye vṛkṣāḥ* again means different trees, or trees that are not what people think of as trees, as in Yakusan's famous phrase describing the practice of sitting-dhyāna as 非思量 (*hi-shiryō*), "non-thinking."

⁹⁹⁵ Whereas blazing redness symbolizes the passions, a blue lotus, which comes into full bloom in cool pools at the height of the hot season, is a symbol of coolness and hence enlightenment.

⁹⁹⁶ Verses 19-22 relate to things in Indra's paradise which, at the 1st of four phases, seem to have religious, spiritual, or holistic meaning – like poetic words, symbols of Buddhist enlightenment, and traditionally-sewn robes.

⁹⁹⁷ The ornaments described in this verse, from a spiritual viewpoint, might be meaningless baubles. From a materialistic viewpoint, they might be worth a lot of money. The verse can thus be taken, at the second phase, to be antithetical to the previous four verses.

vaidūrya-nālāni ca kāñcanāni padmāni vajrānkura-kesarāni /

sparśa-kṣamāṇy uttama-gandhavanti rohanti niṣkampa-talā nalinyaḥ // 10.24 //

There rise golden lotuses with beryl stems and diamond shoots and stamens; / Receptive to touch, they have a scent of the ultimate: still pools without ripples allow them to grow.⁹⁹⁸ // 10.24 //

yatrāyatāmś caiva tatāmś ca tāmś tām vādyasya hetūn suṣirān ghanāmś ca /

phalanti vṛkṣā maṇi-hema-citrāḥ kṛīḍā-sahāyās tridaśālayānām // 10.25 //

All kinds of musical instrument, with lengthened [sinews] and widened [skins], with open tubes and solid substance, / Are born there as fruit, by the distinctively bejewelled and gilded trees which are the heaven-dwellers' playing companions.⁹⁹⁹ // 10.25 //

mandāra-vṛkṣāmś ca kuśe-śayāmś ca puṣpānatān koka-nadāmś ca vṛkṣān /

ākramya mātmya-guṇair virājan rājāyate yatra sa pārijātaḥ // 10.26 //

Over *mandāra* coral trees, and over trees weighed down with water-lily and ruddy lotus blossoms, / The 'Full Grown' Coral, shining there with majestic qualities, steps up and reigns supreme.¹⁰⁰⁰ // 10.26 //

kṛṣṭe tapaḥ-śīla-halair akhinnais tripiṣṭapa-kṣetra-tale prasūtāḥ /

evam-vidhā yatra sadānuvṛttā divaukasām bhoga-vidhāna-vṛkṣāḥ // 10.27 //

Growing there, on soil tilled in Indra's heaven¹⁰⁰¹ by unwearying ploughs of austerity and discipline, / Are such trees as these, which are always adapting to provide for sky-dwellers' enjoyment. // 10.27 //

⁹⁹⁸ Golden lotuses with beryl stems can be understood as symbolizing, at the third phase, what transcends the opposition between red and blue, profane and spiritual, organic and inorganic, material and immaterial, et cetera. That they grow out of stillness seems to acknowledge the practical value of yogic practices that allow body and mind to come to quiet.

⁹⁹⁹ *Kṛīḍā*, play or sport, suggests enjoyment of actions – again, at the third phase – like standing, walking, lying down, and sitting.

¹⁰⁰⁰ The *mandāra* and *pārijāta* tree are the same species of tree – the majestic coral tree. But *pārijāta* literally means “fully developed”; so it suggests something mature, fully transcendent, and ultimate – for example, a fully enlightened buddha's sitting practice, which might be both exactly the same as, and totally beyond, the sitting practice of you and me.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Tri-piṣṭapa*, lit. “the 3rd height,” means the highest heaven, Indra's heaven.

**manaḥśilābhair vadanair vihaṁgā yatrākṣibhiḥ sphāṭika-saṁnibhaiś ca /
śāvaiś ca pakṣair abhilohitāntair māñjiṣṭhakair ardha-sitaiś ca pādaiḥ // 10.28 //**

Birds¹⁰⁰² there have bright red beaks,¹⁰⁰³ the colour of red 'mind-rock' arsenic; and crystalline eyes; / And wings¹⁰⁰⁴ a deathly shade of yellow, with intensely red tips; and claws¹⁰⁰⁵ as red as red dye, but half white.¹⁰⁰⁶ // 10.28 //

**citrāiḥ suvarṇac-chadanais tathānye vaiḍurya-nīlair nayanaiḥ prasannaiḥ /
vihaṁgamāḥ śiñjirikābhidhānā rutair manaḥ-śrotra-harair bhramanti // 10.29 //**

Birds which are – again – different, with distinctively golden wings and bright, beryl-blue eyes, / Birds called *śiñjirikas* fly to and fro, carrying away minds and ears with their songs.¹⁰⁰⁷ // 10.29 //

**raktābhir agreṣu ca vallarībhir madhyeṣu cāmīkara-piñjarābhiḥ /
vaiḍūrya-varṇābhir upānta-madhyeṣv alaṁkṛtā yatra khagāś caranti // 10.30 //**

Adorned with curling feathers that are red at the tips, golden in the middle, / And the colour of beryl within borders, birds there move.¹⁰⁰⁸ // 10.30 //

**rociṣṇavo nāma patatṛiṇo 'nye diptāgni-varṇā jvalitair ivāsyaiḥ /
bhramanti dṛṣṭīr vapuṣākṣipantaḥ svanaiḥ śubhair apsaraso harantaḥ // 10.31 //**

Winged ones of a different ilk, named *rociṣṇus*, who have the lustre of a blazing fire, their faces seeming to be aglow, / Roam around, shaking views with their wonderful appearance, and carrying *apsarases* away with their splendid sound.¹⁰⁰⁹ // 10.31 //

¹⁰⁰² *Vihaṁgāḥ*, lit. "sky-goers," means birds; at the same time it has connotations of acting in emptiness.

¹⁰⁰³ *Vadana*, lit. "speaking," can mean the face or the mouth – or in the case of a bird, the beak.

¹⁰⁰⁴ *Pakṣa* can mean wing or side.

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Pāda* means the foot or leg of any person or creature or inanimate thing.

¹⁰⁰⁶ The four colours mentioned here – 1. the red of 'mind-rock'; 2. transparency, or absence of independent colour; 3. deathly yellow still tinged with red; 4. contrast or opposition between red and white – may be taken as symbolizing, in four phases, our painful struggles as ordinary, unenlightened people in the world.

¹⁰⁰⁷ *Anye... vihaṁgamāḥ*, "birds which are different," or "goers through the sky, being different," may once again be taken as symbols of those non-buddhas who have mastered the practice of non-thinking. On that basis they talk the talk of dharma beautifully and enchantingly, carrying away our minds and ears. The colour which distinguishes them is gold, symbolizing what is most valuable, e.g. a sitting buddha's enlightenment. Verses 28 and 29 are thus antithetical to each other.

¹⁰⁰⁸ The double appearance of *madhyeṣu* suggests synthesis in the middle way between opposites, and *khagāś caranti*, "sky-goers move," emphasizes action itself.

¹⁰⁰⁹ These birds, like the 'Full Grown' Coral Tree, seem to have something especially transcendent and energetic about them, which causes views to be dropped off. Cf. Nāgārjuna: *In the direction of abandoning all views, he taught the true Dharma, / Putting compassion into practice – I bow to him, Gautama.* // (MMK27.30).

yatreṣṭa-ceṣṭāḥ satata-prahrṣṭā nirartayo nirjaraso viśokāḥ /

svaiḥ karmabhir hīna-viśiṣṭa-madhyāḥ svayaṁ-prabhāḥ puṇya-kṛto ramante // 10.32 //

There, merit-makers do whatever they like; constantly erect, they are free from pain, free from aging, and beyond sorrow; / Each by his actions inferior, superior, or in the middle, each letting his own light shine, the merit-makers rejoice. // 10.32 //

nityotsavaṁ taṁ ca niśāmya lokaṁ nis-tandri-nidrārati-śoka-rogam /

nando jarā-mṛtyu-vaśaṁ sadārtaṁ mene śmaśāna-pratimaṁ nṛ-lokam // 10.33 // (EHJ: 10.34)

Seeing that world to be in a perpetually elevated state, free from tiredness, sleep, discontent, sorrow, and disease, / Nanda deemed the ever-afflicted world of men, under the sway of aging and death, to be akin to a cremation ground. // 10.33 //

aindraṁ vanaṁ tac ca dadarśa nandaḥ samantato vismaya-phulla-drṣṭiḥ /

harṣānvitās cāpsarasaḥ parīyuhḥ sagarvam anyonyam avekṣamāṇāḥ // 10.34 // (EHJ: 10.35)

Nanda beheld Indra's forest all around him, his eyes wide open with amazement. / And the *apsarases* surrounded him, bristling with joyous excitement, while eyeing each other haughtily. // 10.34 //

sadā yuvatyo madanaika-kāryāḥ sādharmaṇāḥ puṇya-kṛtām vihārāḥ /

divyāś ca nir-doṣa-parigrahāś ca tapaḥ-phalasyāśrayaṇaṁ surāṇām // 10.35 // (EHJ: 10.36)

Eternally youthful and devoted purely to Love, the *apsarases* are zones of recreation open to all who have made merit; / They are the heavenly and innocent resort of gods, their reward for ascetic practices. // 10.35 //

tāsāṁ jagur dhīram udāttam anyāḥ padmāni kāś-cil lalitaṁ babhañjuḥ /

anyonya-harṣān nanṛtus tathānyāś citrāṅga-hārāḥ stana-bhinna-hārāḥ // 10.36 // (EHJ: 10.37)

Odd ones among those women sang, in low and in high voices; some pulled lotuses apart, playfully; / Others in the same vein danced, bristling with mutual delight, limbs making exotic gestures, breasts perturbing pearl necklaces.¹⁰¹⁰ // 10.36 //

¹⁰¹⁰ This is one of several places where Aśvaghōṣa makes a play on the many possible meanings of *hāra*, which include “bearing” (hence *aṅga-hāra*, “limb-bearing” means gesture) and “pearl necklace.”

**pūrvam tapo-mūlya-parigraheṇa svarga-krayārtham kṛta-niścayānām /
manāmsi khinnāni tapo-dhanānām haranti yatrāpsaraso laḍantyaḥ // 10.37 // (EHJ:
10.33)**

Here, having first accepted the price in austerities and made the decision to splash out on heaven, / Ascetics rich in austerities have their weary minds enthralled by the flirting *apsarases*.¹⁰¹¹ // 10.37 //

**kāsām-cid āsām vadanāni rejur vanāntarebhyaś cala-kuṇḍalāni /
vyāviddha-parṇebhya ivākarebhyaḥ padmāni kādamba-vighaṭṭitāni // 10.38 //**

The faces of some of these women, ear-rings atremble, peeped through chinks in the undergrowth / Like duck-dunked¹⁰¹² lotuses peeping through scattered and displaced leaves. // 10.38 //

**tāḥ niḥsṛtāḥ prekṣya vanāntarebhyas taḍit-patākā iva toya-debhyaḥ /
nandasya rāgeṇa tanur vivepe jale cale candramasaḥ prabheva // 10.39 //**

When he saw them emerging from their forest niches like ribbons of lightning from rainclouds, / Nanda's body trembled with passion like moonlight on rippling water. // 10.39 //

**vapuś ca divyaṁ lalitāś ca ceṣṭās tataḥ sa tāsām manasā jahāra /
kautūhalāvarjitayā ca dṛṣṭyā samśleṣa-tarṣād iva jāta-rāgaḥ // 10.40 //**

Their heavenly form and playful gestures he then mentally seized; / And, while his eye was appropriated by curiosity, he became impassioned, as if from a thirst for union. // 10.40 //

**sa jāta-tarṣo 'psarasaḥ pipāsus tat-prāptaye 'dhiṣṭhita-viklavārtaḥ /
lolendriyāśvena mano-rathena jehrīyamāṇo na dhṛtiṁ cakāra // 10.41 //**

He became thirsty, desirous of drinking up the *apsarases*, afflicted by a pervading itch to have them. / Dragged along by the mind-chariot whose horse is the restless power of the senses, he could not come to stillness. // 10.41 //

**yathā manuṣyo malinaṁ hi vāsaḥ kṣāreṇa bhūyo malinī-karoti /
mala-kṣayārtham na malodbhavārtham rajas tathāsmāi munir ācakarṣa // 10.42 //**

For just as a man adds soda ash to dirty clothes and thereby makes them even dirtier / Not in order to increase dirt but in order to remove it, so the Sage had stirred the dust of passion in Nanda. // 10.42 //

¹⁰¹¹ EHJ expressed in his preface doubts about whether this verse might be spurious. But the verse appears as verse 37 in both the palm-leaf and paper manuscripts, whose order has been maintained here. EHJ repositioned the verse, so that it appears as verse 33 in his edition.

¹⁰¹² In his Sanskrit text, EHJ amended *kādamba-vighaṭṭitāni* to *kāraṇḍava-ghaṭṭitāni*, but at the translation stage he reflected that the amendment was perhaps hardly necessary since the Indian lexica give *kāraṇḍava* (MW: a sort of duck) and *kādamba* (MW: a kind of goose with dark-grey wings) as synonymous.

**doṣāṁś ca kāyād bhiṣag ujjihīrṣur bhūyo yathā kleśayituṁ yateta /
rāgaṁ tathā tasya munir jighāṁsur bhūyastaraṁ rāgaṁ upānināya // 10.43 //**

Again, just as a healer who wishes to draw faults from the body would endeavour to aggravate those faults, / So, wishing to kill the red taint of passion in him, the Sage brought about an even greater passion. // 10.43 //

**dīpa-prabhāṁ hanti yathāndhakāre sahasra-raśmer uditasya dīptiḥ /
manuṣya-loke dyutim aṅganānām antar-dadhāty apsarasām tathā śrīḥ // 10.44 //**

Just as a light in the dark is extinguished by the thousand-rayed brightness of the rising sun, / So the lovely radiance of women in the human world is put in the shade by the brilliance of the celestial nymphs. // 10.44 //

**mahac ca rūpaṁ svaṇu hanti rūpaṁ śabda mahān hanti ca śabdāṁ alpam /
gurvī rujā hanti rujāṁ ca mṛdvīm sarvo mahān hetur aṇor vadhāya // 10.45 //**

Great beauty blots out lesser beauty, a loud noise drowns out a small noise, / And a severe pain kills a mild pain – every great stimulus tends towards the extinction of a minor one. // 10.45 //

**muneḥ prabhāvāc ca śaśāka nandas tad-darśanaṁ soḍhum asahyam anyaiḥ /
avītarāgasya hi durbalasya mano dahed apsarasām vapuḥ śrīḥ // 10.46 //**

And Nanda was able, relying on the power of the Sage, to endure that sight unendurable to others. / For the mind of a man lacking dispassion, when he was weak, would be burned up by the *apsarases'* shining splendour. // 10.46 //

**matvā tato nandam udīrṇa-rāgaṁ bhāryānurodhād apavṛtta-rāgam /
rāgeṇa rāgaṁ pratihantu-kāmo munir virāgo giram ity uvāca // 10.47 //**

Deeming then that Nanda was roused to a new height of passion, his passion having turned from love of his wife, / And desiring¹⁰¹³ to fight passion with passion, the dispassionate Sage spoke these words: // 10.47 //

**etāḥ striyaḥ paśya divaukasas tvaṁ nirīkṣya ca brūhi yathārtha-tattvam /
etāḥ kathaṁ rūpa-guṇair matāste sa vā jano yatra gataṁ manas te // 10.48 //**

“Look at these women who dwell in heaven and, having observed, truly tell the truth: / Do you think more of these women with their lovely form and excellent attributes or the one upon whom your mind has been set?” // 10.48 //

¹⁰¹³ This line draws out the distinction between *rāga*, redness, passion (from the root *vrañj*, to be dyed), and the wider term *kāma*, desire (from the root *vkam*, to wish, desire). Again, in the Buddha's ultimate teaching of of *alpecchu-saṁtuṣṭi*, having small desire and being content, *icchu* is from *viṣ*, to seek for. The point to be clear about is that being dispassionate does not mean having no desire.

**athāpsaraḥsv eva niviṣṭa-dṛṣṭī rāgāgnināntar-hṛdaye pradīptaḥ /
sa-gadgaḍaṁ kāma-viṣakta-cetāḥ kṛtāñjalir vākyam uvāca nandaḥ // 10.49 //**

So, letting his gaze settle upon the *apsarases*, burning in his innermost heart with a fire of passion, / And stammering, with a mind stuck on objects of desire, Nanda joined his hands like a beggar and spoke. // 10.49 //

**haryaṅganāsau muṣitaika-dṛṣṭir yadantare syāt tava nātha vadhvāḥ /
tad-antare 'sau kṛpaṇā vadhūs te vapuṣmatīr apsarasaḥ pratītya // 10.50 //**

“Whatever difference there might be, Master, between that one-eyed she-monkey and your sister-in-law, / Is the same when your poor sister-in-law is set against¹⁰¹⁴ the lovely *apsarases*. // 10.50 //

**āsthā yathā pūrvam abhūn na kā-cid anyāsu me strīṣu niśāmya bhāryām /
tasyām tataḥ samprati kā-cid āsthā na me niśāmyaiva hi rūpam āsām // 10.51 //**

For just as previously, when I beheld my wife, I had no interest in other women, / So now when I behold their beauty I have no interest in her. // 10.51 //

**yathā pratapto mṛdunātapena dahyeta kaś-cin mahatānalena /
rāgeṇa pūrvam mṛdunābhitapto rāgāgninānena tathābhidaḥye // 10.52 //**

Just as somebody who had been pained by mild sunshine might be consumed by a great fire, / So I who was previously toasted by a mild passion am now roasted by this blaze of passion. // 10.52 //

**vāg-vāriṇām mām pariṣiṅca tasmād yāvan na dahye sa ivābja-śatruḥ /
rāgāgnir adyaiva hi mām didhakṣuḥ kakṣam sa-vṛkṣāgram ivotthito 'gniḥ // 10.53 //**

Therefore pour on me the water of your voice, before I am burned, as was The Fishes' Foe;¹⁰¹⁵ / For a fire of passion is going now to burn me up, like a fire rising up to burn both undergrowth and treetops. // 10.53 //

¹⁰¹⁴ *Pratītya* is here used as the absolutive of *prati-vi*, in the sense of “to go against,” i.e. to be compared to. *Pratītya* is as in *pratītya-samutpāda*, “dependent arising” (see SN17.21, but especially BC Canto 14), in which compound *pratītya* seems to mean “going back to” or “having gone back to,” and hence “being dependent upon.”

¹⁰¹⁵ *Abja-śatruḥ* lit. “the enemy of the water-born,” can be understood as another name for *mīna-riṣu* (The Fishes' Foe) mentioned in SN8.44.

**prasīda sīdāmi vimuñca mā mune vasundharā-dhairya na dhairyam asti me /
asūn vimokṣyāmi vimukta-mānasa prayaccha vā vāg-amṛtaṃ mumūrṣave // 10.54 //**

Please,¹⁰¹⁶ O Sage firm as the earth,¹⁰¹⁷ I am sinking. Liberate me who am without firmness. / I shall give up my life, O Man of Liberated Mind,¹⁰¹⁸ unless you extend to a dying man the deathless nectar of your words.¹⁰¹⁹ // 10.54 //

**anartha-bhogena vighāta-dṛṣṭinā pramāda-daṃṣṭreṇa tamo-viṣāgninā /
ahaṃ hi daṣṭo hṛdi manmathāhinā vidhatsva tasmād agadaṃ mahā-bhiṣak // 10.55 //**

For a snake whose coils are calamity, whose eyes are destruction,¹⁰²⁰ whose fangs are madness, whose fiery venom is dark ignorance: / The snake of love has bitten me in the heart. Therefore, Great Healer, supply the antidote!¹⁰²¹ // 10.55 //

**anena daṣṭo madanāhinā hi nā na kaś-cid ātmany anavasthitaḥ sthitaḥ /
mumoha vodhyor hy acalātmano mano babhūva dhīmāṃś ca sa śantanus tanuḥ // 10.56 //**

For nobody bitten by this snake of love remains anything but unsettled in himself / Bewildered was the mind of Vodhyu, whose essence had been immovability, while 'Good-Body' Śan-tanu, who had been a sensible man, grew gaunt.¹⁰²²// 10.56 //

¹⁰¹⁶ *Prasīda* (be pleased to; please!) and *sīdāmi* (I am sinking) are both from the root *vsad*, to sit or sink down, to settle.

¹⁰¹⁷ The 2nd pāda, similarly, contains plays on words from the root *vdhr*, to bear or hold firm – thus the earth is *vasun-dharā* (lit. “treasure-bearer”) and firm is *dhairya*.

¹⁰¹⁸ *Vimokṣyāmi* (I shall give up) and *vimukta* (liberated) are both from *vi-vmuc*.

¹⁰¹⁹ *Amṛtam* (deathless [nectar]) and *mumūrṣave* (to one about to die) are both from the root *vmṛ*. Even though Nanda himself is evidently taking his own burning desire so deadly seriously, the plays on words impart a certain subversive sense of levity.

¹⁰²⁰ *Vighāta*, “a blow, destruction, ruin,” is as in the title of SN Canto 7, *strī-vighātaḥ*, A Tirade against Women.

¹⁰²¹ *Agada* means medicine and especially an antidote. As a rule, the antidote to passion (*rāga*) is recorded in suttas like the Long Discourse Giving Advice to Rāhula (DN22), as the unpleasant or unattractive (*aśubha*; see e.g. SN16.60; SN17.38). Hence the striver's description of the repulsive aspects of the human body in Cantos 7 and 8. The Buddha himself, however, in his administering of the medicine of dharma to Nanda, evidently sees the wisdom in a less conventional and more indirect route.

¹⁰²² Śan-tanu is the king mentioned by Nanda in SN7.41 and 7.44. No reference to Vodhyu has been traced. As in verse 54, Nanda's sense of the deadly seriousness of his situation is subverted by the latitude Aśvaghōṣa exhibits in finding time for poetic wordplay, whereby the closing two syllables of each pāda are repeated]: ...*hi nā hi nā*; ...*sthi taḥ sthi taḥ*; ...*ma no ma no*; ...*ta nus ta nuḥ*.

**sthite viśiṣṭe tvayi saṁśraye śraye yathā na yāmiha vasan diśam diśam /
yathā ca labdhvā vyaśana-kṣayaṁ kṣayaṁ vrajāmi tan me kuru śamsataḥ sataḥ // 10.57
//**

In you who abides conspicuously in the state of refuge, I seek refuge. So that I do not wander through this world loafing in this place and that place; / So that I might come to and then go beyond that abode which is my adversity-ending end,¹⁰²³ please, repeatedly I plead that you help me.”¹⁰²⁴ // 10.57 //

**tato jighāmsur hṛdi tasya tat-tamas tamo-nudo naktam ivotthitam tamaḥ /
maharṣi-candro jagatas tamo-nudas tamaḥ-prahīṇo nijagāda gautamaḥ // 10.58 //**

Desiring to dispell that darkness in his heart like the moon¹⁰²⁵ dispersing the darkness that rises by night, / Then spoke the moon of great seers, the disperser of the world's darkness, the one devoid of darkness – Gautama: // 10.58 //

**dhṛtiṁ pariśvajya vidhūya vikriyāṁ nigṛhya tāvac chruta-cetasī śṛṇu /
imā yadi prārthayase tvam aṅganā vidhatsva śulkārtham ihottamaṁ tapaḥ // 10.59 //**
“Embrace firmness, shake off indecision, get a grip of hearing and of heart, and listen! / If you desire these women practise now the utmost asceticism to pay their price. // 10.59 //

**imā hi śakyā na balān na sevayā na saṁpradānena na rūpavattayā /
imā hriyante khalu dharma-caryayā sacet prahaṛṣaś cara dharmam ādrtaḥ // 10.60 //**
For these women are conquered neither by force nor by service, neither by gifts nor by good looks; / They are mastered¹⁰²⁶ just by dharma-conduct. If aroused,¹⁰²⁷ practise dharma diligently. // 10.60 //

**ihādhivāso divi daivataiḥ samaṁ vanāni ramyāṇy ajarāś ca yoṣitaḥ /
idaṁ phalaṁ svasya śubhasya karmaṇo na dattam anyena na cāpy ahetutaḥ // 10.61 //**
Perching here in heaven with gods; delightful forests; ageless women – / Such is the fruit of your own pure action. It is not conferred by another; nor is it without cause. // 10.61 //

¹⁰²³ The meanings of *kṣayam* include both ending and abode. Like the *hāra* of verse 36, *kṣaya* is one of Aśvaghōṣa's favourite words for punning.

¹⁰²⁴ Again, the closing two syllables of each *pāda* are repeated: ...*śraye śraye*; ...*diśam diśam*; ...*kṣayaṁ kṣayam*; ... *sataḥ sataḥ*. The sense of the repetitiveness of Nanda's pleading is emphasized not only by the sound of *śamsataḥ sataḥ*, but also by the meaning of *śamsataḥ*, from the root *śams*, to repeat.

¹⁰²⁵ *Tamo-nuda*, “darkness-disperser,” means the sun or, as in this case, the moon.

¹⁰²⁶ Again, the ambiguity of *√hr* (root of *hāra* in verse 36) is well suited to Aśvaghōṣa's ironic purposes. Ostensibly *hriyante* means they are mastered or conquered or overpowered or won over, and taken as wives or lovers; but in the hidden meaning *hriyante* might mean they are won over in the sense of being persuaded to go in the right direction; or again *hriyante* might mean they are eclipsed, or surpassed, or transcended.

¹⁰²⁷ The first definition of *prahaṛṣa* in the MW dictionary is “erection of the male organ.” But *pra-√hrṣ* also means to rejoice, be glad, exult. So in the hidden meaning, *prahaṛṣa* suggests non-sexual arousal, as in

**kṣītau manuṣyo dhanur-ādibhiḥ śramaiḥ striyaḥ kadā-cidd hi labheta vā na vā /
asamśayaṁ yat tv iha dharma-caryayā bhavayur etā divi puṇya-karmaṇaḥ // 10.62 //**

Through strenuous efforts on earth – drawing a bow and suchlike – a man may sometimes win women, or else he may not; / But what is certain is that, through his practice of dharma here and now, these women in heaven can belong¹⁰²⁸ to a man of meritorious action. // 10.62 //

**tad apramatto niyame samudyato ramaṣva yady apsaraso 'bhilipsase /
ahaṁ ca te 'tra pratibhūḥ sthira vrate yathā tvam ābhir niyataṁ sameśyasi // 10.63 //**

So delight in restraint, being attentive and ready, if you desire to secure¹⁰²⁹ the *apsarases*, / And I guarantee that, insofar as you persist in your observance, you certainly shall be one¹⁰³⁰ with them.” // 10.63 //

**ataḥ-param paramam iti vyavasthitaḥ parāṁ dhṛtiṁ parama-munau cakāra saḥ /
tato muniḥ pavana ivāmarāt patan pragṛhya taṁ punar agaman mahī-talam // 10.64 //**
“From now on, I will!” he agreed. Believing intently in the supreme Sage, he had become extremely determined.¹⁰³¹ / Then the Sage, gliding down from the sky like the wind, brought him back down again to earth. // 10.64 //

saundaranande mahākāvyे svarga-nidarśano nāma daśamaḥ sargaḥ /
The 10th canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled “A Vision of Heaven.”

BC Canto 3, titled *saṁvegopattiḥ*, Arising of Nervous Excitement.

¹⁰²⁸ Ostensibly, again, the Buddha is affirming the ancient idea that celestial nymphs can belong to an ascetic practitioner in a sexual sense. The verb *vbhū*, however, can mean “to belong” not only in a sexual sense but also in the sense of all being on the same side and thus belonging to each other.

¹⁰²⁹ *Abhilipsase* is a desiderative form of *abhi-vlabh*, which ostensibly means, again, to obtain or secure in a sexual sense; but in the hidden meaning to reach, or to win over, in a transformative sense.

¹⁰³⁰ *Sameśyasi* is from *sam-vi*, which, again, ostensibly means to come together in sexual union, to cohabit; but which in its hidden meaning might simply mean to be together, to live harmoniously together.

¹⁰³¹ “From now on” is *ataḥ-param*; “I will, he agreed” is *paramam iti*. “Extremely determined” is *parāṁ dhṛtiṁ*. “In the supreme sage” is *parama-munau*. Hence a particularly poetic Canto finishes with a final poetic flourish – *param, paramam, parām, paramam...*

Canto 11: svargāpavādaḥ Negation of Heaven

Introduction

Apavāda, as in the title of SN Canto 9, means speaking ill of, blaming, denouncing, denying, negating. In Canto 9 the object negated in the Canto title *madāpavādaḥ* is *mada* or *madā*. In the present Canto the object negated in the Canto title *svargāpavādaḥ* is *svarga*, heaven or paradise. So the two canto titles parallel each other. Moreover, Ānanda himself in the present Canto, for example in verse 37, emphasizes that peace is not possible for one who thirsts after desires, thereby seeming to confirm the Buddhist striver's negation of *mada/madā* as lust.

A fundamental difference, however, is that the striver in Canto 9 fails the pragmatic test of truth – his reproaches do not have the desired effect on Nanda. Ānanda's teaching, in contrast, does have the desired effect on Nanda; it causes Nanda to see the folly of striving for a heaven whose attractions, however pleasurable, could only ever be temporary.

Another difference is that the striver's tone is wholly negative, whereas Ānanda, evidently speaking from first person experience, not only negates pursuit of a fleeting heaven but also points to the lasting enjoyment to be had from directing the mind within. Whereas the striver presents Nanda only with the stick, Ānanda shows himself also to be skilled, like the Buddha, in the use of the carrot.

tatas tā yoṣito dṛṣṭvā nando nandana-cāriṇīḥ /

babandha niyama-stambhe durdamaṁ capalaṁ manaḥ // 11.1 //

And so, having gazed upon those women who wander in the Gladdening Gardens of Nandana, /
Nanda tethered the fickle and unruly¹⁰³² mind to a tethering post of restraint. // 11.1 //

so 'niṣṭa-naiṣkramya-raso mlāna-tāma-rasopamaḥ /

cacāra viraso dharmam niveśyāpsaraso hṛdi // 11.2 //

Failing to relish the taste of freedom from care, sapless as a wilting lotus, / He went through the
motions of dharma-practice, having installed the *apsarases* already in his heart.¹⁰³³ // 11.2 //

¹⁰³² *Durdamaṁ* lit. means “hard to tame.”

¹⁰³³ In the 1st pāda *raso* means taste. In the 2nd pāda *tāma-rasopamaḥ* means like a day-lotus. In the 3rd pāda, *vi-raso* means insipidly or saplessly, not sincerely and vigorously. In the 4th pāda, *apsaraso* is accusative plural for the *apsarases* whom Nanda has installed in his heart. In a similar way, verse 3 contains in each line the word *indriya* (or *endriya* in compound), and verse 4 contains in each line *carya* or *cārya*.

**tathā lolendriyo bhūtvā dayitendriya-gocaraḥ /
indriyārtha-vaśād eva babhūva niyatendriyaḥ // 11.3 //**

Thus did one whose sense-power had been restless, whose senses had grazed on the pasture of his wife, / Come, by the very power of sense-objects, to have his sense-power reined in. // 11.3 //

**kāma-caryāsu kuśalo bhikṣu-caryāsu viklavaḥ /
paramācārya-viṣṭabdho brahma-caryaṁ cacāra saḥ // 11.4 //**

Adept in the practices of love, confused about the practices of a beggar, / Set firm by the best of practice guides,¹⁰³⁴ Nanda did the devout practice of abstinence.¹⁰³⁵ // 11.4 //

**saṁvṛtena ca śāntena tīvreṇa madanena ca /
jalāgner iva saṁsargāc chaśāma ca śuśoṣa ca // 11.5 //**

Stifling restraint and ardent love, / Like water and fire in tandem, smothered him and burned him dry. // 11.5 //

**svabhāva-darśanīyo 'pi vairūpyam agamat param /
cintayāpsarasāṁ caiva niyamenāyatena ca // 11.6 //**

Though naturally good-looking, he became extremely ugly, / Both from agonizing about the *apsarases* and from protracted restraint. // 11.6 //

**prastāveṣv api bhāryāyām priya-bhāryas tathāpi saḥ /
vītarāga ivottasthau na jaharṣa na cukṣubhe // 11.7 //**

Even when mention was made of his wife, he who had been so devoted to his wife / Stood by, seemingly bereft of passion; he neither bristled nor quavered. // 11.7 //

**taṁ vyavasthitam ājñāya bhāryā-rāgāt parān-mukham /
abhigamyābravīn nandam ānandaḥ praṇayād idam // 11.8 //**

Knowing him to be adamant, turned away from passion for his wife, / Ānanda, having come that way, said to Nanda with affection: // 11.8 //

**aho sadṛśam ārabdham śrutasyābhijanasya ca /
nigṛhītendriyaḥ svastho niyame yadi saṁsthitaḥ // 11.9 //**

“Ah! This is a beginning that befits an educated and well-born man – / Since you are holding back the power of your senses and, abiding in yourself, you are set on restraint! // 11.9 //

¹⁰³⁴ *Ācārya* means one who knows or teaches *ācāra*, practice.

¹⁰³⁵ *Brahma-carya* is often rendered as “spiritual practice.” The concept is rooted in a tradition of celibacy that pre-dated the Buddha.

abhiṣvaktasya kāmeṣu rāgiṇo viṣayātmanaḥ /

yad iyaṁ saṁvid utpannā neyam alpena hetunā // 11.10 //

In one entangled in desires, in a man of passion, a sensualist, / That such consciousness has arisen – this is by no small cause! // 11.10 //

vyādhir alpena yatnena mṛduḥ pratinivāryate /

prabalaḥ prabalair eva yatnair naśyati vā na vā // 11.11 //

A mild illness is warded off with little effort; / A serious illness is cured with serious efforts, or else it is not. // 11.11 //

durharo mānaso vyādhir balavāṁś ca tavābhavat /

vinivṛtto yadi sa te sarvathā dhṛtimān asi // 11.12 //

An illness of the mind is hard to remove, and yours was a powerful one. / If you are rid of it, you are in every way steadfast. // 11.12 //

duṣkaraṁ sādhu anāryeṇa māninā caiva mārḍavam /

atisargaś ca lubdhena brahmacaryaṁ ca rāgiṇā // 11.13 //

For an ignoble man good is hard to do; for an arrogant man it is hard to be meek; / For a greedy man giving is hard, and hard for a man of passion is the practice of devout abstinence. // 11.13 //

ekas tu mama saṁdehas tavāsyāṁ niyame dhṛtau /

atrānunayam icchāmi vaktavyaṁ yadi manyase // 11.14 //

But I have one doubt concerning this steadfastness of yours in restraint. / I would like assurance on this matter, if you think fit to tell me. // 11.14 //

ārjavābhihitaṁ vākyaṁ na ca gantavyam anyathā /

rūkṣam apy āśaye śuddhe ruḁato naiti sajjanaḥ // 11.15 //

Straight talk should not be taken amiss; / However harsh it is, so long as its intention is pure, a good man will not retain it as harsh. // 11.15 //

apriyaṁ hi hitaṁ snigdham asnigdham ahitaṁ priyam /

durlabhaṁ tu priya-hitaṁ svādu pathyam iva uṣadham // 11.16 //

For there is disagreeable good advice, which is kind; and there is agreeable bad advice, which is not kind; / But advice that is both agreeable and good is as hard to come by as medicine that is both sweet and salutary. // 11.16 //

viśvāsaś cārtha-caryā ca sāmānyaṁ sukha-duḁkhayoḥ /

marṣaṇaṁ praṇayaś caiva mitra-vṛttir iyaṁ satām // 11.17 //

Trust, acting in the other's interest, sharing of joy and sorrow, / And tolerance, as well as affection: such, between good men, is the conduct of a friend. // 11.17 //

tad idaṁ tvā vivakṣāmi praṇayān na jighāṁsayā /

tac chreyo hi vivakṣā me yat te nārḥāmy upekṣitum // 11.18 //

So now I am going to speak to you out of affection, with no wish to hurt. / For my intention is to speak of that better way for you in regard to which I ought not to be indifferent.¹⁰³⁶ // 11.18 //

apsaro-bhṛtako dharmaṁ carasīty abhidhīyase /

kim idaṁ bhūtam āho svit parihāso 'yam īdṛśaḥ // 11.19 //

You are practising dharma, so they say, for celestial nymphs as wages. / Is that so? Is it true? such a thing would be a joke! // 11.19 //

yadi tāvad idaṁ satyaṁ vakṣyāmy atra yad auśadham /

auddhatyam atha vaktṛṇām abhidhāsyāmi tad rajaḥ // 11.20 //

If this really is true, I will tell you a medicine for it; / Or if it is the impertinence of chatterers, then that dust I shall expose." // 11.20 //

ślakṣṇa-pūrvam atho tena hṛdi so 'bhihataś tadā /

dhyātvā dīrghaṁ niśāśvāsa kiṁ-cic cāvān-mukho 'bhavat // 11.21 //

Then – though it was tenderly done – [Nanda] was stricken in his heart. / After reflecting,¹⁰³⁷ he drew in a long breath, and his face inclined slightly downward. // 11.21 //

tatas tasyeṅgitaṁ jñātvā manaḥ-saṁkalpa-sūcakam /

babhāṣe vākyam ānando madhurodarkam apriyam // 11.22 //

And so, knowing the signs that betrayed the set of Nanda's mind, / Ānanda spoke words which were disagreeable but sweet in consequence: // 11.22 //

ākāreṇāvagacchāmi tava dharma-prayojanam /

yaj jñātvā tvayi jātaṁ me hāsyāṁ kāruṇyam eva ca // 11.23 //

"I know from the look on your face what your motive is in practising dharma.

And knowing that, there arises in me towards you laughter and at the same time pity. // 11.23 //

¹⁰³⁶ *Upekṣā*, indifference or equanimity, is a characteristic of the 4th dhyāna (see SN17.54-55) and one of the seven limbs of awakening (SN17.24). In general, then, indifference or equanimity is a virtue to be cultivated – but not, as Ānanda suggests here and as the Buddha emphasizes from SN16.57, in all circumstances.

