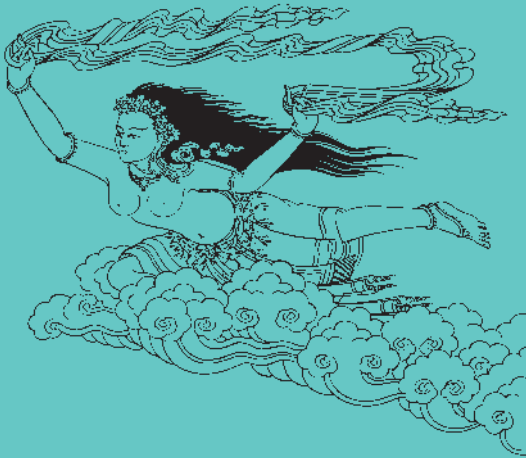


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# Handsome Nanda

by Ashva·ghoṣha



Translated by  
**LINDA COVILL**

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS & JJC FOUNDATION

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First Edition 2007

The Clay Sanskrit Library is co-published by  
New York University Press  
and the JJC Foundation.

Further information about this volume  
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ISBN: 978-0-8147-1683-0 (cloth : alk. paper)

*Artwork by Robert Beer.*

*Typeset in Adobe Garamond at 10.25 : 12.3+pt.*

*XML-development by Stuart Brown.*

*Editorial input from Dániel Balogh,*

*Tomoyuki Kono, & Péter Szántó.*

*Printed in Great Britain by St Edmundsbury Press Ltd,*

*Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, on acid-free paper.*

*Bound by Hunter & Foulis, Edinburgh, Scotland.*

# HANDSOME NANDA

BY AŚVAGHOṢA

TRANSLATED BY

LINDA COVILL



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS  
JJC FOUNDATION

2007

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Aśvaghōṣa

[Saundarananda. English & Sanskrit]

Handsome Nanda / by Asvaghosa ;

translated by Linda Covill. – 1st ed.

p. cm. – (The Clay Sanskrit library)

In English and Sanskrit (romanized) on facing pages;

includes translation from Sanskrit.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8147-1683-0 (cloth : alk. paper)

1. Gautama Buddha–Friends and associates–Poetry.
2. Nanda–Poetry. 3. Buddhist poetry–Translations into English.
4. Asvaghosa–Translations into English.

I. Covill, Linda, 1962- II. Title.

BQ905.N2A713 2007

294.3'4432-dc22

2007003642

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CANTO 4  
HIS WIFE'S REQUEST

- 4.1 **M**UNAU BRUVĀṆE 'pi tu tatra dharmam  
 dharmam prati jñātiṣu c' ādrteṣu,  
 prāsāda|saṃstho madan'âika|kāryaḥ  
 priyā|sahāyo vijahāra Nandaḥ.  
 sa cakravāky" ēva hi cakravākas  
 tayā sametaḥ priyayā priy'ârhaḥ  
 n' âcintayad Vaiśravaṇam na Śakraṃ  
 tat|sthāna|hetoḥ kuta eva dharmam.  
 lakṣmyā ca rūpeṇa ca Sundar" îti  
 stambhena garveṇa ca Mānin" îti  
 dīptyā ca mānena ca Bhāmin" îti  
 yato babhāṣe tri|vidhena nāmnā.  
 sâ hâsa|haṃsâ nayana|dvirephā  
 pīna|stan'âtyunnata|padma|kośā;  
 bhūyo babhāse sva|kul'|ôditena  
 strī|padminī Nanda|divākareṇa.
- 4.5 rūpeṇa c' âtyanta|manohareṇa  
 rūp'ânurūpeṇa ca ceṣṭitena,  
 manuṣya|loke hi tadā babhūva  
 sâ sundarī strīṣu nareṣu nandaḥ.  
 sâ devatā Nandana|cāriṇ" îva  
 kulasya nandī|jananaś ca Nandaḥ  
 atītya martyān anupetya devān  
 sṛṣṭāv abhūtām iva bhūta|dhātrā.  
 taṃ Sundarīm cen na labheta Nandaḥ  
 sâ vā niṣeveta na taṃ nata|bhrūḥ,  
 dvandvaṃ dhruvaṃ tad vikalaṃ na śobhet'  
 ânyonya|hīnāv iva rātri|candrau.  
 Kandarpa|Ratyor iva lakṣya|bhūtam  
 pramoda|nāndyor iva nīḍa|bhūtam

THOUGH THE sage was in the city teaching the *dharma*,<sup>4.1</sup> and though his near relations honored the *dharma*, Nanda stayed in his palace with his wife, making love his only concern. For Nanda was fitted for love, and so lived united with his beloved like a *chakra-vaka* bird with its mate. In this situation he thought of neither Váishravana nor Shakra, let alone the *dharma*. She was known by three different names: Súdari for her charm and beauty, Mánini for her stubbornness and disdain, and Bhámini for her sparkle and willfulness.

