

# 9

## Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta

The Discourse on the Analysis of Gifts | M 142/3:253-257  
Theme: The first nuns and the position of women in early Buddhism

Dedicated to Clement Tan Tiong Wah, Malaysia for his love for Pali

### THE TRADITIONAL ACCOUNTS

#### 1 The Buddha's hesitation to ordain women

**Mohan Wijayaratna**, in his book, *Buddhist Monastic Life*,<sup>1</sup> gives some important insight into the reasons for the Buddha's hesitation to ordain women. The Buddha might have thought that it was not the proper time to establish the Order of Nuns. The first hypothesis, offered by Wijayaratna, is that all the women who first came to him for ordination were his relatives from the Śākya clan. If the Buddha had acceded to their request at once, some of his opponents might have thought it scandalous. However, after it was formed, many brahmin women joined the Order.

The Buddha probably also anticipated some serious problems that might arise in the daily lives of the nuns. The Order of Nuns might become vulnerable and needed the protection of future generations. Indeed, some unfortunate incidents did occur even in his own lifetime. For example, Uppalavaṇṇā was raped in Andhavana (the Dark Wood), after which nuns were forbidden to travel or dwell in forests.<sup>2</sup> On another occasion, while the nuns were away, their huts were burned down (V 4:303). Once, a group of travelling nuns was looking for a place to lodge for the night. The brahmin's wife told them to wait until the head of the house returned. But when he arrived in the night and saw the nuns, he immediately threw them out with the words, "Out with these shaven-headed whores!" (V 4:273-275).

#### 2 The Ordination of Mahā Pajāpatī (V 2:253-256; A 8.51)<sup>3</sup>

##### 2.1 KAPILAVATTHU

At that time the Blessed One stayed amongst the Sakyans in the Banyan Park near Kapilavatthu. There Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī<sup>4</sup> approached him:

"Bhante, it would be good if women were to obtain the going-forth from the household life into the homeless life in this Teaching and Discipline proclaimed by the Tathagata."

"Enough, Gotamī, delight not in the going-forth of women from the household life into the homeless life in this Teaching and Discipline proclaimed by the Tathagata."

Thrice she requested and thrice the Blessed One turned her down.

Then Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī thinking, "The Blessed One does not allow women to go forth," afflicted, grieving, with a tearful face and weeping, having greeted the Blessed One, took her leave by keeping him to her right.

The Blessed One left Kapilavatthu, and walking in stages, he arrived at Vesālī, where he stayed at the Gabled Hall in the Great Wood.

##### 2.2 VESĀLĪ

Then Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī, having had her hair cut off and having donned the saffron robe, set out for Vesālī with a large number of Sakyan women, and in due course approached the Gabled Hall in the

<sup>1</sup> Tr. Grangier & Collin, 1990:158-163.

<sup>2</sup> V 3:35; DhA 2:49 f.

<sup>3</sup> See also Ñāṇamoli *Life of the Buddha*, 1972:104-107; Rockhill 60 f; Thomas, *Life*, 108 f.

<sup>4</sup> Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī was the younger sister of queen Mahā Mayā, the Buddha's mother, and was also the wife of king Suddhodana. After Māyā's death, she became the Buddha's foster mother while she let her own uterine son, Nanda, be cared by nurses.

Great Wood near Vesālī. Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī, her feet swollen, her limbs covered with dust, with tearful face and weeping, then stood outside the porch of the gateway.

The venerable Ānanda, seeing Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī standing outside the porch of the gateway, her feet swollen, her limbs covered with dust, with tearful face and weeping, questioned her. She replied that it was because the Buddha would not allow women to go forth. Ānanda then told Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī to wait until he had spoken to the Buddha.

Having approached the Blessed One, the venerable Ānanda informed him of Mahā Pajāpatī's condition and made the same request that women be allowed to go forth. Thrice he made the request to the Buddha and thrice the Buddha turned it down, too.

### 2.3 ĀNANDA'S INTERCESSION

Then Ānanda thought that he might try a different way of asking the Buddha to allow women to go forth:

"Blessed One, are women who have gone forth able to realize the fruit of streamwinning, the fruit of once-return, the fruit of non-return and the fruit of arhathood?" The Buddha answered in the affirmative.

"If, Blessed One, women who have gone forth are able to realize any of the fruit of Sainthood—and moreover Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī was the Blessed One's aunt, foster mother, nurse, giver of milk, for when the Blessed One's mother passed away she suckled him<sup>5</sup>—it would be good that women should obtain the going forth from the household life into the homeless life in this Teaching and Discipline proclaimed by the Tathagata."