¹⁰³⁷ *Dhyā*, to reflect or to think of, is as in *dhyāna*, reflection or meditation. If a hidden meaning is sought, the hidden meaning might be that, in sitting practice, free and full breathing and poise of the head are not arrangements, but they tend to follow, indirectly, from healthy thinking processes.

yathāsanārthaṁ skandhena kaś-cid gurvīm śilām vahet /

tadvat tvam api kāmārthaṁ niyamaṁ voḍhum udyataḥ // 11.24 //

Like somebody who, with a view to sitting on it, carried around on his shoulder a heavy rock; /
That is how you, with a view to sensuality, are labouring to bear restraint. // 11.24 //

titādayiṣayā drpto yathā meṣo 'pasarpsati /

tadvad abrahmacaryāya brahmacaryam idaṁ tava // 11.25 //

Just as, in its desire to charge, a wild ram draws back, / So, for the sake of non-abstinence, is
this devout abstinence of yours!¹⁰³⁸ // 11.25 //

cikrīṣanti yathā paṇyaṁ vaṇijo lābha-lipsayā /

dharmacaryā tava tathā paṇya-bhūtā na śāntaye // 11.26 //

Just as merchants buy merchandise moved by a desire to make profit, / That is how you are
practising dharma, as if it were a tradable commodity, not for the sake of peace. // 11.26 //

yathā phala-viśeṣārthaṁ bījaṁ vapati kārśakaḥ /

tadvad viṣaya-kārpaṇyād viṣayāṁs tyaktavān asi // 11.27 //

Just as, with a particular crop in view, a ploughman scatters seed, / That is how, because of
being desperate for an object, you have renounced objects. // 11.27 //

ākāṅkṣec ca yathā rogaṁ pratikāra-sukhepsayā /

duḥkham anvicchati bhavāṁs tathā viṣaya-tṛṣṇayā // 11.28 //

Just as a man who craves some pleasurable remedy might want to be ill, / That is how in your
thirst for an object you are seeking out suffering. // 11.28 //

yathā paśyati madhv eva na prapātam avekṣate /

paśyasy apsarāsaḥ tadvad bhraṁśam ante na paśyasi // 11.29 //

Just as a man sees honey and fails to notice a precipice, / That is how you are seeing the
heavenly nymphs and not seeing the fall that will come in the end. // 11.29 //

hṛdi kāmāgninā dīpte kāyena vahato vratam /

kim idaṁ brahmacaryaṁ te manasābrahmacāriṇaḥ // 11.30 //

Blazing with a fire of desire in your heart, you carry out observances with your body: / What is
this devout abstinence of yours, who does not practise abstinence with his mind? // 11.30 //

samsāre vartamānena yadā cāpsarāsaḥ tvayā /

prāptās tyaktāś ca śataśas tābhyaḥ kim iti te sprhā // 11.31 //

Again, since in spiralling through saṁsāra you have gained celestial nymphs and left them / A
hundred times over, what is this yearning of yours for those women? // 11.31 //

¹⁰³⁸ In other words: "So, done for the sake of sex, is this spiritual practice of yours!"

**ṭṛptir nāstīndhanair agner nāmbhasā lavaṇāmbhasaḥ /
nāpi kāmāiḥ sa ṭṛṣṇasya tasmāt kāmā na ṭṛptaye // 11.32 //**

A fire is not satisfied by dry brushwood, nor the salty ocean by water, / Nor a man of thirst by his desires. Desires, therefore, do not make for satisfaction. // 11.32 //

**aṭṛptau ca kutaḥ śāntir aśāntau ca kutaḥ sukham /
asukhe ca kutaḥ prītir aprītau ca kuto ratiḥ // 11.33 //**

Without satisfaction, whence peace? Without peace, whence ease? / Without ease, whence joy? Without joy, whence enjoyment? // 11.33 //

**riraṁsā yadi te tasmād adhyātme dhīyatām manaḥ /
praśāntā cānavadyā ca nāsty adhyātma-samā ratiḥ // 11.34 //**

Therefore if you want enjoyment, let your mind be directed within. / Tranquil and impeccable is enjoyment of the inner self and there is no enjoyment to equal it. // 11.34 //

**na tatra kāryam tūryais te na strībhir na vibhūṣaṇaiḥ /
ekas tvaṁ yatra-tatra-sthas tayā ratyābhiraṁsyase // 11.35 //**

In it, you have no need of musical instruments, or women, or ornaments; / On your own, wherever you are, you can indulge in that enjoyment. // 11.35 //

**mānasam balavad duḥkham tarṣe tiṣṭhati tiṣṭhati /
taṁ tarṣam chindhi duḥkham hi ṭṛṣṇā cāsti ca nāsti ca // 11.36 //**

The mind suffers mightily as long as thirst persists. / Eradicate that thirst; for suffering co-exists with thirst, or else does not exist. // 11.36 //

**saṁpattau vā vipattau vā divā vā naktam eva vā /
kāmeṣu hi sa-ṭṛṣṇasya na śāntir upapadyate // 11.37 //**

In prosperity or in adversity, by day or by night, / For the man who thirsts after desires,¹⁰³⁹ peace is not possible. // 11.37 //

**kāmānām prārthanā duḥkhā prāptau ṭṛptir na vidyate /
viyogān niyataḥ śoko viyogaś ca dhruvo divi // 11.38 //**

The pursuit of desires is full of suffering, and attainment of them is not where satisfaction lies; / The separation from them is inevitably sorrowful; but the celestial constant is separation. // 11.38 //

¹⁰³⁹ The use of *kāma* in the locative plural confirms that Aśvaghōṣa used the word *kāma* to mean, depending on context, both desire itself and an object of desire. Here *kāmeṣu* means loves or desires as objects.

**kṛtvāpi duṣkaraṁ karma svargaṁ labdhvāpi durlabham /
nṛlokaṁ punar evaiti pravāsāt sva-grhaṁ yathā // 11.39 //**

Even having done action that is hard to do, and reached a heaven that is hard to reach, / [A man] comes right back to the world of men, as if to his own house after a spell away. // 11.39 //

**yadā bhraṣṭasya kuśalaṁ śiṣṭaṁ kiṁ-cin na vidyate /
tiryakṣu pitṛ-loke vā narake vopapadyate // 11.40 //**

The backslider when his residual good has run out / Finds himself among the animals or in the world of the departed,¹⁰⁴⁰ or else he goes to hell. // 11.40 //

**tasya bhuktavataḥ svarge viṣayān uttamān api /
bhraṣṭasyārtasya duḥkhena kim āsvādaḥ karoti saḥ // 11.41 //**

Having enjoyed in heaven the utmost sensual objects, / He falls back, beset by suffering: what has that enjoyment done for him? // 11.41 //

**śyenāya prāṇi-vātsalyāt sva-māmsāny api dattavān /
śibhiḥ svargāt paribhraṣṭas tādrk kṛtvāpi duṣkaram // 11.42 //**

Through tender love for living creatures Śibi gave his own flesh to a hawk.¹⁰⁴¹ / He fell back from heaven, even after doing such a difficult deed. // 11.42 //

**śakrasyārdhāsanaṁ gatvā pūrva-pārthiva eva yaḥ /
sa devatvaṁ gate kāle māndhātādhaḥ punar yayau // 11.43 //**

Having attained half of Indra's throne as a veritable earth-lord of the old school, / Māndhātṛ when his time with the gods elapsed came back down again.¹⁰⁴² // 11.43 //

**rājyaṁ kṛtvāpi devānām papāta nahuṣa bhuvi /
prāptaḥ kila bhujāṅgatvaṁ nādyāpi parimucyate // 11.44 //**

Though he ruled the gods, Nahuṣa fell to earth; / He turned into a snake, so they say, and even today has not wriggled free.¹⁰⁴³ // 11.44 //

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Pitṛ-loke*, "in the world of the departed," means in other words, in the world of deceased ancestors, or in the world of hungry ghosts. See BC Canto 14.

¹⁰⁴¹ Both the *Mahā-bhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* contain the story of how the gods tested King Śibi by taking the form of a hawk and a pigeon. Chased by the hawk, the pigeon fell into the lap of Śibi, who offered to compensate the hawk with his own flesh.

¹⁰⁴² Māndhātṛ, reputed to be a 19th-generation descendant of Ikṣvāku, was a famous king of the ancient city of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. The history of that city records that Māndhātṛ obtained half the throne of Śakra ("the Mighty" = Indra) and conquered the whole earth in one day.

¹⁰⁴³ Book 13 of the *Mahā-bhārata* tells the story of how King Nahuṣa became chief of the gods, knocking Indra off top spot, by assiduously performing Brahmanical rites. By his arrogance, however, Nahuṣa incurred the wrath of one of the sages whom he had charged with carrying his palanquin. This sage reacted to being booted in the head by placing a curse on Nahuṣa who duly turned into a great snake which slithered off to skulk in a Himālayan cave. Thereafter, the story goes, when a group of exiled Pāṇḍavas found the snake hiding in the cave, the Pāṇḍava leader recognized that the snake was no

tathaivelivilo rājā rāja-vṛttena saṁskṛtaḥ /

svargaṁ gatvā punar bhraṣṭaḥ kūrmi-bhūtaḥ kilārṇave // 11.45 //

Likewise King Ilivila being perfect in kingly conduct, / Went to heaven and fell back down, becoming, so they say, a turtle in the ocean.¹⁰⁴⁴ // 11.45 //

bhūridyumno yayātiś ca te cānye ca nṛpa-rṣabhāḥ /

karmabhir dyām abhikriya tat-kṣayāt punar atyajān // 11.46 //

Bhūri-dyumna and Yayāti and other excellent kings,¹⁰⁴⁵ / Having bought heaven by their actions, gave it up again, after that karma ran out – // 11.46 //

asurāḥ pūrva-devās tu surair apahrta-śriyaḥ /

śriyaṁ samanuśocantaḥ pātālaṁ śaraṇaṁ yayuḥ // 11.47 //

Whereas the *asuras*, who had been gods in heaven when the *suras* robbed them of their rank, / Went bemoaning their lost glory down to their Pātāla lair.¹⁰⁴⁶ // 11.47 //

kiṁ ca rājarṣibhis tāvad asurair vā surādibhiḥ /

mahendrāḥ śataśaḥ petur mähātmyam api na sthiram // 11.48 //

But why such citing of royal seers, or of *asuras*, *suras*, and the like? / Mighty Indras have fallen in their hundreds! Even the most exalted position is not secure. // 11.48 //

saṁsadaṁ śobhayitvaindrīm upendraś ca tri-vikramaḥ /

kṣīṇa-karmā papātorvīm madhyād apsarasaṁ rasan // 11.49 //

Again, Indra's luminous sidekick,¹⁰⁴⁷ he of the three strides, lit up Indra's court, / And yet when his karma waned he fell to earth from the *apsarases'* midst, screaming. // 11.49 //

ordinary snake and asked it about its origin. Nahuṣa then confessed and was relieved of his curse, so that he was able to shed his snakely incarnation.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Viṣṇu famously became a turtle (his 2nd avatar, Kurma) in order to stop Mt. Mandara from sinking into the ocean. Viṣṇu is said to have had a thousand names. Ilivila, however, has not been traced as one of them.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Bhūri-dhyumna was known for his piety. His fall from heaven, according to EHV's notes, is documented in Book 2 of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Yayāti is the celebrated king of the lunar race whose sons are mentioned favourably in SN1.59. When Yayāti cheated on his wife, her father put a curse on him so that he immediately became an old man, whereupon he tried to buy back youth from his sons. Eventually, however, Yayāti realized the futility of his former shallow actions, let go of his worldly ambitions and took pains to redeem himself.

¹⁰⁴⁶ *Asuras* and *suras* (demons and gods) as their Sanskrit names suggest, are opposed to each other. Pātāla is one of the regions under the earth supposed to be inhabited by nāgas and demons; sometimes it is used as a general name for the lower regions or hells. The resentful attitude of the *asuras* seems to be comically contrasted with the more yielding attitude of Bhūri-dhyumna and Yayāti.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Upendra, lit. "Indra's younger brother," is one of the thousand names of Viṣṇu, whose distinguishing characteristic was said to be light. Hymn 7.100 of the *Ṛg-veda* refers to the celebrated 'three steps' of Viṣṇu by which he strode over the universe and in three places planted his step.

hā caitraratha hā vāpi hā mandākini hā priye /

ity ārtā vilapanto 'pi gām patanti divaukasah // 11.50 //

'Oh, the grove of Citra-ratha!¹⁰⁴⁸ Oh, the pond! Oh, the heavenly Ganges! Oh, my beloved!' - /
Thus lament the distressed denizens of heaven as they fall to earth. // 11.50 //

tīvraṁ hy utpadyate duḥkham iha tāvan mumūrṣatām /

kiṁ punaḥ patatām svargād evānte sukha-sevinām // 11.51 //

For intense already is the pain that arises in those facing death in this world / And how much
worse is it for the pleasure-addicts when they finally fall from heaven? // 11.51 //

rajo gr̥hanti vāsāmsi mlāyanti paramāḥ srajaḥ /

gātrebhyo jāyate svedo ratir bhavati nāsane // 11.52 //

Their clothes gather dust; their glorious garlands wither; / Sweat appears on their limbs; and in
their sitting¹⁰⁴⁹ there is no enjoyment. // 11.52 //

etāny ādau nimittāni cyutau svargād divaukasām /

aniṣṭānīva martyānām ariṣṭāni mumūrṣatām // 11.53 //

These are the first signs of the imminent fall from heaven of sky-dwellers, / Like the
unwelcome but sure signs of the approaching death of those subject to dying. // 11.53 //

sukham utpadyate yac ca divi kāmān upāśnatām /

yac ca duḥkham nīpatatām duḥkham eva viśiṣyate // 11.54 //

When the pleasure that arises from enjoyment of desires in heaven / Is compared with the pain
of falling, the pain, assuredly, is greater. // 11.54 //

tasmād asvantam atrāṇam aviśvāsyam atarpakam /

viññāya kṣayiṇaṁ svargam apavarge matiṁ kuru // 11.55 //

Knowing heaven, therefore, to be ill-fated, precarious, unreliable, unsatisfactory, and
transitory, set your heart upon immunity from that circuit.¹⁰⁵⁰ // 11.55 //

¹⁰⁴⁸ Caitra-ratha, is the name of a grove of Kubera trees (Cedrela Toona) supposed to have been cultivated
by the gandharva Citra-ratha "Having a Bright Chariot," the king of the gandharvas. See also SN2.53.

¹⁰⁴⁹ The ostensible meaning of *āsane* is at the place where they were seated or stationed. Hence EH
Johnston translated "*and they find no delight in their places;*" and Linda Covill "*and they take no joy in their
station.*"

¹⁰⁵⁰ *Apa-varga* (from the verb *apa-√vrj*, to turn or leave off) is given in the MW dictionary as "exemption
from further transmigration."

aśarīraṁ bhavāgraṁ hi gatvāpi munir udrakaḥ /

karmaṇo 'nte cyutas tasmāt tiryag-yoniṁ prapatsyate // 11.56 //

For though he attained a peak experience of bodiless being, Sage Uḍraka,¹⁰⁵¹ / At the expiration of his karma, will fall from that state into the womb of an animal. // 11.56 //

maitrayā sapta-vārṣikyā brahma-lokam ito gataḥ /

sunetraḥ punar āvṛtto garbha-vāsam upeyivān // 11.57 //

Through seven years of loving kindness, Sunetra went from here to Brahma's world, / But he span around again and came back to live in a womb.¹⁰⁵² // 11.57 //

yadā caisvavyavanto 'pi kṣayaṇaḥ svarga-vāsinaḥ /

ko nāma svarga-vāsāya kṣeṣṇave sprḥayed budhaḥ // 11.58 //

Since heaven-dwellers, even when all-powerful, are subject to decay, / What wise man would aspire to a decadent sojourn in heaven? // 11.58 //

sūtreṇa baddho hi yathā vihaṅgo vyāvartate dūragato 'pi bhūyaḥ /

ajñāna-sūtreṇa tathāvbaddho gato 'pi dūraṁ punar eti lokaḥ // 11.59 //

For just as a bird tied to a string, though it has flown far, comes back again; / So too do people return who are tied to the string of ignorance, however far they have travelled. // 11.59 //

kṛtvā kāla-vilakṣaṇaṁ pratibhuvā mukto yathā bandhanād

bhuktvā veshma-sukhāny atītya samayaṁ bhūyo vished bandhanaṁ /

tadvad dyām pratibhūvad ātma-niyamair dhyānādibhiḥ prāptavān

kāle karmasu teṣu bhukta-viṣayeṣv ākṛṣyate gām punaḥ // 11.60 //

A man temporarily released from prison on bail / Enjoys home comforts and then, when his time is up, he must go back to prison; / In the same way, through restrictive practices beginning with meditation, a man gets to heaven, as if on bail, / And after enjoying those objects which were his karmic reward, he eventually is dragged back down to earth. // 11.60 //

¹⁰⁵¹ In SN3.3 the Sage Uḍraka, who inclined towards quietness, is mentioned as one whom Sarvārtha-siddha visited. (See also BC12.84-88.) Even though the Buddha credited only Arāḍa, and not Uḍraka, as having been his teacher (see note to BC12.84), it seems unthinkable that Ānanda would have singled out the Uḍraka of SN3.3 as one destined for rebirth as an animal. Perhaps for that reason, EHJ considered this and the next verse to be spurious.

¹⁰⁵² *Su-netra* lit. means "Having Good Eyes" or "Being a Good Leader." No reference has been traced.

**antar-jāla-gatāḥ pramatta-manaso mīnās taḍāge yathā
jānanti vyasanāṁ na rodha-janitaṁ svasthāś caranty ambhasi /
antar-loka-gatāḥ kṛtārtha-matayas tadvad divi dhyāyino
manyante śivam acyutaṁ dhruvam iti svaṁ sthānam āvartakam // 11.61 //**

Fish in a pond who have swum into a net, unwarily, / Do not know the misfortune that results from capture, but contentedly move around in the water; / In the same way, meditators in heaven (who are really of this world of men), think that they have achieved their end; / And so they assume their own position to be favourable, secure and settled – as they continue to whirl around. // 11.61 //

**taj janma-vyādhi-mṛtyu-vyasana-parigataṁ matvā jagad idaṁ
saṁsāre bhrāmyamāṇaṁ divi nṛṣu narake tiryak-pitṛṣu ca /
yat trāṇaṁ nirbhayaṁ yac chivam amara-jaraṁ niḥśokam amṛtaṁ
tadd-hetor brahmacaryaṁ cara jahi hi calaṁ svargaṁ prati rucim // 11.62 //**

Therefore, see this world to be shot through with the calamities of birth, sickness, and death; / See it – whether in heaven, among men, in hell, or among animals or the departed – to be reeling through saṁsāra. / Seeing the world to be thus, for the sake of that fearless refuge, for that sorrowless nectar of immortality, which is benign, and beyond death and decay, / Devoutly practise abstinence, and abandon your fancy for a precarious heaven.” // 11.62 //

Saundara-nanda mahākāvye svargāpavādo nāma aikādaśaḥ sargaḥ

The 11th canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled “Negation of Heaven.”

Canto 12: pratyavamarśaḥ Gaining a Foothold

Introduction

Praty-ava-√mṛś is given in the MW dictionary as 1. to touch, and 2. to reflect, to meditate. The root *√mṛś* on its own is defined, again, as 1. to touch, and 2. to touch mentally, consider, reflect. Reflecting this latter sense of touching with the mind, EH Johnston translated the Canto title as “Discernment,” and Linda Covill as “Comprehension.”

At the same time, EHJ noted that the original meaning of *mṛś* with *praty-ava* seems to be “lay hold of.”¹⁰⁵³ That the kind of hold thus intended might be a foothold, fits with the title of SN Canto 14 *ādi-prasthānaḥ*, in which *prasthāna* carries a connotation of walking or marching out. Gaining a foothold also fits with the meta-metaphor of the noble eightfold path, which is alluded to in the title of SN Canto 16.

Verses 19 and 20 of the present Canto suggest that Aśvaghōṣa had in mind both senses of *pratyavamarśa* – both the metaphorical sense of gaining a foothold, and the non-figurative sense of mental discernment or comprehension.

Either way, what the Buddha makes very clear in the present Canto is the practical nature of his teaching of *śraddhā*, belief, or confidence. EH Johnston translated *śraddhā* as “faith.”¹⁰⁵⁴ This translation was likely based on the generally held assumption among pioneering Buddhist scholars that the Buddha’s teaching, which those scholars called “Buddhism,” was a faith – i.e., a religion like other religions, that placed faith in the Almighty above practical human experience and reason. Illustrating what he really means by *śraddhā*, however, the Buddha in this Canto uses metaphors like the water-seeker digging for water, the maker of fires twirling firesticks, and the farmer sowing seed. These metaphors point to a confidence which has nothing to do with religious belief, or faith, but everything to do with practical human know-how and rational human effort.

¹⁰⁵³ EHJ’s footnote: “It is hard to determine the exact meaning of *pratyavamarśa*... as it does not apparently occur in any other Buddhist work, Sanskrit or Pali... The original meaning of *mṛś* with *pratyava* seems to be ‘lay hold of,’ which suggests that it means the first step in the path of enlightenment, consisting of laying hold of the Law by faith in the Buddha.”

¹⁰⁵⁴ In his book *Mūlamadhyamakārikā of Nāgārjuna*, which otherwise has much to commend it, the Buddhist scholar Prof. David Kalupahana wrote: “Since such sophisticated Mahāyāna sutras [as the Lotus Sutra] were not available to Nāgārjuna, he could not help moving on to the early discourses in the Nikāyas and the Āgamas in search of the Buddha’s teaching, especially at a time when he realized that the problems were created not only by metaphysicians like the Sarvāstivādins and the Sautrāntikas, but also by more popular religious teachers like Aśvaghōṣa, who over-emphasized the function of ‘faith’ in the emerging belief in a transcendent Buddha.” How wrong can a Buddhist scholar be? Did Kalupahana actually bother to read for himself what Aśvaghōṣa wrote about *śraddhā*?

apsaro-bhṛtako dharmaṁ carasīty atha coditaḥ /

ānandena tadā nandaḥ paraṁ vrīḍam upāgamat // 12.1 //

“You are practising dharma to earn the *apsarases* as wages!” To be upbraided thus, / As Nanda then was by Ānanda, made him deeply ashamed. // 12.1 //

tasya vrīḍena mahatā pramodo hṛdi nābhavat /

aprāmodyena vimukhaṁ nāvatasthe vrata manaḥ // 12.2 //

Because of the great shame the exuberance in his heart was no more. / His mind was downcast, due to disenchantment, and did not stick with practice. // 12.2 //

kāma-rāga-pradhāno 'pi parihāsa-samo 'pi san /

paripāka-gate hetau na sa tan mamṛṣe vacaḥ // 12.3 //

Though he was fixated on sensual love, and at the same time indifferent to ridicule, / Nanda's motivation had matured to a point where neither could he disregard [Ānanda's] words. // 12.3 //

aparīkṣaka-bhāvāc ca pūrvaṁ matvā divaṁ dhruvam /

tasmāt kṣeṣṇuṁ pariśrutya bhṛśaṁ saṁvegam eyivān // 12.4 //

Being of an unquestioning nature, he had presumed heaven to be a constant; / So on learning that it was perishable he was fiercely shocked. // 12.4 //

tasya svargān nivavṛte saṁkalpāśvo mano-rathaḥ /

mahā-ratha ivonmārgād apramattasya sārathēḥ // 12.5 //

Turning back from heaven, the chariot of his mind, whose horse was willpower,¹⁰⁵⁵ / Was like a great chariot turned back from a wrong road by an attentive charioteer. // 12.5 //

svarga-tarṣān nivṛttaś ca sadyaḥ svastha ivābhavat /

mṛṣṭād apathyād virato jijīviṣur ivāturaḥ // 12.6 //

After turning back from his thirst for heaven, he seemed suddenly to become well. / He had given up something sweet that was bad for him, like a sick man finding the will to live. // 12.6 //

visasmāra priyāṁ bhāryāṁ apsaro-darśanād yathā /

tathānityatayodvignas tatyājāpsaraso 'pi saḥ // 12.7 //

Just as he forgot about his beloved wife on seeing the *apsarases*, / So also, when startled by their impermanence, did he put the *apsarases* behind him. // 12.7 //

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Samkalpa* is given in the dictionary as a conception or idea or notion formed in the mind or heart; will, volition, desire, purpose. It is hard to know from this context whether Aśvaghōṣa intended *saṁkalpa* to have a negative, positive, or neutral connotation. EHJ translated “whose steeds are the fancies.” This is as per the Buddha's usage of *saṁkalpa* in SN13.35 (“For smeared with the poison of fancies/conceptions, are those arrows, produced from five senses...”).

mahatām api bhūtānām āvṛttir iti cintayan /

saṁvegāc ca sa-rāgo 'pi vīta-rāga ivābhavat // 12.8 //

“Even the greatest beings are subject to return!” So he reflected, / And from his shock, though given to redness, he seemed to blanch.¹⁰⁵⁶ // 12.8 //

babhūva sa hi saṁvegaḥ śreyasas tasya vṛddhaye /

dhātur edhir ivākhyāte paṭhito 'kṣara-cintakaiḥ // 12.9 //

It was for growth in him of a better way that the shock happened – / Just as the verb “to grow” is listed [after “to happen”] in the lexicon recited by students of grammar.¹⁰⁵⁷ // 12.9 //

na tu kāmān manas tasya kena-cij jagṛhe dhṛtiḥ /

triṣu kāleṣu sarveṣu nipāto 'stir iva smṛtaḥ // 12.10 //

Because of his sensuality, however, his mind was by no means gripped by the kind of constancy / Which is shown, in all three times, by the received usage of the irregularity¹⁰⁵⁸ which is “being.”¹⁰⁵⁹ // 12.10 //

khela-gāmī mahā-bāhur gajendra iva nirmadaḥ /

so 'bhyagacchad gurum kāle vivakṣur bhāvam ātmanaḥ // 12.11 //

Trembling went he of mighty arm, like a top bull elephant, through with rut: / At a suitable moment, he approached the Guru, wishing to communicate his intention. // 12.11 //

praṇamya ca gurau murdhnā bāṣpa-vyākula-locanaḥ /

kṛtvāñjalim uvācedaṁ hriyā kiṁ-cid avāṅmukhaḥ // 12.12 //

After bowing his head to the Guru, with eyes filled with tears, / He joined the palms of his hands and spoke as follows, his face somewhat lowered, because of shame:¹⁰⁶⁰ // 12.12 //

¹⁰⁵⁶ This line may be taken as evidence of Aśvaghoṣa's insight into the mutually antagonistic fear responses (white fear paralysis and red panic) which are at the core of human existence. Of the two, it is fear paralysis which is deeper and more primitive; hence Aśvaghoṣa is emphasizing how deep was the shock to Nanda's system.

¹⁰⁵⁷ The lexicon in question is Pāṇini's *dhātu-pāṭha*, "Recital of Grammatical Roots," an ancient list of 2200 verbal roots, the first of which is *bhu* (be, exist, happen) and the second of which is *edh* (increase, grow). The beginning of the list might have been almost as familiar to people of Aśvaghoṣa's day who knew Sanskrit as “abc” is familiar to us. (Thanks to Malcolm Markovich for clarifying this background.)

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Nipāta* originally means falling down, decay, accidental occurrence; in grammar it means 1. irregular form, irregularity, exception, and 2. a particle.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Linda Covill notes that *asti* (existent, present) is considered to be an example of an indeclinable particle; i.e., an irregular particle whose form is supposed to remain constant. So Aśvaghoṣa is saying that Nanda does not yet show that kind of constancy. At the same time, conversely, Aśvaghoṣa might be saying something about the irregularity of existence itself.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Here again, the mental phenomena – shame – is cause, and the face being lowered is effect. (It is not a question of a practitioner arranging the angle of his head in an effort to regulate his own mind.)

**apsaraḥ prāptaye yan me bhagavan pratibhūr asi /
nāpsarobhir mamārtho 'sti pratibhūtvam tyajāmy aham // 12.13 //**

“For my gaining of the celestial nymphs, Glorious One, you stand as guarantor. / But for the nymphs I have no need; I relinquish your guarantee. // 12.13 //

**śrutvā hy āvartakaṁ svargaṁ saṁsārasya ca citratām /
na martyeṣu na deveṣu pravṛttir mama rocate // 12.14 //**

For since I have heard of heaven’s fleeting whirl and of the varieties of aimless wandering, /
Neither among mortal beings nor among heavenly beings does doing appeal to me.¹⁰⁶¹ // 12.14
//

**yadi prāpya divaṁ yatnān niyamena damena ca /
a-vitrptāḥ patanty ante svargāya tyāgine namaḥ // 12.15 //**

If, after struggling to get to heaven, through self-restriction and restraint, / [Men] fall at last,
unsatisfied, then homage to the heaven-bound who give up on the way. // 12.15 //

**ataś ca nikhilam lokaṁ viditvā sacarācaram /
sarva-duḥkha-kṣaya-kare tvad-dharme parame rame // 12.16 //**

Now that I have seen through the whole world of man, with its changeability and its fixity, / It
is the eradicator of all suffering, your most excellent dharma, that I rejoice in.¹⁰⁶² // 12.16 //

**tasmād vyāsa-samāsābhyāṁ tan me vyākhyātum arhasi /
yac chrutvā śṛṇvatām śreṣṭha paramaṁ prāpnuyām padam // 12.17 //**

Therefore, in detail and in summary, could you please communicate it to me, / O Best of
Listeners, so that through listening I might come to the ultimate step.” // 12.17 //

**tatas tasyāśayaṁ jñātvā vipakṣāṅīndriyāṇi ca /
śreyaś caivāmukhī-bhūtaṁ nijagāda tathāgataḥ // 12.18 //**

Then, knowing from where he was coming, and that, though his senses were set against it, / A
better way was now emerging, the Realised One spoke: // 12.18 //

¹⁰⁶¹ *Pra-vṛtti* is defined as “moving or rolling onwards, advance, progress, active life.” So *pra-vṛtti* expresses the kind of doing which keeps the wheel of saṁsāra rolling – as opposed to *ni-vṛtti*, non-doing. See also SN12.22 and SN16.42.

¹⁰⁶² Notice that in this Canto Nanda does NOT, as per EH Johnston's comment and David Kalupahana's subsequent aberrant assertions, express spiritual faith in the Buddha. If Nanda here expresses belief in anything, he expresses his joyful confidence that the Buddha's most excellent dharma can be effective in eradicating suffering.

aho pratyavamarśo 'yaṁ śreyasas te purojavaḥ /

araṇyāṁ mathyamānāyām agner dhūma ivotthitaḥ // 12.19 //

“Aha! This gaining of a foothold¹⁰⁶³ is the harbinger of a higher good in you, / As, when a firestick is rubbed, rising smoke is the harbinger of fire. // 12.19 //

ciram unmārga-vihṛto lolair indriya-vājibhiḥ /

avatīrṇo 'si panthānaṁ diṣṭyā dṛṣṭyāvīmūḍhayā // 12.20 //

Long carried off course by the restless horses of the senses, / You have now set foot on a path, with a clarity of vision that, happily, will not dim. // 12.20 //

adya te sa-phalaṁ janma lābho 'dya su-mahāṁs tava /

yasya kāma-rasa-jñasya naiṣkramyāyotsukaṁ manaḥ // 12.21 //

Today your birth bears fruit; your gain today is great; / For though you know the taste of love, your mind is yearning for indifference. // 12.21 //

loke 'sminn ālayārāme nivṛttau durlabhā ratiḥ /

vyathante hy apunar-bhāvāt prapātād iva bālīśāḥ // 12.22 //

In this world which likes what is close to home, a fondness for non-doing is rare; / For men shrink from the end of becoming like the puerile from the edge of a cliff. // 12.22 //

duḥkhaṁ na syāt sukhaṁ me syād iti prayatate janaḥ /

atyanta-duḥkhoparamaṁ sukhaṁ tac ca na budhyate // 12.23 //

People think ‘there might be no suffering, just happiness for me!’ And as they labour under this [illusion], / Any respite from incessant suffering they sense not as such, but as happiness. // 12.23 //

ari-bhūteṣv anityeṣu satataṁ duḥkha-hetuṣu /

kāmādiṣu jagat saktaṁ na vetti sukham avyayam // 12.24 //

Upon [whims] which are transient and akin to enemies, forever causing suffering, / Upon things like love, the world is fixed. It does not know the happiness that is immune to change. // 12.24 //

sarva-duḥkhāpahaṁ tat tu hasta-stham amṛtaṁ tava /

viṣaṁ pītṛvā yad agadaṁ samaye pātum icchasi // 12.25 //

But that deathless nectar which prevents all suffering you have in your hands: / It is an antidote which, having drunk poison, you are going in good time to drink. // 12.25 //

¹⁰⁶³ As a translation of *pratyavamarśa*, there is evidence to support both 1. "gaining a foothold," and 2. "discernment/comprehension" – i.e. touching with the mind, in verse 20, where the Buddha tells Nanda that he has 1. set foot on a true path, with 2. clarity of vision.

**anarha-saṁsāra-bhayaṁ mānārhaṁ te cikīrṣitam /
rāgāgnis tādṛṣo yasya dharmonmukha parān-mukhaḥ // 12.26 //**

In its fear of worthless wandering your intention is worthy of respect, / For a fire of passion such as yours, O you whose face is turned to dharma, is being turned around. // 12.26 //

**rāgoddāmena manasā sarvathā duṣkarā dhṛtiḥ /
sa-doṣaṁ salilaṁ dṛṣṭvā pāntheneva pipāsunā // 12.27 //**

With a mind unbridled by lust it is exceedingly difficult to be steadfast - / As when a thirsty traveller sees dirty water. // 12.27 //

**īdṛśī nāma buddhis te niruddhā rajasābhavat /
rajasā caṇḍa-vātena vivasvata iva prabhā // 12.28 //**

Obviously, the dust of passion was blocking the consciousness that is now awakening in you, / Like the dust of a sand-storm blocking the light of the sun. // 12.28 //

**sā jighāṁsus tamo hārdaṁ yā saṁprati vijṛmbhate /
tamo naiṣaṁ prabhā saurī vinirgīrṇeva meruṇā // 12.29 //**

But now [consciousness] is blossoming forth, seeking to dispell darkness of the heart, / Like that sunlight spewed forth from mount Meru which dispells the darkness of night. // 12.29 //

**yukta-rūpam idaṁ caiva śuddha-sattvasya cetasaḥ /
yat te syān naiṣṭhike sūkṣme śreyasi śraddadhānatā // 12.30 //**

And this indeed befits a soul whose essence is simplicity: / That you should have confidence in a better way which is ultimate and subtle.¹⁰⁶⁴ // 12.30 //

**dharma-cchandam imaṁ tasmād vivardhayitum arhasi /
sarva-dharmā hi dharmajña niyamāc chanda-hetavaḥ // 12.31 //**

This wish for dharma, therefore, you should nurture; / For all dharmas, O knower of dharma, invariably have wishing as their cause. // 12.31 //

**satyāṁ gamana-buddhau hi gamanāya pravartate /
śayyā-buddhau ca śayanaṁ sthāna-buddhau tathā sthitiḥ // 12.32 //**

As long as the intention of moving is there, one mobilizes for the act of moving; / And with the intention of staying at rest there is an act of staying at rest; with the intention of standing, likewise, there is standing up. // 12.32 //

¹⁰⁶⁴ Again, from the Buddha's standpoint, there is no affirmation here of faith in Buddha. There is affirmation of confidence in a better way, or belief in betterment. The subtlety to which the Buddha refers might be related with the principle that purity/simplicity is a person's original nature, in which case the source is to be returned to by indirect means, and not by a direct ascetic assault on the senses. (See also Introduction to Canto 13.)

**antar-bhūmi-gataṃ hy ambhaḥ śraddadhāti naro yadā /
arthitve sati yatnena tadā khanati gām imām // 12.33 //**

When a man has confidence that there is water under the ground / And has need of water, then,
with an effort of will, here the earth he digs. // 12.33 //

**nārthī yady agninā vā syāc chraddadhyāt taṃ na vāraṇau /
mathnīyān nāraṇim kaś-cit tad-bhāve sati mathyate // 12.34 //**

If a man had no need of fire, nor confidence that fire was in a firestick, / He would never twirl
the stick. Those conditions being met, he does twirl the stick. // 12.34 //

**sasyotpattim yadi na vā śraddadhyāt kārṣakaḥ kṣitau /
arthī sasyena vā na syād bījāni na vaped bhuvī // 12.35 //**

Without the confidence that corn will grow in the soil he tills, / Or without the need for corn,
the farmer would not sow seeds in the earth. // 12.35 //

**ataś ca hasta ity uktā mayā śraddhā viśeṣataḥ /
yasmād grṇhāti sad-dharmaṃ dāyaṃ hasta ivākṣataḥ // 12.36 //**

And so I call this confidence the Hand, because it is this confidence, above all, / That grasps true
dharma, as a hand naturally takes a gift. // 12.36 //

**prādhānyād indriyam iti sthiratvād balam ity ataḥ /
guṇa-dāridrya-śamanād dhanam ity abhivarṇitā // 12.37 //**

From its primacy I describe it as Sensory Power;¹⁰⁶⁵ from its constancy, as Strength; / And
because it relieves poverty of virtue I describe it as Wealth. // 12.37 //

**rakṣaṇārthena dharmasya tatheṣik ety udāhṛtā /
loke 'smin durlabhatvāc ca ratnam ity abhibhāṣitā // 12.38 //**

For its protection of dharma, I call it the Arrow, / And from the difficulty of finding it in this
world I call it the Jewel. // 12.38 //

**punaś ca bījam ity uktā nimittaṃ śreyaso yadā /
pāvanārthena pāpasya nadīty abhihitā punaḥ // 12.39 //**

Again, I call it the Seed since it is the cause of betterment;¹⁰⁶⁶ / And for its cleansing action, in
the washing away of wrong, again, I call it the River. // 12.39 //

¹⁰⁶⁵ *Indriya* means power, force, the quality which belongs especially to the mighty Indra (see Introduction to Canto 13). EHJ translated *indriya* here as “the Faculty.”

¹⁰⁶⁶ *Nimittaṃ śreyasas*. Here *nimitta* evidently means “cause.” (See discussion of *nimitta* from SN16.53.)

**yasmād dharmasya cotpattau śraddhā kāraṇam uttamam /
mayoktā kāryatas tasmāt tatra tatra tathā tathā // 12.40 //**

Since in the arising of dharma confidence is the primary cause, / Therefore I have named it
after its effects in this case like this, in that case like that. // 12.40 //

**śraddhāṅkuram imam tasmāt saṁvardhayitum arhasi /
tad-ṽṛddhau vardhate dharmo mūla-ṽṛddhau yathā drumah // 12.41 //**

This shoot of confidence, therefore, you should nurture; / When it grows dharma grows, as a
tree grows with the growth of its root. // 12.41 //

**vyākulaṁ darśanam yasya durbalo yasya niścayaḥ /
tasya pāriplavā śraddhā na hi kṛtyāya vartate // 12.42 //**

When a person's seeing is disordered, when a person's sense of purpose is weak: / The
confidence of that person is unsteady, for he is not veering in the direction he should. // 12.42
//

**yāvat tattvaṁ na bhavati hi dṛṣṭam śrutaṁ vā
tāvaca śraddhā na bhavati bala-sthā sthirā vā /
dṛṣṭe tattve niyama-paribhūtendriyasya
śraddhā-ṽṛkṣo bhavati sa-phalaś cāśrayaś ca // 12.43 //**

So long as the real truth is not seen or heard, confidence does not become strong or firm; / But
when, through restraint, the power of the senses is subjugated and the real truth is realised, the
tree of confidence bears fruit and weight." // 12.43 //

saundaranande mahākāvye pratyavamarśo nāma dvādaśaḥ sargaḥ // 12 //
The 12th Canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled "Gaining a Foothold."