She seemed a lotus-pool in womanly form, with her laughter for swans, her eyes for bees and her swelling breasts as budding lotus calyxes; still more did she shine after the sun-like Nanda had arisen in her own family. With her<sup>4.5</sup> captivating beauty and manner to match, in the world of humankind she, Súdari, was the loveliest of women and he, Nanda, the happiest of men.\* The Creator had made them greater than mortals, though not yet gods—she, walking the Nándana gardens like a divinity, and Nanda, bringer of joy to his kin. If Nanda had not won her, Súdari, or if she, arch-browed, had withheld herself from him, then the pair would surely have appeared impaired, like the night and the moon without each other.

Blind with passion, the couple took their pleasure in each other, as though they were the targets of Kandárpa and Rati, as though they were a home to joy and rapture, as though

praharṣa|tuṣṭyor iva pātra|bhūtaṃ  
 dvandvam saḥ āraṃsta mad'āndha|bhūtam.  
 paraspar'ōdvīkṣaṇa|tat|par'ākṣaṃ,  
 paraspara|vyāhṛta|sakta|cittam  
 paraspar'āśleṣa|hṛt'āṅgarāgaṃ  
 parasparaṃ tan mithunaṃ jahāra.  
 4.10 bhāv'ānuraktau giri|nirjhara|sthau  
 tau kiṃnarī|kiṃpuruṣāv iv' ōbhau,  
 cikrīdatuś c' ābhivirejatuś ca  
 rūpa|śriy" ānyonyam iv' ākṣipantau.  
 anyonya|saṃrāga|vivardhanena tad  
 dvandvam anyonyam arīramac ca,  
 klam'āntare 'nyonya|vinodanena  
 salīlam anyonyam amīmadac ca.  
 vibhūṣayām āsa tataḥ priyām sa  
 siṣeviṣus tāṃ na mṛj"āvah'ārtham;  
 sven' āiva rūpeṇa vibhūṣitā hi  
 vibhūṣaṇānām api bhūṣaṇaṃ sā.  
 dattv" ātha sā darpaṇam asya haste  
 «mam' āgrato dhārāya tāvad enam  
 viśeṣakaṃ yāvad ahaṃ karom' ity»  
 uvāca kāntaṃ sa ca taṃ babhāra.  
 bhartus tataḥ śmaśru nirīkṣamāṇā  
 viśeṣakaṃ s" āpi cakāra tādrk.  
 niśvāsa|vātena ca darpaṇasya  
 cikitsayitvā nijaghāna Nandaḥ.

they were a vessel for arousal and satiety. With eyes only for each other's eyes, they hung upon each other's words and rubbed off their cosmetics through caressing each other, so mutually absorbed was the couple. They were resplendent 4.10 in their play like a *kinnari* and a *kimpurusha* standing in a mountain waterfall intent on love, as though wishing to outdo each other in beauty and splendor. The couple gave each other pleasure by exciting passion in each other, while in languid moments they teasingly inebriated each other by way of mutual entertainment.

At one time he arranged her jewellery on her, not to make her lovelier, but to do her a service; for she was so adorned by her own beauty that it was she who lent loveliness to her jewels. She put a mirror into his hand and said to her lover, "Just hold this in front of me while I do my *vishéshaka*,"\* and he held it. Then, looking at her husband's mustache, she made up her *vishéshaka* just like it, but Nanda blew on the mirror to remedy this.

4.15 sā tena ceṣṭā|lalitena bhartuḥ  
 śāthyena c' ântar|manasā jahāsa  
 bhavec ca ruṣṭā kila nāma tasmai  
 lalāṭa|jihmām bhrukuṭim cakāra,  
 cikṣepa karṇ'|ôtpalam asya c' âṃse  
 kareṇa savyena mad'|ālasena.  
 patr'|âṅgulim c' ârdha|nimilit'|âkṣe  
 vaktre 'sya tām eva vinirdudhāva.  
 tataś calan|nūpura|yoktritābhyām  
 nakha|prabh" |ôdbhāsitar'|âṅgulibhyām  
 padbhyām priyāyā nalin'|ôpamābhyām  
 mūrdhnā bhayān nāma nanāma Nandaḥ.  
 sa mukta|puṣp'|ônmiṣitena mūrdhnā  
 tataḥ priyāyāḥ priya|kṛd babhāse  
 suvarṇa|vedyām anil'|âvabhagnaḥ  
 puṣp'|âtibhārād iva nāga|vrkṣaḥ.  
 sā taṃ stan'|ôdvartita|hāra|yaṣṭir  
 utthāpayām āsa nipīḍya dorbhyām.  
 «kathaṃ|kṛto 's' îti!» jahāsa c' ôccair  
 mukhena sâcī|kṛta|kuṇḍalena.