### 2.4 THE EIGHT STRICT RULES

If, Ānanda, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī accepts these eight strict rules (*garu, dhamma*), they would constitute her ordination:

- (1) A nun, even if ordained for a hundred years, must greet a monk with deference, even if he has been ordained that very day. She must rise up from her seat, salute him with joined palms, and show him proper respect.
- (2) A nun is forbidden to spend the rains retreat in a place where there is no monk.
- (3) Every fortnight, a nun is to ask two things of the monks: the date of the Uposatha ceremony (for the recitation of the Pāṭimokkha) and to teach them Dharma.
- (4) At the end of the rains retreat, a nun must address the triple "invitation" (*pavāraṇā*) to both the Orders (of the monks and of the nuns): she must ask if anyone has "seen, heard or suspected" anything against her (for which she has to make amends).
- (5) A nun who has committed a serious offence must undergo probation (*mānatta*) before both Orders.
- (6) Ordination as a nun must be sought from both Orders only after a postulant (*sikkhamānā*) has kept to the Six Precepts [that is, the 5 Precepts and the rule regarding not eating during wrong hours] for two years.
- (7) A nun should on no account revile or abuse a monk.
- (8) **From this day forth** (*ajja-t-agge*),<sup>6</sup> a monk can admonish and advise a nun, but a nun cannot admonish or advise a monk.

—These eight strict rules are never to be transgressed for life."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> **Dakkhiṇa, vibhaṅga S** (M 142.3/3:253).

<sup>6</sup> This indeclinable adverb clearly suggests that there were incidents where nuns had admonished or advised monks!

<sup>7</sup> These heavy rules are interesting because, traditionally, the Buddha would only make a rule or amend one after the fact, that is, only after a problem incident or an infringement of a rule has occurred. In the case of the ordination of women, he has introduced preventive measures, rather than corrective and restorative procedures (which were introduced later for the nuns by way of the Bhikkhuṇī Vinaya). However, despite the Buddha's careful precautions, many untoward incidents later does occur involving the nuns. There are cases where indisciplined nuns like Thulā

## 2.5 MAHĀ PAJĀPATĪ GOTAMĪ ACCEPTS THE STRICT CONDITIONS

The venerable Ānanda then informed Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī of the Buddha's conditions and she gladly accepted them:

“Even, venerable Ānanda, as a young woman or a man, of tender years, fond of ornaments, having washed himself or herself, and having obtained a garland of lotus flowers or a garland of jasmine or a garland of sweet-scented creeper, having taken it with both hands, should place it on the crown of his or her head—even so do I, venerable Ānanda, accept the eight strict rules never to be transgressed for life.”

## 2.5 THE BUDDHA'S PROPHECY

The venerable Ānanda then approached the Buddha and informed him of Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī's acceptance of the eight strict rules, to which the Buddha remarked:

“If, Ānanda, women had not obtained the going forth, the holy life, Ānanda, would have lasted long, the True Teaching would have endured for a thousand years. But, Ānanda, since women have gone forth, the holy life now would not last, the True Dharma would endure only for 500 years.<sup>8</sup>

Ānanda, just as those households which have many women and few men easily fall prey to robbers and thieves, even so, in whatever Teaching and Discipline where women obtain the going forth, the holy life will not last long.

Ānanda, just as when mildew attacks a whole paddy field, the field of paddy does not last long...

Ānanda, just as when red dust attacks a whole sugar-cane field, the field of sugar-cane does not last long...

Ānanda, just as when a man, looking to the future, might build a dyke to dam up a great reservoir so that the water might not overflow, even so, Ānanda, are these eight strict rules for nuns laid down by me, looking to the future, not to be transgressed for life.”

(V 2:253-256; A 8.51/4:274-279)

## 2.6 EVALUATION

It is possible, even likely, from the evidence provided by the suttas and texts in this study, that there were nuns even before Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī. It has been suggested by a student in one of my classes that the eight strict rules were introduced by the Buddha probably in connect with Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī's ordination. After Siddhodāna's death, it might be said that Pajāpatī, as Siddhodāna's queen, was effectively the most powerful person, the matriarch, amongst the Sakyas. To prevent this secular influence from spilling into the spiritual order, the rules were introduced as a way of curbing the secular influence of the newly-ordained ex-queen and her followers. [7]

— — —

---

Nandā (S 2:219) and Thulā Tissā (S 16.10) who rudely abused Mahā Kāssapa. It is likely that these 8 strict rules were formulated after the Buddha's time, when the monastics were more urbanized in times when patriarchy was strong socially. For a modern response to these 8 rules, see eg Thich Nhat Hanh's innovative “The 8 practices of respect”: <http://santifm1.0.googlepages.com/theeightbhiksugarudhamma>.

<sup>8</sup> On problems relating to this remark, see Liz Williams, “Red Rust, Robbers and Rice Fields: Women's part in the precipitation of the decline of the Dhamma” (*Buddhist Studies Review* 19,2 2002:41-47). For the causes of the disappearance of the True Dharma, see Nattier, 1991:120-121.