Canto 13: śilendriya-jayaḥ Defeating the Power of the Senses through Integrity

Introduction

Far from being seen as passive receptors, the senses were seen in ancient India as powerful forces. Thus the very word *indriya* means, as an adjective, “belonging to mighty Indra,” and, as a noun, “power, force, the quality which belongs especially to the mighty Indra.” Secondary definitions of *indriya* are “bodily power, power of the senses,” and “faculty of sense, sense, organ of sense.” Reflecting this conception, in ancient Indian asceticism the word *jitendriya*, “conqueror/subjugator of the senses,” was used to mean the ascetic himself.

The title of the present Canto can be read as expressing a subtly different conception, in which the power of the senses (*indriya*) continues to be regarded as a dangerous or hostile force to be conquered, but in which the means of conquest (*jaya*) is indirect, via the practice and the discipline of integrity (*śīla*; defined in verse 27). As part of this metaphor of conquest, the Buddha speaks of wearing the protective armour of reflective awareness – or, in other words, wearing the armour of mindfulness.

**atha saṁrādhito nandaḥ śraddhām prati maharṣiṇā /
pariṣikto ’mṛteneva yuyuje parayā mudā // 13.1 //**

And so, Nanda was affirmed by the great seer, in the matter of confidence; / He felt filled with the deepest joy, as if drenched in the deathless nectar. // 13.1 //

**kṛtārtham iva taṁ mene saṁbuddhaḥ śraddhayā tayā /
mene prāptam iva śreyāḥ sa ca buddhena saṁskṛtaḥ // 13.2 //**

To the Fully Awakened Buddha, by virtue of that confidence, he seemed already to be a success; / And to himself, having been initiated¹⁰⁶⁷ by the Buddha, he felt as though he had arrived already on the better path. // 13.2 //

**ślakṣṇena vacasā kāṁś-cit kāṁś-cit paruṣayā girā /
kāṁś-cid ābhyām upāyābhyām sa vininye vināyakaḥ // 13.3 //**

Some in soothing tones; some with tough talk, / Some by both these means, he the trainer trained. // 13.3 //

**pāṁsubhyaḥ kāñcanaṁ jātaṁ viśuddhaṁ nirmalaṁ śuci /
sthitaṁ pāṁsuṣv api yathā pāṁsu-doṣair na lipyate // 13.4 //**

Just as gold born from dirt is pure, spotless, gleaming, / And while lying in the dirt is not tarnished by the dirt’s impurities, // 13.4 //

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Saṁskṛta* (from *saṁ-s-√kr*; see also verses 13 and 29) lit. means “put together” or “well formed.” “Initiated” and “made ready” are secondary meanings.

**padma-parṇaṁ yathā caiva jale jātaṁ jale sthitam /
upariṣṭād adhastād vā na jalenopalipyate // 13.5 //**

And just as a lotus-leaf is born in water and remains in water, / But neither above nor below is sullied by the water, // 13.5 //

**tadval loke munir jāto lokasyānugrahaṁ caran /
kṛtīvān nirmalatvāc ca loka-dharmair na lipyate // 13.6 //**

So the Sage, born in the world, and acting for the benefit of the world, / Because of his state of action, and spotlessness, is not tainted by worldly things. // 13.6 //

**śleṣaṁ tyāgaṁ priyaṁ rūkṣaṁ kathāṁ ca dhyānam eva ca /
mantu-kāle cikitsārthaṁ cakre nātmānuvṛttaye // 13.7 //**

Joining with others and leaving them; love and toughness; and talking, as well as meditation itself: / He used these means during his instruction for the purpose of healing, not to make a following for himself. // 13.7 //

**ataś ca saṁdadhe kāyaṁ mahākaruṇayā tayā /
mocayeaṁ kathaṁ duḥkhāt sattvānīty anukampakaḥ // 13.8 //**

Thus did the benevolent one, out of his great compassion, take on a form / By which he might release fellow living beings from suffering. // 13.8 //

**atha saṁharṣaṇān nandaṁ viditvā bhājanī-kṛtam /
abravīd bruvatām śreṣṭhaḥ krama-jñāḥ śreyasām kramam // 13.9 //**

Seeing, then, that by boosting Nanda he had made a receptacle, / The best of speakers, the knower of processes, spoke of better ways as a process: // 13.9 //

**ataḥ prabhṛti bhūyas tvam śraddhendriya-puraḥsaraḥ /
amṛtasyāptaye saumya vṛttaṁ rakṣitum arhasi // 13.10 //**

“Starting afresh from here, my friend, with the power of confidence leading you forward, / In order to get to the nectar of deathlessness you should watch the manner of your action. // 13.10 //

**prayogaḥ kāya-vacasoḥ śuddho bhavati te yathā /
uttāno vivṛto gupto ’navacchidras tathā kuru // 13.11 //**

So that the use of body and voice becomes simple¹⁰⁶⁸ for you, / Make it expansive and open, and guarded, and free from disconnectedness¹⁰⁶⁹ – // 13.11 //

¹⁰⁶⁸ Śuddha means pure, firstly in the sense of being cleansed, but also in the secondary sense of being simple, genuine, true.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Anavacchidra means free from clefts or flaws, unbroken, uninterrupted, uninjured. As an adjective, chidra means containing holes, leaky; as a noun, chidra means hole, cleft, and hence defect, fault, weak point.

**uttāno bhāva-karaṇād vivṛtaś cāpy agūhanāt /
gupto rakṣaṇa-tātparyād acchidraś cānavadyataḥ // 13.12 //**

Expansive by reality's doing; open from not hiding; / Guarded because aimed at prevention; and unbroken through absence of fault. // 13.12 //

**śarīra-vacasoḥ śuddhau saptāṅge cāpi karmaṇi /
ājīva-samudācāraṁ śaucāt saṁskartum arhasi // 13.13 //**

With regard for purity of body and voice, and with regard also for the sevenfold [prohibition on bodily and vocal] conduct,¹⁰⁷⁰ / You should work to perfect a proper way of making a living, on the grounds of integrity¹⁰⁷¹ - // 13.13 //

**doṣāṇāṁ kuhanādīnāṁ pañcānāṁ aniṣevaṇāt /
tyāgāc ca jyotiṣādīnāṁ caturṇāṁ vṛtti-ghātināṁ // 13.14 //**

On the grounds of not indulging the five faults, beginning with hypocrisy; / On the grounds of fleeing the four predators of practice, such as astrology; // 13.14 //

**prāṇi-dhānya-dhanādīnāṁ varjyānāṁ apratigrahāt /
bhaikṣāṅgānāṁ nisṛṣṭānāṁ niyatānāṁ pratigrahāt // 13.15 //**

On the grounds of not accepting things to be avoided, such as valuables linked to the needless killing of living creatures;¹⁰⁷² / On the grounds of accepting the established rules for begging, with their definite limits; // 13.15 //

**parituṣṭaḥ śucir mañjuś caukṣayā jīva-saṁpadā /
kuryā duḥkha-pratikāraṁ yāvad eva vimuktaye // 13.16 //**

As a person who is contented, pristine, and pleasant, you can, through making a living cleanly and well, / Counteract suffering all the way to liberation. // 13.16 //

¹⁰⁷⁰ Of the ten precepts alluded to in SN Canto 3, there seem to be seven that specifically prohibit wrong physical and vocal conduct, namely: not inflicting needless suffering on any living being, not stealing, not chasing married women; along with not lying, not gossiping, not hurting others with smooth speech, and not slandering others (see verses 3.30–33).

¹⁰⁷¹ “On the grounds of integrity” is *śaucāt*. *Śauca* is given in the dictionary as 1. cleanness, 2. purity of mind, integrity, honesty (especially in money matters). This verse alludes to the three elements of threefold integrity (*śīla*) within the noble eightfold path. Those three elements are using the voice well, using the body well, and earning a clean living (see SN16.31).

¹⁰⁷² EHJ's original text has *prāṇi-dhānya-dhanādīnāṁ* (living creatures, **grain**, money and so on), but EHJ noted that Gawronski's *prāṇi-ghāta-dhanādīnāṁ* may well be right. *Prāṇi-ghātin* means killing living beings, so that Gawronski's amendment could mean 'such things as money [procured from needless] killing of living beings' or 'goods [whose production has involved needless] killing of living beings' or 'valuables [whose acquisition has involved needless] killing of living beings.' It is difficult to see why grain would have been avoided.

**karmaṇo hi yathādr̥ṣṭāt kāya-vāk-prabhavād api /
ājīvaḥ pṛthag evokto duḥśodhatvād ayaṁ mayā // 13.17 //**

Separately from overt action, and from the origin of the use of body and voice, / I have spoken
of making a living because it is so hard to make a pure one¹⁰⁷³ – // 13.17 //

**gṛha-sthena hi duḥśodhā dr̥ṣṭir vividha-dr̥ṣṭinā /
ājīvo bhikṣuṇā caiva pareṣv āyatta-vṛttinā // 13.18 //**

For hard to be washed away is the view of a householder with his many and various concerns,
/ And also [hard to be kept pure] is the livelihood of a beggar whose subsistence depends on
others.¹⁰⁷⁴ // 13.18 //

**etāvaca chīlam ity uktam ācāro 'yaṁ samāsataḥ /
asya nāśena naiva syāt pravrajyā na gṛhasthatā // 13.19 //**

Such is termed “the discipline of integrity.” In sum, it is conduct; / Without it there could truly
be no going forth, nor state of being at home. // 13.19 //

**tasmāc cāritra-sampanno brahmacaryam idaṁ cara /
aṇumātreṣv avadyeṣu bhaya-darśī dr̥ḍha-vrataḥ // 13.20 //**

Steeped in good conduct, therefore, lead this life of devout abstinence, / And in what is even
minutely blameworthy see danger, being firm in your purpose. // 13.20 //

**śīlam āsthāya vartante sarvā hi śreyasi kriyāḥ /
sthānādyaṇīva kāryāṇi pratiṣṭhāya vasundharām // 13.21 //**

For founded on integrity unfurl all actions on the better path, / Just as events¹⁰⁷⁵ like standing
unfold, when [a force] resists the earth. // 13.21 //

**mokṣasyopaniṣat saumya vairāgyam iti gṛhyatām /
vairāgyasyāpi saṁvedaḥ saṁvido jñāna-darśanam // 13.22 //**

Let it be grasped, my friend, that release is seated in dispassion, / Dispassion in conscious
awareness, and conscious awareness in knowing and seeing. // 13.22 //

¹⁰⁷³ *Duḥśodhatvād* is lit. “from the difficulty of cleansing.”

¹⁰⁷⁴ EHJ's original Sanskrit text has *pareṣṭāyatta*, as per the paper manuscript. In the notes to his translation, however, EHJ refers to the *Abhidharma-kośa* (Abhidharma Treasury) of Aśvaghoṣa's 9th-generation descendant Vasubandhu (21st Zen patriarch in India), which quotes this verse and shows the correct reading to be *pareṣv āyatta-vṛttinā*.

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Kārya* lit. means “[something] to be done.” Ironically, however, the description seems to be of an act of standing which is not done, but which is allowed to do itself.

**jñānasyopaniṣac caiva samādhir upadhāryatām /
samādher apy upaniṣat sukhaṁ śārīra-mānasam // 13.23 //**

And let it be experienced, again, that the knowing is seated in a stillness / And that the seat of the stillness is a body-mind at ease. // 13.23 //

**praśrabdhiḥ kāya-manasaḥ sukhasyopaniṣat parā /
praśrabdher apy upaniṣat prītir apy avagamyatām // 13.24 //**

An assurance on which sits ease of the body-mind is of the highest order, / And the assurance is seated in enjoyment. Again, let this be realised in experience. // 13.24 //

**tathā prīter upaniṣat prāmodyaṁ paramaṁ matam /
prāmodyasyāpy ahrīlekhaḥ kukṛteṣv akrteṣu vā // 13.25 //**

The enjoyment is seated in a great happiness which, similarly, is understood to be of the highest order; / And the happiness is seated in a freedom from furrowing the heart over things done badly or not done. // 13.25 //

**avilekhasya manasaḥ śīlaṁ tūpaniṣac chuci /
ataḥ śīlaṁ nayaty agryam iti śīlaṁ viśodhaya // 13.26 //**

But the freedom of the mind from remorse is seated in pristine practice of integrity. / Therefore, [realising] that integrity comes first, purify the discipline of integrity. // 13.26 //

**śīlanāc chīlam ity uktaṁ śīlanaṁ sevanād api /
sevanaṁ tan-nideśāc ca nideśaś ca tad-āśrayāt // 13.27 //**

The discipline of integrity is so called because it comes out of repeated practice;¹⁰⁷⁶ repeated practice comes out of devotion to training; / Devotion to training comes out of direction in it; and direction comes out of submitting to that direction. // 13.27 //

**śīlaṁ hi śaraṇaṁ saumya kāntāra iva daiśikaḥ /
mitraṁ bandhuś ca rakṣā ca dhanam ca balam eva ca // 13.28 //**

For the discipline of integrity, my friend, is the refuge: it is like a guide in the wilderness, / It is friend, kinsman, and protector; it is wealth, and it is strength. // 13.28 //

¹⁰⁷⁶ “Repeated practice” is *śīlana*; “the discipline of integrity” is *śīla*. So *śīla*, the discipline of integrity, is so called because it comes from *śīlana*, repeated practice, or constant application.

**yataḥ śīlam ataḥ saumya śīlaṁ saṁskartum arhasi /
etat sthānam athānyeṣu mokṣārambheṣu yoginām // 13.29 //**

Since the discipline of integrity is such, my friend, you should work to perfect the discipline of integrity. / Among those who practise, moreover, this is the stance taken in different endeavours whose aim is freedom.¹⁰⁷⁷ // 13.29 //

**tataḥ smṛtim adhiṣṭhāya capalāni svabhāvataḥ /
indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyo nivārayitum arhasi // 13.30 //**

On this basis, standing grounded in awareness, you should hold back the naturally impetuous senses from the objects of those senses. // 13.30 //

**bhetavyaṁ na tathā śatror nāgner nāher na cāśaneḥ /
indriyebhyo yathā svebhyas tair ajasraṁ hi hanyate // 13.31 //**

There is less to fear from an enemy or from fire, or from a snake, or from lightning, / Than there is from one's own senses; for through them one is forever being smitten. // 13.31 //

**dviṣadbhiḥ śatrubhiḥ kaś-cit kadā-cit pīḍyate na vā /
indriyair bādhyate sarvaḥ sarvatra ca sadaiva ca // 13.32 //**

Some people some of the time are beleaguered by hateful enemies – or else they are not. / Besieged through the senses are all people everywhere, all of the time. // 13.32 //

**na ca prayāti narakaṁ śatru-prabhṛtibhir hataḥ /
kṛṣyate tatra nighnas tu capalair indriyair hataḥ // 13.33 //**

Nor does one go to hell when smitten by the likes of an enemy; / But meekly is one pulled there when smitten through the impetuous senses. // 13.33 //

**hanyamānasya tair duḥkhaṁ hārdaṁ bhavati vā na vā /
indriyair bādhyamānasya hārdaṁ śārīram eva ca // 13.34 //**

The pain of being smitten by those others may occur in the heart – or else it may not. / The pain of being oppressed through one's senses is a matter of the heart and indeed of the body. // 13.34 //

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Yoginām* here seems to indicate not only those who practise yoga as directed by the Buddha, for example in Canto 16 (see e.g. use of the word *yoga* in SN16.33, 16.52, 16.92), but also yogins devoted to other ways of practice whose aim is freedom. The universal principle in the background, recognized by mechanical engineers as well as by yoga adepts, might be the interdependence of freedom and restraint. The use of *yoginām* in the plural in this verse mirrors the use of *śreyasām* in the plural in verse 9. The point might be that there is more than one way to liberate oneself from the slavery of habit – the way of a Thai bhikkhu, the way of a Tibetan bodhisattva, the way of a Zen practitioner devoted to just sitting, the way of a martial artist, the way of a runner or a skier or a swimmer, the way of a student of FM Alexander, or of J. Krishnamurti, or of G. I. Gurdjieff – but every way is a process, in which the universal truth holds that there is no freedom without restraint.

**saṁkalpa-viṣa-digdhā hi pañcendriya-mayāḥ śarāḥ /
cintā-puñkhā rati-phalā viṣayākāśa-gocarāḥ // 13.35 //**

For smeared with the poison of conceptions,¹⁰⁷⁸ are those arrows, produced from five senses, /
Whose tails are anxiety, whose tips are thrills, and whose range is the vast emptiness of objects.
// 13.35 //

**manuṣya-hariṇān ghnanti kāma-vyādheritā hr̥di /
vihanyante yadi na te tataḥ patanti taiḥ kṣatāḥ // 13.36 //**

Fired off by Desire, the hunter, they strike human fawns in the heart; / Unless they are warded
away, men wounded by them duly fall. // 13.36 //

**niyamājira-saṁsthena dhairya-kārmuka-dhāriṇā /
nipatanto nivāryās te mahatā smṛti-varmaṇā // 13.37 //**

Standing firm in the arena of restraint, and bearing the bow of resolve, / The mighty man, as
they rain down, must fend them away, wearing the armour of awareness. // 13.37 //

**indriyāṇām upaśamād arīṇām nigrahād iva /
sukhaṁ svapiti vāste vā yatra tatra gatoddhavaḥ // 13.38 //**

From ebbing of the power of the senses, as if from subjugation of enemies, / One sleeps or sits at
ease, in joyful recreation, wherever one may be. // 13.38 //

**teṣāṁ hi satataṁ loke viṣayān abhikāṅkṣatām /
saṁvin naivāsti kārpaṇyāc chunām āśāvatām iva // 13.39 //**

For in the constant hankering of those senses after objects in the world, / There occurs out of
that ignominy no more consciousness than there is in the hoping of hounds. // 13.39 //

**viṣayair indriya-grāmo na tṛptim adhigacchati /
ajasraṁ pūryamāṇo 'pi samudraḥ salilair iva // 13.40 //**

A cluster of sense organs is no more sated by objects, / Than is the ocean, even when constantly
filled, by water. // 13.40 //

¹⁰⁷⁸ The meanings of *saṁkalpa* include conception or idea or notion, but also willpower (see SN12.5) or definite intention, and (as defined in the MW dictionary) “an idea or expectation of any advantage.” EHJ here translated *saṁkalpa-viṣa* as “the poison of fancies;” and LC as “the poison of fanciful notions.”

avaśyaṃ gocare sve sve vartitavyam ihendriyaiḥ /

Nimittam tatra na grāhyam anuvyañjanam eva ca // 13.41 //

It is necessarily through the senses, each in its own sphere, that one must function in this world. / But not to be seized upon in that realm is an objectified image¹⁰⁷⁹ or any secondary sexual sign:¹⁰⁸⁰ // 13.41 //

ālokya cakṣuṣā rūpaṃ dhātu-mātre vyavasthitaḥ /

strī veti puruṣo veti na kalpayitum arhasi // 13.42 //

On seeing a form with your eye [you] are contained in the sum of the elements: / The conception that ‘it is a woman’ or ‘it is a man’ you should not frame.¹⁰⁸¹ // 13.42 //

sacet strī-puruṣa-grāhaḥ kva-cid vidyeta kaś-cana /

śubhataḥ keśa-dantādīn nānuprasthātum arhasi // 13.43 //

If a notion of woman or man does intrude at any time in relation to anyone, / Upon hair, teeth, and the rest, for their beauty, you should not dwell. // 13.43 //

nāpaneyaṃ tataḥ kiṃ-cit prakṣepyaṃ nāpi kiṃcana /

draṣṭavyaṃ bhūtato bhūtaṃ yādṛśaṃ ca yathā ca yat // 13.44 //

Nothing, then, is to be taken away and nothing is to be added: / The reality is to be investigated as it really is, whatever and however it is. // 13.44 //

evaṃ te paśyatas tattvaṃ śaśvad indriya-gocare /

bhaviṣyati pada-sthānaṃ nābhidhyā-daurmanasyayoḥ // 13.45 //

In your observing what is, like this, always in the territory of the senses, / There will be no foothold for longing and dejection. // 13.45 //

¹⁰⁷⁹ *Nimittam* in the context the Buddha is about to explain means “a woman” or “a man” made into a target. EHJ translates *nimittam* here as “general characteristic;” and LC as “major attribute.”

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Anu-vyañjanam* is given in the MW dictionary as a word used in Buddhist literature to mean “secondary mark or token.” Meanings of *vyañjanam* include “mark of sex or gender (as the beard, breasts et cetera),” and the prefix *anu-* means following from, or secondary. In this verse, the use of *anu-vyañjanam*, in combination with *nimittam*, sheds some light on a somewhat technical meaning of *nimittam*. No such Buddhist technical meaning is given in the MW dictionary, which defines *nimitta* more broadly as 1. mark, target, 2. sign, omen, 3. cause, motive, reason. The Pali-English Dictionary, being more closely based on the Pali canon, defines *nimitta* as 1. a sign or omen, 2. outward appearance, mark, characteristic, attribute, 3. mark, aim, 4. sexual organ, and 5. ground, reason. Specifically with reference to the practice of meditation, the Pali-English dictionary adds (as part of sense 2) the technical sense of “a mental reflex [i.e. reflection] or image” and cites *nimittan gaṇhāti*, “to make something the object of a thought, to catch up a theme for reflection.”

¹⁰⁸¹ *Kalpayitum* (the causative infinitive from the root \sqrt{klp}) means to frame, form, invent, compose (as a poem et cetera), and hence to imagine.

**abhidhyā priya-rūpeṇa hanti kāmātmakam jagat /
arir mitra-mukheneva priya-vāk-kaluṣāśayaḥ // 13.46 //**

Longing, using cherished forms, smites the sensual masses: / A foe who has a friendly face, she's¹⁰⁸² fair of speech and foul of heart. // 13.46 //

**daurmanasyābhidhānas tu pratigho viṣayāśritaḥ /
mohād yenānuvṛttena paratreha ca hanyate // 13.47 //**

Conversely, what is called dejectedness is, in connection with an object, a contrary reaction¹⁰⁸³ / By going along with which, in one's ignorance, one is smitten hereafter, and smitten here and now. // 13.47 //

**anurodha-virodhābhyām śitoṣṇābhyām ivārditaḥ /
śarma nāpnoti na śreyaś calendriyam ato jagat // 13.48 //**

When, by getting and not getting his way, [a man] is pained as if by cold or heat, / He finds no refuge; nor arrives on a better path: hence the unsteady sense-power of the masses. // 13.48 //

**nendriyam viṣaye tāvat pravṛttam api sajjate /
yāvan na manasas tatra parikalpaḥ pravartate // 13.49 //**

And yet the power of the senses, though operative, need not become glued to an object, / So long as in the mind, with regard to that object, no conceptualization goes on.¹⁰⁸⁴ // 13.49 //

**indhane sati vāyau ca yathā jvalati pāvakaḥ /
viṣayāt parikalpāc ca kleśāgnir jāyate tathā // 13.50 //**

Just as a fire burns only where fuel and air co-exist, / So a fire of affliction arises, from an object and the forming of a conception. // 13.50 //

**abhūta-parikalpena viṣayasya hi badhyate /
tam eva viṣayam paśyan bhūtataḥ parimucyate // 13.51 //**

For through an illusory fixed conception one is bound to an object; / Seeing that very same object as it really is, one is set free. // 13.51 //

¹⁰⁸² *Abhidhyā*, desire or longing, is a feminine noun.

¹⁰⁸³ *Pratigha* (from *prati-vhan*, to strike back) means 1. resistance, opposition; 2. anger, wrath, enmity, resentment. In the Rāhula Sutta (MN62), the Pali equivalent *paṭigha* is one of six afflictive emotions specifically discussed; its antidote is *uppekhā* (Sanskrit: *upekṣā*), which means looking on with indifference, showing equanimity or forbearance – in short, not minding.

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Na... parikalpaḥ pravartate* means “no conceptualization goes on” or “no fixing goes on” or “no inventing goes on” or “no illusion arises.” *Parikalpa* is given in the MW dictionary as a word used in Buddhist literature to mean “illusion.” At the same time in non-Buddhist writing, *parikalpa* = *parikalpana*: fixing, contriving, making, inventing. The primary meaning of the verb *pari-vklp* is to fix. “Fixing” does not seem to fit in this part as a translation of *parikalpa*. But “conceptualization” is also unsatisfactory, since it seems to lean too far to the psychological. What kind of *parikalpa* goes on in the brain and mind of an autistic child who cannot cope with certain auditory stimuli?

**dr̥ṣṭvaikaṁ rūpam anyo hi rajyate 'nyaḥ praduṣyati /
kaś-cid bhavati madhya-sthas tatraivānyo ghr̥ṇāyate // 13.52 //**

On seeing one and the same form this man is enamoured, that man is disgusted; / Somebody else remains in the middle; while yet another feels thereto a human warmth. // 13.52 //

**ato na viṣayo hetur bandhāya na vimuktaye /
parikalpa-viśeṣeṇa saṅgo bhavati vā na vā // 13.53 //**

Thus, an object is not the cause of bondage or of liberation; / It is due to peculiar fixed conceptions that attachment arises or does not.¹⁰⁸⁵ // 13.53 //

**kāryaḥ parama-yatnena tasmād indriya-saṁvaraḥ /
indriyāṇi hy agutpāni duḥkhāya ca bhavāya ca // 13.54 //**

Through effort of the highest order, therefore, contain the power of the senses; / For unguarded senses make for suffering and for becoming.// 13.54 //

**kāmabhoga-bhogavadbhir ātma-dr̥ṣṭi-dr̥ṣṭibhiḥ pramāda-naika-mūrdhabhiḥ prahaṣa-
lola-jihvaiḥ /
indriyoragair mano-bila-śrayaiḥ spr̥hā-viṣaiḥ śamāgadād ṛte na daṣṭam asti yac cikitset
// 13.55 //**

The senses are like serpents coiled in sensual enjoyment with eyes of selfish views, their many heads are heedlessness and their flickering tongues are excitement: / The snaky senses lurk in mind-pits, their venom eager desire; and when they bite there is no cure, save the antidote of cessation.¹⁰⁸⁶ //13.55 //

**tasmād eṣām akuśala-karāṇām arīṇām cakṣur-ghr̥ṇa-śravaṇa-rasana-sparśanānām /
sarvāvasthāsu bhava niyamād apramatto māsminn arthe kṣaṇam api kṛthās tvam
pramādam // 13.56 //**

Therefore, towards those mischief-making foes, seeing, smelling, hearing, tasting, and feeling, / Show in every situation a vigilance born of restraint. In this matter you are not for an instant to be heedless. // 13.56 //

saundaranande mahākāvye śilendriya-jayo nāma trayodaśaḥ sargaḥ //13//

The 13th Canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled “Defeating the Power of the Senses through the Discipline of Integrity.”

¹⁰⁸⁵ Here, then, is the Buddha's explicit falsification of the striver's argument that women are to blame for men's reaction to them.

¹⁰⁸⁶ This verse was omitted by both EHJ and LC from their respective translations. The verse's spurious metre – which EHJ had not traced elsewhere – convinced EHJ that it was an interpolation.

Canto 14: ādi-prasthānaḥ Stepping Into Action

Introduction

Ādi means start or beginning. *Prasthāna* is an *-na* neuter action noun from the verb *pra-√sthā*, which means to stand up or set out or march forth. So *ādi-prasthāna* suggests stepping forth in earnest on the noble path that leads in the direction of the cessation of suffering. It is in the context of such directed effort that the Buddha again emphasizes the importance of *smṛti*, mindfulness or awareness, as a defence against the faults which threaten our integrity in the everyday round – when we are taking food, and when we are going to sleep; when we are standing and walking and lying down; and even, ultimately, when we are sitting in solitude.

**atha smṛti-kavāṭena pidhāyendriya-saṁvaram /
bhōjane bhava mātrā-jño dhyānāyānāmayāya ca // 14.1 //**

And so using the floodgate of awareness¹⁰⁸⁷ to close a dam on the power of the senses, / Know the measure, in eating food, that conduces to meditation and to health. // 14.1 //

**prāṇāpānau niḡṛṇhāti glāni-nidre prayacchati /
kṛto hy atyartham āhāro vihanti ca parākramam // 14.2 //**

For it depresses in-breath and out-breath, and brings tiredness and sleepiness, / When food is taken in excess; it also destroys enterprise.¹⁰⁸⁸ // 14.2 //

**yathā cātyartham āhāraḥ kṛto 'narthāya kalpate /
upayuktas tathātyalpo na sāmāthyāya kalpate // 14.3 //**

And just as eating too much conduces to a dearth of value, / So eating too little makes for a lack of efficacy. // 14.3 //

**ācayam dyutim utsāham prayogam balam eva ca /
bhōjanam kṛtam atyalpam śarīrasyāpakarṣati // 14.4 //**

Of its substance, lustre, and stamina; of its usefulness and its very strength, / A meagre diet deprives the body. // 14.4 //

**yathā bhāreṇa namate laghunonnamate tulā /
samā tiṣṭhati yuktena bhōjyeneyam tathā tanuḥ // 14.5 //**

Just as a weighing scale bends down with a heavy weight, bends upwards with a light one, / And stays in balance with the right one, so does this body according to intake of food. // 14.5 //

¹⁰⁸⁷ *Smṛti* is translated in this Canto as awareness, mindfulness, or vigilance. In SN9.33 *smṛti* was translated as memory.

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Parākrama*, enterprise or initiative, is one of the elements of the noble eightfold path – sometimes included under the heading of *prajñā*, and sometimes under *samādhi*. See SN16.32.

**tasmād abhyavahartavyam̐ sva-śaktim̐ anupaśyatā /
nātimātram̐ na cātyalpaṁ meyaṁ māna-vaśād api // 14.6 //**

Therefore food is to be eaten, each reflecting on his own energy, / And none apportioning himself too much or too little under the influence of pride. // 14.6 //

**atyākṛānto hi kāyāgnir̐ guruṇānnena śāmyati /
avacchanna ivālpō 'gniḥ sahasā mahatendhasā // 14.7 //**

For the fire of the body is damped down when it is burdened by a heavy load of food, / Like a small blaze suddenly covered with a big heap of firewood. // 14.7 //

**atyantam̐ api saṁhāro nāhārasya praśasyate /
anāhāro hi nirvāti nirindhana ivānalaḥ // 14.8 //**

Excessive fasting, also, is not recommended; / For one who does not eat is extinguished like a fire without fuel. // 14.8 //

**yasmān nāsti vināhārāt sarva-prāṇabhṛtām̐ sthitiḥ /
tasmād duṣyati nāhāro vikalpo 'tra tu vāryate // 14.9 //**

Since without food there is none that survives among those that bear breath, / Therefore eating food is not a sin; but being choosy, in this area, is prohibited. // 14.9 //

**na hy eka-viṣaye 'nyatra sajyante prāṇinas tathā /
avijñāte yathāhāre boddhavyam̐ tatra kāraṇam̐ // 14.10 //**

For on no other single object are sentient beings so stuck / As on the heedless eating of food. To the reason for this one must be awake. // 14.10 //

**cikitsārtham̐ yathā dhatte vraṇasyālepanam̐ vraṇī /
kṣud-vighātārtham̐ āhāras tadvat sevyo mumukṣuṇā // 14.11 //**

Just as one who is wounded, for the purpose of healing, puts ointment on a wound, / So does one who wills freedom, for the purpose of staving off hunger, eat food. // 14.11 //

**bhārasyodvahanārtham̐ ca rathākṣo 'bhyajyate yathā /
bhojanam̐ prāṇa-yātrārtham̐ tadvad vidvān niṣevate // 14.12 //**

Just as, in order to ready it for bearing a burden, one greases a wagon's axle, / So, in order to journey through life, does the wise man utilize food. // 14.12 //

**samatikramaṇārthaṁ ca kāntārasya yathādhvagau /
putra-māmsāni khādetām dāmpatī bhṛśa-duḥkhitau // 14.13 //**

And just as two travellers in order to cross a wasteland / Might feed upon the flesh of a child,
though grievously pained to do so, as its mother and father, // 14.13 //

**evam abhyavahartavyaṁ bhojanaṁ pratisaṁkhyā /
na bhūṣārthaṁ na vapuṣe na madāya na dṛptaye // 14.14 //**

So food should be eaten, consciously, / Neither for display, nor for appearance; neither to excite
hilarity, nor to feed extravagance. // 14.14 //

**dhāraṇārthaṁ śarīrasya bhojanaṁ hi vidhīyate /
upastambhaḥ pipatiṣor durbalasyeva veśmanaḥ // 14.15 //**

Food is provided for the upkeep of the body / As if to prop, before it falls, a dilapidated house.
// 14.15 //

**plavaṁ yatnād yathā kaś-cid badhniyād dhārayed api /
na tat-snehena yāvat tu mahaughasyottitīṣayā // 14.16 //**

Just as somebody might take pains to build and then carry a raft, / Not because he is so fond of
it but because he means to cross a great flood, // 14.16 //

**tathopakaraṇaiḥ kāyaṁ dhārayanti parikṣakāḥ /
na tat-snehena yāvat tu duḥkhaughasya titīṣayā // 14.17 //**

So too, by various means, do men of insight sustain the body, / Not because they are so fond of
it but because they mean to cross a flood of suffering. // 14.17 //

**śocatā piḍyamānena dīyate śatrave yathā /
na bhaktyā nāpi tarṣeṇa kevalaṁ prāṇa-guptaye // 14.18 //**

Just as [a king] under siege yields, in sorrow, to a rival king, / Not out of devotion, nor through
thirsting, but solely to safeguard life, // 14.18 //

**yogācāras tathāhāraṁ śarīrāya prayacchati /
kevalaṁ kṣud-vighātārthaṁ na rāgeṇa na bhaktaye // 14.19 //**

So the devotee of practice tenders food to his body / Solely to stave off hunger, neither with
passion nor as devotion. // 14.19 //

**mano-dhāraṇayā caiva pariṇāmyātmavān ahaḥ /
vidhūya nidrāṁ yogena niśāṁ apy atināmayeḥ // 14.20 //**

Having passed the day self-possessed, through maintenance of the mind, / You may be able,
shaking off sleep, to spend the night-time too in a state of practice. // 14.20 //

**hṛdi yat saṁjñinaś caiva nidrā prādur bhavet tava /
guṇavat saṁjñitāṁ saṁjñāṁ tadā manasi mā kṛthāḥ // 14.21 //**

Since even when you are conscious sleep might be holding out in your heart, / Consciousness properly revealing itself is nothing to be sure about. // 14.21 //

**dhātur ārambha-dhṛtyoś ca sthāma-vikramayor api /
nityaṁ manasi kāryas te bādhyamānena nidrayā // 14.22 //**

Initiative, constancy, inner strength and courage are the elements / Always to bear in mind while you are being oppressed by sleep. // 14.22 //

**āmnātavyāś ca viśadaṁ te dharmā ye pariśrutāḥ /
parebhyaś copadeṣṭavyāḥ saṁcintyāḥ svayam eva ca // 14.23 //**

Recite clearly those dharma-teachings that you have learnt; / Point others in their direction, and think them out for yourself. // 14.23 //

**prakledyam adbhir vadanāṁ vilokyāḥ sarvato diśaḥ /
cāryā dṛṣṭiś ca tārāsu jijāgariṣuṇā sadā // 14.24 //**

Wet the face with water, look around in all directions, / And glance at the stars, wanting always to be awake. // 14.24 //

**antargatair acapalair vaśa-sthāyibhir indriyaiḥ /
avikṣiptena manasā caṁkramyasvāsva vā niśi // 14.25 //**

By the means of inner senses¹⁰⁸⁹ that are not impetuous but in a state of subjection, / By the means of a mind that is not scattered, walk up and down at night or else sit. // 14.25 //

**bhaye prītau ca śoke ca nidrayā nābhibhūyate /
tasmān nidrābhiyogeṣu sevitavyam idaṁ trayam // 14.26 //**

In fear, in joy and in grief, one does not succumb to sleep; / Therefore against the onslaughts of sleep resort to these three: // 14.26 //

**bhayam āgamanān mṛtyoḥ prītiṁ dharmā-parigrahāt /
janma-duḥkhād aparyantāc chokam āgantum arhasi // 14.27 //**

Feel fear from death's approach, joy from grasping a teaching of dharma, / And from the boundless suffering inherent in a birth, feel the grief. // 14.27 //

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Antargatair.. indriyaiḥ*, “by means of internal senses,” would seem to refer primarily to the vestibular and proprioceptive senses.

evam-ādiḥ kramaḥ saumya kāryo jāgaraṇaṁ prati /

vandhyaṁ hi śayanād āyuh kaḥ prājñāḥ kartum arhati // 14.28 //

Such a step may need to be taken, my friend, in the direction of being awake; / For what wise man, out of sleep, makes a wasted life? // 14.28 //

doṣa-vyālān atikramya vyālān gr̥ha-gatān iva /

kṣamaṁ prājñasya na svaptuṁ nistitīṣor mahad bhayam // 14.29 //

To neglect the reptilian faults, as if ignoring¹⁰⁹⁰ snakes in the house, / And thus to slumber on, does not befit a man of wisdom who wishes to overcome the great terror. // 14.29 //

pradīpte jīvaloke hi mṛtyu-vyādhi-jarāgnibhiḥ /

kaḥ śayīta nirudvegaḥ pradīpta iva veśmani // 14.30 //

For while the world of the living burns with the fires of death, disease and aging, / Who could lie down insensibly, any more than in a burning house? // 14.30 //

tasmāt tama iti jñātvā nidrāṁ nāveṣṭum arhasi /

aprasānteṣu doṣeṣu sa-śastreṣv iva śatruṣu // 14.31 //

Therefore, knowing it to be darkness, you should not let sleep enshroud you / While the faults remain unquieted, like sword-wielding enemies. // 14.31 //

pūrvaṁ yāmaṁ tri-yāmāyāḥ prayogeṇātināmya tu /

sevyā śayyā śarīrasya viśrāmārthaṁ sva-tantriṇā // 14.32 //

But having spent the first of the three night-watches actively engaged in practice, / You should, as one who is pulling his own strings,¹⁰⁹¹ go to bed to rest the body. // 14.32 //

dakṣiṇena tu pārśvena sthitayāloka-samjñayā /

prabodhaṁ ḥṛdaye kṛtvā śayīthāḥ śānta-mānasaḥ // 14.33 //

On your right side, then, remaining conscious of light, / Thinking in your heart of wakefulness, you might with peace of mind fall asleep. // 14.33 //

yāme tṛtiye cotthāya carann āsīna eva vā /

bhūyo yogaṁ manaḥ-śuddhau kurvīthā niyatendriyaḥ // 14.34 //

Again, by getting up in the third watch and going into movement, or indeed just sitting, / You might renew your practice, with mind refreshed, and power of the senses curbed. // 14.34 //

¹⁰⁹⁰ “As if stepping over snakes in the house” may be closer to the literal meaning of the original – *atikram* means to step over, and hence to neglect.