4.20 patyus tato darpaṇa|sakta|pāṇer  
 muhur muhur vaktram avekṣamāṇā,  
 tamāla|patr'|ârdra|tale kapole  
 samāpayām āsa viśeṣakaṃ tat.  
 tasyā mukhaṃ tat sa|tamāla|pattraṃ  
 tām'r'|âdhar'|âuṣṭhaṃ cikur'|āyat'|âkṣam,  
 rakt'|âdhik'|âgraṃ patita|dvirephaṃ  
 sa|śaivalaṃ padmam iv' âbabhāse.  
 Nandas tato darpaṇam ādareṇa  
 bibhrat tadā maṇḍana|sākṣi|bhūtam

She smiled to herself at her husband's cheekiness and playful little game, but furrowed her brow as though annoyed, and with her left hand, languorous with wine, she threw the lotus from behind her ear at his shoulder. Then she smeared some of her make-up on his face and half-closed eyes. 4-15

Nanda, in a pretence of fear, bent his head to his lover's lotus feet—feet encircled with swaying anklets, with toes brightened by their shimmering nails. His head blossoming with loosened flowers as he begged his lover's pardon, he resembled a *naga* plant overburdened with flowers, bending over its golden pedestal in the breeze.\* She pressed him close in her arms and raised him up, making the strands of her pearl necklace lift off her breast. "What are you doing?" she cried laughingly, as her earrings were pushed sideways from her face.

While she finished applying the *vishéshaka* to her cheeks, damp with *tamála* paste,\* she kept looking at her husband's face as he held the mirror in his hand. Her own face, with its *tamála* paste, lips touched with red and eyes extending to her hair, seemed a moss-bedecked, crimson-tipped lotus settled by bees. 4-20

So Nanda dutifully held the mirror which bore witness to her act of adornment, and as he squinted to watch her maquillage, he observed his lover's mischievous face. Nanda

viśeṣak'āvekṣaṇa|kekar'ākṣo  
 laḍat|priyāyā vadanam dadarśa.  
 tat|kuṇḍal'ādaṣṭa|viśeṣak'āntam  
 kāraṇḍava|kliṣṭam iv' āravindam  
 Nandaḥ priyāyā mukham īkṣamāṇo  
 bhūyaḥ priy"ānanda|karo babhūva.  
 vimāna|kalpe sa vimāna|garbhe  
 tatas tathā c' āiva nananda Nandaḥ,  
 Tathāgataś c' āgata|bhaikṣa|kālo  
 bhaikṣāya tasya praviveśa veśma.

4.25 avān|mukho niṣ|praṇayaś ca tasthau  
 bhrātur gṛhe 'nyasya gṛhe yath" āiva.  
 tasmād atho preṣya|jana|pramādād  
 bhikṣām a|labdhv" āiva punar jagāma—  
 kā cit pipeṣ' āṅga|vilepanam hi,  
 vāso 'ṅganā kā cid avāsayac ca,  
 ayojayat snāna|vidhiṃ tath" ānyā,  
 jagranthur anyāḥ surabhīḥ srajaś ca.  
 tasmin gṛhe bhartur ataś carantyaḥ  
 krīḍ"ānurūpaṃ laliṭam niyogam  
 kāś cin na Buddhaṃ dadṛṣur yuvatyo  
 Buddhasya v" āiṣā niyataṃ manīṣā.



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made his sweetheart happier than ever when he watched her face, the edge of its *vishéshaka* smudged by her earrings so that it seemed a lotus nibbled by a *karándava* bird.