## 3

## Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta

### The Discourse on the Analysis of Gifts

M 142/3:253-257

[253] Thus have I heard.

#### Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī offers robes to the Buddha

**1** Once the Blessed One was staying amongst the Sakyans in Nigrodha's Park near Kapilavatthu.

**2** Then **Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī**, bringing along a set of new robes, approached the Blessed One. Having saluted the Blessed One, she sat down at one side.

Seated this at one side, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, this set of new robes was spun and woven by me especially for the Blessed One. Bhante, may the Blessed One accept it out of compassion.”

When this was spoken, the Blessed One said this to Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī:

“Give it to the Sangha, Gotamī. If it is given to the Sangha, both the Sangha and I will be honoured.”<sup>9</sup>

For a second time, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī said this to the Blessed One:

“This set of new robes was woven and made by me especially for the Blessed One. May the Blessed One accept it out of compassion.”

For the second time, when this was spoken, the Blessed One said this to Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī:

“Give it to the Sangha, Gotamī. If it is given to the Sangha, both the Sangha and I will be honoured.”

For a third time, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī said this to the Blessed One:

“This set of new robes was woven and made by me especially for the Blessed One. May the Blessed One accept it out of compassion.”

For the third time, when this was spoken, the Blessed One said this to Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī:

“Give it to the Sangha, Gotamī. If it is given to the Sangha, both the Sangha and I will be honoured.”

#### Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī's virtue

**3a** When this was spoken, the venerable Ānanda said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, may the Blessed One receive Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī's set of new robes.

**3b** Bhante, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī has been of great service to the Blessed One. She is his maternal aunt, foster mother, nurse, giver of milk, for when the Blessed One's mother passed away she suckled him.

**3c** Bhante, the Blessed One, too, has been of great service to the Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī. Bhante, on account of the Blessed One, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī

has gone to the Buddha as refuge,

has gone to the Dharma as refuge,

has gone to the Sangha as refuge.

**3d** Bhante, on account of the Blessed One, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī is one who

abstains from taking life,

abstains from taking the not-given,

abstains from sexual misconduct,

abstains from false speech,

abstains from strong drinks, distilled drinks and intoxicants that cause heedlessness.<sup>10</sup>

**3d** Bhante, on account of the Blessed One, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī is

<sup>9</sup> On the benefits of offering to the Sangha, see also Miln 240.

<sup>10</sup> On her status as a laywoman observing the five precepts, see “Notes on the Dakkhina Vibhaṅga Sutta” under “Contradiction” [3.1] below here.

accomplished in wise faith<sup>11</sup> in the Buddha,  
 accomplished in wise faith in the Dharma,  
 accomplished in wise faith in the Sangha,  
 accomplished in [254] moral virtue dear to the noble ones.<sup>12</sup>

- 3e Bhante, on account of the Blessed One, Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī is  
 free of doubt regarding suffering,  
 free of doubt regarding the arising of suffering,  
 free of doubt regarding the ending of suffering,  
 free of doubt regarding the path leading to the end of suffering.  
 Bhante, the Blessed One, too, has been of great service to Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī.”

### The Buddha acquiesces

4 “That is so, Ānanda! That is so, Ānanda!

That person, Ānanda, on whose account one has gone *to the Buddha as refuge, gone to the Dharma as refuge, gone to the Sangha as refuge*—

I say, Ānanda, that it is not easy for that person to repay him (the latter) in this manner, that is to say, by rising up,<sup>13</sup> or by saluting him with a low bow, or by proper services, or by providing him with robes, almsfood, lodging, and support for the sick and medical requisites.

That person, Ānanda, on whose account one *abstains from taking life, abstains from taking the not-given, abstains from sexual misconduct, abstains from false speech, abstains from strong drinks, distilled drinks and intoxicants that cause heedlessness*—

I say, Ānanda, that it is not easy for that person to repay him (the latter) in this manner, that is to say, by rising up, or by saluting him with a low bow, or by proper services, or by providing him with robes, almsfood, lodging, and support for the sick and medical requisites.

That person, Ānanda, on whose account one is *accomplished in wise faith in the Buddha, accomplished in wise faith in the Dharma, accomplished in wise faith in the Sangha, and accomplished in moral virtue dear to the noble ones*—

I say, Ānanda, that it is not easy for that person to repay him (the latter) in this manner, that is to say, by rising up, or by saluting him with a low bow, or by proper services, or by providing him with robes, almsfood, lodging, and support for the sick and medical requisites.

That person, Ānanda, on whose account one has come *to be free of doubt regarding suffering, free of doubt regarding the arising of suffering, free of doubt regarding the ending of suffering, free of doubt regarding the path leading to the end of suffering*—

I say, Ānanda, that it is not easy for that person to repay him (the latter) in this manner, that is to say, by rising up, or by saluting him with a low bow, or by proper services, or by providing him with robes, almsfood, lodging, and support for the sick and medical requisites.