¹⁰⁹¹ *Sva-tantrin*, “being in possession of one's own threads,” means not being amenable to manipulation by somebody else – hence, free, independent.

athāsana-gata-sthāna-prekṣita-vyāhṛtādiṣu /

saṃprajānan kriyāḥ sarvāḥ smṛtim ādhātum arhasi // 14.35 //

And so, upon acts like sitting, moving, standing, looking, and speaking – / Being fully aware of every action – you should bring mindfulness to bear. // 14.35 //

dvārādhyakṣa iva dvāri yasya praṇihitā smṛtiḥ /

dharṣayanti na taṃ doṣāḥ puram guptam ivārayaḥ // 14.36 //

When [a man], like a gatekeeper at his gate, is cocooned in vigilance,¹⁰⁹² / The faults do not venture to attack him, any more than enemies would attack a guarded city. // 14.36 //

na tasyotpadyate kleśo yasya kāya-gatā smṛtiḥ /

cittaṃ sarvāsv avasthāsu bālaṃ dhātrīva rakṣati // 14.37 //

No affliction arises in him for whom awareness pervades the body – / Guarding the mind in all situations, as a nurse protects a child. // 14.37 //

śaravyaḥ sa tu doṣāṇāṃ yo hīnaḥ smṛti-varmaṇā /

raṇa-sthaḥ pratiśatrūṇāṃ vihīna iva varmaṇā // 14.38 //

But he is a target for the faults who lacks the armour of mindfulness: / As for enemies is he who stands in battle¹⁰⁹³ with no suit of armour. // 14.38 //

anāthaṃ tan-mano jñeyaṃ yat smṛtir nābhirakṣati /

nirṇetā dṛṣṭi-rahito viṣayeṣu carann iva // 14.39 //

Know to be vulnerable that mind which vigilance does not guard – / Like a blind man without a guide groping after objects.¹⁰⁹⁴ // 14.39 //

¹⁰⁹² *Praṇihitā smṛtiḥ* could perhaps more literally be translated “with mindfulness placed in front.” *Pra-ṇi-ṽdhā* means to place in front, to cause to precede. At the same time the meanings of *praṇihita* include 1. laid on, applied; and 2. directed towards (with locative). The former meaning has been taken here. Since *dvāri* (gate) is locative, EHJ took the latter meaning and translated, “*The man, whose attention is directed towards the door (of his actions) like a doorkeeper towards his door....*” I have taken *praṇihitā smṛtiḥ*, “mindfulness being laid on” to suggest a situation in which the practitioner is as if blanketed in mindfulness, or as if wearing the armour of reflective awareness (SN13.37; 14.38), or as if cocooned in vigilance. In any case, the point to take from these metaphors might be that mindfulness is not necessarily a state of narrow focus; on the contrary, it might be a state of un-concentration, or all-round vigilance.

¹⁰⁹³ EHJ notes a play on the word *raṇa*, which means battle but is also a synonym of *kleśa* (affliction).

¹⁰⁹⁴ Both palm-leaf and paper manuscripts have *viṣayeṣu carann*, which means “moving himself in the direction of sense objects,” or “living in the realm of sensual enjoyments.” Based on Gawronki's conjecture, EHJ amended to *viṣameṣu carann* (going over uneven ground).

**anartheṣu prasaktāś ca svārthebhyaś ca parānmukhā /
yad bhaye sati nodvignāḥ smṛti-nāśo 'tra kāraṇam // 14.40 //**

When [men] attach to meaningless aims and turn away from their proper aims,¹⁰⁹⁵ / Failing to shudder at the danger, loss of mindfulness is the cause. // 14.40 //

**sva-bhūmiṣu guṇāḥ sarve ye ca śīlādayaḥ sthitāḥ /
vikīrṇā iva gā gopaḥ smṛtis tān anugacchati // 14.41 //**

Again, when each virtue, beginning with integrity, is standing on its own patch, / Mindfulness goes after those virtues like a herdsman rounding up his scattered cows. // 14.41 //

**pranaṣṭam amṛtaṁ tasya yasya viprasṛtā smṛtiḥ /
hasta-stham amṛtaṁ tasya yasya kāya-gatā smṛtiḥ // 14.42 //**

The deathless nectar is lost to him whose awareness dissipates; / The nectar exists in the hands of him for whom awareness pervades the body. // 14.42 //

**āryo nyāyaḥ kutas tasya smṛtir yasya na vidyate /
yasyāryo nāsti ca nyāyaḥ pranaṣṭas tasya sat-pathaḥ // 14.43 //**

Where is the noble principle of a man who lacks awareness? / And for whom no noble principle exists, to him a true path has been lost.¹⁰⁹⁶ // 14.43 //

**pranaṣṭo yasya sanmārgo naṣṭam tasyāmṛtaṁ padam /
pranaṣṭam amṛtaṁ yasya sa duḥkhān na vimucyate // 14.44 //**

He who has lost the right track has lost the deathless step. / Having lost that nectar of deathlessness, he is not exempt from suffering. // 14.44 //

**tasmāc caran caro 'smīti sthito 'smīti ca dhiṣṭhitaḥ /
evam-ādiṣu kāleṣu smṛtim ādhātum arhasi // 14.45 //**

Therefore walking with the awareness that “I am walking” and standing with the awareness that “I am standing” – / Upon such moments¹⁰⁹⁷ as these, you should bring mindfulness to bear. // 14.45 //

**yogaṅgulomaṁ vijanaṁ viśabdaṁ śayyāsaṇaṁ saumya tathā bhajasva /
kāyasya kṛtvā hi vivekam ādau sukho 'dhigantaṁ manaso vivekaḥ // 14.46 //**

In this manner, my friend, repair to a place suited for practice, free of people and free of noise, a place for lying down and sitting; / For by first achieving solitude of the body it is easy to obtain solitude of the mind. // 14.46 //

¹⁰⁹⁵ Thus, mindfulness as the Buddha taught it is associated with directed effort.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Again, the Buddha is taking pains to connect his teaching of mindfulness with directed effort on the noble eightfold path. The point is underlined in SN16.33.

¹⁰⁹⁷ EHJ queried reading kāryeṣu for kāleṣu. That would give “Upon such actions as these, you should bring mindfulness to bear.”

alabdha-cetaḥ-praśamaḥ sa-rāgo yo na pracāraṁ bhajate viviktam /

sa kṣaṇyate hy apratīlabdha-mārgaś carann ivorvyām bahu-kaṇṭakāyām // 14.47 //

The man of redness, the tranquillity of his mind unrealized, who does not take to a playground of solitude, / Is injured as though, unable to regain a track, he is walking on very thorny ground. // 14.47 //

adr̥ṣṭa-tattvena parīkṣakeṇa sthitena citre viṣaya-pracāre /

cittaṁ niṣeddhurṁ na sukhena śakyam kṛṣṭādako gaur iva sasya-madhyāt // 14.48 //

For a seeker who fails to see reality but stands in the tawdry playground of objects, / It is no easier to rein in the mind than to drive a foraging bull away from corn. // 14.48 //

anīryamāṇas tu yathānilena praśāntim āgacchati citra-bhānuḥ /

alpena yatnena tathā viviktesv aghaṭṭitaṁ śāntim upaiti cetaḥ // 14.49 //

But just as a bright fire dies down when not fanned by the wind, / So too, in solitary places, does an unstirred mind easily come to quiet. // 14.49 //

kva-cid bhuktvā yat-tad vasanam api yat-tat parihito

vasann ātmārāmaḥ kva-cana vijane yo 'bhiramate /

kṛtārthaḥ sa jñeyaḥ śama-sukha-rasa-jñāḥ kṛta-matiḥ

pareṣāṁ saṁsargaṁ pariharati yaḥ kaṇṭakam iva // 14.50 //

One who eats anything at any place, and wears any clothes, / Who dwells in enjoyment of his own being and loves to be anywhere without people: / He is to be known as a success, a knower of the taste of peace and ease, whose mind is made up - / He avoids involvement with others like a thorn. // 14.50 //

yadi dvandvārāme jagati viṣaya-vyagra-hṛdaye

vivikte nirdvando viharati kṛtī śānta-hṛdayaḥ /

tataḥ pītvā prajñā-rasam amṛtavat tṛpta-hṛdayo

viviktaḥ saṁsaktam viṣaya-kṛpaṇam śocati jagat // 14.51 //

If, in a world that delights in duality and is at heart distracted by objects, / He roves in solitude, free of duality, a man of action, his heart at peace, / Then he drinks the essence of wisdom as if it were the deathless nectar and his heart is filled. / Separately he sorrows for the clinging, object-needy world. // 14.51 //

**vasañ śūnyāgāre yadi satatam eko 'bhiramate
yadi kleśotpādaīḥ saha na ramate śatrubhir iva /
carann ātmārāmo yadi ca pibati prīti-salilaṁ
tato bhunkte śreṣṭham tridaśa-pati-rājyād api sukham // 14.52 //**

If he constantly abides as a unity, in an empty abode, / If he is no fonder of arisings of affliction than he is of enemies, / And if, going rejoicing in the self, he drinks the water of joy, / Then greater than dominion over thirty gods¹⁰⁹⁸ is the happiness he enjoys.// 14.52 //

/ saundara-nanda mahākāvya ādi-prasthāno nāma caturdaśaḥ sargaḥ//14//

The 14th canto of the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled “Stepping Into Action.”

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Tridaśa-pati-rājya*, “the realm of the lord of the 3 x 10,” means heaven, i.e, the kingdom of Indra, ruler of the 33 gods (10 being approximately equal to 11). The 33 gods are the 12 *ādityas* (“sons of the Eternal and Infinite Expanse [= the Goddess Aditi]”), 8 *vasus* (“good or bright ones”), 11 *rudras* (“howlers”; storm-gods), and the 2 *aśvins* (“charioteers”).

Canto 15: vitarka-prahāṇaḥ Abandoning Ideas

Introduction

Vitarka means thought or idea, and *prahāṇa* is an *-na* neuter action noun from *pra-vhā*, to abandon or give up. So *vitarka-prahāṇaḥ* means giving up thoughts or abandoning ideas. And the fundamental means of giving up troublesome ideas, the Buddha teaches Nanda in the present Canto, is, again, *smṛti*, mindfulness or awareness.

In the preceding two cantos the Buddha has described how the armour of mindfulness protects *śīla*, the discipline of integrity. In the present Canto the Buddha's extolling of mindfulness seems mainly to relate to *samādhi*, meditative balance. For the abandoning of ideas, the Buddha tells Nanda in verse 64, he should master mindfulness of inward and outward breathing – this mindfulness to be practised, the Buddha recommends from the outset, with the legs crossed in the traditional way and the body directed upward.

Thus, insofar as the cause of trouble is the idea of gaining some end, that troublesome idea can be countered, in sitting, by mindfulness as a means, and can be countered by mindfulness of sitting as a means.

At the same time, in verse 5 the Buddha introduces the option of using not only one's mindfulness and not only one's sitting but also *bhāvanā*, cultivation or development of one's mind, to extinguish what lies behind troublesome desires, like using water to put out a fire.

Again, where negative thoughts are associated with specific afflictive emotions, the Buddha in verses 13-14 advises cultivation of specific antidotes – so that, for example, goodwill can be cultivated as the antidote to ill will.

In the closing verses of the Canto these various skillful efforts to cleanse the mind, eliminating faults in the order of their grossness, and to develop the mind, are compared to the efforts of the dirt-washing miner and the goldsmith, whose job it is to produce gold.

**yatra tatra vivikte tu baddhvā paryaṅkam uttamam /
rjum kāyaṁ samādhāya smṛtyābhimukhayānvitāḥ // 15.1 //**

In whatever place of solitude you are, cross the legs in the supreme manner / And align the body so that it tends straight upward;¹⁰⁹⁹ thus attended by awareness that is directed... // 15.1
//

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Rjum* is (according to the MW dictionary) lit. “tending in a straight direction.” See also SN17.4.

nāsāgre vā lalāṭe vā bhruvor antara eva vā /

kurvīthās capalaṁ cittam ālambana-parāyaṇam // 15.2 //

Towards the tip of the nose or towards the forehead, or in between the eyebrows, / Let the inconstant mind be fully engaged with the fundamental.¹¹⁰⁰ // 15.2 //

sacet kāma-vitarkas tvām dharṣayen mānaso jvaraḥ /

kṣeptavyo nādhivāsyāḥ sa vastre reṇur ivāgataḥ // 15.3 //

If some desirous idea, a fever of the mind, should venture to offend you, / Entertain no scent of it but shake it off as if pollen had landed on your robe. // 15.3 //

yady api pratisamkhyānāt kāmān utsṛṣṭavān asi /

tamāmsīva prakāśena pratipakṣeṇa tāñ jahi // 15.4 //

Even if, as a result of calm consideration, you have let go of desires, / You must, as if shining light into darkness,¹¹⁰¹ abolish them by means of opposition.¹¹⁰² // 15.4 //

¹¹⁰⁰ *Ālambana-parāyaṇam*. *Ālambana* means 1. depending or resting on, and hence 2. foundation, base (but see also MMK ch. 1, where *ālambanam* is the 2nd *pratyaya* of four). As the second half of a compound, *parāyaṇa* means making anything one's chief object, being wholly devoted to or engaged in. EHJ took *ālambana-parāyaṇam* to mean "wholly intent." Thus: "You should make your wandering mind wholly intent on an object such as the tip of your nose or your forehead or the space between the brows." An alternative reading is that being fully engaged with the fundamental, or being wholly devoted to the foundation, describes practice that is directed towards the ending of suffering.

¹¹⁰¹ *Tamas* (here used in the plural, *tamāmsi*) means 1. darkness, and by extension 2. ignorance.

¹¹⁰² *Pratipakṣeṇa* means "by means of [their] opposite" or "by means of opposition." The opposite of desirous ideas, insofar as those ideas are unconscious, might be conscious awareness itself (as suggested by verses 64 and 65). Again, insofar as desirous ideas are associated with discontentment, that discontentment might be countered by the cultivation of joy. But the most likely reading here would seem to be that the ignorance which is darkness is to be abolished by the wisdom which is symbolized by light.

**tiṣṭhaty anuśayas teṣāṃ channo 'gnir iva bhasmanā /
sa te bhāvanayā saumya praśāmyo 'gnir ivāmbunā // 15.5 //**

What lies behind those desires sleeps on,¹¹⁰³ like a fire covered with ashes; / You are to extinguish it, my friend, by the means of mental development,¹¹⁰⁴ as if using water to put out a fire. // 15.5 //

**te hi tasmāt pravartante bhūyo bījād ivāṅkurāḥ /
tasya nāśena te na syur bīja-nāśād ivāṅkurāḥ // 15.6 //**

For from that source they re-emerge, like shoots from a seed. / In its absence they would be no more – like shoots in the absence of a seed. // 15.6 //

**arjanādīni kāmebhyo dṛṣṭvā duḥkhāni kāminām /
tasmāt tān mūlataś chindhi mitra-saṃjñān arīn iva // 15.7 //**

See how acquisition and other troubles stem from the desires of men of desire, / And on that basis cut off at their root those troubles, which are akin to enemies calling themselves friends. // 15.7 //

¹¹⁰³ The 1st pāda is more literally translated: “The dormant tendency (*anuśayah*) behind those [desires] (*teṣāṃ*) remains (*tiṣṭhati*).” Seven dormant or latent tendencies, as listed in DN33, are: sensual greed, resentment, holding views, doubt, conceit, undue interest in becoming, and ignorance (see SN17.58). Since the Buddha refers in the singular to the object to be extinguished, however, again we can think that here he was targeting mainly ignorance.

¹¹⁰⁴ *Bhāvanā*, lit. means “bringing into being,” and hence developing or cultivating [the mind]. In Tibetan and Theravādan practice, *bhāvanā* is sometimes translated as “meditation,” but in the present work “meditation” has been reserved as a translation of *dhyāna*, which lit. means “thinking, reflecting, contemplating, meditating.” The practice known in Japan as 坐禪, *zazen*, means “sitting-*dhyāna*.” *Zazen* (or “just sitting”) can also be revered as a practice of *bhāvanā*, by which the ignorance that sleeps behind end-gaining desires is extinguished, through cultivation of the wisdom of non-doing. From verse 12, however, the Buddha evidently has in mind the use of specific antidotes to specific afflictive emotions.

anityā moṣa-dharmāṇo riktā vyaṣana-hetavaḥ /

bahu-sādhāraṇāḥ kāmā barhyā hy āśi-viṣā iva // 15.8 //

Fleeting desires; desires which bring privation; flighty¹¹⁰⁵ desires, which are the causes of wagging to and fro;¹¹⁰⁶ / And common desires, are to be dealt with¹¹⁰⁷ like poisonous snakes – // 15.8 //

ye mṛgyamāṇā duḥkhāya rakṣyamāṇā na śāntaye /

bhraṣṭāḥ śokāya mahate prāptāś-ca na vitṛptaye // 15.9 //

The chasing of which leads to trouble, the keeping of which does not conduce to peace, / And the losing of which makes for great anguish. Securing them does not bring contentment. // 15.9 //

ṭṛptim vitta-prakarṣeṇa svargāvāptyā kṛtārthatām /

kāmebhyāś ca sukhotpattim yaḥ paśyati sa naśyati // 15.10 //

Satisfaction through extra-ordinary wealth; success through the gaining of paradise, / And happiness born from desires: he who sees these things comes to nothing.¹¹⁰⁸ // 15.10 //

¹¹⁰⁵ *Rikta* means empty, void, hollow, worthless. At the same time, in augury *rikta* is the name of one of the four wagtails which serve for omens.

¹¹⁰⁶ *Vyaṣana* means the wagging of a tail, or moving to and fro, and hence what does not go smoothly, a calamity or disaster.

¹¹⁰⁷ The meaning of *barhyāḥ* here is uncertain, except that the word is a gerundive, meaning “to be –ed.” On a superficial reading, the suggestion is that pesky desires should simply be got rid of. Hence EHJ translated “*the passions should be killed like poisonous snakes.*” EHJ noted: “neither *barhyā* nor *varhyā* is satisfactory in d and on the strength of *Abhidharma-kośa*, IV, p. 10... I would read *vadhyā* [to be killed, destroyed].” For *√barh*, the dictionary gives various meanings including to speak, to hurt, to cover, and (possibly significant in light of verse 4) to shine. Perhaps the suggestion below the surface is that a good strategy in dealing with poisonous snakes, before rushing in to try and kill them, is to shine a light on them to see where they are hiding, and to keep a careful eye on them.

¹¹⁰⁸ *Kāma*, desire, is a broad concept. In the plural, its meanings include “objects of desire” (see SN9.47; 11.37). At the same time, in the singular and in the sense of subjective volition, it may mean the same as *chanda* (“wishing”) as in *dharma-cchandam*, “the wish for dharma” (SN12.31). So is the real intention of this series of verses about desires necessarily what it seems to be on the surface? For example, isn't the gift of confidence the imparting of a kind of wealth? Was not Nanda's trip to Indra's paradise instrumental in his ultimate success? And in realizing that success, did Nanda become something? Or is it truer to say that he came to nothing?

calān apariniṣpannān asārān anavasthitān /

parikalpa-sukhān kāmān na tān smartum ihārhasi // 15.11 //

Pay no heed to the changeable, unformed, insubstantial and ungrounded desires, / Which are presumed to bring happiness; being here and now, you need pay no heed to those desires.¹¹⁰⁹ // 15.11 //

vyāpādo vā vihiṁsā vā kṣobhayed yadi te manaḥ /

prasādyam tad-vipakṣeṇa maṇinevākulam jālam // 15.12 //

If hatred or cruelty should stir up your mind, / Let it be charmed by their opposite, as turbid water is by a jewel. // 15.12 //

pratipakṣas tayor jñeyo maitrī kārūnyam eva ca /

virodho hi tayor nityam prakāśa-tamasor iva // 15.13 //

Know their opposite to be kindness and compassion; / For this opposition is forever like brightness and darkness.¹¹¹⁰ // 15.13 //

nivṛtam yasya dauṣṭilyam vyāpādaś ca pravartate /

hanti pāmsubhir ātmānam su-snāta iva vāraṇaḥ // 15.14 //

He in whom wrongdoing has been given up and yet hatred carries on, / Hits himself with dust like an elephant after a good bath.¹¹¹¹ // 15.14 //

duḥkhibebhyo hi martyebhyo vyādhi-mṛtyu-jarādibhiḥ /

āryaḥ ko duḥkham aparam sa-ghṛṇo dhātum arhati // 15.15 //

Upon mortal beings who are pained by sickness, dying, aging, and the rest, / What noble person with human warmth would lay the utmost pain?¹¹¹² // 15.15 //

¹¹⁰⁹ The ostensible meaning is as per EHJ: “Take heed (*arhasi*) not to fix your attention (*na smartum*) in this world (*iha*) on the passions (*kāmān... tān*).” The deeper hidden teaching might be “Being here and now (*iha*), you need not (*na arhasi*) be [overly] mindful (*smartum*) about those desires (*kāmān... tān*).” In the hidden meaning, in other words, the Buddha might be encouraging Nanda not to worry too much about desires per se – because the central gist of the Buddha's teaching is not, as in misguided asceticism, to put an end to desire; it is rather to veer towards alleviation of suffering.

¹¹¹⁰ I.e, goodwill rules out ill will in the way that brightness instantly rules out darkness – brightness and darkness, symbols of wisdom and ignorance, cannot exist simultaneously.

¹¹¹¹ Insofar as *vyāpāda* means (as per MW) “evil intent” or “malice,” this verse is probably best taken at face value. But if hidden meaning is sought here, one thinks of a metaphorical elephant like Zen Master Dogen who in *Shobogenzo* chap. 73 expressed intense hatred towards the attitude of so-called monks in China who were mainly interested in garnering their own fame and profit.

¹¹¹² *Duḥkham aparam* can be read (as per EHJ) as “further suffering,” in which case *aparam* means “further.” But *aparam* can also mean “having nothing beyond” or “having no superior” – i.e. being of the highest order, being supremely valuable. So, again, if hidden meaning is sought here, one could question whether the Buddha, for example, with utmost human warmth, laid the utmost pain on Nanda and Sundarī.

**duṣṭena ceha manasā bādhyate vā paro na vā /
sadyas tu dahyate tāvat svaṁ mano duṣṭa-cetasah // 15.16 //**

Again, a tainted mind here and now may or may not trouble the other; / But instantly burned up in this moment is the mind of the man of tainted consciousness himself.¹¹¹³ // 15.16 //

**tasmāt sarveṣu bhūteṣu maitrīm kārūṇyameva ca /
na vyāpādaṁ vihiṁsām vā vikalpayitum arhasi // 15.17 //**

On this basis, towards all beings, it is kindness and compassion, / Not hatred or cruelty, that you should opt for. // 15.17 //

**yad-yad eva prasaktaṁ hi vitarkayati mānavaḥ /
abhyāsāt tena-tenāsyā natir bhavati cetasaḥ // 15.18 //**

For whatever a human being continually thinks, / In that direction, through habit, the mind of this person veers. // 15.18 //

**tasmād akuśalaṁ tyaktvā kuśalaṁ dhyātum arhasi /
yat te syād iha cārthāya paramārthasya cāptaye // 15.19 //**

Therefore disregarding what is not helpful focus on what is helpful, / Which might be valuable for you here and now and might be for the reaching of ultimate value. // 15.19 //

**saṁvardhante hy akuśalā vitarkāḥ saṁbhṛtā hṛdi /
anartha-janakās tulyam ātmanaś ca parasya ca // 15.20 //**

For unhelpful thoughts carried in the heart densely grow, / Producing in equal measure nothing of value for the self and for the other. // 15.20 //

**śreyaso vighna-karaṇād bhavanty ātma-vipattaye /
pātrībhāvopaghātāt tu para-bhakti-vipattaye // 15.21 //**

Because they make obstacles on the better path, they lead to the falling apart of the self; / And because they undermine the worthy condition, they lead to the falling apart of the other's trust. // 15.21 //

**manaḥ-karmasv avikṣepam api cābhyastum arhasi /
na tv evākuśalaṁ saumya vitarkayitum arhasi // 15.22 //**

Concentration during activities of the mind, you should certainly practise too. / But above all, my friend, nothing unhelpful should you think. // 15.22 //

¹¹¹³ Ostensibly the point is that anger, for example, is primarily damaging to the health of the angry person. The deeper meaning may be related with Nāgārjuna's observation that *Whatever is the cusp of nirvāṇa, is the cusp of saṁsāra. Between the two, not the slightest gap is to be found.* (MMK25.20).

yā tri-kāmopabhogāya cintā manasi vartate /

na ca taṁ guṇam āpnoti bandhanāya ca kalpate // 15.23 //

That anxious thought of enjoying the three desires¹¹¹⁴ which churns in the mind / Does not meet with merit, but produces bondage. // 15.23 //

sattvānām upaghātāya parikleśāya cātmanah /

mohaṁ vrajati kāluṣyaṁ narakāya ca vartate // 15.24 //

Tending to cause offence to living beings and torment for oneself, / Disturbed thinking¹¹¹⁵ becomes delusion and leads to hell. // 15.24 //

tad vitarkair akuśalair nātmānaṁ hantum arhasi /

suśastraṁ ratna-vikṛtaṁ mṛdd-hato gāṁ khanann iva // 15.25 //

With unhelpful thoughts, therefore, you should not mar your self / - Which is a good sword and jewelled - as if you were digging the earth and getting spattered with mud. // 15.25 //

an-abhijño yathā jātyaṁ dahed aguru kāṣṭhavat /

a-nyāyena manuṣyatvam upahanyād idaṁ tathā // 15.26 //

Just as an ignoramus might burn as firewood the best aloes, / So, wrong-headedly, would one waste this state of being human. // 15.26 //

tyaktvā ratnaṁ yathā loṣṭaṁ ratna-dvīpāc ca saṁharet /

tyaktvā naiḥśreyasaṁ dharmaṁ cintayed aśubhaṁ tathā // 15.27 //

Again, just as he might leave the jewel and carry away from the jewel-island a clod, / So would one leave the dharma that leads to happiness and think evil. // 15.27 //

himavantaṁ yathā gatvā viṣaṁ bhuñjīta nauśadham /

manuṣyatvaṁ tathā prāpya pāpaṁ seveta no śubham // 15.28 //

Just as he might go to the Himālayas and eat not herbs but poison, / So would one arrive at being a human being and do not good but harm. // 15.28 //

tad buddhvā pratipakṣeṇa vitarkaṁ kṣeptum arhasi /

sūkṣmeṇa pratikīlena kīlaṁ dārv-antarād iva // 15.29 //

Being awake to this, you must see off thought by antagonistic means,¹¹¹⁶ / As if using a finely-honed counter-wedge to drive a wedge from a cleft in a log. // 15.29 //

¹¹¹⁴ The three desires can be understood as the desire to get something, the desire to become something, and the desire to be rid of something.

¹¹¹⁵ *Kāluṣya* (from *kaluṣa*, turbid) means 1. foulness, dirtiness, turbidness, opacity; 2. disturbance or interruption of harmony.

¹¹¹⁶ *Pratipakṣeṇa*, as in verse 4, means “by antagonistic means” or “by means of opposition.” The opposition the Buddha seems to have in mind in the following long section is the challenging of general assumptions by detailed investigation of what really is.

**vṛddhy-avṛddhyor atha bhavec cintā jñāti-janaṁ prati /
svabhāvo jīva-lokasya parīkṣyas tan-nivṛttaye // 15.30 //**

And so, should there be anxiety about whether or not your family is prospering, / Investigate the nature of the world of the living in order to put a stop to it. // 15.30 //

**saṁsāre kṛṣyamāṇānām sattvānām svena karmaṇā /
ko janaḥ sva-janaḥ ko vā mohāt sakto jane janaḥ // 15.31 //**

Among beings dragged by our own doing through the cycle of saṁsāra / Who are our own people, and who are other people? It is through ignorance that people attach to people. // 15.31 //

**atīte 'dhvani saṁvṛttaḥ sva-jano hi janas tava /
aprāpte cādhvani janaḥ sva-janas te bhaviṣyati // 15.32 //**

For one who turned on a bygone road into a relative, is a stranger to you,¹¹¹⁷ / And a stranger, on a road to come, will become your relative. // 15.32 //

**vihagānām yathā sāyaṁ tatra tatra samāgamaḥ /
jātau jātau tathāśleṣo janasya sva-janasya ca // 15.33 //**

Just as birds in the evening flock together at separate locations, / So is the mingling over many generations of one's own and other people. // 15.33 //

**pratiśrayaṁ bahu-vidhaṁ saṁśrayanti yathādhvagāḥ /
pratiyānti punas tyaktvā tadvaj jñāti-samāgamaḥ // 15.34 //**

Just as, under any old roof, travellers shelter together / And then go again their separate ways, so are relatives joined. // 15.34 //

**loke prakṛti-bhinne 'smin na kaś-cit kasya-cit priyaḥ /
kārya-kāraṇa-sambaddhaṁ bālukā-muṣṭivaj jagat // 15.35 //**

In this originally shattered world nobody is the beloved of anybody. / Held together by cause and effect, humankind is like sand in a clenched fist. // 15.35 //

**bibharti hi sutaṁ mātā dhārayiṣyati mām iti /
mātaraṁ bhajate putro garbheṇādhatta mām iti // 15.36 //**

For mother cherishes son thinking "He will keep me," / And son honours mother thinking "She bore me in her womb." // 15.36 //

¹¹¹⁷ *Janas tava*, lit. "a person to you," means in other words (contrasted with *sva-jana*), just another person, a stranger.

anukūlaṃ pravartante jñātiṣu jñātayo yadā /

tadā snehaṃ prakurvanti riputvaṃ tu viparyayāt // 15.37 //

As long as relatives act agreeably towards each other, / They engender affection; but otherwise it is enmity. // 15.37 //

ahito dṛśyate jñātir ajñātir dṛśyate hitaḥ /

snehaṃ kāryāntarāl lokaś chinatti ca karoti ca // 15.38 //

A close relation is demonstrably unfriendly; a stranger proves to be a friend. / By the different things they do, folk break and make affection. // 15.38 //

svayam eva yathālikhya rajyec citra-karaḥ striyam /

tathā kṛtvā svayaṃ snehaṃ saṅgam eti jane janaḥ // 15.39 //

Just as an artist, all by himself, might fall in love with a woman he painted, / So, each generating attachment by himself, do people become attached to one another. // 15.39 //

yo 'bhavad bāndhava-janaḥ para-loke priyas tava /

sa te kam arthaṃ kurute tvaṃ vā tasmai karoṣi kam // 15.40 //

That relation who, in another life, was so dear to you: /

What use to you is he? What use to him are you? // 15.40 //

tasmā jñāti-vitarkaṇa mano nāveṣṭum arhasi /

vyavasthā nāsti saṃsāre sva-janasya janasya ca // 15.41 //

With thoughts about close relatives, therefore, you should not enshroud the mind. / There is no abiding difference, in the flux of saṃsāra, between one's own people and people in general. // 15.41 //

asau kṣemo janapadaḥ subhikṣo 'sāv asau śivaḥ /

ity evam atha jāyeta vitarkas tava kaś-cana // 15.42 //

“That country is an easy place to live; that one is well-provisioned; that one is happy.” / If there should arise any such idea in you, // 15.42 //

praheyaḥ sa tvayā saumya nādhivāsyāḥ kathaṃ-cana /

viditvā sarvam ādīptaṃ tais-tair doṣāgnibhir jagat // 15.43 //

You are to give it up, my friend, and not entertain it in any way, / Knowing the whole world to be ablaze with the manifold fires of the faults. // 15.43 //

ṛtu-cakra-nivartāc ca kṣut-pipāsā-klamād api /

sarvatra niyataṃ duḥkhaṃ na kva-cid vidyate śivam // 15.44 //

Again, from the turning of the circle of the seasons, and from hunger, thirst and fatigue, / Everywhere suffering is the rule. Not somewhere is happiness found. // 15.44 //

**kva-cic chītaṁ kva-cid gharmaḥ kva-cid rogo bhayaṁ kva-cit /
bād hate 'bhyadhikaṁ lokaṁ tasmād aśaraṇaṁ jagat // 15.45 //**

Here cold, there heat; here disease, there danger / Oppress humanity in the extreme. The world, therefore, has no place of refuge. // 15.45 //

**jarā vyādhiś ca mṛtyuś ca lokasyāśya mahad bhayam /
nāsti deśaḥ sa yatrāśya tad bhayaṁ nopapadyate // 15.46 //**

Aging, sickness and death are the great terror of this world. / There is no place where that terror does not arise. // 15.46 //

**yatra gacchati kāyo 'yaṁ duḥkhaṁ tatrānugacchati /
nāsti kā-cid gatir loke gato yatra na bādhyate // 15.47 //**

Where this body goes there suffering follows. / There is no way in the world going on which one is not afflicted. // 15.47 //

**ramaṇīyo 'pi deśaḥ san su-bhikṣaḥ kṣema eva ca /
ku-deśa itī vijñeyo yatra kleśair vidahyate // 15.48 //**

Even an area that is pleasant, abundant in provisions, and safe, / Should be regarded as a deprived area where burn the fires of affliction. // 15.48 //

**lokasyābhyāhatasyāśya duḥkhaiḥ śārīra-mānasaiḥ /
kṣemaḥ kaś-cin na deśo 'sti svastho yatra gato bhavet // 15.49 //**

In this world beset by hardships physical and mental, / There is no cosy place to which one might go and be at ease. // 15.49 //

**duḥkhaṁ sarvatra sarvasya vartate sarvadā yadā /
chanda-rāgam ataḥ saumya loka-citreṣu mā kṛthāḥ // 15.50 //**

While suffering, everywhere and for everyone, continues at every moment, / You are not to enthuse, my friend, over the world's shimmering images. // 15.50 //

**yadā tasmān niṣṛttas te chanda-rāgo bhaviṣyati /
jīva-lokaṁ tadā sarvam ādīptam iva maṁsyate // 15.51 //**

When your enthusiasm is turned back from all that, / The whole living world you will deem to be, as it were, on fire. // 15.51 //

**atha kaś-cid vitarkas te bhaved amaraṇāśrayaḥ /
yatnena sa vihanavayo vyādhir ātmagato yathā // 15.52 //**

Any idea you might have, then, that has to do with not dying, / Is, with an effort of will, to be obliterated as a disorder of your whole being. // 15.52 //

**muhūrtam api viśrambhaḥ kāryo na khalu jīvite /
nilīna iva hi vyāghraḥ kālo viśvasta-ghātakāḥ // 15.53 //**

Not a moment of trust is to be placed in life, / For, like a tiger lying in wait, Time¹¹¹⁸ slays the unsuspecting. // 15.53 //

**balastho 'haṁ yuvā veti na te bhavitum arhati /
mṛtyuḥ sarvāsv avasthāsu hanti nāvekṣate vayaḥ // 15.54 //**

That "I am young," or "I am strong," should not occur to you: / Death kills in all situations without regard for sprightliness. // 15.54 //

**kṣetra-bhūtam anarthānām śarīraṁ parikarṣataḥ /
svāsthy-āśā jīvitāśā vā na dṛṣṭārthasya jāyate // 15.55 //**

As he drags about that field of misfortunes which is a body, / Expectations of well-being or of continuing life do not arise in one who is observant. // 15.55 //

**nirvṛtaḥ ko bhavet kāyaṁ mahā-bhūtāśrayaṁ vahan /
paraspara-viruddhānām ahīnām iva bhājanam // 15.56 //**

Who could be complacent carrying around a body, a receptacle for the elements, / Which is like a basket full of snakes each opposed to another? // 15.56 //

**praśvasity ayam anvaḥṣaṁ yad ucchvasiti mānavaḥ /
avagaccha tad-āścaryam aviśvāsyāṁ hi jīvitam // 15.57 //**

That a man¹¹¹⁹ draws breath and next time around breathes in again, / Know to be a wonder; for staying alive is nothing to breathe easy about. // 15.57 //

**idam āścaryam aparaṁ yat suptaḥ pratibudhyate /
svapity utthāya vā bhūyo bahv-amitrā hi dehinaḥ // 15.58 //**

Here is another wonder: that one who was asleep wakes up / Or, having been up, goes back to sleep; for many enemies has the owner of a body. // 15.58 //

**garbhāt prabhṛti yo lokam jighāmsur anugacchati /
kas tasmin viśvasen mṛtyāv udyatāsāv arāv iva // 15.59 //**

He who stalks humankind, from the womb onwards, with murderous intent: / Who can breath easy about him? Death, poised like an enemy with sword upraised. // 15.59 //

¹¹¹⁸ *Kāla* means Time and equally, since time is the destroyer of all things, Death.

¹¹¹⁹ *Ayam... manavaḥ* is lit. "this man."

**prasūtaḥ puruṣo loka śrutavān balavān api /
na jayaty antakaṁ kaś-cin nājayan nāpi jeṣyati // 15.60 //**

No man born into the world, however endowed with learning and power, / Ever defeats Death, maker of ends, nor has ever defeated him, nor ever will defeat him. // 15.60 //

**sāmnā dānena bhedena daṇḍena niyamena vā /
prāpto hi rabhaso mṛtyuḥ pratihantuṁ na śakyate // 15.61 //**

For cajoling, bribing, dividing, or the use of force or restraint, / When impetuous Death has arrived, are powerless to beat him back. // 15.61 //

**tasmān nāyuṣi viśvāsaṁ cañcale kartum arhasi /
nityaṁ harati kālo hi sthāviraṁ na pratikṣate // 15.62 //**

So place no trust in teetering life, / For Time is always carrying it off and does not wait for old age. // 15.62 //

**niḥsāraṁ paśyato lokaṁ toya-budbuda-durbalam /
kasyāmara-vitarko hi syād anunmatta-cetasah // 15.63 //**

Seeing the world to be without substance, as fragile as a water-bubble, / What man of sound mind could harbour the notion of not dying? // 15.63 //

**tasmād eṣāṁ vitarkāṇāṁ prahāṇārthaṁ samāsataḥ /
ānāpāna-smṛtiṁ saumya viṣayī-kartum arhasi // 15.64 //**

So for the giving up, in short, of all these ideas, / Mindfulness of inward and outward breathing,¹¹²⁰ my friend, you should make into your own possession. // 15.64 //

**ity anena prayogeṇa kāle sevitum arhasi /
pratipakṣān vitarkāṇāṁ gadānām agadān iva // 15.65 //**

Using this device you should take in good time / Counter-measures against ideas, like remedies against illnesses. // 15.65 //

¹¹²⁰ *Ānāpāna-smṛtiṁ*. *Ānāpāna* = *āna* (breathing in, from *van*, to breath) + *apāna* (breathing out, from *apa-van*). The Great Sutta on Mindfulness (DN 22) describes three stages: 1. Being aware that a long in-breath is long, being aware that a long out-breath is long; being aware that a short in-breath is short, being aware that a short out-breath is short – thus abandoning the end-gaining idea of improving the breathing by direct intervention (“Let it all be wrong!”). 2. Thinking “being conscious of the whole body, I will breathe in”; thinking “being conscious of the whole body, I will breathe out” – thus abandoning the idea of doing anything now, in a piecemeal manner, to influence the breathing. 3. Thinking “causing bodily doings to cease, I will breathe in”; thinking “causing bodily doings to cease, I will breathe out” – thus abandoning any idea whatever that might trigger bodily doings. In the Sutta, there is no word “thinking,” but only the quotation particle *ti*. So the thinking involved is not so much thinking as mindfulness or awareness – or what in Chinese Zen was called 非思量, “non-thinking.”