While Nanda was thus enjoying himself in his palace, which was like a celestial palace, the Tathágata, the realized one, entered his home for alms, since it was the time for his alms-round. Looking downwards and without asking for anything, he stood in his brother's house as he would in the house of any other person. But he went away again without obtaining any alms because of the household's preoccupation—one woman was grinding body-unguents, another was perfuming clothes, one was preparing a bath, and others were weaving fragrant garlands. The Buddha came to the unavoidable conclusion that the housemaids were so busy carrying out frivolous tasks related to their master's dalliance that none of them noticed him. 4.25

- kā cit sthitā tatra tu harmya|pṛṣṭhe  
 gavākṣa|pakṣe praṇidhāya cakṣuḥ  
 viniṣpatantaṃ Sugataṃ dadarśa  
 payoda|garbhād iva dīptam arkam.  
 sā gauravaṃ tatra vicārya bhartuḥ  
 svayā ca bhakty” ârhatay” ârhatas ca,  
 Nandasya tasthau purato vivakṣus  
 tad|ājñayā c’ êti tad” âcacakṣe:
- 4.30 «anugrahāy’ âsya janasya śaṅke  
 gurur gr̥haṃ no bhagavān praviṣṭaḥ,  
 bhikṣām a|labdhvā giram āsanaṃ vā  
 sūnyād araṇyād iva yāti bhūyaḥ.»  
 śrutvā maha”|rṣeḥ sa gr̥ha|praveśaṃ  
 satkāra|hīnaṃ ca punaḥ prayāṇam,  
 cacāla citr’|ābharaṇ’|āmbara|srak  
 kalpa|drumo dhūta iv’ ânilena.  
 kṛtv” âñjaliṃ mūrdhani padma|kalpaṃ  
 tataḥ sa kāntāṃ gamanaṃ yayāce.  
 «kartuṃ gamiṣyāmi gurau praṇāmaṃ.  
 mām abhyanu|jñātum ih’ ârhas’ îti?»  
 sā vepamānā parisasvaje taṃ  
 śālaṃ latā vāta|samīrit” êva.  
 dadarśa c’ âśru|pluta|lola|netrā  
 dīrghaṃ ca niśvasya vaco ’bhyuvāca:  
 «n’ âhaṃ yiyāsor guru|darśan’|ârtham  
 arhāmi kartuṃ tava dharma|pīḍām.  
 gacch’, ārya|putr’, âihi ca śīghram eva  
 viśeṣako yāvad ayaṃ na śuṣkaḥ.
- 4.35 saced\* bhaves tvam khalu dīrgha|sūtro  
 daṇḍam mahāntaṃ tvayi pātayeyam;

However, one woman at the top of the palace had glanced at a side-window, and she had seen the Sógata emerging like the radiant sun from a cloud. Taking into consideration her master's deep respect for the enlightened one as well as his worthiness and her own devotion to him, she approached Nanda to tell him, and spoke at his permission: "The Blessed One, the guru, entered our house, presumably as a favor to you. He received no alms, no conversation, and no seat, and so he is going away as though from an empty forest." 4.30

When he heard that the great seer had come to his house, found no hospitality and left again, he trembled, seeming, with his bright decorations, garments and garlands, like a tree of Paradise swaying in the wind. Putting his hands together in the shape of a lotus, he raised them to his forehead and asked his wife if he might leave. "I would like to go and pay my respects to the guru. Will you let me?" She held him close and shivered like a wind-stirred creeper encircling a *shala* tree. Looking at him with her rolling eyes filled with tears, she sighed deeply and replied:

"You wish to leave in order to see the guru, and I ought not to hinder you in your duty. Go, my dear husband, but come back quickly before my *vishéshaka* dries. If you are late, I will punish you severely; as you lie sleeping, I will keep waking you up by brushing against you with my breasts, but then refuse to talk to you. But if you hurry back to me before my *vishéshaka* is dry, I will hold you in my arms, bare of ornaments and still damp with unguents." Her voice shook 4.35