<sup>11</sup> “Wise faith,” *avecca-p, pasādā*. There are 2 kinds of faith (*saddhā*): (1) “rootless faith” (*amūlika, saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith. (M 2:170); (2) “faith with a good cause” (*ākāravati, saddhā*), faith founded on seeing (M 1:320,8, 401,23); also called *avecca-p, pasādā* (S 12.41.11/2:69). “Wise faith” is syn with (2). *Amūlika* = “not seen, not heard, nor otherwise sensed” (V 2:243 3:163 & Comy). Gethin speaks of two kinds of faith: the cognitive and the affective (eg ERE: Faith & Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:387): “Faith in its cognitive dimension is seen as concerning belief in propositions or statements of which one does not—or perhaps cannot—have knowledge proper (however that should be defined); cognitive faith is a mode of knowing in a different category from that knowledge. Faith is its affective dimension is a more straightforward positive response to trust or confidence towards something or somebody...the conception of *saddhā* in Buddhist writings appears almost, if not entirely affective, the cognitive element is completely secondary.” (Gethin 2001:207; my emphases).

<sup>12</sup> These are the 4 qualities of a streamwinner (D 33/3:227; S 55.1, 55.7). It is evident that she was already a streamwinner at this point. See Bodhi’s n on the streamwinner, S:B 2000:1517 f.

<sup>13</sup> Be Ce Se *paccuṭṭhāna*–; Ee *paccupaṭṭhāna*–, “by serving her.” The former reading fits the idea-flow better here.

### Fourteen kinds of gifts

5 Ānanda, there are these **fourteen individual gifts** (*cuddasa pāṭipuggalikā dakkhiṇā*). What are the fourteen?<sup>14</sup>

- (1) One gives a gift to the Tathagata, the arhat [worthy one], fully self-awakened one<sup>15</sup>—this is the first individual gift.
- (2) One gives a gift to a pratyeka Buddha—this is the second individual gift.<sup>16</sup>
- (3) One gives a gift to an arhat disciple of the Tathagata—this is the third individual gift.
- (4) One gives a gift to one on the way to realize the fruition of arhathood [an arhat-to-be]<sup>17</sup>—this is the fourth individual gift.
- (5) One gives a gift to a non-returner—this is the fifth individual gift. [255]
- (6) One gives a gift to one on the way to realize the fruition of non-return [a non-returner-to-be]<sup>18</sup>—this is the sixth individual gift.
- (7) One gives a gift to a once-returner—this is the seventh individual gift.
- (8) One gives a gift to one on the way to realize the fruition of once-return [a once-returner-to-be]<sup>19</sup>—this is the eighth individual gift.
- (9) One gives a gift to a streamwinner—this is the ninth individual gift.
- (10) One gives a gift to one on the way to realize the fruition of streamwinning [a streamwinner-to-be]<sup>20</sup>—this is the tenth individual gift.
- (11) One gives a gift to one outside (the path) who is free from sensual pleasures<sup>21</sup>—this is the eleventh individual gift.

<sup>14</sup> That is, gifts separately given to individuals. For a similar list, extended to include personal spiritual practice, see **Velāma S** (A 9.20/4:394-396).

<sup>15</sup> *Tathāgate arahante sammā, sambuddhe dānaṃ deti*. Here *Tathāgate*, etc are in loc sg “in the Tathāgata...”, although it is possible to read it as acc pl (“to the Tathāgata...”). Pali idiom, however, would follow the former.

<sup>16</sup> *Pacceka, Buddha* (Skt *pratyeka, buddha*) “independently awakened one” (BDict), sometimes “hermit Buddha” (Kh:Ñ 262); erroneously called a “silent Buddha” or “private Buddha”; def at Pug 29. This is a term for one who becomes an arhat without having heard the Buddha’s teachings from others, comprehending the 4 noble truths by himself (*pacceka*), independent of any teacher. However, he lacks the capacity to proclaim the Dharma to others for their awakening and thus lacks the virtues of the fully self-awakened Buddha. Pratyeka-buddhas are said to be of few words and love solitude. According to tradition, they do not arise during the dispensation of a fully self-awakened Buddha, but it is before him that they make their aspiration to become a pratyeka-buddha, and then making aeons of spiritual effort towards that goal. The Cūḷa Niddesa attributes **Khagga, visāṇa S** (Sn 1.3) to a pratyeka-buddha (Nc 54 ff). A pratyeka-buddha is said to be one of those worthy of a stupa after death (D 2:142; A 2:245). **The Nidhi, kaṇḍa S** (Khp 8) mentions *pacceka, bodhi* (stanza 15). See also M 3:68; S 1:92; U 50. See Ria Kloppenberg, *The Pacceka Buddha*, Leiden: EJ Brill, 1974. See **Aputtaka S** (S 3.20) = SD 22.5 Intro 2.1.