**suvarṇa-hetor api pāmsu-dhāvako vihāya pāmsūn bṛhato yathāditaḥ /
jahāti sūkṣmān api tad-viśuddhaye viśodhya hemāvayavān niyacchati // 15.66 //**

A dirt-washer in pursuit of gold washes away first the coarse grains of dirt, / Then the finer granules, so that the [material] is cleansed; and by the cleansing he retains the rudiments of gold. // 15.66 //

**vimokṣa-hetor api yukta-mānaso vihāya doṣān bṛhataḥ tathāditaḥ /
jahāti sūkṣmān api tad-viśuddhaye viśodhya dharmāvayavān niyacchati // 15.67 //**

In the same way, a man whose mind is poised, in pursuit of liberation, lets go first of the gross faults, / Then of the subtler ones, so that his [mind] is cleansed, and by the cleansing he retains the rudiments of dharma. // 15.67 //

**krameṇādbhiḥ śuddhaṁ kanakam iha pāmsu vyavahitaṁ
yathāgnau karmāraḥ pacati bhṛśam āvartayati ca /
tathā yogācāro nipuṇam iha doṣa-vyavahitaṁ
viśodhya kleśebhyaḥ śamayati manaḥ saṁkṣipati ca // 15.68 //**

Just as gold, washed with water, is separated from dirt in this world, methodically, / And just as the smith heats the gold in the fire and repeatedly turns it over, / Just so is the practitioner's mind, with delicacy and accuracy, separated from faults in this world, / And just so, after cleansing it from afflictions, does the practitioner temper the mind and collect it. // 15.68 //

**yathā ca sva-cchandād upanayati karmāśraya-sukhaṁ
suvarṇaṁ karmāro bahu-vidham alaṅkāra-vidhiṣu /
manaḥ-śuddho bhikṣur vaśagatam abhijñāsv api tathā
yathecchaṁ yatreccchaṁ śamayati manaḥ prerayati ca // 15.69 //**

Again, just as the smith brings gold to a state where he can work it easily / In as many ways as he likes into all kinds of ornaments, / So too a beggar of cleansed mind tempers his mind, / And directs his yielding mind among the powers of knowing,¹¹²¹ as he wishes and wherever he wishes. // 15.69 // //

saundaranande mahākāvye vitarka-prahāṇo nāma pañca-daśaḥ sargaḥ //15//

The 15th canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled “Abandoning Ideas.”

¹¹²¹ *Abhijñāsu* refers either to five or to six higher powers of knowing. The five powers, as listed in SN16.2, are called five “mundane” powers – though nowhere in Saundara-nanda does the Buddha himself call them that. The sixth, “supramundane” power, attainable through penetrating insight (Pali: *vipassanā*), is the power of knowing how to eradicate the *āsrava*s, those influences that pollute the mind (see SN17.22).

Canto 16: ārya-satya-vyākhyānaḥ Exposition of the Noble Truths

Introduction

Ārya-satya means noble truth or noble truths, and vyākhyāna is an -na neuter action noun from vy-ā-vkhyā, which means to explain in detail, to tell in full, or to communicate. The importance of this Canto is indicated by its length: at 98 verses, it is comfortably the longest canto in Saundarananda. In it the Buddha tells Nanda that the birth of a sentient creature is the birth of suffering. This suffering has its cause in faults which the Buddha associates with progressive doing (*pravṛtti*), and with thirsting (*tṛṣṇā*). To eliminate the faults which are the cause of suffering is to eliminate suffering itself. As a practical means whereby Nanda might eliminate faults, then, the Buddha teaches him a noble eightfold path based on the integrity (*śīla*) praised in Canto 13, but including the meditative tranquillity (*samādhi*) indicated in Canto 15, and also comprising the crowning accomplishment of wisdom (*prajñā*), this wisdom being primarily a function of insight into the four noble truths themselves.

While the Canto thus has a practical emphasis, it also contains some especially memorable examples of Aśvaghōṣa's poetry – like for example verse 4, verse 10, verses 28-29, verse 35, verse 42-43, verse 50, and verses 97-98.

In the end the present Canto is much more than a detailed explanation of the four noble truths, and much more than beautiful poetry. It is a call to action, in which the Buddha exhorts Nanda, following the example of many other individuals, energetically to clear his own path of *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*, for the ending of all faults, gross and subtle. The Canto title *ārya-satya-vākhyāna* – like all of the other canto titles from Canto 12 onwards – is thus ultimately suggestive of sitting practice itself. In the final analysis, *ārya-satya-vākhyāna* may be understood as describing the very act of sitting in the lotus posture as the expression, or the communication, of the four noble truths.

**evaṁ mano-dhāraṇayā krameṇa vyapohya kiṁ-cit samupohya kiṁ-cit /
dhyānāni catvāry adhigamya yogī prāpnoty abhijñā niyamena pañca // 16.1 //**

Thus, by methodically taking possession of the mind, getting rid of something and gathering something together, / The practitioner makes the four dhyānas¹¹²² his own, and duly acquires the five powers of knowing: // 16.1 //

¹¹²² The four stages of sitting-meditation are described from SN17.42 to 17.55. See also Arāḍa's description in BC Canto 12.

**ṛddhi-pravekaṃ ca bahu-prakāraṃ parasya cetaś-caritāvabodham /
atīta-janma-smaraṇaṃ ca dīrghaṃ divye viśuddhe śruti-cakṣuṣī ca // 16.2 //**

The principal transcendent power,¹¹²³ taking many forms;¹¹²⁴ then being awake to what others are thinking; / And remembering past lives from long ago; and divine lucidity of ear; and of eye. // 16.2 //

**ataḥ paraṃ tattva-parīkṣaṇena mano dadhāty āsrava-saṃkṣayāya /
tato hi duḥkha-prabhṛtīni samyak catvāri satyāni padāny avaiti // 16.3 //**

From then on,¹¹²⁵ through investigation of what is,¹¹²⁶ he applies his mind to eradicating the polluting influences,¹¹²⁷ / For on this basis he fully understands suffering and the rest, the four true standpoints: // 16.3 //

**bādhātmakaṃ duḥkham idaṃ prasaktaṃ duḥkhasya hetuḥ prabhavātmako 'yam /
duḥkha-kṣayo niḥsaraṇātmako 'yaṃ trāṇātmako 'yaṃ praśamāya mārgaḥ // 16.4 //**

This is suffering, which is constant and akin to trouble; this is the cause of suffering, akin to starting it; / This is cessation of suffering, akin to walking away. And this, akin to a refuge, is a peaceable path. // 16.4 //

¹¹²³ *Ṛddhi-pravekam*. The meanings of *ṛddhi* include 1. increase, growth, prosperity, success; and 2. accomplishment, perfection, supernatural power [= *abhijñā*]. At the end of a compound, *praveka* means principal or chief.

¹¹²⁴ The 1st pāda has been translated in such a way as to allow the reading that “taking many forms,” i.e. versatility or adaptability, is the principal transcendent power. EHJ translated “the most excellent magic powers of many kinds.” Cf. SN3.22.

¹¹²⁵ *Ataḥ param*, “from then on.” As EHJ wrote in his Introduction to *Buddhacarita*, this seems to accord with “the view generally prevailing in the schools... that the trances [*dhyānas*] are mastered in a preliminary stage before the process of *bhāvanā* begins.” The prevailing view, in other words, was that sitting-dhyāna was a mundane practice, associated with the five higher powers, but not with the sixth supramundane power, by which the pollutants are eradicated. But see note to SN17.56.

¹¹²⁶ *Tattva-parīkṣaṇa*, “investigation of reality,” may be taken as equivalent to the Pali *vipassanā* (see note to SN15.69).

¹¹²⁷ An *āsrava* (lit. “influx”) is a polluting influence, or pollutant, or taint, that is said to tie us to existence in *saṃsāra*. Sometimes the *āsravas* are classified three ways as *kāmāsrava* (desire), *bhavāsrava* (becoming), and *avidyāsrava* (ignorance). Sometimes *drṣṭy-āsrava* (views) is included in a four-way classification. According to one explanation, the taint of views is ended through the supramundane path of stream-entry, the taint of desire through the supramundane path of non-returning, and the taints of becoming and ignorance through the supramundane path of arhathood. EHJ's point, then, is that, in the conventional understanding, sitting-dhyāna is a mundane practice, and sometimes (as in the case of *Arāḍa*) a non-Buddhist practice, which precedes the supramundane efforts of the four kinds of noble ones to cleanse the mind of pollutants. EHJ queries why *Aśvaghōṣa* seems to go against this convention in his description of Nanda's progress in SN Canto 17. (Again, see note to SN17.56.)

**ity ārya-satyāny avabudhya buddhyā catvāri samyak pravīdya caiva /
sarvāsravān bhāvanayābhībhūya na jāyate śāntim avāpya bhūyaḥ // 16.5 //**

Understanding these noble truths, by a process of reasoning, while getting to know the four as one, / He prevails over all pollutants, by the means of mental development, and, on finding peace, is no longer subject to becoming. // 16.5 //

**abodhato hy aprativedhataś ca tattvātmakasyāsyā catuṣṭasya /
bhavād bhavaṁ yāti na śāntim eti saṁsāra-dolām adhiruhya lokaḥ // 16.6 //**

For by failing to wake up and come round to this four, whose substance is the reality of what is, / Humankind goes from existence to existence without finding peace, hoisted in the swing of saṁsāra. // 16.6 //

**tasmāj jarāder vyasanasya mūlaṁ samāsato duḥkham avaihi janma /
sarvauśadhīnām iva bhūr bhavāya sarvāpadān kṣetram idaṁ hi janma // 16.7 //**

Therefore, at the root of a tragedy like growing old, see, in short, that birth is suffering. / For, as the earth supports the life of all plants, this birth is the field of all troubles. // 16.7 //

**yaj janma-rūpasya hi sendriyasya duḥkhasya tan naika-vidhasya janma /
yaḥ saṁbhavaś cāsyā samucchrayasya mṛtyoś ca rogasya ca saṁbhavaḥ saḥ // 16.8 //**

The birth of a sentient bodily form, again, is the birth of suffering in all its varieties; / And he who begets such an outgrowth is the begetter of death and of disease. // 16.8 //

**sad vāpy asadvā viṣa-miśram annaṁ yathā vināśāya na dhāraṇāya /
loke tathā tiryag-upary-adho vā duḥkhāya sarvaṁ na sukhāya janma // 16.9 //**

Good food or bad food, if mixed with poison, makes for ruin and not for sustenance. / Likewise, whether in a world on the flat or above or below, all birth makes for hardship and not for ease. // 16.9 //

**jarādayo naika-vidhāḥ prajānān satyān pravṛttau prabhavanti anarthāḥ /
pravātsu ghoreṣv api māruteṣu na hy aprasūtās taravaś calanti // 16.10 //**

The many and various disappointments of men, like old age, occur as long as their doing goes on. / (For, even when violent winds blow, trees do not shake that never sprouted.) // 16.10 //

**ākāśa-yoniḥ pavano yathā hi yathā śamī-garbha-śayo hutāśaḥ /
āpo yathāntar-vasudhā-śayāś ca duḥkhaṁ tathā citta-śarīra-yoni // 16.11 //**

As wind is born from the air, as fire sleeps in the womb of śamī wood, / And as water gestates inside the earth, so does suffering spring from an expectant mind-and-body. // 16.11 //

**apām dravatvaṁ kaṭhinaṭvaṁ urvyā vāyoś calatvaṁ dhruvaṁ auṣṇyam agneḥ /
yathā sva-bhāvo hi tathā sva-bhāvo duḥkhaṁ śarīrasya ca cetasaś ca // 16.12 //**

The fluidity of water, the solidity of earth, the motion of wind, and the constant heat of fire /
Are innate in them; as also it is in the nature of both the body and the mind to suffer. // 16.12
//

**kāye sati vyādhi-jarādi duḥkhaṁ kṣut-tarṣa-varṣoṣṇa-himādi caiva /
rūpāśrite cetasi sānubandhe śok-ārati-krodha-bhayādi duḥkham // 16.13 //**

Insofar as there is a body, there is the suffering of sickness, aging and so on; and also of hunger
and thirst, and of the rains, and summer heat and winter cold. / Insofar as a mind is bonded,
tied to phenomena, there is the suffering of grief, discontent, anger, fear and so on. // 16.13 //

**pratyakṣam ālokya ca janma duḥkhaṁ duḥkhaṁ tathātītam apīti viddhi /
yathā ca tad duḥkham idaṁ ca duḥkhaṁ duḥkhaṁ tathānāgatam apy avehi // 16.14 //**

Seeing now before your eyes that birth is suffering, recognise that likewise in the past it was
suffering. / And just as that was suffering and this is suffering, know that likewise in the future
it will be suffering. // 16.14 //

**bīja-svabhāvo hi yatheha dṛṣṭo bhūto 'pi bhavyo 'pi tathānumeyaḥ /
praty-akṣataś ca jvalano yathoṣṇo bhūto 'pi bhavyo 'pi tathoṣṇa eva // 16.15 //**

For just as it is evident to us now what kind of thing a seed is, we can infer that it was so in the
past and that it will be so in the future. / And just as fire burning before us is hot, so was it hot
and so will it be hot. // 16.15 //

**tan nāma-rūpasya guṇānurūpaṁ yatraiva nirvṛttir udāra-vṛtta /
tatraiva duḥkhaṁ na hi tad-vimuktaṁ duḥkhaṁ bhaviṣyaty abhavad bhaved vā // 16.16
//**

In conformity with its kind, then, a distinguishable bodily form¹¹²⁸ develops, wherein, O man of
noble conduct, / Suffering exists, right there – for nowhere else will suffering exist or has it
existed or could it exist. // 16.16 //

**pravṛtti-duḥkhasya ca tasya loke tṛṣṇādayo doṣa-gaṇā nimittam /
naiveśvaro na prakṛtir na kālo nāpi svabhāvo na vidhir yadṛcchā // 16.17 //**

And this, the suffering of doing, in the world, has its cause¹¹²⁹ in clusters of faults which start
with thirsting – / The cause is certainly not in God, nor in primordial matter, nor in time; nor
even in one's inherent constitution, nor in predestination or self-will. // 16.17 //

¹¹²⁸ *Nāmu-rūpa*, as the 3rd of the 12 links in 12-fold dependent arising, can be understood to mean the
psycho-physicality which arises out of divided consciousness, and which at the same time produces
divided consciousness (see BC14.74). But the MW dictionary also defines *nāma-rūpa* as an individual
being. EHJ translated *nāma-rūpa* in this instance as “corporeality.”

¹¹²⁹ Here (as also in 12.39-40) *nimittam* is identified with *kāraṇa*, and means cause.

jñātavyam etena ca kāraṇena lokasya doṣebhya iti pravṛttiḥ /

yasmān mriyante sa-rajās-tamaskā na jāyate vīta-rajās-tamaskaḥ // 16.18 //

Again, you must understand how, due to this cause, because of men's faults, the cycle of doing goes on, / So that they succumb to death who are afflicted by the dust of the passions and by darkness; but he is not reborn who is free of dust and darkness. // 16.18 //

icchā-viśeṣe sati tatra tatra yānāsanāder bhavati prayogaḥ /

yasmād atas tarṣa-vaśāt tathaiva janma prajānām iti veditavyam // 16.19 //

Insofar as the specific desire exists to do this or that, an action like going or sitting happens; / Hence, in just the same way, by the force of their thirsting living creatures are reborn – as is to be observed: // 16.19 //

sattvāny abhiṣvaṅga-vaśāni drṣṭvā svajātiṣu prīti-parāṅy atīva /

abhyāsa-yogād upapāditāni tair eva doṣair iti tāni viddhi // 16.20 //

See sentient beings in the grip of attachment, dead set on pleasure among their own kind; / And, from their habitual practice of faults, observe them presenting with those very faults. // 16.20 //

krodha-praharṣādibhir āśrayāṅām utpadyate ceḥa yathā viśeṣaḥ /

tathaiva janmasv api naika-rūpo nirvartate kleśa-kṛto viśeṣaḥ // 16.21 //

Just as the anger, lust, and so on of sufferers of those afflictions give rise in the present to a personality trait, / So too in new lives, in various manifestations, does the affliction-created trait develop: // 16.21 //

roṣādhike janmani tīvra-roṣa utpadyate rāgiṇi tīvra-rāgaḥ /

mohādhike moha-balādhikaś ca tad-alpa-doṣe ca tad-alpa-doṣaḥ // 16.22 //

In a life dominated by anger arises violent anger,¹¹³⁰ in the lover of passion arises burning passion, / And in one dominated by ignorance arises overwhelming ignorance. In one who has a lesser fault, again, the lesser fault develops. // 16.22 //

¹¹³⁰ EHJ followed Shastri in amending the two occurrences in the 1st pāda of roṣa (anger) to doṣa. EHJ took doṣa (a fault) to represent specifically dveṣa, hatred. Hartmann's later discovery of the Central Asian fragment, parts of which cover this verse, tended to confirm that the paper manuscript's original roṣa had been correct.

**phalaṃ hi yādṛk samavaiti sāksāt tādātmyato bījam avaity atītam /
avetya bīja-prakṛtīm ca sāksād anāgataṃ tat-phalam abhyupaiti // 16.23 //**

Seeing what kind of fruit is before one's eyes, one knows it was that kind of seed in the past.¹¹³¹
/ And having identified a seed before one's eyes, one knows the fruit it may be in the future. //
16.23 //

**doṣa-kṣayo jātiṣu yāsu yasya vairāgyatas tāsu na jāyate saḥ /
doṣāśayas tiṣṭhati yasya yatra tasyopapattir vivaśasya tatra // 16.24 //**

In whichever realms of existence a man has ended faults, thanks to that dispassion he is not
born in those realms. / Wherever he remains susceptible to a fault, that is where he makes his
appearance, whether he likes it or not. // 16.24 //

**taj janmano naika-vidhasya saumya tṛṣṇādayo hetava ity avetya /
tāmś chindhi duḥkhād yadi nirmumuksā kārya-kṣayaḥ kāraṇa-samkṣayād hi // 16.25 //**

So my friend,¹¹³² with regard to the many forms of becoming, know their causes to be [the
faults] that start with thirsting / And cut out those [faults], if you wish to be freed from
suffering; for ending of the effect follows from eradication of the cause. // 16.25 //

**duḥkha-kṣayo hetu-parikṣayāc ca śāntaṃ śivaṃ sāksi-kuruṣva dharmaṃ /
tṛṣṇā-virāgaṃ layanaṃ nirodhaṃ sanātanaṃ trāṇam ahāryam āryam // 16.26 //**

Again, the ending of suffering follows from the disappearance of its cause. Experience that
reality for yourself as peace and well-being, / A place of rest, a cessation, an absence of the red
taint of thirsting, a primeval refuge which is irremovable and noble, // 16.26 //

**yasmin na jātir na jarā na mṛtyur na vyādhayo nāpriya-samprayogaḥ /
necchā-vipanna priya-viprayogaḥ kṣemaṃ padaṃ naiṣṭhikam acyutaṃ tat // 16.27 //**

In which there is no becoming, no aging, no dying, no illness, no being touched by
unpleasantness, / No disappointment, and no separation from what is pleasant: It is an ultimate
and indestructible step, in which to dwell at ease. // 16.27 //

¹¹³¹ Originally I followed EHJ's reading of the first word in the 2nd pāda as *tad-āgamad*, and translated "from past knowledge of that fruit." But Hartmann's fragment of Central Asian text has *tādātmyato*; this I have amended, following the conjecture of Harunaga Isaacson, to *tādātmyato* (= *tādātmya* + suffix *-tas*). *Tādātmya*, lit. "the state of having that as nature," is given in the MW dictionary as: "sameness or identity of nature or character with." Either way, the point is that, rather than discuss the principle of cause and effect in the abstract, here the Buddha speaks of seed and fruit. (Translation amended July 2012, after completion of the audio recording of this Saundara-nanda translation.)

¹¹³² Hartmann's fragment has *samyak*. Salomon points out that since *samyak* is a key word, repeated many times in this chapter, it might have been easy for the copyist to misread *saumya* as *samyak*.

dīpo yathā nirvṛtim abhyupeto naivāvaniṃ gacchati nāntarīkṣam /

dīsaṃ na kām-cid vidiṣaṃ na kām-cit sneha-kṣayāt kevalam eti śāntim // 16.28 //

A lamp that has gone out reaches neither to the earth nor to the sky, / Nor to any cardinal nor to any intermediate point: Because its oil is spent it reaches nothing but extinction. // 16.28 //

evaṃ kṛtī nirvṛtim abhyupeto naivāvaniṃ gacchati nāntarīkṣam /

dīsaṃ na kām-cid vidiṣaṃ na kām-cit kleśa-kṣayāt kevalam eti śāntim // 16.29 //

In the same way, a man of action who has come to quiet reaches neither to the earth nor to the sky, / Nor to any cardinal nor to any intermediate point: From the ending of his afflictions he attains nothing but extinction. // 16.29 //

asyābhyupāyo 'dhigamāya mārگاḥ prajñā-trikalpaḥ praśama-dvikalpaḥ /

sa bhāvanīyo vidhivad budhena śīle śucau tripramukhe sthitena // 16.30 //

A means for gaining that end is the path of threefold wisdom and twofold tranquillity.¹¹³³ / It is to be cultivated¹¹³⁴ by a wakeful person working to principle – abiding in untainted threefold integrity. // 16.30 //

vāk-karma samyak saha-kāya-karma yathāvad ājīva-nayaś ca śuddhaḥ /

idaṃ trayam vṛtta-vidhau pravṛttaṃ śīlāśrayaṃ dharma-parigrahāya // 16.31 //

Using the voice well and the body well in tandem, and making a clean living in a suitable manner: / These three, pertaining to conduct, are for the mastery, based on integrity, of one's dharma-duty.¹¹³⁵ // 16.31 //

¹¹³³ At the end of this line, the fragment first identified in a 1988 paper by Jens-Ewe Hartmann has *praśamas trikalpa*. Richard Salomon (1999) notes that this should probably be amended to *praśama-trikalpa*. Either way, there is a significant difference here between the Nepalese manuscript which EHJ based his text on, and the Central Asian manuscript to which Hartmann's fragment belonged. In the Nepalese manuscript *praśama-dvikalpaḥ* indicates that tranquillity is twofold; in the Central Asian manuscript *praśamas trikalpaḥ* or *praśama-trikalpaḥ* indicates that tranquillity is threefold. If one accepts that tranquillity is threefold, then wisdom must be twofold. Therefore, though *prajñā-dvikalpaḥ* is missing from Hartmann's original fragment, Salomon makes a case for reconstructing the verse as follows: *asyābhyupāyo dhigamāya mārگاḥ prajñā-dvikalpaḥ praśama-trikalpaḥ / tau bhāvanīyau vidhivad budhena śīle śucau tripramukhe sthitena //*

¹¹³⁴ In Hartmann's fragment, *tau bhāvanīyau* means these two [wisdom and tranquillity] are to be cultivated. Thus: "A means for gaining that end is the path of twofold wisdom and threefold tranquillity. These two are to be cultivated by a wakeful person working to principle – abiding in untainted threefold integrity." In some versions of the threefold categorization of the noble eightfold path, initiative/effort is indeed included not under the heading of wisdom (*prajñā*) but under the heading of tranquillity (*samādhi*), making wisdom twofold and tranquillity threefold, as per Salomon's suggested reconstruction.

¹¹³⁵ EHJ's preferred reading is *karma-parigrahāya*, "for the mastery of one's *karma*-conduct."

**satyeṣu duḥkhādiṣu dṛṣṭir āryā samyag-vitarkaś ca parākramaś ca /
idaṃ trayam jñāna-vidhau pravṛttaṃ prajñāśrayam kleśa-parikṣayāya // 16.32 //**

Noble insight into suffering and the other truths, along with thinking straight, and initiative: / These three, pertaining to know-how, are for dissolution, based on wisdom, of the afflictions.¹¹³⁶ // 16.32 //

**nyāyena satyābhigamāya yuktā samyak smṛtiḥ samyag atho samādhiḥ /
idaṃ dvayam yoga-vidhau pravṛttaṃ śamāśrayam citta-parigrahāya // 16.33 //**

True mindfulness, properly harnessed so as to bring one close to the truths;¹¹³⁷ and true balance: / These two, pertaining to practice, are for mastery, based on tranquillity, of the mind. // 16.33 //

**kleśāṅkurān na pratanoti śilam bījāṅkurān kāla ivātivṛttaḥ /
śucau hi śīle puruṣasya doṣā manaḥ sa-lajjā iva dharṣayanti // 16.34 //**

Integrity no more propagates the shoots of affliction than a bygone spring propagates shoots from seeds. / The faults, as long as a man's integrity is untainted, venture only timidly to attack his mind. // 16.34 //

**kleśāṁs tu viṣkambhayate samādhir vegān ivādrir mahato nadīnām /
sthitaṁ samādhau hi na dharṣayanti doṣā bhujāṅgā iva mantra-baddhāḥ // 16.35 //**

But balance casts off the afflictions like a mountain casts off the mighty torrents of rivers. / The faults do not attack a man who is standing firm in balanced stillness: like charmed snakes, they are spellbound. // 16.35 //

**prajñā tv aśeṣeṇa nihanti doṣāṁs tīra-drumān prāvṛṣi nimnageva /
dagdhā yayā na prabhavanti doṣā vajrāṅginevānuṣṛtena vṛkṣāḥ // 16.36 //**

And wisdom destroys the faults without trace, as a mountain stream in the monsoon destroys the trees on its banks. / Faults consumed by it do not stand a chance, like trees in the fiery wake of a thunderbolt. // 16.36 //

¹¹³⁶ In Salomon's reconstruction, EHJ's verse 32 becomes verse 33 and reads: satyeṣu duḥkhādiṣu dṛṣṭir āryā samyag-vitarkaś-ca ? ? ? ? ? / idaṃ dvayam jñāna-vidhau pravṛttaṃ prajñāśrayam kleśa-parikṣayāya // "Noble insight into suffering and the other truths, along with thinking straight, * * * * : These two, pertaining to know-how, are for dissolution, based on wisdom, of the afflictions."

¹¹³⁷ Nyāyena satyābhigamāya yuktā samyak smṛtiḥ. EHJ translated "Right attention used in accordance with the plan in order to approach the Truths." LC translated "Right mindfulness conjoined to the plan for the discovery of the truth." Whichever of many possible translations is preferred, the point is that true smṛti as the Buddha taught it is not bare attention divorced from any philosophical or developmental context; mindfulness is part of an eightfold means of going in a certain direction.

**triskandham etaṁ pravigāhya mārgaṁ praspaṣṭam aṣṭāṅgam ahāryam āryam /
duḥkhasya hetūn prajahāti doṣān prāpnoti cātyanta-śivaṁ padaṁ tat // 16.37 //**

Giving oneself to this path with its three divisions and eight branches – this straightforward, irremovable, noble path – / One abandons the faults, which are the causes of suffering, and comes to that step which is total well-being. // 16.37 //

**asyopacāre dhṛtir ārjavaṁ ca hrīr apramādaḥ praviviktatā ca /
alpecchatā tuṣṭir asaṁgatā ca loka-pravṛttāv aratiḥ kṣamā ca // 16.38 //**

Attendant on it are constancy and straightness; modesty, attentiveness, and reclusiveness; / Wanting little, contentment, and freedom from forming attachments; no fondness for worldly activity, and forbearance. // 16.38 //

**yāthātmyato vindati yo hi duḥkhaṁ tasyodbhavaṁ tasya ca yo nirodham /
āryeṇa mārgeṇa sa śāntim eti kalyāṇa-mitraiḥ saha vartamānaḥ // 16.39 //**

For he who knows suffering as it really is, who knows its starting and its stopping: / It is he who reaches peace by the noble path – going along with friends in the good. // 16.39 //

**yo vyādhitō vyādhim avaiti samyag vyādher nidānaṁ ca tad-auśadhaṁ ca /
ārogyam āpnoti hi so 'cireṇa mitrair abhijñair upacaryamāṇaḥ // 16.40 //**

He who fully appreciates his illness, as the illness it is, who sees the cause¹¹³⁸ of the illness and its remedy: / It is he who wins, before long, freedom from disease – attended by friends in the know. // 16.40 //

**tad vyādhi-saṁjñāṁ kuru duḥkha-satyē doṣeṣv api vyādhi-nidāna-saṁjñāṁ /
ārogya-saṁjñāṁ ca nirodha-satyē bhaiṣajya-saṁjñāṁ api mārga-satyē // 16.41 //**

So with regard to the truth of suffering, see suffering as an illness; with regard to the faults, see the faults as the cause of the illness; / With regard to the truth of stopping, see stopping as freedom from disease; and with regard to the truth of a path, see a path as a remedy. // 16.41 //

**tasmāt pravṛttim parigaccha duḥkhaṁ pravartakān apy avagaccha doṣān /
nivṛttim āgaccha ca tan-nirodhaṁ nivartakaṁ cāpy avagaccha mārgam // 16.42 //**

Comprehend, therefore, that suffering is doing; witness the faults impelling it forward; / Realise its stopping as non-doing; and know the path as a turning back. // 16.42 //

**śirasy atho vāsasi saṁpradīpte satyāvabodhāya matir vicāryā /
dagdhaṁ jagat satya-nayaṁ hy adṛṣṭvā pradahyate saṁprati dhakṣyate ca // 16.43 //**

Though your head and clothes be on fire direct your mind so as to be awake to the truths. / For in failing to see the purport of the truths, the world has burned, it is burning now, and it will burn. // 16.43 //

¹¹³⁸ *Nidāna*, cause, is as in the 12 *nidāna* which form the links in 12-fold dependent arising.

yadaiva yaḥ paśyati nāma-rūpaṁ kṣayīti tad-darśanam asya samyak /

samyak ca nirvedam upaiti paśyan nandī-kṣayāc ca kṣayam eti rāgaḥ // 16.44 //

When a man sees a separate bodily form as decrepit, that insight of his is accurate; / In seeing accurately he is disenchanted, and from the ending of exuberance ends the red taint of passion.

// 16.44 //

tayoś ca nandī-rajasoḥ kṣayeṇa samyag vimuktaṁ pravādāmi cetaḥ /

samyag vimuktir manasaś ca tābhyāṁ na cāsya bhūyaḥ karaṇīyam asti // 16.45 //

By the ending of the duality which is exuberance and gloom, I submit, his mind is fully set free. / And when his mind is fully liberated from that duality, there is nothing further for him to do.

// 16.45 //

yathā-svabhāvena hi nāma-rūpaṁ tadd-hetum evāsta-gamaṁ ca tasya /

vijānataḥ pasyata eva cāhaṁ bravīmi samyak kṣayam āsravāṇāṁ // 16.46 //

For in him who sees a separate bodily form¹¹³⁹ as it is, and who sees its origin and passing away, / From the very fact of his knowing and seeing, I predict the complete eradication of the pollutants. // 16.46 //

tasmāt paraṁ saumya vidhāya vīryaṁ śighraṁ ghaṭasv āsrava-saṁkṣayāya /

duḥkhān anityāṁś ca nirātmakāṁś ca dhātūn viśeṣeṇa parīkṣamāṇaḥ // 16.47 //

So my friend garner your energy greatly and strive quickly to put an end to polluting influences, / Examining in particular the elements – as suffering, as impermanent and as devoid of self. // 16.47 //

dhātūn hi ṣaḍ bhū-salilānalādīn sāmānyataḥ svena ca lakṣaṇena /

avaiti yo nānyam avaiti tebhyaḥ so 'tyantikaṁ mokṣam avaiti tebhyaḥ // 16.48 //

For in knowing the six elements of earth, water, fire and the rest, generically, and each as specific to itself,¹¹⁴⁰ / He who knows nothing else but those elements, knows total release from those elements. // 16.48 //

kleśa-prahāṇāya ca niścitena kālo 'bhyupāyaś ca parīkṣitavyaḥ /

yogo 'py akāle hy anupāyataś ca bhavaty anarthāya na tad-guṇāya // 16.49 //

One set on abandoning the afflictions, then, should attend to timing and method; / For even practice itself, done at the wrong time and relying on wrong means, makes for disappointment and not for the desired end. // 16.49 //

¹¹³⁹ “Psycho-physicality,” as in the 4th of the 12 causal links, would also work here as a translation of *nāma-rūpaṁ*. EHJ, however, again read *nāma-rūpaṁ* here as “corporeality.”

¹¹⁴⁰ The sense of realizing elements “all together, and one after another” echoes SN16.5, as well as SN10.19.

ajāta-vatsām yadi gām duhīta naivāpnuyāt kṣīram akāla-dohī /

kāle 'pi vā syān na payo labheta mohena śṛṅgād yadi gām duhīta // 16.50 //

If a cow is milked before her calf is born, milking at the wrong time will yield no milk. / Or even at the right time no milk will be got if, through ignorance, a cow is milked by the horn. // 16.50 //

ārdrāc ca kāṣṭhāj jvalan-ābhikāmo naiva prayatnād api vanhim ṛcchet /

kāṣṭhāc ca śuṣkād api pātanena naivāgnim āpnoty anupāya-pūrvam // 16.51 //

Again, one who wants fire from damp wood, try as he might, will not get fire. / And even if he lays down dry wood, he won't get fire from that, with bad bushcraft. // 16.51 //

tad-deśa-kālau vidhivat pariṁśya yogasya mātrām api cābhyupāyam /

balābale cātmani sampradhārya kāryaḥ prayatno na tu tad-viruddhaḥ // 16.52 //

Having given due consideration to the time and place as well as to the extent and method of one's practice, / One should, reflecting on one's own strength and weakness, persist in an effort that is not inconsistent with them. // 16.52 //

pragrāhakaṁ yat tu nimittam uktam uddhanyamāne hṛdi tan na sevyam /

evaṁ hi cittam praśamaṁ na yāti [viś]vāyunā vahnir iveryamāṇaḥ // 16.53 //

That factor¹¹⁴¹ said to be "garnering" does not serve when the emotions are inflamed, / For thus the mind does not come to quiet, like a fire being fanned by the wind.¹¹⁴² // 16.53 //

śamāya yat syān niyataṁ nimittaṁ jātoddhave cetasi tasya kālaḥ /

evaṁ hi cittam praśamaṁ niyacchet pradīpyamāno 'gnir ivodakena // 16.54 //

A factor ascertained to be calming has its time when one's mind is excited; / For thus the mind subsides into quietness, like a blazing fire [doused] with water. // 16.54 //

¹¹⁴¹ Paradoxically, *nimittam* means both 1. mark, target, object (see SN13.41 "objectified image"), and 2. cause (see SN16.17, 16.96), causal factor or stimulus (see SN16.72, 16.84). It also means 3. sign (see SN1.32; 5.10). In the series of verses from verses 53 to 67 dealing with the practice of mental development (*bhāvanā*), whose aim is the removal of polluting influences, primarily through the use of antidotes, *nimitta* might be understood as meaning 1. a target/area/subject [for development/cultivation], or 2. a stimulus used in such practice (as in resort to a disagreeable or unpleasant stimulus; see verse 60), or indeed as both 1. and 2. together – insofar as a target is itself a kind of stimulus. Up to this point, Aśvaghōṣa has used *nimitta* in various distinct meanings; from here he seems to use *nimitta* in such a way that it cannot be definitively understood in any of these meanings – say, as cause/stimulus, or as target/object. "Factor" has therefore been selected as a translation of *nimitta*, in the hope that the meaning of "factor" might be broad enough not to rule anything definitively in or out.

¹¹⁴² EHJ's Sanskrit text has at the beginning of the 4th pāda *** *nā* plus the following note: "I cannot solve the restoration of *d*, Evidently a four-syllable word meaning 'wind' in the instrumental is required." *Pra-vāyunā* would fit, but the Monier-Williams dictionary gives no such word for wind as *pra-vāyu*. There is such a word as *viś-vayu* (air, wind), but its light 2nd syllable does not fit the metre. *Viśvāyu* with a long 2nd syllable means not "wind" but "all people" (*viśva + āyu*). Thus the 4th pāda as rendered here is not a satisfactory solution. *Viśvāyunā vahnir iveryamāṇa* literally means "like a fire fanned by all people."

**śamāvahaṃ yan niyataṃ nimittaṃ sevyam na tac cetasi liyamāne /
evaṃ hi bhūyo layam eti cittam anīryamāṇo 'gnir ivālpā-sāraḥ // 16.55 //**

A factor ascertained to bring calm does not serve when one's mind is dormant; / For thus the mind sinks further into lifelessness, like a feeble fire left unfanned. // 16.55 //

**pragrāhakaṃ yan niyataṃ nimittaṃ layam gate cetasi tasya kālaḥ /
kriyā-samarthaṃ hi manas tathā syān mandāyamāno 'gnir ivendhanena // 16.56 //**

A factor determined to be garnering, has its time when one's mind is lifeless, / For thus the mind becomes fit for work, like a feebly-burning fire [plied] with fuel. // 16.56 //

**aupekṣikaṃ nāpi nimittam iṣṭam layam gate cetasi soddhave vā /
evaṃ hi tīvraṃ janayed anartham upekṣito vyādhir ivāturaṣya // 16.57 //**

Nor is equanimity¹¹⁴³ a valid factor when one's mind is either lifeless or excited.¹¹⁴⁴ / For that might engender severe adversity, like the neglected illness of a sick man. // 16.57 //

**yat syād upekṣā niyataṃ nimittaṃ sāmyaṃ gate cetasi tasya kālaḥ /
evaṃ hi kṛtyāya bhavet prayogo ratho vidheyāśva iva prayātaḥ // 16.58 //**

A factor ascertained to conduce to equanimity¹¹⁴⁵ has its time when one's mind is in its normal state; / For thus one may set about work to be done, like a wagon setting off with well-trained horses. // 16.58 //

**rāgoddhava-vyākulite 'pi citte maitropasamhāra-vidhir na kāryaḥ /
rāgātmako muhyati maitrayā hi snehaṃ kapha-kṣobha ivopayujya // 16.59 //**

Again, when the mind is filled with the red joys of passion, direction towards oneself¹¹⁴⁶ of loving-kindness¹¹⁴⁷ is not to be practised; / For a passionate type is stupefied by love, like a sufferer from phlegm taking oil. // 16.59 //

¹¹⁴³ As a noun from *upa-vīkṣ*, which means “to look on, overlook, disregard, neglect, leave be,” *aupekṣika* can be understood as 1. the practice of not interfering (cf. verse 65), or 2. “not minding” as the state of mind associated with such practice – in other words, “indifference,” or (as it is usually translated in the context of meditation) “equanimity” (SN17.54).