muhur muhus tvām śayitaṃ kucābhyāṃ  
 vibodhayeyaṃ ca na c' ālapeyam.  
 ath' āpy an|āśyāna|viśeṣakāyāṃ  
 mayy eṣyasi tvaṃ tvaritaṃ tatas tvām  
 nipīdayiṣyāmi bhujā|dvayena  
 nir|bhūṣaṇen' ārdra|vilepanena.»  
 ity evam uktaś ca nipīḍitaś ca  
 tay" ā|sa|varṇa|svanayā jagāda.  
 «evam kariṣyāmi. vimuñca, caṇḍi,  
 yāvad gurur dūra|gato na me saḥ.»  
 tataḥ stan'|ôdvartita|candanābhyāṃ  
 mukto bhujābhyāṃ na tu mānasena.  
 vihāya veṣaṃ madan'|ānurūpaṃ  
 satkāra|yogyaṃ sa vapur babhāra.  
 sā taṃ prayāntaṃ ramaṇaṃ pradadhyau  
 pradhyāna|śūnya|sthita|nīscal'|ākṣī,  
 sthit" ôcca|karṇā vyapaviddha|śaṣpā  
 bhrāntaṃ mṛgaṃ bhrānta|mukhī mṛg" īva.  
 4.40 didr̥kṣay" ākṣipta|manā munes tu  
 Nandaḥ prayāṇaṃ prati tatvare ca,  
 vivṛtta|dr̥ṣṭiś ca śanair yayau tāṃ  
 kar" īva paśyan sa laḍat|kareṇum.  
 chāt'|ôdarīm pīna|payodhar'|ōruṃ  
 sa Sundarīm rukma|darīm iv' ādreḥ  
 kākṣeṇa paśyan na tatarpa Nandaḥ  
 pibann iv' āikena jalaṃ kareṇa.  
 taṃ gauravaṃ Buddha|gataṃ cakarṣa  
 bhāry"ānurāgaḥ punar ācakarṣa.  
 so 'nīscayān n' āpi yayau na tasthau  
 turaṃs taraṅgeṣv īva rāja|hamsaḥ.

## HIS WIFE'S REQUEST

as she spoke, and she embraced him. "I will," he replied. "Now let me go, my little vixen, before the guru has gone too far."

So she let him go from her arms which were scented with sandal from her breast, but she did not let him go in her mind. He set aside the clothes suited to love-making, and made himself presentable for paying his respects. She contemplated her departing lover, her face troubled and her eyes empty and unmoving in her preoccupation, like a doe standing with ears pricked up and chewed grass falling from her mouth as she watches the stag wander off. With his thoughts taken up by his wish to see the sage, Nanda hurried his departure, then lingered with a backward glance at her, like an elephant watching a playful she-elephant. But a glance at Súdari, her waist compact between her swelling breasts and thighs like a golden fissure in a mountain, could no more satisfy Nanda than drinking water with one hand. 4.40

Reverence for the Buddha drew him on, love for his wife drew him back again. He hesitated, neither going nor staying, like a king-geese pushing forwards against the waves. However, once she was no longer in his sight, he came briskly out of the palace, only to hang back again, his heart

a|darśanaṃ t' ūpagataś ca tasyā  
 harmyāt tataś c' âvatatāra tūrṇam,  
 śrutvā tato nūpura|nisvanaṃ sa  
 punar lalambe hṛdaye grhītaḥ.  
 sa kāma|rāgeṇa nigṛhyamāṇo  
 dharm'ânurāgeṇa ca kṛṣyamāṇaḥ,  
 jagāma duḥkhena nivartyamāṇaḥ  
 plavaḥ pratisrota iv' âpagāyāḥ.  
 4.45 tataḥ kramair dīrghatamaiḥ pracakrame  
 «kathaṃ nu yāto na gurur bhaved» iti  
 «svajeya tām c' âiva viśeṣaka|priyām  
 kathaṃ priyām ārdra|viśeṣakām» iti.  
 atha sa pathi dadarśa mukta|mānaṃ  
 piṭṛ|nagare 'pi tathā|gat'âbhimānam  
 daśa|balam abhito vilambamānaṃ  
 dhvajam anuyāna iv' âindram arcyamānam.

Saundaranande mahā|kāvyē Bhāryā|yācitako nāma  
 caturthaḥ sargaḥ.

## HIS WIFE'S REQUEST

contracting, at the sound of her anklets. Kept back by his passion for love, and drawn forward by his attachment to *dharma*, he proceeded with difficulty, being turned about like a boat going upstream on a river.

Then setting out with long strides, he thought “The guru 4.45  
can't possibly not be gone by now!” and “Perhaps I'll be able to hug my darling girl, whose love is so special, while her *vishéshaka* is still wet.”

Then on the road he saw him of the ten powers,\* free from pride even in his father's city, and with all arrogance similarly gone, stopping everywhere and being worshipped like Indra's banner in a procession.

End of Canto 4: His Wife's Request.



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In Ashva-ghosha's drama of spiritual re-orientation, handsome Nanda is transformed from libertine to liberated man. The Buddha's strong-arm and seductive tactics risk the imputation of a forced and dishonest conversion. But the suffering of each pleasure's end is succeeded by a more enticing prospect, until Nanda attains the total bliss of enlightenment.

क्रे

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Washington Square  
New York, NY 10003  
www.nyupress.org

ISBN 978-0-8147-1683-0

90000>



9 780814 716830