<sup>17</sup> *Arahatta, phala, sacchikiriyāya paṭipanne*.

<sup>18</sup> This important statement means that one who is on the path to streamwinning is *not* a mind-moment (as held by the Abhidhamma tradition). MA & MAT explain that this term can be used to include even a lay follower who has gone for refuge to the Three Jewels, as well as laymen and monastics intent on fulfilling the moral training and the practice of calm and insight. Bodhi, adds that “[i]n the strict sense it refers only to those possessing the supramundane path of stream-entry” (M:B 1356 n1295), but this quality is already implicit in (9). Cf the implications of the 10 suttas of S 25/3:225-228 (**Okkanti Vagga**).

<sup>19</sup> *Bāhirake kāmesu vīta, rāge*.

<sup>20</sup> Comy: “One with the five mundane superknowledges in terms of the teaching of karma and action, and so on” (MA 5:71). **Bodhi**, however, takes *bāhiraka* to mean “outside the teaching (*sāsana*),” and remarks that “[t]his is a non-Buddhist contemplative who attains the jhānas and the mundane kinds of direct knowledge.” (M:ÑB 1357 n1296). Based on **Nandiya S** (55.40)—where it is stated that those who are not at least streamwinners are “outsiders” (S 55.40.3/5:397) = SD 47.13—I would propose that *bāhiraka here* (nb) refers to one “outside the path,” ie a non-saint of the path, rather than “outside the religion,” which is too broad. It should be noted that (10) is “a stream-

(12) One gives a gift to a virtuous worldling—this is the twelfth individual gift.<sup>21</sup>

(13) One gives a gift to an immoral worldling —this is the thirteenth individual gift.

(14) One gives a gift to an animal—this is the fourteenth individual gift.

6 In this regards, Ānanda, having made a gift to an animal, one may expect a hundredfold gift.<sup>22</sup>

Having made a gift to an immoral worldling, one may expect a thousandfold gift.

Having made a gift to a virtuous worldling, one may expect a hundred-thousandfold gift.

Having made a gift to one outside (the path) who is free from sensual pleasures, one may expect a hundred-thousand times a hundred-thousandfold gift.

Having made a gift to one on the way to realize the fruition of streamwinning [a streamwinner-to-be], one may expect boundless, immeasurable gift.

What more to speak of a streamwinner?

What more to speak of one on the way to realize the fruition of once-return [a once-returner-to-be]?

What more to speak of a once-returner?

What more to speak of one on the way to realize the fruition of once-return [a non-returner-to-be]?

What more to speak of a non-returner?

What more to speak of one on the way to realize the fruition of arhathood [an arhat-to-be]?

What more to speak of an arhat disciple of the Tathagata?

What more to speak of a pratyeka Buddha?

What more to speak of the Tathagata, fully self-awakened arhat, ripen in an incalculable way?

## Seven kinds of offerings

7 And, Ānanda, there are **seven kinds of offerings to the Sangha [order] (*satta saṅgha, gatā dakkhiṇā*)**. What are the seven?

(1) One gives to both Sanghas (of monks and nuns) headed by the Buddha—this is the first offering to the order.

(2) One gives to the both Sanghas (of monks and nuns)<sup>23</sup> after the Buddha has passed away—this is the second offering to the order.

---

winner-to-be,” while (12) is “a virtuous worldling” (*puthujjana, sīla.vanta*). **Caṇḍāla S** (A 5.175) says that a false follower “seeks the giftworthy outside the Teaching,” while a true follower does not (A 5.175/3:206) = SD 3.3(5.3).

Cf Mahā, parinibbāna S comy where it is stated that a morally virtuous worldling should be given great honour as that given to a monk who attains parinirvana (*puthujjana, sīla.vato pana parinibbuta, bhikkhuno viya mahantam pi sakkāraṃ kātuṃ vaṭṭati yeva*, DA 2:584 = AA 3:219). Its **Ṭīkā** adds that here it means that such a person “should not be overcome by shamelessness, but be spiritually accomplished by nature” (*tena na alajji, dhātuko pakati, siddho idha putthujjana, sīlavā ti adhipeto ti dasseti*, DAT:VRI 2:191). We can safely assume that here the “good worldling” (*kalyāṇa, putthujjana*) is meant, and which refers to those who are more than being mere “statistical” or nominal Buddhists: they are de facto practitioners, but not yet saints-of-the-path (DA 1:59 = SA 2:97).