¹¹⁴⁴ EHJ's original text, based on the palm-leaf manuscript, has *soddhave* (*sa* = possessive prefix + *uddhava* = sacrificial fire, festival, holiday, joy). Linda Covill has *sodbhave* (*sa* = possessive prefix + *udbhava* = springing up, growing, becoming visible). The meaning is not materially affected. EHJ translated as “excited” and LC as “over-excited.”

¹¹⁴⁵ “Cultivate development of the mind, Rāhula,” the Buddha tells his son in the Rāhula Sutta (MN62), “which is like earth... water... fire... wind... and space.” The Buddha goes on to explain that earth does not care what is thrown on it, water flows anywhere, fire does not mind what it burns, et cetera.

¹¹⁴⁶ The meanings of *upasamhāra* (from *upa-sam-vhr*, to draw together) include “drawing towards one's self” and “bringing near.” See also note to verse 62.

¹¹⁴⁷ *Maitra* (or as per verse 59 *maitrā* and verse 62 *maitrī*), more literally means friendship or friendliness, being derived from *mitra*, friend. Other possible translations are goodwill, or benevolence.

rāgoddhate cetasi dhairyam etya niṣevitavyaṁ tv aśubhaṁ nimittam /

rāgātmako hy evam upaiti śarma kaphātmako rūkṣam ivopayujya // 16.60 //

Steadiness lies, when the mind is excited by ardour, in resorting to an unpleasant factor;¹¹⁴⁸ /
For thus a passionate type obtains relief, like a phlegmatic type taking an astringent. // 16.60 //

vyāpāda-doṣeṇa manasy udīrṇe na sevītavyaṁ tv aśubhaṁ nimittam /

dveṣātmakasya hy aśubhā vadhāya pittātmanas tīkṣṇa ivopacāraḥ // 16.61 //

When the mind is wound up, however, with the fault of malice, unpleasantness is not the factor to be deployed; / For unpleasantness¹¹⁴⁹ is destructive to a hating type, as acid treatment is to a man of bilious nature. // 16.61 //

vyāpāda-doṣa-kṣubhite tu citte sevyaṁ sva-pakṣopanayena maitrī /

dveṣātmano hi praśamāya maitrī pittātmanaḥ śīta ivopacāraḥ // 16.62 //

When the mind is agitated by the fault of malice, loving-kindness should be cultivated, by directing it towards oneself.¹¹⁵⁰ / For loving-kindness¹¹⁵¹ is calming to a hate-afflicted soul, as cooling treatment is to the man of bilious nature. // 16.62 //

mohānubaddhe manasaḥ pracāre maitrāśubhā caiva bhavaty ayogaḥ /

tābhyāṁ hi saṁmoham upaiti bhūyo vāyv-ātmako rūkṣam ivopanīya // 16.63 //

When there is wandering of the mind, tied to delusion, both loving-kindness and unpleasantness are unsuitable, / For a deluded man is further deluded by these two, like a windy type given an astringent. // 16.63 //

¹¹⁴⁸ *Aśubhaṁ nimittam*, “an unpleasant factor,” or “unattractive object,” is generally understood to refer to the so-called impurity meditation (which the striver seems to have in mind in Canto 8) whereby some unattractive or repulsive aspect of a human body is conjured up in the mind and contemplated. By the repeated use in verses 54 – 58 of the word *niyatam* (established, ascertained), however, the Buddha in this part seems to have emphasized that Nanda is to establish what kind of *niṣmitta* (cause or object or factor) works for him, on an individual basis. In the same way, in Canto 10 the Buddha himself intuited that what would work for Nanda was not, as the striver understood, meditation on the repulsive aspects of a female body. On the contrary, what really worked for Nanda was a plan that began with a kind of fantasy, or thought experiment, involving the most attractive of women in Indra's paradise.

¹¹⁴⁹ The use of *aśubhā* as a nominative feminine noun looks unusual here, but EHV did not see it as calling for comment. EHV translated as “that meditation,” referring back to the *aśubhaṁ nimittam* of the previous line.

¹¹⁵⁰ *Sva-pakṣa*, lit. “one's own wings,” means, in the first instance, one's own self. But *sva-pakṣa* can also mean somebody on one's own side, a friend. Meditators steeped in practice of loving-kindness meditation speak of starting with those to whom it is easy to feel goodwill, and moving outwards, so that goodwill might eventually be extended to everybody.

¹¹⁵¹ *Maitrī* (from *mitra*, friend) means friendship, friendliness, benevolence, goodwill.

**mohātmikāyām manasaḥ pravṛttau sevyas tv idam pratyayatā-vihāraḥ /
mūḍhe manasy eṣa hi śānti-mārgo vāyv-ātmake snigdha ivopacāraḥ // 16.64 //**

When working of the mind is delusory, one should appreciate the causality therein;¹¹⁵² / For this is a path to peace when the mind is bewildered, like treating a wind condition with oil. // 16.64 //

**ulkā-mukha-sthaṁ hi yathā suvarṇaṁ suvarṇa-kāro dhamatīha kāle /
kāle pariprokṣayate jalena krameṇa kāle samupekṣate ca // 16.65 //**

Holding gold in the mouth of a furnace, a goldsmith in this world blows it at the proper time, / Douses it with water at the proper time, and gradually, at the proper time, he leaves it be. // 16.65 //

**dahet suvarṇaṁ hi dhamann akāle jale kṣipan saṁśameyed akāle /
na cāpi samyak paripākam enaṁ nayed akāle samupekṣamāṇaḥ // 16.66 //**

For he might burn the gold by blowing at the wrong time, he might make it unworkable by plunging it into water at the wrong time, / And he would not bring it to full perfection if at the wrong time he were just to leave it be. // 16.66 //

**saṁpragrahasya praśamasya caiva tathaiva kāle samupekṣaṇasya /
samyān nimittaṁ manasā tv avekṣyaṁ nāśo hi yatno 'py anupāya-pūrvāḥ // 16.67 //**

Likewise, for garnering as also for calming, as also when appropriate for leaving well alone, / One should readily attend to the appropriate factor; because even diligence is destructive when accompanied by a wrong approach.” // 16.67 //

**ity evam anyāya-nivartanaṁ ca nyāyaṁ ca tasmai sugato babhāṣe /
bhūyaś ca tat-tac caritaṁ viditvā vitarka-hānāya vidhīn uvāca // 16.68 //**

Thus, on retreat from muddling through, and on the principle to come back to, the One Who Went Well spoke to [Nanda]; / And knowing the varieties of behaviour, he detailed further the directions for abandoning ideas. // 16.68 //

**yathā bhiṣak pitta-kaphānilānām ya eva kopān samupaiti doṣaḥ /
śamāya tasyaiva vidhīm vidhatte vyadhata doṣeṣu tathaiva buddhaḥ // 16.69 //**

Just as, for a disorder of bile, phlegm, or wind – for whatever disorder of the humours has manifested the symptoms of disease – / A doctor prescribes a course of treatment to cure that very disorder; so did the Buddha prescribe for the faults: // 16.69 //

¹¹⁵² *Sevyas... pratyayatā-vihāraḥ* is lit. “taking-delight-in-causality is to be practised,” or “the pleasure-ground of causality is to be resorted to.” EHJ translated “the subject of reflection should be causality.” Aśvaghōṣa's phrasing brings to mind the words of the 6th patriarch in China that when our minds are enlightened we turn the Flower of Dharma, and when our minds are deluded the Flower of Dharma turns.

**ekena kalpena sacen na hanyāt sv-abhyasta bhāvād asubhān vitarkān /
tato dvitīyaṁ kramam ārabheta na tv eva heyo guṇavān prayogaḥ // 16.70 //**

“It may not be possible, following a single method, to kill off bad ideas that habit has so deeply entrenched; / In that case, one should commit to a second course but never give up the good work. // 16.70 //

**anādi-kālopacitātmakatvād baliyasaḥ kleśa-gaṇasya caiva /
samyak prayogasya ca duṣkaratvāc chettuṁ na śakyāḥ sahasā hi doṣāḥ // 16.71 //**

Because of the instinct-led accumulation,¹¹⁵³ from time without beginning, of the powerful mass of afflictions, / And because true practice is so difficult to do, the faults cannot be cut off all at once. // 16.71 //

**aṅvyā yathānyā vipulāṅir anyā nirvāhyate tad-viduṣā nareṇa /
tadvat tad-evākuśalaṁ nimittaṁ kṣipen nimittāntara-sevanena // 16.72 //**

Just as a deep splinter, by means of the point of another sharp object, is removed by a man skilled in that task, / Likewise an unpromising stimulus may be dispensed with through deployment of a different stimulus.¹¹⁵⁴ // 16.72 //

**tavātha vādhyātma-nava-grahatvān naivopaśāmyed aśubho vitarkaḥ /
heyaḥ sa tad-doṣa-parīkṣaṇena sa-śvāpado mārga ivādhvarena // 16.73 //**

There again, because of your personal inexperience, a bad idea might not give way. / You should abandon it by observing the fault in it, as a traveller abandons a path on which there is a wild beast. // 16.73 //

**yathā kṣudh-ārto ’pi viśeṇa pṛktaṁ jijīviṣur necchati bhoktum annam /
tathaiva doṣāvaham ity avetya jahāti vidvān aśubhaṁ nimittam // 16.74 //**

A man who wishes to live, even when starving, declines to eat poisoned food. / Likewise, observing that it brings with it a fault, a wise person leaves alone an unpleasant stimulus.¹¹⁵⁵ // 16.74 //

¹¹⁵³ *Anādi-kālopacitātmakatvād* = *anādi* (without beginning) + *kāla* (time) + *upacita* (heaped up) + *ātmaka* (inherently consisting of) + *tvāt* (ablative of the suffix *tva*, indicating state or condition). So *ātmakatvāt* more literally means something like “because of the being inherent.” Incidentally, *upacitam* (heaped up, accumulated, abundant) might conceivably be considered as a candidate for amending the closing words of SN Canto 18 – see note to SN18.64 on *upakaram*.

¹¹⁵⁴ In this particular context *nimitta* seems to invite the translation “stimulus.”

¹¹⁵⁵ *Jahāti vidvān aśubhaṁ nimittam* means “the wise one leaves the *aśubhaṁ nimittam*.” Ostensibly this means that in particular circumstances, for example, when the mind is agitated by ill will (as in verse 61), the wise practitioner does not opt for “the impurity meditation.” Hence, EHJ: “the wise man abandons an impure meditation.” Below the surface, it may be that Aśvaghōṣa is circumspectly calling into question – not only in this verse, but in the way he tells Nanda's whole story, especially in Cantos 8, 9 and 10 – the way that the Buddha's original teaching of use of an *aśubhaṁ nimittam*, in specific circumstances, had come to be wrongly applied, on a general basis, by monks fixated on a mysoginist

**na doṣataḥ paśyati yo hi doṣaṁ kas taṁ tato vārayitum samarthaḥ /
gūṇaṁ gūṇe paśyati yaś ca yatra sa vāryamāṇo 'pi tataḥ prayāti // 16.75 //**

When a man does not see a fault as a fault, who is able to restrain him from it?¹¹⁵⁶ / But when a man sees the good in what is good, he goes towards it despite being restrained. // 16.75 //

**vyapatrapante hi kula-prasūtā manaḥ-pracārair aśubhaiḥ pravṛtaiḥ /
kaṅṭhe manasvīva yuvā vapuṣmān acāksuṣair aprayatair viṣaktaiḥ // 16.76 //**

For those brought up well¹¹⁵⁷ are ashamed of unpleasant occurrences going on in the mind, / As one who is bright, young and good-looking is ashamed of unsightly, ill-arranged [objects] hanging around his neck. // 16.76 //

**nirdhūyamānās tv atha leśato 'pi tiṣṭheyur evākuśalā vitarkāḥ /
kāryāntarair adhyayana-kriyādyaiḥ sevyo vidhir vismaraṇāya teṣām // 16.77 //**

If, though they are being shaken off, a trace persists of unhelpful thoughts, / One should resort to different tasks, such as study or physical work, as a means of consigning those thoughts to oblivion. // 16.77 //

**svaptavyam apy eva vicakṣaṇena kāya-klamo vāpi niṣevitavyaḥ /
na tv eva saṁcintyam asan-nimittaṁ yatrāvasaktasya bhaved anarthaḥ // 16.78 //**

A clear-sighted person should even sleep or resort to physical exhaustion, / But should never dwell on a bad stimulus, pending on which might be an adverse reaction. // 16.78 //

**yathā hi bhīto niśi taskarebhyo dvāraṁ priyebhyo 'pi na dātum icchet /
prājñas tathā saṁharati prayogaṁ samaṁ śubhasyāpy aśubhasya doṣaiḥ // 16.79 //**

For just as a man afraid of thieves in the night would not open his door even to friends, / So does a wise man withhold consent equally to the doing of anything bad or anything good that involves the faults. // 16.79 //

**evam-prakārair api yady upāyair nivāryamāṇā na parāṇmukhāḥ syuḥ /
tato yathā-śthūla-nibarhaṇena suvarṇa-doṣā iva te praheyāḥ // 16.80 //**

If, though fended off by such means, [faults] do not turn back, / Then, eliminated in order of their grossness, they must be driven out like impurities¹¹⁵⁸ from gold. // 16.80 //

view.

¹¹⁵⁶ Again, the subtext might be that Aśvaghōṣa was aware that practice of “impurity meditation” – not as the Buddha had originally taught it (as in verse 60), but as monks who lacked the eyes to see a fault as a fault had come to practise it – was being practised with faulty understanding.

¹¹⁵⁷ *Kula-prasūta* means, in other words, “born into a noble house” or “born into a noble lineage.”

¹¹⁵⁸ The meanings of *doṣāḥ* include 1. faults like greed and anger; and 2. impurities in metal; as well as 3. diseases associated with imbalance of the humours, as alluded to from verse 59.

**druta-prayāṇa-prabhṛtīmś ca tīkṣṇāt kāma-prayogāt parikhidyamānaḥ /
yathā naraḥ samśrayate tathaiva prājñena doṣeṣv api vartitavyam // 16.81 //**

Just as a man who feels depressed following a torrid love affair takes refuge in activities like quick marching, so should a wise person proceed with regard to the faults. // 16.81 //

**te ced alabdha-pratipakṣa-bhāvān naivopaśāmyeyur asad-vitarkāḥ /
muhūrtam apy aprativadhyamānā grhe bhujāṅgā iva nādhivāsyāḥ // 16.82 //**

If their counteragent cannot be found and unreal fancies do not subside, / They must not for a moment be left unchecked: no whiff of them should be tolerated, as if they were snakes in the house. // 16.82 //

**dante 'pi dantaṁ praṇidhāya kāmaṁ tālv agram utpīḍya ca jivhayāpi /
cittena cittam parigrhya cāpi kāryaḥ prayatno na tu te 'nuvartyāḥ // 16.83 //**

Grit tooth against tooth, if you will, press the tongue forward and up against the palate, / And grip the mind with the mind – make an effort, but do not yield to them. // 16.83 //

**kim-atra citraṁ yadi vīta-moho vanaṁ gataḥ svastha-manā na muhyet /
ākṣipyamāṇo hṛdi tan-nimittair na kṣobhyate yaḥ sa kṛtī sa dhīraḥ // 16.84 //**

Is it any wonder that a man without any delusions should not become deluded when he has contentedly repaired to the forest? / [But] a man who is not shaken when challenged to the core by the stimuli of the aforementioned [ideas, thoughts, and fancies]:¹¹⁵⁹ he is a man of action; he is a steadfast man. // 16.84 //

**tad ārya-satyādhigamāya pūrvam viśodhayānena nayena mārgam /
yātrā-gataḥ śatru-vinigrahārtham rājeva lakṣmīm ajitām jigīṣan // 16.85 //**

So, in order to make the noble truths your own, first clear a path according to this plan of action, / Like a king going on campaign to subdue his foes, wishing to conquer unconquered dominions. // 16.85 //

**etāny araṇyāny abhitaḥ śivāni yogānukūlāny ajaneritāni /
kāyasya kṛtvā praviveka-mātraṁ kleśa-prahāṇāya bhajasva mārgam // 16.86 //**

These salubrious wilds that surround us are suited to practice and not thronged with people. / Furnishing the body with ample solitude, cut a path for abandoning the afflictions. // 16.86 //

¹¹⁵⁹ Again Aśvaghōṣa seems to be playing with the multiplicity of possible meanings of *nimitta*, which cannot mean the same here as in the series of verses from 16.53. The evident difficulty of dealing with the ambiguity of *nimitta* caused LC to amend *tan-nimittair* to *tad-vitarkair* (“by such thoughts”). EHJ retained *tan-nimittair*, translating “before the onslaught of such ideas.” From 16.53, in contrast, EHJ translated *nimitta* as “subject of meditation.”

kaunḍinya-nanda-kṛmilāniruddhās tiṣyopasenau vimalo 'tha rādhaḥ /

bāṣṭottarau dhautaki-moharājau kātyāyana-dravya-pilindavatsāḥ // 16.87 //

Kaunḍinya,¹¹⁶⁰ Nanda,¹¹⁶¹ Kṛmila, Aniruddha, Tiṣya, Upasena, Vimāla, Rādha, / Vāśpa, Uttara, Dhautaki, Moha-rāja, Kātyāyana, Dravya, Pilinda-vatsa, // 16.87 //

bhaddāli-bhadrāyaṇa-sarpadāsa-subhūti-godatta-sujāta-vatsāḥ /

saṁgrāmajid-bhadrajid-aśvajic ca śroṇas ca śoṇas ca sa-koṭikarnaḥ // 16.88 //

Bhaddāli,¹¹⁶² Bhadrāyaṇa, Sarpa-dāsa, Subhūti,¹¹⁶³ Go-datta, Sujāta, Vatsa, / Saṁgrāmajit, Bhadrājī, Aśvajit, Śrona and Śona Koṭikarna, // 16.88 //

kṣemājito nandaka-nanda-mātāv upāli-vāgīśa-yaśo-yaśodāḥ /

mahāhvayo valkali-rāṣṭrapālau sudarśana-svāgata-meghikāś ca // 16.89 //

Kṣemā, Ajita, the mothers of Nandaka and Nanda, Upāli,¹¹⁶⁴ Vāgīśa, Yaśas, Yaśoda, / Mahāhvaya, Valkalin, Rāṣṭra-pāla, Sudarśana, Svāgata and Meghika, // 16.89 //

sa kapphinaḥ kāśyapa auruvilvo mahā-mahākāśyapa-tiṣya-nandāḥ /

pūrṇas ca pūrṇas ca sa pūrṇakaś ca śonāparāntaś ca sa pūrṇa eva // 16.90 //

Kapphina, Kāśyapa of Uruvilvā, the great Mahā-kāśyapa,¹¹⁶⁵ Tiṣya, Nanda, / Pūrṇa and Pūrṇa¹¹⁶⁶ as well as Pūrṇaka and Pūrṇa Śonāparānta, // 16.90 //

śāradvatīputra-subāhu-cundāḥ kondeya-kāpya-bhṛgu-kunṭhadhānāḥ /

sa-śaivalau revata-kauṣṭhilaḥ ca maudgalya-gotraś ca gavāmpatīś ca // 16.91 //

The son of Śāradvatī, Subāhu, Cunda, Kondeya, Kāpya, Bhṛgu, Kunṭha-dhāna, / Plus Śaivala, Revata and Kauṣṭhila, and he of the Maudgalya clan¹¹⁶⁷ and Gavāmpati – // 16.91 //

yaṁ vikramaṁ yoga-vidhāv akurvaṁs tam eva śīghraṁ vidhivat kuruṣva /

tataḥ padaṁ prāpsyasi tair avāptaṁ [sukhāvṛtais] tvaṁ niyataṁ yaśaś ca // 16.92 //

Be quick to show the courage that they have shown in their practice, working to principle. / Then you will assuredly take the step that they took and will realise the splendour that they realised.¹¹⁶⁸ // 16.92 //

¹¹⁶⁰ Kaunḍinya (mentioned in SN3.13) was celebrated as one of the Buddha's ten great disciples, as were Aniruddha and Kātyāyana.

¹¹⁶¹ This Nanda – not the protagonist of Saundara-nanda – was formerly a cowherd.

¹¹⁶² A record of the Buddha's teaching addressed to Baddhāli is preserved in Pali in the Baddhāli Sutta.

¹¹⁶³ Subhūti was another of the Buddha's ten great disciples.

¹¹⁶⁴ Upāli was another of the Buddha's ten great disciples.

¹¹⁶⁵ The repetition of the *mahā* (great) underlines the importance of Mahā-kāśyapa, whose pre-eminence even among the ten great disciples, at the time of the Buddha's death, is described in the final Canto of Buddha-carita (i.e. BC Canto 28, extant only in Tibetan and Chinese, not in Sanskrit).

¹¹⁶⁶ One of these two Pūrṇas is included in the list of the Buddha's ten great disciples.

¹¹⁶⁷ Maudgalyāyana (he of the Maudgalya clan) was another of the Buddha's ten great disciples. The two of the ten great disciples not mentioned on this list of 62 excellent individuals are Śāriputra and Ānanda.

**dravyaṃ yathā syat kaṭukaṃ rasena tac copayuktaṃ madhuraṃ vipāke /
tathaiva vīryaṃ kaṭukaṃ śrameṇa tasyārtha-siddhau madhuro vipākaḥ // 16.93 //**

Just as a fruit may have flesh that is bitter to the taste and yet is sweet when eaten ripe, / So heroic effort,¹¹⁶⁹ through the struggle it involves, is bitter and yet, in accomplishment of the aim, its mature fruit is sweet. // 16.93 //

**vīryaṃ paraṃ kārya-kṛtau hi mūlaṃ vīryād-ṛte kā-cana nāsti siddhiḥ /
udeti vīryād iha sarva-saṃpan nirvīryatā cet sakalaś ca pāpmā // 16.94 //**

Directed energy is paramount: for, in doing what needs to be done, it is the foundation; without directed energy there is no accomplishment at all; / All success in this world arises from directed energy – and in the absence of directed energy wrongdoing is rampant. // 16.94 //

**alabdhasyālābho niyatam upalabdhasya vigamaḥ
tathaivātmāvajñā kṛpaṇam adhikebhyaḥ paribhavaḥ /
tamo nis-tejastvaṃ śruti-niyama-tuṣṭi-vyuparamo
nṛṇām nir-vīryāṇām bhavati vinipātaś ca bhavati // 16.95 //**

No gaining of what is yet to be gained, and certain loss of what has been gained, / Along with low self-esteem, wretchedness, the scorn of superiors, / Darkness, lack of spirit, and the breakdown of learning, restraint and contentment: / For men without directed energy a great fall awaits. // 16.95 //

**nayaṃ śrutvā śakto yad ayam abhivṛddhiṃ na labhate
paraṃ dharmaṃ jñātvā yad upari nivāsaṃ na labhate /
gṛhaṃ tyaktvā muktau yad ayam upaśāntiṃ na labhate
nimittaṃ kausīdyaṃ bhavati puruṣasyātra na ripuḥ // 16.96 //**

When a capable person hears the guiding principle but realises no growth, / When he knows the most excellent method but realises no upward repose, / When he leaves home but in freedom realises no peace: / The cause is the laziness in him and not an enemy. // 16.96 //

¹¹⁶⁸ For the first five syllables of the 4th pāda, the palm-leaf manuscript has something like *sakhācattais tvam* and the paper manuscript has *sakhvācattais tva*. EHJ admits that his restoration to *sukhāvṛtais tvam* is little more than a stopgap. *Taiḥ... sukhāvṛtaiḥ* (= *sukha + avṛtaiḥ*) means something like “by those ease/happiness-filled ones.” EHJ noted “In any case it must, I think, be a four-syllable compound in the instrumental plural, of which the first member is probably *sukha*, *sakhya*, *samkhyā* ('reasoning power') or *satya*.” At the translation stage, EHJ decided to omit the word altogether, the correct reading being “entirely uncertain.”

¹¹⁶⁹ The meanings of *vīrya*, one of the six transcendent accomplishments (*pāramitā*), include manliness, valour, energy, and heroism. From here to the end of Canto 16, *vīrya* has been translated “directed energy.”

**anikṣiptotsāho yadi khanati gām vāri labhate /
prasaktaṁ vyāmathnan jvalanam araṇibhyāṁ janayati /
prayuktā yoge tu dhruvam upalabhante śrama-phalaṁ
drutaṁ nityaṁ yāntyo girim api hi bhindanti saritaḥ // 16.97 //**

A man obtains water if he digs the ground with unflagging exertion, / And produces fire from fire-sticks by continuous twirling. / But those are sure to reap the fruit of their effort whose energies are harnessed to practice, / For rivers that flow swiftly and constantly cut through even a mountain. // 16.97 //

**kṛṣṭvā gām paripālya ca śrama-śatair aśnoti sasya-śriyaṁ
yatnena pravigāhya sāgara-jalaṁ ratna-śriyā krīḍati /
śatrūṇāṁ avadhūya vīryam iṣubhir bhuṅkte narendra-śriyaṁ
tad vīryaṁ kuru śāntaye viniyataṁ vīrye hi sarva-rddhayaḥ // 16.98 //**

After ploughing and protecting the soil with great pains, [a farmer] gains a bounteous crop of corn; / After striving to plumb the ocean's waters, [a diver] revels in a bounty of coral and pearls; / After seeing off with arrows the endeavour¹¹⁷⁰ of rival kings, [a king] enjoys royal dominion. / So direct your energy in pursuit of peace, for in directed energy, undoubtedly, lies all growth." // 16.98 //

saundaranande mahākāvya ārya-satya-vyākhyāno nāma ṣoḍaśaḥ sargaḥ /

The 16th Canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled "Exposition of the Noble Truths."¹¹⁷¹

¹¹⁷⁰ *Vīryam*, means endeavor or, again, directed energy. A successful king uses his own *vīryam* to see off the *vīryam* of a rival.

¹¹⁷¹ The title of each of the last seven cantos of Saundara-nanda is suggestive of sitting practice itself. Hence *ārya-satya-vākhyāna* may be understood as describing sitting practice itself as "expressing/communicating the noble truths."

Canto 17: amṛtādhigamaḥ Obtaining the Deathless Nectar

Introduction

Amṛta means undying, immortal; and hence, as a noun, the nectar of immortality – the sweet elixir which the denizens of heaven aspire to drink (SN3.8). *Adhi-vgam* means to find, discover, obtain; and so *adhigama* means obtaining, realizing, making one's own.

The deathless nectar has been mentioned already in several cantos of Saundara-nanda as a symbol of the eternal truth that the Buddha taught (SN3.10), like a prescription that saves a dying man (SN10.54), like a fearless refuge beyond aging and death (SN11.62), like an antidote that prevents all suffering (SN12.55), and again as exemption from suffering (SN14.44).

In context *amṛtādhigama* describes Nanda's success in making into his own possession the Buddha's timeless truth of a remedy to end all suffering. One aspect of *amṛta* that the Canto title alludes to, then, is the deathless nature of the four noble truths, the eternal validity of which is akin to $2 + 2 = 4$. But another aspect of *amṛta* is that, as the heavenly nectar, its taste is so sweet that it is like pure liquid joy (SN13.1). That being so, Nanda's obtaining of the nectar represents the fulfillment of the Buddha's promises (SN12.25, SN16.93) that Nanda's bitter struggles, if he sticks to principle, will – as sure as night follows day – eventually bring the sweet taste of success.

Through the course of the Canto, without referring to the ten fetters explicitly, Aśvaghōṣa describes how Nanda cuts through these ten fetters one by one, on his way to truly coming back to himself. The present Canto thus seems to assume on the part of the reader familiarity with teachings like the ten fetters, plus the seven limbs of awakening, the seven latent tendencies, and so on. To clarify these enumerated teachings, along with niceties like the distinction between mundane and supramundane powers of knowing, pedantic and repetitive footnotes have been duly provided.

But what strikes one on reflection is that Aśvaghōṣa, while acknowledging the ten fetters and seven latent tendencies in his own description of Nanda's practice, does not record the Buddha bothering with these particular enumerations. Neither do the words “mundane” or “supramundane” appear in the Buddha's own teaching. What Aśvaghōṣa puts into the mouth of the Buddha is mainly the four noble truths, with their eightfold practical path of *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*. In this light, I think, is the riddle of verse 60 solved. Indirectly, Aśvaghōṣa is signalling to us what is really vital, and what is not really so vital.

The point, in conclusion, might be that the Buddha's deathless nectar, which Nanda makes his own while sitting in the traditional cross-legged manner, is not so much enumerations of ten fetters, seven latent tendencies, et cetera, but only the timeless gist of the four noble truths. In gradually being led to this conclusion, not because Aśvaghōṣa ever spells it out for us, but on the contrary

because he drops indirect hints and clues, we are left with a sense of having been privileged to commune, as if in secret, with the ancient Indian master.

**athaivam ādeśita-tattva-mārgo nandas tadā prāpta-vimokṣa-mārgaḥ /
sarveṇa bhāvena gurau praṇamya kleśa-prahāṇāya vanam jagāma // 17.1 //**

Having thus had pointed out to him the path of what is, Nanda took that path of liberation.¹¹⁷² /
He bowed with his whole being before the Guru and, with a view to abandoning the afflictions,
he made for the forest. // 17.1 //

**tatrāvakāśam mṛdu-nīla-śaṣṭam dadarśa śāntam taru-ṣaṇḍa-vantam /
niḥśabdayā nimnagayopagūḍham vaiḍūrya-nīlodakayā vahantya // 17.2 //**

There he saw a clearing, a quiet glade, of soft deep-green grass, / Kept secret by a silent stream
bearing water blue as beryl. // 17.2 //

**sa pādayos tatra vidhāya śaucam śucau śive śrīmati vṛkṣa-mūle /
mokṣāya baddhvā vyavasāya-kakṣām paryānkamaṅkāvahitam babandha // 17.3 //**

Having washed his feet there, Nanda, by a clean, auspicious, and splendid tree-root, / Girded on
the intention to come undone, and sat with legs fully crossed. // 17.3 //

**rjuṁ samagram praṇidhāya kāyam kāye smṛtiṁ cābhimukhīm vidhāya /
sarvendriyaṅy ātmani samnidhāya sa tatra yogam prayataḥ prapede // 17.4 //**

By first directing¹¹⁷³ the whole body up, and thus keeping his awareness turned towards the
body, / And thus integrating in his person all the senses, there he threw himself all-out into
practice. // 17.4 //

¹¹⁷² *Tattva-mārga*, the path of what is, or *vimokṣa-mārga*, the path of liberation, means the noble eightfold path, described by the Buddha in Canto 16 under the three headings of *śīla* (integrity), *prajñā* (wisdom), and *śama* (peace). This Canto describes Nanda's progressing on that path all the way to the fourth fruit of dharma, the worthy state of the arhat.

¹¹⁷³ *Pra-ṇi-dhāya... vidhāya... sam-ṇi-dhāya...* Putting in front (directing)... putting in order (keeping)... putting together (integrating)... The verb in each of the first three pādas is thus an absolutive form from *vdhā*, to put or place. The sense is of preparatory efforts, attended to in a certain order, to put things in place, followed by the main verb *pra-vpad*, to throw oneself in.

**tataḥ sa tattvaṁ nikhilam cikīrṣur mokṣānukūlānś ca vidhīnś cikīrṣan /
jñānena lokyena śamena caiva cacāra cetaḥ-parikarma-bhūmau // 17.5 //**

Wishing to practise, on that basis, the truth that has no gaps, and wishing to perform practices that would be favourable to release, / He moved, using mundane know-how¹¹⁷⁴, and stillness,¹¹⁷⁵ into the stage of readying of consciousness. // 17.5 //

**saṁdhāya dhairyaṁ prañidhāya vīryaṁ vyapohya saktim pariḡḥya śaktim /
praśānta-cetā niyama-stha-cetāḥ svasthas tatobhūd viṣayeṣv anāsthaḥ // 17.6 //**

By holding firm, keeping direction of energy to the fore, by cutting out clinging and garnering his energy, / With consciousness that was calmed and contained, he came back to himself and was not concerned about ends. // 17.6 //

**ātaṭṭa-buddheḥ prahitātmano 'pi sv-abhyasta-bhāvād atha kāma-saṁjñā /
paryākulaṁ tasya manaś cakāra prāvṛtsu vidyuj jalam āgateva // 17.7 //**

Though his judgement had been tempered and his soul inspired, now a vestige of desire, arising out of habit, / Made his mind turbid – like lightning striking water in a monsoon. // 17.7 //

**sa paryavasthānam avetya sadyaś cikṣepa tām dharma-vighāta-kartrīm /
priyām api krodha-parīta-cetā nārīm ivodvṛtta-guṇām manasvī // 17.8 //**

Being instantly aware of incompatibilities, he saw off that authoress of the dharma's downfall, / As a man whose mind is seized by anger shoos away a loved but excitable woman, when he is trying to concentrate.¹¹⁷⁶ // 17.8 //

**ārabdha-vīryasya manaḥ-śamāya bhūyas tu tasyākuśalo vitarkaḥ /
vyādhi-praṇāśāya niviṣṭa-buddher upadravo ghora ivājagāma // 17.9 //**

Nanda re-directed his energy in order to still his mind, but as he did so an unhelpful thought reasserted itself, / As when, in a man intent on curing an illness, an acute symptom suddenly reappears. // 17.9 //

¹¹⁷⁴ *Jñānena lokyena*. EHJ noted that *lokya* is equivalent to *laukika* (of the world, mundane, ordinary, not sacred; see verse 17), which in turn is equivalent to *sāsrava* (still being possessed of the polluting influences, by which one is attached to *saṁsāra*). *Lokottara* ('supramundane,' world-beating, extraordinary, transcendent; see verse 22) is equivalent to *anāsrava* (being free of the pollutants). Describing *jñāna* as *lokya*, then, distinguishes such knowing from the sixth of the six transcendent powers of knowing (*abhijñāḥ*), which is the power to rid the mind of pollutants.

¹¹⁷⁵ EHJ noted further that possibly *śīlena* is to be understood here, since *śīla* also – like *prajñā* and *samādhi* – can be either *laukika* (mundane, subject to the influence of the pollutants) or *lokottara* ('supramundane,' beyond the influence of the pollutants). The suggestion would thus be that Nanda progressed by the threefold means of mundane knowing (*jñānena lokyena*), mundane discipline (*śīlena lokyena*), and mundane tranquillity (*śamena lokyena*), this threefold categorization mirroring the three sub-headings of the noble-eightfold path, viz. *prajñā*, *śīla*, *samādhi*.

¹¹⁷⁶ In SN16.76 Aśvaghoṣa uses *manasvin* in its primary sense of being full of mind, bright, intelligent. As a secondary sense, however, the dictionary gives “fixing the mind, attentive.”

**sa tad-vighātāya nimittam anyad yogānukūlaṁ kuśalaṁ prapede /
ārtāyanam kṣīṇa-balo bala-sthaṁ nirasyamāno balināriṇeva // 17.10 //**

To fend against that he turned skillfully to a different factor, one favourable to his practice, /
Like an enfeebled [prince] who seeks out a powerful protector when being overthrown by a
mighty rival. // 17.10 //

**puraṁ vidhāyānuvidhāya daṇḍaṁ mitrāṇi saṁgrhya ripūn viḡrhya /
rājā yathāpnoti hi gām apūrvām nītir mumukṣor api saiva yoge // 17.11 //**

For just as, by laying out fortifications and laying down the rod of the law, by banding with
friends and disbanding foes, / A king gains hitherto ungained land, that is the very policy
towards practice of one who desires release. // 17.11 //

**vimokṣa-kāmasya hi yogino 'pi manaḥ puraṁ jñāna-vidhiś ca daṇḍaḥ /
guṇāś ca mitrāṇy arayaś ca doṣā bhūmir vimuktir yatate yad artham // 17.12 //**

Because, for a practitioner whose desire is release, the mind is his fortress, know-how is his rod,
/ The virtues are his friends, the faults are his foes; and liberation is the territory he
endeavours to reach. // 17.12 //

**sa duḥkha-jālān mahato mumukṣur vimokṣa-mārgādhigame vivikṣuḥ /
panthānam āryaṁ paramaṁ didṛkṣuḥ śamaṁ yayau kiṁ-cid upātta-cakṣuḥ // 17.13 //**

Desiring release from the great net of suffering; desiring to enter into possession of the
pathways of release, / Desiring to experience the supreme noble path; he got a bit of the Eye,¹¹⁷⁷
and came to quiet. // 17.13 //

**yaḥ syān niketas tamaso 'niketaḥ śrutvāpi tattvaṁ sa bhavet pramattaḥ /
yasmāt tu mokṣāya sa pātra-bhūtas tasmān manaḥ sv-ātmani saṁjahāra // 17.14 //**

Heedless would be the unhoused man who, despite hearing the truth, housed the darkness of
ignorance; / But since [Nanda] was a man of the bowl, a receptacle for liberation, he had
collected his mind into himself. // 17.14 //

¹¹⁷⁷ In general, the Dharma-Eye does not mean an organ of sight so much as it means an instrument of
seeing, or means of realizing, the truth of the Buddha's dharma (see also verse 32).

**sambhārataḥ pratyayataḥ svabhāvād āsvādato doṣa-viśeṣataś ca /
athātmavān niḥsaraṇātmataś ca dharmeṣu cakre vidhivat parikṣām // 17.15 //**

On the grounds of their being held together, their causality, and their inherent nature, on the grounds of their flavour and their concrete imperfection, / And on the grounds of their tendency to spread out,¹¹⁷⁸ he who was now contained in himself,¹¹⁷⁹ carried out a methodical investigation into things. // 17.15 //

**sa rūpiṇaṁ kṛtsnam arūpiṇaṁ ca sāraṁ didṛkṣur vicikāya kāyam /
athāśuciṁ duḥkham anityam asvaṁ nirātmakaṁ caiva cikāya kāyam // 17.16 //**

Desiring to examine its total material and immaterial substance, he investigated the body, / And he perceived the body to be impure, full of suffering, impermanent, without an owner, and again, devoid of self. // 17.16 //

**anityatas tatra hi śūnyataś ca nirātmato duḥkhata eva cāpi /
mārga-pravekeṇa sa laukikena kleśa-drumaṁ saṁcalayām cakāra // 17.17 //**

For, on those grounds, on the grounds of impermanence and emptiness, on the grounds of absence of self,¹¹⁸⁰ and of suffering, / He, by the most excellent among mundane paths,¹¹⁸¹ caused the tree of afflictions to shake. // 17.17 //

**yasmād abhūtvā bhavatiha sarvaṁ bhutvā ca bhūyo na bhavaty avaśyam /
sa-hetukaṁ ca kṣayi-hetumac ca tasmād anityaṁ jagad ity avindat // 17.18 //**

Since everything, after not existing, now exists, and after existing it never exists again; / And since the world is causal, and has disappearance as a cause, therefore he understood that the world is impermanent. // 17.18 //

**yataḥ prasūtasya ca karmayogaḥ prasajyate bandha-vighāta-hetuḥ /
duḥkha-pratīkāra-vidhau sukhākhye tato bhavaṁ duḥkham iti vyapaśyat // 17.19 //**

Insofar as a creature's industry, motivated by bond-making or bond-breaking impulse, / Is dependent on a prescription, named "pleasure," for counteracting pain, he saw, on that account, that existence is suffering. // 17.19 //

¹¹⁷⁸ *Niḥsaraṇātmataś* (*niḥsaraṇātman* = tending to terminate / spread out + ablative suffix *taḥ*) can be understood – especially in light of the 2nd law of thermodynamics – as a description of impermanence. EHJ, accepting Gawronski's conjecture, translated *niḥsaraṇātmakaś* (*niḥ-saraṇa* = going out, escaping + *ātmakaḥ* = being devoted to) so that the phrase described Nanda as "devoted to escape from being."

¹¹⁷⁹ The merit of being *ātmavān*, in possession of oneself, is referred to repeatedly in BC Canto 11.

¹¹⁸⁰ Aśvaghōṣa thus equates *śūnya*, being empty, with absence of a permanent self – a point which Nāgārjuna will clarify in detail two generations later.

¹¹⁸¹ Again, the meaning here of *laukika* is that these efforts of Nanda's were prior to his winning the stage of a stream-enterer. *Laukika*, in other words, means the same as *sāsrava*, being under the influence of the pollutants, and is opposed to *lokottara* in verse 22.

**yataś ca saṁskāra-gataṁ viviktaṁ na kārakaḥ kaś-cana vedako vā /
samagryataḥ sambhavati pravṛtṭiḥ śūnyaṁ tato lokam imaṁ dadarśa // 17.20 //**

And insofar as separateness comes from doings,¹¹⁸² there being no doer or knower, / And the activity done arises out of a totality,¹¹⁸³ he realised, on that account, that this world is empty.¹¹⁸⁴ // 17.20 //

**yasmān nirīhaṁ jagad asvatantraṁ naiśvaryaṁ ekaḥ kurute kriyāsu /
tat-tat-pratītya prabhavanti bhāvā nirātmakaṁ tena viveda lokam // 17.21 //**

Since the throng of humanity is passive, not autonomous,¹¹⁸⁵ and no one exercises direct control over the workings of the body, / But states of being arise dependent on this and that, he found, in that sense, that the world is devoid of self.¹¹⁸⁶ // 17.21 //

**tataḥ sa vātaṁ vyajanād ivoṣṇe kāṣṭhāsritaṁ nirmathanād ivāgnim /
antaḥ-kṣiti-sthaṁ khaṇanād ivāmbho lokottaraṁ vartma durāpam āpa // 17.22 //**

Then, like air in the hot season, got from fanning; like fire latent in wood, got from rubbing; / And like water under the ground, got from digging, that supramundane¹¹⁸⁷ path which is hard to reach, he reached: // 17.22 //

**saj-jñāna-cāpaḥ smṛti-varma baddhvā viśuddha-śīla-vrata-vāhana-sthaḥ /
kleśāribhiś citta-raṇājira-sthaiḥ sārdaṁ yuyutsur vijayāya tasthau // 17.23 //**

As a bow of true knowledge, clad in the armour of awareness, standing up in a chariot of pure practice of integrity,¹¹⁸⁸ / He took his stance for victory, ready to engage in battle his enemies, the afflictions, who were ranged on the battlefield of his mind. // 17.23 //

¹¹⁸² *Saṁskāra-gatam*. In BC Canto 14, Aśvaghōṣa describes the Buddha discovering that doings (*saṁskārāḥ*) born of ignorance are the causal grounds of divided consciousness, which in turn is both cause and effect of psycho-physicality. In this sense, separation (*viviktaṁ*) comes from doings.

¹¹⁸³ EHJ notes that *samagrya* stands here for *sāmagrī* (“totality” [from *sam-agra*]) which is the regular word for the complex of causes and conditions in the teaching of dependent arising. *Sāmagrī-parīkṣa*, “Investigation of Totality,” is the title of MMK ch. 20.

¹¹⁸⁴ Again, Aśvaghōṣa's gist here is clarified by Nāgārjuna's more detailed considerations of emptiness in the context of dependent arising – studying which caused me to amend the translation of this verse (after having already made the audio recording).

¹¹⁸⁵ *A-sva-tantra* is translated in SN7.41 as “uncontrollable”; but see also SN14.32 where *sva-tantrin* is translated “pulling his own strings.” *Tantra* originally means a loom, or the warp.

¹¹⁸⁶ This is the gist of the teaching of *pratītya-samutpāda*, for the clarification of which Nāgārjuna wrote his *mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā*. See also verse 31.

¹¹⁸⁷ *Lokottara* (*loka + uttara*) is given in the MW dictionary as “excelling or surpassing the world, beyond what is common or general, unusual, extraordinary.” Here the supramundane path in question is the first of the four supramundane paths, viz: 1. the path to the fruit of the stream-enterer; 2. the path to the fruit of the once-returner; 3. the path to the fruit of not returning; 4. the path to the fruit of arhathood.

¹¹⁸⁸ The three elements in the first half of the verse, again, represent the noble eightfold path's three sub-categories of 1. *prajñā* and 2. *samādhi*, based in 3. *śīla*.

**tataḥ sa bodhy-aṅga-śītātta-śāstraḥ samyak-pradhānottama-vāhana-sthaḥ /
mārgāṅga-mātaṅga-vatā balena śanaiḥ śanaiḥ kleśa-camūm jagāhe // 17.24 //**

Then, unsheathing a sword that the limbs of awakening¹¹⁸⁹ had honed, standing in the supreme chariot of true motivation, / With an army containing the elephants of the branches of the path,¹¹⁹⁰ he gradually penetrated the ranks of the afflictions. // 17.24 //

**sa smṛty-upasthāna-mayaiḥ pṛṣatkaiḥ śatrūn viparyāsa-mayān kṣaṇena /
duḥkhasya hetūnś caturaś caturbhiḥ svaiḥ-svaiḥ pracārāyatanair dadāra // 17.25 //**

With arrows made from the presence of mindfulness,¹¹⁹¹ instantly he shot those enemies whose substance is upside-down-ness: / He split apart four enemies, four causes of suffering, with four arrows, each having its own range. // 17.25 //

**āryair balaiḥ pañcabhir eva pañca cetaḥ-khilāny apratimair babhañja /
mithyāṅga-nāgānś ca tathāṅga-nāgair vinirdudhāvāṣṭabhir eva so 'ṣṭau // 17.26 //**

With the five incomparable noble powers,¹¹⁹² he broke five uncultivated areas of mental ground;¹¹⁹³ / And with the eight true¹¹⁹⁴ elephants which are the branches of the path, he drove away eight elephant of fakery. // 17.26 //

¹¹⁸⁹ The seven limbs of awakening are 1. *dharma-pravicaya*, investigation of things, 2. *vīrya*, manly endeavor, directed energy, 3. *pṛīti*, joy, 4. *praśrabdhi*, confidence, 5. *upekṣā*, equanimity, 6. *samādhi*, balanced stillness, 7. *smṛti*, awareness/vigilance/mindfulness.

¹¹⁹⁰ The eight branches of the path, as enumerated by the Buddha in SN16.30-37, are 1. *samyag-vāk-karma*, using the voice well, 2. *samyak-kāya-karma*, using the body well 3. *samyag-ājīva*, making one's living well, 4. *samyag-dṛṣṭi*, proper insight (into the four noble truths), 5. *samyag-vitarka*, thinking straight, 6. *samyag-parākrama*, fully taking initiative, 7. *samyak-smṛti*, true mindfulness/awareness, 8. *samyak-samādhi*, totally balanced stillness.

¹¹⁹¹ *Smṛty-upasthāna*. *Upasthāna* (from *upa-√sthā*, to stand or place one's self near, to be present) means 1. the act of placing one's self near to, coming into the presence of, waiting on, attendance; 2. abiding, and hence a place of abiding, an abode. In Chinese (see Shobogenzo chap. 73) *smṛty-upasthāna* was rendered 念住, "attention-abode" – hence 四念住 "the four abodes of mindfulness." In Sanskrit the four abodes of (or ways of attending to) mindfulness are 1. *kāya-smṛtyupasthāna*, mindfulness of the body, 2. *vedanā-smṛtyupasthāna*, mindfulness of feelings, 3. *citta-smṛtyupasthāna*, mindfulness of the mind, and 4. *dharma-smṛtyupasthāna*, mindfulness of dharmas.

¹¹⁹² *Pañca balāḥ*, the five powers, are 1. *śraddhā*, confidence, 2. *vīrya*, manly endeavor, directed energy, 3. *smṛti*, awareness/vigilance/mindfulness, 4. *samādhi*, balanced stillness, 5. *prajñā*, wisdom.

¹¹⁹³ *Pañca cetaḥ-khilāni*, "the five obstructions of the mind" [EHJ] or "the five barren places of the mind" [LC], are, according to a note by LC, four kinds of doubt, concerning 1. Buddha, 2. Dharma, 3. Saṅgha, and 4. Vinaya; and 5. anger. *Khila* means a piece of waste or uncultivated land situated between cultivated fields, bare soil.

¹¹⁹⁴ EHJ comments that Aśvaghoṣa is here using *tathā* as an adjective, as in Pali.

athātma-dṛṣṭim sakalām vidhūya caturṣu satyeṣv akathamkathaḥ san /

viśuddha-śīla-vrata-dṛṣṭa-dharmo dharmasya pūrvām phala-bhūmim āpa // 17.27 //

And so, having shaken off every vestige of the personality view, being free of doubt in regard to the four truths, / And knowing the score in regard to pure practice of integrity,¹¹⁹⁵ he attained the first fruit of dharma.¹¹⁹⁶ // 17.27 //

sa darśanād ārya-catuṣṭayasya kleśaika-deśasya ca viprayogāt /

pratyātmikāc cāpi viśeṣa-lābhāt pratyakṣato jñāni-sukhasya caiva // 17.28 //

By glimpsing the noble foursome, and by being released from one portion of the afflictions; / By realising for himself what was specific to him as well as by witnessing the ease of the sages; // 17.28 //

dārḍhyāt prasādasya dhṛteḥ sthiratvāt satyeṣv asaṁmūḍhatayā caturṣu /

śīlasya cācchidratayottamasya niḥsaṁśayo dharmavidhau babhūva // 17.29 //

Through the stability of his stillness and the constancy of his steadiness; through not being altogether bewildered about the four truths; / And through not being full of holes in the supreme practice of integrity,¹¹⁹⁷ he became free of doubt in the truth of dharma. // 17.29 //

ku-dṛṣṭi-jālena sa viprayukto lokam tathā-bhūtam avekṣamāṇaḥ /

jñānāśrayām prītim upājagāma bhūyaḥ prasādam ca gurāv iyāya // 17.30 //

Released from the net of shabby views, seeing the world as it really is, / He attained a joy pregnant with knowing and his quiet certainty in the Guru deepened all the more. // 17.30 //

yo hi pravṛtṭim niyatām avaiti naivānya-hetor iha nāpy ahetor /

pratītya tat-tat samavaiti tat-tat sa naiṣṭhikam paśyati dharmam āryam // 17.31 //

For he who understands that the doing in this world is determined neither by any outside cause nor by no cause, / and who appreciates everything depending on everything: he sees the ultimate noble dharma. // 17.31 //

¹¹⁹⁵ *Viśuddha-śīla-vrata*, “pure practice of integrity” is repeated from verse 23. The phrase could also be read as “being pure in discipline and vows” or even (in light of fetter no. 3 in the ten fetters) “freedom from the vice of clinging to rule and ritual.”

¹¹⁹⁶ Ten fetters – five lower fetters and five upper fetters – are said to tie us to the wheel of saṁsāra and impede our progress on the four supramundane paths of the stream-enterer, once-returner, no-returner and arhat. Attainment of stream-entry is associated with the cutting of three of the five lower fetters, namely: 1. the personality view, 2. doubting, and 3. clinging to rules and rituals. The three elements of this verse describe cutting of those three lower fetters. Hence *viśuddha-śīla-vrata-dṛṣṭa-dharma* suggests genuine integrity (*śīla*) and untainted devotion to practice (*vrata*), as opposed to *śīla-vratopadanna*, clinging to rules (*śīla*) and rituals (*vrata*).

¹¹⁹⁷ Again, the suggestion is of progress via the noble eightfold path under its three headings of *samādhi*, *prajñā* and *śīla*.

**śāntaṁ śivaṁ nir-jarasaṁ virāgaṁ niḥśreyasaṁ paśyati yaś ca dharmam /
tasyopadeṣṭāram athārya-varyaṁ sa prekṣate buddham avāpta-cakṣuḥ // 17.32 //**

And he who sees as the greatest good the dharma that is peaceful, salutary, ageless, and free of the red taint of passion, / And who sees its teacher as the noblest of the noble: he, as one who has got the Eye, is meeting Buddha. // 17.32 //

**yathopadeśena śivena mukto rogād arogo bhiṣajaṁ kṛta-jñāḥ /
anusmaran paśyati citta-dṛṣṭyā maitryā ca śāstra-jñatayā ca tuṣṭaḥ // 17.33 //**

When a healthy man has been freed from illness by salutary instruction, and he is aware of his debt of gratitude, / Just as he sees his healer in his mind's eye, gratefully acknowledging his benevolence and knowledge of his subject, // 17.33 //

**āryeṇa mārgeṇa tathaiva muktas tathāgataṁ tattva-vid ārya-tattvaḥ /
anusmaran paśyati kāya-sākṣī maitryā ca sarva-jñatayā ca tuṣṭaḥ // 17.34 //**

Exactly so is a finder of reality who, set free by the noble path, is the reality of being noble: / His body being a seeing Eye,¹¹⁹⁸ he sees the Realised One, gratefully acknowledging his benevolence and all-knowingness. // 17.34 //

**sa nāśakair dṛṣṭi-gatair vimuktaḥ paryantam ālokya punar-bhavasya /
bhaktvā ghrṇām kleśa-vijṛmbhiteṣu mṛtyor na tatrāsa na dur-gatibhyaḥ // 17.35 //**

Sprung free from pernicious theories, seeing an end to becoming, / And feeling horror for the consequences of affliction, [Nanda] trembled not at death or hellish realms. // 17.35 //

**tvak-snāyu-medo-rudhirāsthi-māmsa-keśādināmedhya-gaṇena pūrṇam /
tataḥ sa kāyaṁ samavekṣamāṇaḥ sārāṁ vicintyāṅv api nopalebhe // 17.36 //**

As full of skin, sinew, fat, blood, bone, and flesh; as full of hair and a mass of other such unholy stuff, / [Nanda] then observed the body to be; he looked into its essential reality, and found not even an atom. // 17.36 //

**sa kāmarāga-pratighau sthirātmā tenaiva yogena tanū cakāra /
kṛtvā mahoraska-tanus tanū tau prāpa dvitīyaṁ phalam ārya-dharme // 17.37 //**

By the yoke of that very practice,¹¹⁹⁹ he, firm in himself, minimised the duality of love and hate; / Being himself big across the chest, he made those two small, and so obtained the second fruit in the noble dharma.¹²⁰⁰ // 17.37 //

¹¹⁹⁸ *Kāya-sākṣī* is lit. “body-witnessing.” *Sākṣin* is defined as “seeing with the eyes, witnessing.” So the emphasis here, as in the writings of Zen Master Dogen, seems to be that real arising of the Dharma-Eye involves not mere recognition but realisation with and through the whole body-mind, in sitting-meditation.

¹¹⁹⁹ *Tenaiva yogena* means “by that very *yoga*.” *Yoga* means practice, and at the same time a yoke as a device that causes two to be one.

¹²⁰⁰ The fourth and fifth of the lower five fetters that bind a person to the nether regions of *saṁsāra* are 4.

**sa lobha-cāpaṁ parikalpa-bāṇaṁ rāgaṁ mahā-vairiṇam alpa-śeṣam /
kāya-svabhāvādhigatair bibheda yogāyudhāstrair aśubhā-ṛṣatkaiḥ // 17.38 //**

A small vestige of the great enemy, red passion, whose straining bow is impatient desire and whose arrow is a fixed conception, / He destroyed using weapons procured from the body as it naturally is – using the darts of unpleasantness, weapons from the armoury of practice. // 17.38 //

**dveṣāyudhaṁ krodha-vikīrṇa-bāṇaṁ vyāpādam antaḥ-prasavaṁ sapatnam /
maitrī-ṛṣatkair dhṛti-tūṇa-saṁsthaiḥ kṣamā-dhanurjyā-visṛtair jaghāna // 17.39 //**

That gestating love-rival, malice, whose weapon is hatred and whose errant arrow is anger, / He slayed with the arrows of kindness, which are contained in a quiver of constancy and released from the bow-string of patience. // 17.39 //

**mūlāny atha trīṇy aśubhasya vīras tribhir vimokṣāyatanaś cakarta /
camū-mukha-sthān dhṛta-kārmukāms trīn arīn ivāris tribhir āyasāgraiḥ // 17.40 //**

And so the hero cut the three roots of shameful conduct¹²⁰¹ using three seats of release, / As if three rival princes, bearing bows in the van of their armies, had been cut down by one prince using three iron points.¹²⁰² // 17.40 //

**sa kāma-dhātoḥ samatikramāya pārṣṇi-grahāms tān abhibhūya śatrūn /
yogād anāgāmi-phalaṁ prapadya dvārīva nirvāṇa-purasya tasthau // 17.41 //**

In order to go entirely beyond the sphere of desire, he overpowered those enemies that grab the heel, / So that he attained, because of practice, the fruit of not returning,¹²⁰³ and stood as if at the gateway to the citadel of nirvāṇa. // 17.41 //

desire for sensual pleasure and 5. ill will. One who has cut the first three fetters and reduced sense desire and ill will to a minimum is said to have attained the second fruit, thus being subject to only one more return to the lower realms of saṁsāra. One who has completely cut all five fetters is said to have attained the third fruit of the dharma, as a non-returner. So this verse again accords with the ancient teaching of four fruits and ten fetters, saying that Nanda had reduced love and hate to manageable proportions, but that – like the citizens of Kapilavāstu described in SN3.39 – he had not yet completely cut lower fetters no. 4 and 5.

¹²⁰¹ *Tri-mulāni aśubhasya*, the three roots of shameful conduct, are greed, hatred and delusion.

¹²⁰² As investigated in BC Canto 13, *āyasa* means made of iron or of metal. In that Canto, the metal in question, since it is described as fire-coloured, might be gold. If similar hidden meaning is sought in this verse, the three points might be the base of the pyramid in which one person's golden sitting is contained. (Nanda, after all, was described back in verse 3 as sitting in the full lotus posture, and there has been no mention so far of him breaking that posture.)

¹²⁰³ He attained the third of the four fruits of dharma, the stage of the non-returner, synonymous with complete freedom from fetters 1-5.

**kāmair viviktaṁ malinais ca dharmair vitarkavac cāpi vicāravac ca /
viveka-jaṁ prīti-sukhopapannaṁ dhyānaṁ tataḥ sa prathamam prapede // 17.42 //**
Distanced from desires and tainted things, containing ideas and containing thoughts, / Born of
solitude and possessed of joy and ease, is the first stage of meditation, which he then
entered.¹²⁰⁴ // 17.42 //

**kāmāgni-dāhena sa vipramukto hlādaṁ paraṁ dhyāna-sukhād avāpa /
sukhaṁ vigāhyāpsv iva gharma-khinnaḥ prāpyeva cārtham vipulaṁ daridraḥ // 17.43 //**
Released from the burning of the bonfire of desires, he derived great gladness from ease in the
act of meditating – / Ease like a heat-exhausted man diving into water. Or like a pauper coming
into great wealth. // 17.43 //

**tatrāpi tad-dharma-gatān vitarkān guṇāguṇe ca prasṛtān vicārān /
buddhvā manaḥ-kṣobha-karān aśāntāns tad-viprayogāya matiṁ cakāra // 17.44 //**
Even in that, he realised, ideas about aforesaid things, and thoughts about what is or is not
good, / Are something not quieted, causing disturbance in the mind, and so he decided to cut
them out. // 17.44 //

**kṣobham prakurvanti yathormayo hi dhīra-prasannāmbu-vahasya sindhoḥ /
ekāgra-bhūtasya tathormi-bhūtās cittāmbhasaḥ kṣobha-karā vitarkāḥ // 17.45 //**
For, just as waves produce disturbance in a river bearing a steady flow of tranquil water, / So
ideas, like waves of thought, disturb the water of the one-pointed mind. // 17.45 //

**khinnasya suptasya ca nirvṛtasya bādham yathā samjanayanti śabdāḥ /
adyātmam aikāgryam upāgatasya bhavanti bādhāya tathā vitarkāḥ // 17.46 //**
And just as noises are a source of bother to one who is weary, and fallen fast asleep, / So do
ideas become bothersome to one who is indulging in his original state of unitary awareness. //
17.46 //

**athāvitarkaṁ kramaśo 'vicāram ekāgra-bhāvān manasaḥ prasannam /
samādhi-jaṁ prīti-sukhaṁ dvitīyaṁ dhyānaṁ tad-ādhyātma-śivaṁ sa dadhyau // 17.47
//**
And so gradually bereft of idea and thought, his mind tranquil from one-pointedness, / He
realised the joy and ease born of balanced stillness – that inner wellbeing which is the second
stage of meditation. // 17.47 //

¹²⁰⁴ Cf Arāḍa in BC12.49: “Then he arrives at a stage secluded from desires, and also from things like
malice; / He reaches the stage born of seclusion – the first dhyāna, in which there is thinking.”
//SN12.49// In general, the following description of the four dhyānas corresponds closely to the
description which Aśvaghoṣa attributes to the sage Arāḍa in BC Canto 12.

**tad-dhyānam āgamyā ca citta-maunaṁ lebhe parāṁ prītim alabdha-pūrvām /
prītau tu tatrāpi sa doṣa-darśī yathā vitarkeṣv abhavat tathaiva // 17.48 //**

And on reaching that stage, in which the mind is silent,¹²⁰⁵ he experienced an intense joy that he had never experienced before. / But here too he found a fault, in joy, just as he had in ideas. // 17.48 //

**prītiḥ parā vastuni yatra yasya viparyayāt tasya hi tatra duḥkham /
prītāv atah prekṣya sa tatra doṣān prīti-kṣaye yogam upāruroha // 17.49 //**

For when a man finds intense joy in anything, paradoxically, suffering for him is right there. / Hence, seeing the faults there in joy, he kept going up, into practice that goes beyond joy. // 17.49 //

**prīter virāgāt sukham ārya-juṣṭaṁ kāyena vindann atha saṁprajānan /
upekṣakaḥ sa smr̥ti-mān vyahārṣid dhyānaṁ tṛtīyaṁ pratilabhya dhīraḥ // 17.50 //**

And so experiencing the ease enjoyed by the noble ones, from non-attachment to joy, knowing it totally, with his body, / He remained indifferent, fully aware, and, having realised the third stage of meditation, steady. // 17.50 //

**yasmāt paraṁ tatra sukhaṁ sukhebhyaḥ tataḥ paraṁ nāsti sukha-pravṛttiḥ /
tasmād babhāṣe śubha-kṛtsna-bhūmiṁ parāpara-jñāḥ parameti maitryā // 17.51 //**

Since the ease here is beyond any ease, and there is no progression of ease beyond it, / Therefore, as a knower of higher and lower, he realised it as a condition of resplendent wholeness¹²⁰⁶ which he deemed – in a friendly way – to be superlative. // 17.51 //

**dhyāne 'pi tatrātha dadarśa doṣaṁ mene paraṁ śāntam aniñjam eva /
ābhogato 'pīñjayati sma tasya cittaṁ pravṛttaṁ sukham ity asram // 17.52 //**

Then, even in that stage of meditation, he found a fault: he saw it as better to be quiet, not excited, / Whereas his mind was fluctuating tirelessly because of ease circulating. // 17.52 //

**yatreñjitaṁ spanditam asti tatra yatrāsti ca spanditam asti duḥkham /
yasmād atas tat-sukham iñjakatvāt praśānti-kāmā yatayas tyajanti // 17.53 //**

In excitement there is interference, and where there is interference there is suffering, / Which is why, insofar as ease is excitatory, devotees who are desirous of quiet give up that ease. // 17.53 //

¹²⁰⁵ EHJ notes that *citta-mauna* seems to be the equivalent of Pāli *mano-moneyya*.

¹²⁰⁶ In BC12.55, the sage Arāḍa describes the 3rd dhyāna as a condition of ease experienced as one with Śubha-kṛtsna deities (*śubha-kṛtsnaiḥ... daivataiḥ*), the Gods of Resplendent Wholeness.

**atha prahāṇāt sukha-duḥkhayoś ca mano-vikārasya ca pūrvam eva /
dadhyāv upekṣā-smṛtimad viśuddhaṁ dhyānaṁ tathāduḥkha-sukhaṁ caturtham // 17.54
//**

Then, having already transcended ease and suffering, and emotional reactivity,¹²⁰⁷ / He realised the lucidity in which there is indifference and full awareness: thus, beyond suffering and ease, is the fourth stage of meditation. // 17.54 //

**yasmāt tu tasmin na sukhaṁ na duḥkhaṁ jñānaṁ ca tatrāsti tad-artha-cāri /
tasmād upekṣā-smṛti-pāriśuddhir nirucyate dhyāna-vidhau caturthe // 17.55 //**

Since in this there is neither ease nor suffering, and the act of knowing abides here, being its own object, / Therefore utter lucidity through indifference and awareness is specified in the protocol for the fourth stage of meditation. // 17.55 //

**dhyānaṁ sa niśritya tataś caturtham arhattva-lābhāya matiṁ cakāra /
saṁdhāya mitraṁ balavantam āryaṁ rājeva deśān ajitān jigīṣuḥ // 17.56 //**

Consequently, relying on the fourth stage of meditation, he made up his mind to win the worthy state,¹²⁰⁸ / Like a king joining forces with a strong and noble ally and then aspiring to conquer unconquered lands.¹²⁰⁹ // 17.56 //

¹²⁰⁷ *Mano-vikāra* is translated by EHJ as “alteration of mind.” The meanings of *vikāra* include change of form [as in the contorted postures of the women in BC Canto 5], alteration or deviation from any natural state, change (especially for the worse) of bodily or mental condition, disease, emotion, agitation.

¹²⁰⁸ *Arhattva*, “the worthy state,” means the fourth fruit, the ultimate state of arhathood.

¹²⁰⁹ EHJ wrote (in the Introduction to his translation of *Buddhacarita*) that he found it puzzling that *Aśvaghōṣa* elevated sitting-dhyāna into the area of 'supramundane' practice in the stage of the third fruit of the dharma, immediately prior to attainment of arhatship: “In Canto 17, after the aspirant has reached the supramundane path, he acquires successively the three stages of the *srotāpanna*, *sakṛdāgāmin* and *anāgāmin*, and it is only thereafter that the four trances are described and they are said to be the immediate precursors of Arhatship. But [SN16.1], in accordance with the view generally prevailing in the schools, shows that the trances are mastered in a preliminary stage before the process of *bhāvanā* begins; and that they are even accessible to non-Buddhists is the regular belief, which *Buddhacarita* Canto 12 shows *Aśvaghōṣa* to share.”

Was *Aśvaghōṣa*'s intention to challenge (albeit indirectly, with due circumspection) what EHJ describes as “the view generally prevailing in the schools”? The point might be that what in theory is linear and neatly arranged is in practice circular and not neatly arranged but is rather (like *Aśvaghōṣa*'s poetry) full of *variously interwoven strands* (SN10.20). In verse 17, for example, perception of impermanence is described as mundane and therefore belonging, in EHJ's scheme to “a preliminary stage before the process of *bhāvanā* begins.” But in the *Rāhula Sutta* the Buddha instructs: *anicca-saññaṁ Rāhula bhāvanāṁ bhāvehi*, “Cultivate development of the mind, *Rāhula*, which is perception of impermanence.”

**ciccheda kārtsnyena tataḥ sa pañca prajñāsinā bhāvanayeritena /
ūrdhvaṃ gamāny uttama-bandhanāni saṃyojanāny uttama-bandhanāni // 17.57 //**

Then he cut the five upper fetters: with the sword of intuitive wisdom which is raised aloft by cultivation of the mind, / He completely severed the five aspirational fetters, which are bound up with superiority, and tied to the first person.¹²¹⁰ // 17.57 //

**bodhy-aṅga-nāgair api saptabhiḥ sa saptaiḥ cittānuśayān mamarda /
dvipān ivopasthita-vipraṇāśān kālo grahaiḥ saptabhir eva sapta // 17.58 //**

Again, with the seven elephants of the limbs of awakening¹²¹¹ he crushed the seven dormant tendencies¹²¹² of the mind, / Like Time, when their destruction is due, crushing the seven continents by means of the seven planets. // 17.58 //

**agni-drumājyāmbuṣu yā hi vṛttiḥ kavandha-vāyv-agni-divākarāṇām /
doṣeṣu tāṃ vṛttim iyāya nando nirvāpaṇotpāṭana-dāha-śoṣaiḥ // 17.59 //**

The action which on fire, trees, ghee and water is exerted by rainclouds, wind, a flame and the sun, / Nanda exerted that action on the faults, quenching, uprooting, burning, and drying them up. // 17.59 //

¹²¹⁰ An arhat or worthy one is one who has cut the ten fetters, the lower five of which bind the ordinary person, the stream-enterer and the once-returned to lower worlds, and the upper five of which bind the more advanced spiritual aspirant to more elevated realms. To recap, the five lower fetters are 1. personality view, 2. doubting, and 3. clinging to rules and rituals, along with 4. sensual desire, and 5. ill-will. The stream-enterer is free of fetters 1-3; the once-returned is also free of fetters 4-5 in their grosser form; the non-returned is fully free of all five of the lower fetters. Aśvaghōṣa in this verse refers to the five upper (or aspirational) fetters (*pañca ūrdhvaṃ gamāni saṃyojanāni*), which remain for the would-be arhat to cut. They are namely: 6. undue interest in outward forms/appearances (*rūpa-rāga*; i.e. material ambition), 7. undue interest in what does not have form (*arūpa-rāga*; i.e., spiritual ambition, end-gaining desire for higher consciousness, knowledge etc.), 8. conceit, 9. restlessness, and 10. ignorance. In describing these five upper fetters, Aśvaghōṣa repeats the phrase *uttama-bandhanāni*, and this repetition led EHJ to think that the text might be suspect. But perhaps Aśvaghōṣa was playing with the ambiguity of *uttama*, which as an adjective means uppermost or highest, and as a noun means “the last person” – i.e. the first person singular. Relevant here is the cautionary tale that Dogen quotes in *Shobogenzo* of the bhikṣu who, having realized the fourth dhyāna, was tripped up by conceit. See *Shobogenzo* chap. 90, *Shizen-biku*, “The Monk who Mistook the Fourth Dhyāna.”

¹²¹¹ The seven limbs of awakening are as per verse 24. To recap, they are: investigation of things, energy, joy, confidence, equanimity, balanced stillness, and mindfulness.

¹²¹² *Anuśaya*, “dormant tendency” (from *anu-vśī*, to sleep with), is as per SN15.5 – “*What lies behind those desires sleeps on, like a fire covered with ashes...*” To recap, the seven tendencies are: sensual greed, resentment, holding views, doubt, conceit, undue interest in becoming, and ignorance.

**iti tri-vegaṃ tri-jhaṣaṃ tri-viceṃ ekāmbhasaṃ pañca-rayāṃ dvi-kūlam /
dvi-grāham aṣṭāṅgavatā plavena duḥkhārṇavaṃ dus-taram uttatāra // 17.60 //**

Thus he overcame three surges, three sharks, three swells, the unity of water, five currents, two shores, / And two crocodiles: in his eight-piece raft, he crossed the flood of suffering which is so hard to cross. ¹²¹³ // 17.60 //

**arhattvam āsādyā sa sat-kriyārho nirutsuko niṣpraṇayo nirāśaḥ /
vibhīr viśug vītamado virāgaḥ sa eva dhṛtyānya ivābabhāse // 17.61 //**

Having attained to the seat of arhathood, he was worthy of being served. Without ambition, without partiality, without expectation; / Without fear, sorrow, pride, or passion; while being nothing but himself, he seemed in his constancy to be different. // 17.61 //

**bhrātuś ca śāstuś ca tayānuśiṣṭyā nandas tataḥ svena ca vikrameṇa /
praśānta-cetāḥ paripūrṇa-kāryo vāṇīm imām ātmagatāṃ jagāda // 17.62 //**

And so Nanda, who, through the instruction of his brother and teacher and through his own valiant effort, / Had quieted his mind and fulfilled his task, spoke to himself these words: // 17.62 //

**namo 'stu tasmai sugatāya yena hitaiṣiṇā me karuṇātmakena /
bahūni duḥkhāny apavartitāni sukhāni bhūyāmsy upasaṃhṛtāni // 17.63 //**

“Praise be to him, the Sugata, the One Gone Well, through whose compassionate pursuit of my welfare, / Great agonies were turned away and greater comforts conferred. // 17.63 //

**ahaṃ hy anāryeṇa śarīra-jena duḥkhātmake vartmani kṛṣyamāṇaḥ /
nivartitas tad-vacanāṅkuṣeṇa darpānvito nāga ivāṅkuṣeṇa // 17.64 //**

For while being dragged, by ignoble physicality, down a path pregnant with suffering, / I was turned back by the hook of his words, like an elephant in musk by a driver's hook. // 17.64 //

¹²¹³ The point might be that the eightfold path is a means for overcoming any number and all kinds of obstacles, including both all-smothering religious oneness (the water), and dualism (the crocodiles). At the same time, the verse brings to mind the teaching of Zen Master Dogen, who in Shobogenzo chap. 73 *Sanjushichi-bon-bodai-bunbo*, The 37 Things On the Side of Bodhi, went through the seven limbs, eight branches, four abodes, five powers, and so on, one by one, and then concluded the chapter by saying that we should consign all of them to oblivion, by just sitting.

**Tasyājñāyā kāruṇikasya śāstur hr̥di-stham utpāṭya hi rāga-śalyam /
adyaiva tāvat su-mahat sukhaṁ me sarva-kṣaye kiṁ-bata nirvṛtasya // 17.65 //**

For through the liberating knowledge¹²¹⁴ of the compassionate teacher who extracted a dart of passion that was lodged in my heart, / Now such abundant ease is mine – Oh! how happy I am in the loss of everything! // 17.65 //

**nirvāpya kāmāgnim ahaṁ hi dīptaṁ dhṛty-ambunā pāvakaṁ ambuneva /
hlādaṁ paraṁ sāmpratam āgato 'smi śītaṁ hradaṁ gharma ivāvātīrṇaḥ // 17.66 //**

For, by putting out the burning fire of desires, using the water of constancy, as if using water to put out a blaze, / I have now come to a state of supreme refreshment, like a hot person descending into a cool pool. // 17.66 //

**na me priyaṁ kiṁ-cana nāpriyaṁ me na me 'nurodho 'sti kuto virodhaḥ /
taylor abhāvāt sukhito 'smi sadyo himātapābhyām iva viprayuktaḥ // 17.67 //**

Nothing is dear to me, nor offensive to me. There is no liking in me, much less disliking. / In the absence of those two, I am enjoying the moment, like one immune to cold and heat. // 17.67 //

**mahā-bhayāt kṣemam ivopalabhya mahāvarodhād iva vipramokṣam /
mahārṇavāt pāram ivāplavaḥ san bhīmāndhakārād iva ca prakāśam // 17.68 //**

Like gaining safety after great danger; like gaining release after long imprisonment; / Like having no boat and yet gaining the far shore, after a mighty deluge; and like gaining clarity, after fearful darkness; // 17.68 //

**rogād ivārogyam asahya-rūpād ṛṇād ivānr̥ṇyam ananta-saṁkhyāt /
dviṣat-sakāśād iva cāpayānam durbhikṣa-yogāc ca yathā subhikṣam // 17.69 //**

Like gaining health out of incurable illness, relief from immeasurable debt, / Or escape from an enemy presence; or like gaining, after a famine, plentiful food: // 17.69 //

**tadvat parām śāntim upāgato 'haṁ yasyānubhāvena vināyakasya /
karomi bhūyaḥ punar uktam asmai namo namo 'rhāya tathāgatāya // 17.70 //**

Thus have I come to utmost quiet, through the [quieting] influence¹²¹⁵ of the teacher. / Again and repeatedly I do homage to him: Homage, homage to the Worthy One, the Realised One! // 17.70 //

¹²¹⁴ The metaphor of the surgeon who is able to remove a deeply-lodged dart or splinter seems to point to the primary sense of *ājñā* as deep knowledge or liberating knowledge. *Ājñā* can also mean order, command, or unlimited power, full autonomy.

¹²¹⁵ MW defines *anubhāva* as 1. a sign or indication of a feeling (*bhāva*) by look or gesture; 2. dignity, authority.