Vinaya Comy takes “**free from sensual pleasures**” (*kāmesu vīta, rāga*)—*kāma* taken in a broad psychological (not just ethical) sense—to mean “dhyana attainers” (*jhāna, lābhī*, VA 5:1129). Even a worldling is *kāmesu vīta, rāga* while in dhyana (Kvu 14.9.2/507). See **Abhaya S**, A 4.184.6/2:175 = SD 14.8. Comys seem to take *vīta, rāga* as referring specifically to those *within* the teaching (MA 1:44, ThaA 1:60); but cf (**Paribhāsaka**) **Dhammika S** (A 6.54) & **Suriya S** (A 7.62) where an outside teacher (*satthā titha, kara*) Sunetta is said to be *kāmesu vīta, rāga*, but this is a story of the past (A 6.54.7/3:371 = SD 47.6; A 7.62.9/4:104 = SD 47.7). A possible interpretation here is that category (11) includes dhyana-attainers who are committed Buddhists as well as those dhyana-attainers who even tacitly accept the Buddha Dharma. On how to overcome sensual desire without meditation, see **Nimitta & Anuvyañjana** = SD 19.14. On *putthujjana*, see **Nakula, pitā S** (S 22.1) = SD 5.4 Intro (3). On *kalyāṇa, putthujjana, sekha & aseka*, see **Indriya, bhāvanā S** (M 12) = SD 17.13.

<sup>21</sup> Comy: One who constantly keeps to the precepts as naturally as a cow (keeps to its pasture), is upright, and practises right livelihood (MA 5:71). In other words, this is a Buddhist practitioner who has taken the refuges and keeps to the five precepts at least.

<sup>22</sup> Comy says that for a hundred existences, one enjoys long life, beauty, happiness, strength and intelligence, and it frees one from agitation. The following attainments should be understood accordingly (MA 5:72). Such number-specific measuring of merit is uncharacteristic of early Buddhism, and hints at a later development.

- (3) One gives to the Sangha of monks—this is the third offering to the order.
- (4) One gives to the Sangha of nuns—this is the fourth offering to the order.
- (5) One gives, saying, “Appoint so many monks and nuns from the Sangha” [256]—this is the fifth offering to the order.
- (6) One gives, saying, “Appoint so many monks from the Sangha”—this is the sixth offering to the order.
- (7) One gives, saying, “Appoint so many nuns from the Sangha”—this is the seventh offering to the order.

### Prophecy

**8** In the future, Ānanda, there will be members of the religious lineage who are “yellow-necks,” immoral, of evil nature.<sup>24</sup> People will give them gifts for the sake of the Sangha.

Even then, Ānanda, I say, an offering made to the Sangha is immeasurable.<sup>25</sup> And, Ānanda, I say that in no way is an individual gift ever more fruitful than an offering made to the Sangha.<sup>26</sup>

### The four kinds of purification of giving

**9** Ānanda, there are **these four kinds of purification<sup>27</sup> of giving (*dakkhiṇa, visuddhi*)**. What are the four?

- (1) There is, Ānanda, the gift that is purified on account of the giver, but not the recipients.
- (2) There is, Ānanda, the gift that is purified on account of the recipients, but not the giver.
- (3) There is, Ānanda, the gift that is purified on account of neither the giver nor the recipients.
- (4) There is, Ānanda, the gift that is purified on account of both the giver and the recipients.

**10** (1) And how, Ānanda, is the gift purified on account of the giver, but not the recipients?

Here, Ānanda, the giver is morally virtuous, good by nature, but the recipients are immoral, evil by nature. Thus, Ānanda, is the gift purified on account of the giver, but not the recipient.

<sup>23</sup> The mention of nuns (*bhikkhunī*) here may appear as anachronistic. Either this was interpolated post-Buddha, or this is the Buddha’s premonition or prophecy that the order of nuns would arise in due course. A third possible explanation is that the order of nuns is *already* in existence: see (3.2). See also (3.3).

<sup>24</sup> “Members of the religious lineage...of evil nature,” *gotrabhuno kāsāva, kaṇṭhā dussilā pāpa, dhammā*. Comy says that “members of the religious lineage” (*gotra, bhuno*) are those who are monks only in name (M 3:256,7 = Sāra, saṅgaha 25,9). They will go about with only a piece of yellow cloth around their necks or arms, and will support their wives and children by engaging in trade and farming, etc (MA 5:74 f). They are those who ritually don the saffron robe, and when they remove them, leave the saffron taints on their necks. On *kāsāva, kaṇṭha*, see It 43 (ItA 177); Dh 307a (Dh:P 113, Uv 1.9, *kāsāva, kaṇṭha*; DhA 3:478) qu at V 3:90 (VA 486); AA 1:90,13+24, wr *kāsāva, -khaṇḍam*; SnA 162,2, 164,23; Sadda, nīti 78,4, 78,1 *kaṇṭha, samaṇa*. Does this uncanny premonition refer to the laicized gurus and their followers who claim to be “neither ordained nor lay order members” in our own times? See foll n.