**yenāhaṃ girim upanīya rūkma-śṛṅgaṃ svargaṃ ca plavaga-vadhū-nidarśanena /
kāmātmā tridiva-carībhir aṅganābhir niṣkṛṣṭo yuvati-maye kalau nimagnaḥ // 17.71 //**
By him I was taken to the golden-peaked mountain, and to heaven, where, with the example of
the she-monkey, / And by means of the women who wander the triple heaven, I who was a slave
to love, sunk in girl-filled strife, was lifted up and out. // 17.71 //

**tasmāc ca vyasana-parād anartha-pañkāḍ utkṛṣya krama-śīthilaḥ karīva pañkāḍ /
śānte 'smin virajasi vijvare viśoke saddharme vitamasi naiṣṭhike vimuktaḥ // 17.72 //**
From that extreme predicament, from that worthless mire, up he dragged me, like a feeble-
footed elephant from the mud, / To be released into this quieted, dustless, feverless, sorrowless,
ultimate true reality, which is free from darkness.¹²¹⁶ // 17.72 //

**taṃ vande param anukampakaṃ maharṣim
mūrdhnāhaṃ prakṛti-guṇa-jñam āśaya-jñam /
saṃbuddhaṃ daśa-balinaṃ bhiṣak-pradhānaṃ
trātāraṃ punar api cāsmi saṃnatas tam // 17.73 //**
I salute the great supremely compassionate Seer, bowing my head to him, the knower of types,
the knower of hearts, / The fully awakened one, the holder of the ten powers, the best of
healers, the deliverer: again, I bow to him. // 17.73 //

mahākāvye saundaranande 'mṛtādhigamo nāma saptadaśaḥ sargaḥ /

The 17th Canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled "Obtaining the Deathless Nectar."

¹²¹⁶ The darkness of ignorance is listed as the final fetter in the list of ten fetters. In Aśvaghoṣa's account of the Buddha's enlightenment, also, in BC Canto 14, full awakening is described as synonymous with the ending of ignorance.

Canto 18: ājñā-vyākaraṇaḥ Knowing & Affirming

Introduction

Ājñā means 1. the highest knowledge, the deepest knowledge, knowledge of liberation; and 2. order, command, authority, unlimited power. Vyākaraṇa is an *-na* neuter action noun from *vy-ā-√kr*, which means 1. to expound, explain, declare, and 2. to predict or prophesy. Related to this latter definition, *vyākaraṇa* is one of the nine divisions of the teaching. This category of *vyākaraṇa* is generally understood to contain the Buddha's predictions of the future enlightenment of his followers. In Chinese, however, *vyākaraṇa* was rendered as 授記 (*juki*); and in Shobogenzo Dogen explains these two characters not in terms of future time (which, philosophically speaking, does not exist) but rather in terms of the real time of the present. Hence, rather than Giving a Prophecy, 授記 is better translated in Shobogenzo as Giving Affirmation. Following this line of thinking, then, the Canto title *ājñā-vyākaraṇaḥ* might be translated "Giving Affirmation of Deep Knowledge" or, in short, "Affirming of Knowing."

In EH Johnston's Canto title "The Declaration of Insight," however, the reading of *vyākaraṇa* mirrors the usage of *vyākaraṇa* in verse 21, where Nanda does indeed declare his own insight. Again, Linda Covill's translation "His Instructions Revealed" reflects the conventional understanding of *vyākaraṇa* in which the Buddha himself is the one who does the revealing.

Thus, in view of the ambiguity of both *ājñā* and *vyākaraṇa*, it seems likely that, as in so many previous Cantos, a two-word compound was chosen that might save us from the sin of certainty. "Knowing/Affirming" might come closer to conveying the real cloud of un-knowing that, ironically, Aśvagoṣa may have had it in mind to suggest.

atha dvijo bāla ivāpta-vedaḥ kṣipraṁ vaṇik prāpta ivāpta-lābhaḥ /

jītvā ca rājanya ivārisainyaṁ nandaḥ kṛtārtho gurum abhyagacchat // 18.1 //

And so like a young initiate who mastered the Vedas, like a trader who turned a quick profit, /
Or like a royal warrior who conquered a hostile army, a success, Nanda approached the Guru. //
18.1 //

draṣṭuṁ sukhaṁ jñāna-samāpti-kāle gurur hi śiṣyasya guroś ca śiṣyaḥ/

pariśramas te saphalo mayīti yato didṛkṣāsyā munau babhūva // 18.2 //

For it is pleasant, at a time when wisdom has been fully realized, for teacher to see student, and
for student to see teacher, / [Each thinking], "Your toil has rewarded me"; for which same
reason the wish to see [Nanda] arose in the Sage. // 18.2 //

**yato hi yenādhigato viśeṣas tasyottamāṅge 'rhati kartum idyām /
āryaḥ sarāgo 'pi kṛtajña-bhāvāt prakṣiṇamānaḥ kim-u vītarāgaḥ // 18.3 //**

Thus is a noble person obliged to pay respect,¹²¹⁷ to his face,¹²¹⁸ to the one through whom he has acquired distinction. / Even a noble person who retains the taint of redness is so obliged, out of gratitude: How much more is one with no red taint, all pride having perished? // 18.3 //

**yasyārtha-kāma-prabhavā hi bhaktis tato 'sya sā tiṣṭhati rūḍha-mūlā /
dharmānvayo yasya tu bhakti-rāgas tasya prasādo hṛdayāvagāḍhaḥ // 18.4 //**

For when devotion springs from an agenda or desire, there it remains rooted; / But when a person has love and devotion for dharma, that person is steeped to the core in tranquility. // 18.4 //

**kāṣāya-vāsāḥ kanakāvadātas tataḥ sa mūrdhnā gurave praṇeme /
vāteritaḥ pallava-tāmra-rāgaḥ puṣpojjvala-śrīr iva karṇikāraḥ // 18.5 //**

And so, a glowing gold in his yellow-red robe, he bowed his head to the Guru / Like a *karnikāra* tree, with an outburst of ruddy shoots, and a glorious blaze of flowers, nodding in the wind. // 18.5 //

**athātmanaḥ śiṣya-guṇasya caiva mahā-muneḥ śāstr-guṇasya caiva /
saṁdarśanārthaṁ sa na māna-hetoḥ svām kārya-siddhiṁ kathayām babhūva // 18.6 //**

Then, as a manifestation of his individual merit as a student and, indeed, of the great Sage's merit as a teacher, / And not out of pride, he described his own accomplishment of the work that has to be done: // 18.6 //

**yo dṛṣṭi-śalyo hṛdayāvagāḍhaḥ prabho bhṛṣaṁ mām atudat su-tikṣṇaḥ /
tvad-vākya-saṁdaṁśa-mukhena me sa samuddhṛtaḥ śalya-hṛteva śalyaḥ // 18.7 //**

“The splinter of a view,¹²¹⁹ that had penetrated to my core, O Mighty One, was paining me intensely, being very sharp; / Via the jaws of the pincers of your words – by means of a means and by way of a mouth¹²²⁰ – it was pulled out of me, as a splinter is removed by a surgeon. // 18.7 //

¹²¹⁷ EHJ notes that *idyām* is a corruption here for *ijyām*, which occurs occasionally in Buddhist works in the sense of *pūjā* (honour, worship, respect).

¹²¹⁸ *Uttamāṅge* (fr. *uttama* + *aṅga*) is lit. “to the highest part of the body.”

¹²¹⁹ The cutting of ten fetters which was implicit in Aśvaghōṣa's account of Nanda's progress in Canto 17, is also implicit in Nanda's own account of his progress. The ten fetters, to recap, are: 1. personality view, 2. doubting, 3. clinging to rules and rituals; 4. sensual desire, 5. ill will, 6. concern for outward appearances, 7. concern for spiritual advancement, 8. conceit, 9. restlessness, and 10. ignorance. In this verse, then, Nanda describes the cutting in him of the first fetter, the personality view.

¹²²⁰ A play seems to be intended on the word *mukhena*: the meanings of *mukha* include 1. mouth, 2. tip (i.e. the jaw of a pincer) and 3. means.

**kathamkathā-bhāva-gatosmi yena chinnaḥ sa niḥsaṁśaya saṁśayo me/
tvac-chāsanāt satpatham āgato 'smi sudeśikasyeva pathi pranaṣṭaḥ // 18.8 //**

A doubt,¹²²¹ by which I fell into a state of hesitant questioning, O One Beyond Doubt, has been eradicated in me – / Through your teaching I have arrived at a true path like a straggler, under a good guide, getting on the road.¹²²² // 18.8 //

**yat pītam āsvāda-vaśendriyeṇa darpeṇa kandarpa-viṣaṁ mayāsīt /
tan me hataṁ tvad-vacanāgadena viṣaṁ vināśīva mahāgadena // 18.9 //**

With senses ruled by relishing, I madly drank the drug of love;¹²²³ / Its action was blocked in me by the antidote of your words, as a deadly poison is by a great remedy. // 18.9 //

**kṣayaṁ gataṁ janma nirasta-janman saddharma-caryām uṣīto 'smi samyak /
kṛtsnaṁ kṛtaṁ me kṛta-kārya kāryaṁ lokeṣu bhūto 'smi na loka-dharmā // 18.10 //**

Rebirth is over, O Refuter of Rebirth! I am dwelling as one with observance of true dharma. / What was for me to do, O Doer of the Necessary! is totally done. I am present in the world¹²²⁴ without being of the world. // 18.10 //

**maitrī-stanīm vyañjana-cāru-sāsnām saddharma-dugdhām pratibhāna-śṛṅgām /
tavāsmi gām sādhu nipīya tṛptas tṛṣeva gām uttama vatsa-varṇaḥ // 18.11 //**

Having drunk from the milk-cow of your voice, whose udder is loving-kindness, whose lovely dewlap is figures of speech, who is milked for true dharma, and whose horns are boldness of expression, / I am properly satisfied, O Most Excellent One, like a little calf that, because of thirst, has drunk milk.¹²²⁵ // 18.11 //

**yat paśyataś cādhiḡamo mamāyaṁ tan me samāsenā mune nibodha /
sarva-jña kāmaṁ viditaṁ tavaitat svaṁ tūpacāraṁ pravivakṣur asmi // 18.12 //**

And so, O Sage, hear from me in brief what, through seeing, I have made my own. / Though you know it anyway, O All-knowing One, still I wish to mention how I have worked on myself. // 18.12 //

¹²²¹ Describes cutting of fetter no. 2, doubting.

¹²²² Cutting of the fetter no. 3, clinging to rules and rituals, appears either to be understood, or else to be implicit in entry onto a true path.

¹²²³ This verse can be read as relating to fetter no. 4, namely desire for sensual pleasure. Cutting of the fetter no. 5, ill will, is understood.

¹²²⁴ *Lokeṣu* is locative plural. Therefore, more literally, “I am present among the inhabitants of the world.”

¹²²⁵ This verse can be read as expressing freedom from fetters no. 6 and 7, which are manifestations, in material and spiritual spheres, of residual craving (*rāga*) or thirst (*tṛṣṇā*).

**anye 'pi santo vimumuksavo hi śrutvā vimokṣāya nayaṁ parasya /
muktasya rogād iva rogavantas tenaiva mārgeṇa sukhaṁ ghaṭante // 18.13 //**

For true freedom-loving people (however individual they are) when they hear of another person's plan that led to freedom / Will happily work at [freedom] via that same path, like sick men [hearing the plan] of one who became free from a disease. // 18.13 //

**urvyādikān janmani vedmi dhātūn nātmānam urvyādiṣu teṣu kiṁ-cit /
yasmād atas teṣu na me 'sti saktir bahiḥ ca kāyena samā matir me // 18.14 //**

In a birth, I perceive earth and the other elements, but in earth and those other elements, I perceive no self at all. / On that basis, there is no attachment in me to those elements; my orientation is equal with regard to my body and outside. // 18.14 //

**skandhānś ca rūpa-prabhṛtīn daśārdhān paśyāmi yasmāc capalān asārān /
anātmakānś caiva vadhātmakānś ca tasmād vimukto 'smy aśivebhya ebhyaḥ // 18.15 //**

Again, the five skandhas,¹²²⁶ beginning with the organized body, I see to be inconstant and without substance, / As well as unreal and life-negating; therefore I am free from those pernicious [constructs]. // 18.15 //

**yasmāc ca paśyāmy udayaṁ vyayaṁ ca sarvāsv avasthāsv aham indriyāṇān /
tasmād anityeṣu nirātmakeṣu duḥkheṣu me teṣv api nāsti saṁgaḥ // 18.16 //**

Since I see for myself an arising and a vanishing in all situations in the realms of the senses, / Therefore, again, there is in me no clinging to those [aforementioned elements] which are impermanent, impersonal, and unsatisfactory. // 18.16 //

**yataś ca lokaṁ sama-janma-niṣṭhaṁ paśyāmi nihsāram asac ca sarvaṁ /
ato dhiyā me manasā vibaddham asmīti me neñjitam asti yena // 18.17 //**

Again, on the grounds that I see the whole world as emerging and in the same moment passing away, as having no essential meaning and not being as it ought to be, / On these grounds, because of meditation, [the world] is bound fast by my mind in such a way that there is no flicker in me of 'I am.'¹²²⁷ // 18.17 //

¹²²⁶ *Skandha* means shoulder and hence part or (as in SN16.37) division. The five skandhas are *rūpa*, material form, or (as per the MW dictionary) "the organized body"; *vedanā*, feeling; *saṁjñā*, perception; *saṁskāra*, doing; *vijñāna*, consciousness. In agreement with the realization expressed here by Nanda, Nāgārjuna (MMK26.8) asserts that the five skandhas are just becoming.

¹²²⁷ A series of verses in which Nanda seems to describe what is seen by the Dharma-Eye referred to in Canto 17, thus culminates with the association of seeing and sitting-meditation. Nanda sees what he sees because of meditating (*dhiyā*). This verse can thus be seen as mirroring SN17.34. At the same time, it can be seen as expressing freedom from fetter no. 8, which is "I am" conceit.

**catur-vidhe naikavidha-prasaṅge yato 'ham āhāra-vidhāv asaktaḥ /
amūrccitaś cāgrathitaś ca tatra tribhyo vimukto 'smi tato bhavebhyaḥ // 18.18 //**

There is all manner of indulging in the four sorts of food, but since I am not attached to how I take food, / Since when it comes to food¹²²⁸ I am not congealed or trussed up, I am free, on that score, from three kinds of becoming.¹²²⁹ // 18.18 //

**aniścitaś cāpratibaddha-citto dṛṣṭa-śrutādau vyavahāra-dharme /
yasmāt samātmānugataś ca tatra tasmād visaṅgyoga-gato 'smi muktaḥ // 18.19 //**

In the daily round of dharma-practice since I am neither certain about nor bound in mind to visual, auditory and other kinds of perception, / And since through that [dharma-round] I am graced by trailing equanimity, on that account I am detached and am free.”¹²³⁰ // 18.19 //

**ity evam uktvā guru-bāhumānyāt sarveṇa kāyena sa gām nipannaḥ /
praverito lohita-candanākto haimo mahā-stambha ivābhāṣe // 18.20 //**

After speaking thus, he prostrated himself on the ground with his whole body, out of deep appreciation for the Guru; / He looked like a great fallen column of gold tinged with red sandalwood. // 18.20 //

**tataḥ pramādāt prasṛtasya pūrvaṁ śrutvā dhṛtiṁ vyākaraṇaṁ ca tasya /
dharmānvayaṁ cānugataṁ prasādaṁ meghasvaras taṁ munir ābabhāṣe // 18.21 //**

Then, after listening to him who had emerged already out of heedlessness, after hearing his firmness and his testimony¹²³¹ / And a clarity consistent with the gist of dharma, the Sage boomed at him like a thundercloud: // 18.21 //

**uttiṣṭha dharme sthita śiṣya-juṣṭe kiṁ pādayor me patito 'si murdhnā /
abhyarcanaṁ me na tathā praṇāmo dharme yathaiṣā pratipattir eva // 18.22 //**

“You who stands firm in the dharma which is loved by those who study it, stand up! Why are you fallen with your head at my feet? / The prostration does not honour me so much as this surefootedness in the dharma. // 18.22 //

¹²²⁸ *Tatra*, in that regard, i.e. in regard to food.

¹²²⁹ Three kinds of becoming might mean three forms of fetter no. 9, which is restlessness or agitation. In the context of taking food in everyday life, the fetter might mean for example 1. the restlessness of impatient desire for food that is available, 2. the restlessness of dissatisfaction with food that is available, 3. the restlessness of envy for food that is not available.

¹²³⁰ This seems to be an expression – again in terms of action in everyday life – of freedom from fetter no. 10, ignorance. In BC Canto 14, the Buddha's own full awakening is described as the ending of ignorance.

¹²³¹ *Vyākaraṇaṁ* is as per the Canto title. But the usage of *vyākaraṇa* in this verse, to express Nanda's “detailed description” [MW], or testimony, is different from the conventional usage in which the Buddha is the agent of “prediction” or “phrophecy” [MW], or affirmation.

**adyāsi su-pravrajito jitātmann aiśvaryam apy ātmani yena labdham /
jitātmanah pravrajanaṁ hi sādhu calātmano na tv ajitendriyasya // 18.23 //**

Today, conqueror of yourself, you have truly gone forth, since you have thereby gained sovereignty over yourself. / For in a person who has conquered himself, going forth has worked; whereas in an impulsive person whose senses remain unconquered, it has not. // 18.23 //

**adyāsi śaucena pareṇa yukto vāk-kāya-cetāṁsi śucīni yat te /
ataḥ punaś cāprayatāṁ asaumyāṁ yat saumya no vekṣyasi garbha-śayyām // 18.24 //**

Today you are possessed of purity of the highest order, in that your voice, body, and mind are untainted, / And in that, henceforward, my gentle friend, you will not again be confined in the ungentle womb of unready slumber.¹²³² // 18.24 //

**adyārthavat te śrutavac chrutaṁ tac chrutānurūpaṁ pratipadya dharmam /
kṛta-śruto vipratipadyamāno nindyo hi nirvīrya ivāttaśastraḥ // 18.25 //**

Listening [ears open] to the [truth] which is replete with listening, and with purpose, today you stand surefooted in the dharma, in a manner that befits the listening tradition. / For a man equipped with listening [ears] who is wavering is like a swordsman lacking valour: he is worthy of blame. // 18.25 //

**aho dhṛtis te 'viṣayātmakasya yat tvam matim mokṣa-vidhāv akārṣiḥ /
yāsyāmi niṣṭhām iti bālīśo hi janma-kṣayāt trāsam ihābhyupaiti // 18.26 //**

Ah! What firmness in you, who is a slave to objects no more, in that you have willed the means of liberation. / For, facing the end of existence in this world and thinking 'I will be finished,' it is a fool who gives in to a state of quivering anxiety. // 18.26 //

**diṣṭyā durāpaḥ kṣaṇa-saṁnipāto nāyam kṛto moha-vaśena moghaḥ /
udeti duḥkhena gato hy adhastāt kūrmō yugacchidra ivārṇavasthaḥ // 18.27 //**

Happily, this meeting with the present moment, which is so hard to come by, is not being wasted under the sway of ignorance. / For a man who has been down goes up with difficulty, like a turtle to a hole in a yoke, in the foaming sea. // 18.27 //

¹²³² The palm-leaf manuscript has *garbha-śaryyām*, which EHJ amended based on Shastri's conjecture, noting: "*Garbha-śayyā* ['abode/bed of the womb'] is so regular a phrase that I have not dared to keep the manuscript's interesting *garbha-śaryām* with *śaryā* in the sense of 'night' and a possible pun of 'moonless' in *asaumyām*." An alternative translation, then, is: *Today you are possessed of purity of the highest order, in that your voice, body, and mind are untainted, / And in that, henceforward, my moon-like friend, you will not again be confined in the womb of moonless night.* //

**nirjitya mārāṃ yudhi durnivāram adyāsi loke raṇa-śīrṣa-śūraḥ /
śūro 'py aśūraḥ sa hi veditavyo doṣair amitrair iva hanyate yaḥ // 18.28 //**

Having conquered Māra, who is so hard to stop in battle, today, at the forefront of the fight, you are a hero among men. / For even a hero is not recognized as a hero who is beaten by the foe-like faults. // 18.28 //

**nirvāpya rāgāgnim udīrṇam adya diṣṭyā sukhaṃ svapsyasi vītadāhaḥ /
duḥkhaṃ hi śete śayane 'py udāre kleśāgninā cetasi dahyamānaḥ // 18.29 //**

Today, having extinguished the flaming fire of redness, happily, you will sleep well, free of fever. / For even on a fabulous bed he sleeps badly who is being burned in his mind by the fires of affliction. // 18.29 //

**abhyucchrito dravya-madena pūrvam adyāsi tṛṣṇoparamāt samṛddhaḥ /
yāvat satarṣaḥ puruṣo hi loke tāvat samṛddho 'pi sadā daridraḥ // 18.30 //**

You used markedly to be mad about possessions; today, because you have stopped thirsting, you are rich. / For as long as a man in the world thirsts, however rich he may be, he is always deprived. // 18.30 //

**adyāpadeṣṭuṃ tava yukta-rūpaṃ śuddhodano me nṛ-patiḥ piteti /
bhraṣṭasya dharmāt pitṛbhir nipātād aślāghaniyo hi kulāpadeśaḥ // 18.31 //**

Today you may fittingly proclaim that King Śuddhodana is your father. / For it is not commendable for a backslider, after falling from the dharma alighted on by ancestors, to proclaim his lineage. // 18.31 //

**diṣṭyāsi śāntiṃ paramām upeto nistīrṇa-kāntāra ivāpta-sāraḥ /
sarvo hi saṃsāra-gato bhayārto yathaiva kāntāra-gatas tathaiva // 18.32 //**

How great it is that you have reached the deepest tranquillity, like a man making it through a wasteland and gaining possession of treasure. / For everybody in the flux of saṃsāra is afflicted by fear, just like a man in a wasteland. // 18.32 //

**āraṇyakaṃ bhaikṣa-caraṃ vinītaṃ draḥṣyāmi nandaṃ nibhṛtaṃ kadeti /
āsīt purastāt tvayi me didṛkṣā tathāsi diṣṭyā mama darśanīyaḥ // 18.33 //**

'When shall I see Nanda settled, given over to the living of a forest beggar's life?', / So thinking, I had harboured from the start the desire to see you thus. What a wonderful sight you are for me to behold! // 18.33 //

**bhavaty arūpo 'pi hi darśanīyaḥ sv-alamkṛtaḥ śreṣṭhatamai-guṇaiḥ svaiḥ /
doṣaiḥ parīto malinī-karais tu sudarśaniyo 'pi virūpa eva // 18.34 //**

For even an unlovely sort is a sight to behold when he is well-adorned with his own best features. / But a man who is full of the befouling faults, strikingly beautiful man though he may be, is truly ugly. // 18.34 //

**adya prakṛṣṭā tava buddhimattā kṛtsnam yayā te kṛtam ātmakāryam /
śrutonnatasyāpi hi nāsti buddhir notpadyate śreyasi yasya buddhiḥ // 18.35 //**

Developed in you today is the real wisdom by which you have done, totally, the work you had to do on yourself. / For even a highly educated man lacks wisdom, if wisdom fails to show in his practice of a better way. // 18.35 //

**unmīlitasyāpi janasya madhye nimīlitasyāpi tathaiva cakṣuḥ /
prajñā-mayaṁ yasya hi nāsti cakṣuś cakṣur na tasyāsti sacakṣuṣo 'pi // 18.36 //**

So it is with seeing, among people with eyes open and with eyes closed. / For when a man lacks sight that is packed with intuition, though he has eyes, the Eye is not present in him. // 18.36 //

**duḥkha-pratīkāra-nimittam ārtaḥ kṛṣyādibhiḥ khedam upaiti lokaḥ /
ajasram āgacchati tac ca bhūyo jñānena yasyādya kṛtas tvayāntaḥ // 18.37 //**

Struck by calamity, stung to do something to combat suffering, the world exhausts itself with work like ploughing; / And yet it is ceaselessly revisited by that [suffering], to which, using what you know, you today have put an end. // 18.37 //

**duḥkham na me syāt sukham eva me syād iti pravṛttaḥ satataṁ hi lokaḥ /
na vetti tac caiva tathā yathā syāt prāptaṁ tvayādyāsulabham yathāvat // 18.38 //**

People in the world are impelled ever forward by thinking “There might be for me no hardship, just happiness....” / And yet [the world] does not know a means whereby that [happiness] might come to be – that rarely attained [happiness] which you today have properly realized.” // 18.38 //

**ity evam ādi sthira-buddhi-cittas tathāgatenābhīhito hitāya /
staveṣu nindāsu ca nir-vyapekṣaḥ kṛtāñjalir vākyaṁ uvāca nandaḥ // 18.39 //**

While the Tathāgata told him this and more for his benefit Nanda remained firm in his judgement and thinking / And was indifferent to plaudits or criticisms. With hands joined, he spoke these words: // 18.39 //

**aho viśeṣeṇa viśeṣa-darśims tvayānukampā mayi darśiteyaṁ /
yat kāmapañke bhagavan nimagnas trāto 'smi saṁsāra-bhayād akāmaḥ //18.40 //**

“Oh, how particular, O Seer of Particularities, is this compassion that you have shown to me! / Since I who was sunk, Glorious One, in the mire of love have been a reluctant refugee from the terror of saṁsāra. //18.40 //

**bhrātrā tvayā śreyasi daiśikena pitrā phala-sthena tathaiva mātṛā /
hato 'bhaviṣyaṁ yadi na vyamokṣyaṁ sārthāt paribhraṣṭa ivākṛtārthaḥ // 18.41 //**

If not set free by you, a brother, a guide along a better way, a fruitful¹²³³ father, and equally a mother, / I would be done for; like a straggler¹²³⁴ dropped from a caravan, I would not have made it.¹²³⁵ // 18.41 //

**śāntasya tuṣṭasya sukho viveko vijñāta-tattvasya parīkṣakasya /
prahīṇa-mānasya ca nir-madasya sukhaṁ virāgatvam asakta-buddheḥ // 18.42 //**

Solitude is sweet for one who is calm and contented, who looks into and has learned what is. / Again, for one who is sober and shorn of conceits, for one who is detached in his decision-making, dispassion is a pleasure. // 18.42 //

**ato hi tattvaṁ parigamya samyaṁ nirdhūya doṣān adhigamya śāntim /
svaṁ nāśramaṁ samprati cintayāmi na taṁ janaṁ nāpsaraso na devān // 18.43 //**

And so, through squarely realising what is, through shaking off faults and coming to quiet, / I worry now neither about my own place, nor about the person there, nor about *apsarases*, nor about gods. // 18.43 //

**idaṁ hi bhuktvā śuci śāmikaṁ sukhaṁ na me manaḥ kāmīkṣati kāmajaṁ sukham /
mahārham apy annam adaivatāhṛtaṁ divaukaso bhuktavataḥ sudhām iva // 18.44 //**

For now that I have tasted this pure, peaceful happiness, my mind no longer hankers after happiness born of desires – / Just as the costliest earthly fare [cannot entice] a god who has supped the heavenly nectar. // 18.44 //

**aho 'ndha-vijñāna-nimilitaṁ jagat paṭāntare paśyati nottamaṁ sukham /
sudhīram adhyātma-sukhaṁ vyapāśya hi śramaṁ tathā kāma-sukhārtham ṛcchati //
18.45 //**

Alas, the world has its eyes closed by blind unconsciousness; it does not see utmost happiness in a different robe. / Flinging away lasting inner happiness, it exhausts itself so, in pursuit of sensual happiness. // 18.45 //

**yathā hi ratnākaram etya durmatir vihāya ratnāny asato maṇin haret /
apāśya sambodhi-sukhaṁ tathottamaṁ śramaṁ vrajet kāma-sukhopalabdhye // 18.46
//**

For just as a fool, having made it to a jewel mine, might leave the jewels and carry off inferior crystals, / So would one reject the highest happiness of full awakening and struggle to gain sensual gratification. // 18.46 //

¹²³³ *Phala-sthena* is also used in the sense of “fruitful” in SN6.43.

¹²³⁴ *Akṛtārthaḥ* lit. means “one who was not successful.”

¹²³⁵ *Na vyamokṣyam* lit. means “I would not be set free.”

aho hi sattveṣv atimaitra-cetasas tathāgatasyānujighṛkṣutā parā /

apāsyā yad dhyāna-sukhaṁ mune paraṁ parasya duḥkhoparamāya khidyase // 18.47 //

Oh! high indeed, then, is the order of that desire to favour living beings which the Tathāgata has, overflowing with benevolence: / Since, O Sage, you throw away the highest-order happiness of meditation and are consumed by your effort to stop others suffering. // 18.47 //

mayā nu śakyaṁ pratikartum adya kiṁ gurau hitaiṣiṇy anukampake tvayi /

samuddhṛto yena bhavārṇavād ahaṁ mahārṇavāc cūrṇita-naur ivormibhiḥ // 18.48 //

How today could I possibly repay you, my compassionate Guru whose desire is others' welfare, / By whom I was taken totally up and out of the foaming sea of becoming, like a man out of a great ocean when his boat is being battered by waves?" // 18.48 //

tato munis tasya niśamya hetumat prahīṇa-sarvāsrava-sūcakaṁ vacaḥ /

idaṁ babhāṣe vadatām anuttamo yad arhati śrīghana eva bhāṣitum // 18.49 //

Then the Sage, hearing his well-founded words which signified the removal of all pollutants, / Voiced, as the Very Best of Speakers, these lines that none but a buddha, being 'Sheer Radiance,'¹²³⁶ should voice: // 18.49 //

idaṁ kṛtārthaḥ paramārthavit kṛtī tvam eva dhīmann abhidhātum arhasi /

atītya kāntāram avāpta-sādhanaḥ su-daiśikasyeva kṛtaṁ mahāvaṇik // 18.50 //

"As a man of action who got the job done and who knows the primary task,¹²³⁷ none but you, O crafty man!, should express this affirmation - / Like a great trader, having crossed a wasteland and got the goods, who affirms the work of a good guide. // 18.50 //

avaiti buddhaṁ nara-damya-sārathim kṛtī yathārhanṇ upaśānta-mānasaḥ /

na dṛṣṭa-satyo 'pi tathāvabudhyate pṛthag-janaḥ kiṁ-bata buddhimān api // 18.51 //

An arhat, a man of action whose mind has come to quiet, knows the Buddha as a charioteer of human steeds who needed taming: / Not even a truth-seer appreciates the Buddha in this manner: how much less does an ordinary person, however intelligent he may be? // 18.51 //

¹²³⁶ EHJ noted that *śrīghana* was a very rare appellation for the Buddha and translated "spoke these words which were such as a Buddha Śrīghana should speak." The implicit principle is as expressed in Dogen's favourite line from the Lotus Sutra 唯仏与仏乃能究尽諸法実相 "None but a buddha, together with a buddha, is able perfectly to realize that all things are reality."

¹²³⁷ *Paramārtha* is as in *paramārthataḥ*, the word that Nāgārjuna uses in distinguishing between conventional truth (*loka-saṃvṛti-satyam*) and ultimate truth (*satyaṁ paramārthataḥ*). In this verse, however, the Buddha's emphasis seems to be more practical than philosophical.

**rajas-tamobhyām parimukta-cetasas tavaiva ceyam sadṛśī kṛtajñatā /
rajaḥ-prakarṣeṇa jagaty avasthite kṛtajña-bhāvo hi kṛtajña durlabhaḥ // 18.52 //**

This gratitude is fitting, again, in none but you whose mind has been liberated from the dust of the passions and from darkness. / For while dust prevails in the world, O man of gratitude! real gratitude is a rare state of being. // 18.52 //

**sa-dharma dharmānvayato yataś ca te mayi prasādo 'dhigame ca kauśalam /
ato 'sti bhūyas tvayi me vivakṣitam nato hi bhaktaś ca niyogam arhasi // 18.53 //**

O possessor of dharma! Since, because of abiding by dharma, you have skill in making it your own and quiet confidence in me, / I have something else to say to you. For you are surrendered and devoted, and up to the task. // 18.53 //

**avāpta-kāryo 'si parām gatiṁ gato na te 'sti kiṁ-cit karaṇīyam aṅv api /
ataḥ paraṁ saumya carānukampayā vimokṣayan kṛcchra-gatān parān api // 18.54 //**

Walking the transcendent walk, you have done the work that needed to be done: in you, there is not the slightest thing left to work on. / From now on, my friend, go with compassion, freeing up others who are pulled down into their troubles. // 18.54 //

**ihārtham evārabhate naro 'dhamo vimadhyamas tūbhaya-laukikīm kriyām /
kriyām amutraiva phalāya madhyamo viśiṣṭa-dharmā punar apravṛttaye // 18.55 //**

The lowest sort of man only ever sets to work for an object in this world. But a man in the middle does work both for this world and for the world to come. / A man in the middle, I repeat, works for a result in the future. The superior type, however, tends towards abstention from positive action. // 18.55 //

**ihottamebhyo 'pi mataḥ sa tūttamo ya uttamaṁ dharmam avāpya naiṣṭhikam /
acintayitvātma-gataṁ pariśramaṁ śamaṁ parebhyo 'py upadeṣṭum icchatī // 18.56 //**

But deemed to be higher than the highest in this world is he who, having realized the supreme ultimate dharma, / Desires, without worrying about the trouble to himself, to teach tranquillity to others. // 18.56 //

**vihāya tasmād iha kāryam ātmanaḥ kuru sthirātman para-kāryam apy atho /
bhramatsu sattveṣu tamo-vṛtātmasu śruta-pradīpo niśi dhāryatām ayam // 18.57 //**

Therefore forgetting the work that needs to be done in this world on the self, do now, stout soul, what can be done for others. / Among beings who are wandering in the night, their minds shrouded in darkness, let the lamp of this transmission be carried. // 18.57 //

**bravītu tāvat puri vismito janas tvayi sthite kurvati dharma-deśanāḥ /
aho batāścaryam idaṁ vimuktaye karoti rāgī yad ayaṁ kathāṁ iti // 18.58 //**

Just let the astonished people in the city say, while you are standing firm, voicing dharma-directions, / ‘Well! What a wonder this is, that he who was a man of passion is preaching liberation!’ // 18.58 //

**dhruvaṁ hi saṁśrutya tava sthiraṁ mano nivṛtta-nānā-viṣayair mano-rathaiḥ /
vadhūr gr̥he sāpi tavānukurvati kariṣyate strīṣu virāgiṇīḥ kathāḥ // 18.59 //**

Then, surely, when she hears of your steadfast mind with its chariots turned back from sundry objects, / Your wife following your example will also talk, to women at home, the talk of dispassion. // 18.59 //

**tvayi parama-dhṛtau niviṣṭa-tattve bhavana-gatā na hi raṁsyate dhruvaṁ sā /
manasi śama-damātmake vivikte matir iva kāma-sukhaiḥ parīkṣakasya // 18.60 //**

For, with you showing constancy of the highest order, as you get to the bottom of what is, she surely will not enjoy life in the palace, / Just as the mind of an enlightened man does not enjoy sensual pleasures when his mental state is tranquil and controlled, and his thinking is detached and distinct.” // 18.60 //

**ity arhataḥ parama-kāruṇikasya śāstur
mūrdhnā vacaś ca caraṇau ca samaṁ gr̥hītvā /
svasthaḥ praśānta-hṛdayo vinivṛtta-kāryaḥ
pārsvān muneḥ pratiyayau vimadaḥ karīva // 18.61 //**

Thus spoke the Worthy One, the instructor whose compassion was of the highest order, / Whose words and equally whose feet [Nanda] had accepted, using his head; / Then, at ease in himself, his heart at peace, his task ended, / He left the Sage’s side like an elephant free of rut. // 18.61 //

**bhikṣārthaṁ samaye viveśa sa puraṁ dṛṣṭīr janasyākṣipan
lābhālābha-sukhāsukhādiṣu samaḥ svasthendriyo nispr̥haḥ /
nirmokṣāya cakāra tatra ca kathāṁ kāle janāyārthine
naivonmārga-gatān parān paribhavann ātmānam utkarṣayan // 18.62 //**

When the occasion arose he entered the town for begging and attracted the citizens’ gaze; / Being impartial towards gain, loss, comfort, discomfort, and the like and with his senses composed, he was free of longing; / And being there, in the moment, he talked of liberation to people so inclined - / Never putting down others on a wrong path or raising himself up. // 18.62 //

**ity eṣā vyupaśāntaye na rataye mokṣārtha-garbhā kṛtiḥ
śrotṛṇām grahaṇārtham anya-manasām kāvyopacārāt kṛtā /
yan mokṣāt kṛtam anyad atra hi mayā tat kāvyā-dharmāt kṛtaṁ
pātuṁ tiktam ivauśadhaṁ madhu-yutaṁ hṛdyaṁ kathaṁ syād iti // 18.63 //**

This work is pregnant with the purpose of release: it is for cessation, not for titillation; / It is wrought out of the figurative expression of kāvyā poetry in order to capture an audience whose minds are on other things – / For what I have written here not pertaining to liberation, I have written in accordance with the conventions of kāvyā poetry. / This is through asking myself how the bitter pill might be made pleasant to swallow, like bitter medicine mixed with something sweet. // 18.63 //

**prāyeṇālokya lokaṁ viṣaya-rati-paramṁ mokṣāt pratihatam
kāvyā-vyājena tattvaṁ kathitam iha mayā mokṣaḥ param iti /
tad buddhvā śāmikaṁ yat tad avahitam ito grāhyaṁ na lalitaṁ
pāṁsubhyo dhātu-jebhyo niyatam upakaraṁ cāmikaram iti // 18.64 //**

Seeing, in general, that the world is moved primarily by fondness for objects and is repelled by liberation, / I for whom liberation is paramount have told it here like it is, using a kāvyā poem as a pretext. / Being aware of the deceit, take from this [verb-rooted dust]¹²³⁸ what pertains to peace and not to idle pleasure. / Then elemental dust, assuredly, shall yield up serviceable¹²³⁹ gold. // 18.64 //

saundaranande mahākāvya ājñā-vyākaraṇo nāmaṣṭādaśaḥ sargaḥ /

The 18th canto in the epic poem Handsome Nanda, titled “Knowing Affirmation.”

**ārya-suvarṇākṣī-putrasya sāketakasya bhikṣor ācārya-bhadantāśvagoṣasya
mahā-kaver mahā-vādīnaḥ kṛtir iyam //**

This is the work of a beggar, the respected teacher Aśvagoṣa of Saketa, son of the noble Suvarṇākṣī, crafter of epic poetry and talker of the great talk.

¹²³⁸ Pāṁsubhyo dhātu-jebhyaḥ in the 4th pāda – “dhātu-born dust” – contains a play on the word dhātu, which means “element” both in the sense of a primary element of the earth and also in the sense of a grammatical element, i.e. a verbal root or stem.

¹²³⁹ EHJ notes that upakara is not met with elsewhere, nor is there any obvious amendment. The noun upakāra (from upa-√kr, to serve) means benefit, service, favour, use, advantage, and upakāraṇa means “doing a service.” Hence LC translated upakaraṁ cāmikaram as “serviceable gold.” The shortening of a vowel to fit a verse's metre is very common in works that pre-dated Aśvagoṣa, such as Udāna-varga, written in what is known as Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit. But Aśvagoṣa was the first known author to express the Buddha's teaching in pure classical Sanskrit, and such vowel shortening is not characteristic of his poetry. One possible amendment (possible in the sense that it fits the metre) is upacitam (see SN16.71), which means “heaped up,” “furnished in abundance,” or in short “abundant.”