<sup>25</sup> Bodhi: “The gift is incalculable and immeasurable in value because it is offered, by way of intention of the donor, not to the ‘yellow-necks’ as individuals but to the Sangha as a corporate whole. Thus the recipient body includes all the virtuous bhikkhus of the past, even those who have long passed away.” (M:B n1301)

<sup>26</sup> MA says that a gift offered to immoral monks taken to represent the whole Sangha is more fruitful than an individual gift to an arhat. But for the gift to be properly given to the Sangha, the donor must consider the personal qualities of the recipient and must see him only as representing the Sangha as a whole. For this reason, the next section deals with the conditions for the purity of proper giving. The teaching expressed here (“a gift offered to immoral monks taken to represent the whole Sangha is more fruitful than an individual gift to an arhat”) is clearly not Buddha Word. See eg **Ādiya S** (A 5.41) where it is stated that a householder should donate a part of his income to as “offerings to all those recluses and brahmins who abstain from intoxication and heedlessness, who bear all things with patience and restraint, each taming himself, each calming himself, each cooling himself” (A 3:45f). Also see (**Maha-p, phala**) **Dāna S** (A 7.49) where 6 reasons for giving are given and the best is to make a gift thinking, “This is an adornment for the mind, a support for the mind,” by which one is reborn in the Brahmā world to become a non-returner in due course (A 4:62 f). On the benefits of offering to the Sangha, see also Miln 240.

<sup>27</sup> MA says that purification here refers to fruitfulness.

11 (2) And how, Ānanda, is the gift purified on account of the recipients, but not the giver?

Here, Ānanda, the giver is immoral, evil by nature, the recipient is morally virtuous, good by nature. Thus, Ānanda, is the gift purified on account of the recipients, but not the giver.

12 (3) And how, Ānanda, is the gift purified on account of neither the giver nor the recipients?

Here, Ānanda, the giver is immoral, evil by nature, and the recipients are immoral, evil by nature. Thus, Ānanda, is the gift purified on account of neither the giver nor the recipients.

13 (4) And how, Ānanda, is the gift purified on account of both the giver and the recipients?

Here, Ānanda, the giver is morally virtuous, good by nature, and the recipients, too, are morally virtuous, good by nature. Thus, Ānanda, is the gift purified on account of both the giver and the recipients.”<sup>28</sup>  
[257]

These, Ānanda, are the four kinds of purification of giving.

14 This is what Blessed One said. Having said that, the Sugata [well-gone one], the Teacher added:

When the virtuous gives to the immoral  
a gift rightly obtained, with a heart that is truly bright,<sup>29</sup>  
firm in the faith<sup>30</sup> that its karmic fruit is great<sup>31</sup>—  
the gift is purified by the giver.

When the immoral gives to the virtuous  
a gift wrongly obtained, with a heart that is not bright,  
without any firm faith that its karmic fruit is great—  
the gift is purified by the one who receives.

When the immoral gives to the immoral  
a gift wrongly obtained, with a heart that is not bright,  
without any firm faith that its karmic fruit is great—  
the gift is purified by neither.

When the virtuous gives to the virtuous  
a gift rightly obtained, with a heart that is truly bright,  
firm in the faith that its karmic fruit is great—  
the gift is of abundant fruit, I say.

When one passion-free gives to the passion-free,  
with a truly faithful heart, a gift rightly obtained,  
firm in the faith that its karmic fruit is great—  
that material gift is a truly bountiful gift, I say.<sup>32</sup>

— — —

<sup>28</sup> This particular type of giving—the virtuous giving to the virtuous—is expanded into the six-limbed gift (*chaḥ-ḥaṅga, samannāgata dakkhiṇa*) in **(Sumana) Dāna S** (A 6.37/3:36 f) = SD 22.1.

<sup>29</sup> *Dānaṃ dhammena laddhā supasanna, citto*. Here, “truly bright” (*supasanna*) refers to moral virtue, joy, faith, or in short “with devotion.” *Supasanna* = *su* (“well, very, truly”) + *pasanna*, past part of *pasīdati* (“he is bright with faith,” to be calm and clear at heart).

<sup>30</sup> “Firm in the faith,” *abhisaddham* (Be Ce), pres part m of *abhisaddahati*.

<sup>31</sup> “That its karmic fruit is great,” *kamma, phalaṃ uḷāraṃ*. *Uḷāra* has a broad range of senses: “large, great; best, eminent, excellent, noble, rich, superb; glorious, illustrious; eloquent (*vācā*); famous, sweet” (CPD).

<sup>32</sup> Comy: This last verse refers to non-returners, or to one arhat giving to another. Although the arhat believes in karmic fruition, since he is without desire or lust for existence, his giving is not productive of any fruit, but is merely a functional deed (*kiriya*) that has no trace (MA 5:77). Comy is being a bit technical here; for, this may also include laity who are even momentarily free from desire (say during a good meditation retreat) who give offerings to monastics who are also practitioners. See §13 & n above.

## Notes on the Dakkhina Vibhaṅga Sutta

**3.1 CONTRADICTION.** The statement that Gotamī is *pure in the five precepts* (M 142.3b above) clearly means that she is a laywoman at that time (and the next paragraph [§3c] clearly mentions her attainment as a streamwinner). However, §7 mentions the twofold order (of monks and of nuns). If we accept the tradition that Gotamī is the first nun, then one of these accounts here must be false or interpolated. **Bodhi**, however, suggests that “[w]e might resolve the discrepancy (unnoticed by the commentator) by supposing that the original discourse was later modified after the founding of the Bhikkhuṇī Saṅgha to bring the latter into the scheme of offerings to the Saṅgha.” (M:NB n1291).

**Liz Williams** argues that the order of nuns may have already been in existence and the story of its foundation at Mahā Pajāpatī’s request in the Vinaya may have been added on by later reciters:

If she is still a lay person, as has already been demonstrated by the fact that she only adheres to the five precepts, then, if the ordination story is accurate, there would be no bhikkhuṇīs in existence. It would seem then that this is evidence of the existence of bhikkhuṇīs *before* Mahā-pajāpatī requested the going forth. The only other explanation is that this sutta may be an assimilation of one story with another [as suggested by Bodhi]. *Cullavagga* 10 [V 2:253-258], then, looks as if it may have been added on by later compilers of the texts. Unlike bhikkhus, whose admission to the Order precedes all other rules specific to them in the text order as we have it, bhikkhuṇīs appear throughout the *Vinaya* prior to the story of their admission. Certain rules are also laid down for bhikkhuṇīs *before* any transgression takes place, which is another inconsistency. (2000:170)

**3.2 ĀNANDA.** Ānanda plays an important active role in the Dakkhina Vibhaṅga Sutta in intervening on Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī’s behalf [3a]. Ānanda’s active intervention on behalf of Mahā Pajāpatī is also recorded in the two Chinese parallels to the Dakkhina Vibhaṅga Sutta.<sup>33</sup> According to **the Ānanda Thera, gāthā**, he became the Buddha’s attendant for 25 years (Tha 1041-1043). Subtracting these 25 years from the 45 of the Buddha’s ministry, Ānanda would have become the Buddha’s attendant from about the 20<sup>th</sup> year at the earliest.<sup>34</sup> And the Dakkhina Vibhaṅga Sutta and its two Chinese parallels all report Ānanda’s active role as intercessor. As Analayo notes,

the way the three versions depict his intervention would fit the role of a personal attendant, and not the role of a monk who has no particular standing, apart from being one of the Buddha’s relatives. From this it would seem more probable that the events described in the Dakkhinavibhaṅga-sutta and its parallels should be placed at a time when Ānanda had become the Buddha’s personal attendant, and therefore considerably later than the Buddha’s first visit to Kapilavatthu.

(Analayo, *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya* (draft), 2006 ad M 3:254)

This also means that Mahā Pajāpatī would have been a nun by then: after all, the fourfold Saṅgha is mentioned in the Sutta [§7]. However, we still have the mention of her being keeping the five precepts, that is, as a laywoman [§3b]. Analayo offers a solution:

Perhaps the reference to her observance of the five precepts could be understood to be simply a part of the description of her taking refuge, both together referring to the moment when she had become lay follower. On adopting this perspective, to mention her having taken the five precepts need not necessarily indicate that she was still a laywoman at the time of the present discourse, but could only refer to the point of time in the past when she had become a lay follower. If the main point of this description of benefits was to highlight that she had become a Buddhist and a

<sup>33</sup> MĀ 180 = T1.721c28 & T84 = T903c4.

<sup>34</sup> Another piece of evidence to support this is that **Ānanda S** (S 22.83/3:106) and its parallel at SĀ 261 = T2.66b4 say that Ānanda became a streamwinner soon after ordaining, a fact also confirmed by V 2:183.

stream-winner, then perhaps the absence of any explicit reference to her going forth may become less puzzling. (Analayo, *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya* (draft), 2006 ad M 3:254)

Finally, there is the possibility that the events of the Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta actually took place during the Buddha's first visit to Kapilavatthu, and that Mahā Pajāpatī was still a laywoman keeping the five precepts. After all, the Buddha only tells Pajāpatī, "Give it to the Order, Gotamī. If it is given to the Sangha, both the Sangha and I will be honoured" (*Saṅghe, Gotami, dehi, saṅghe te dinne ahañ c'eva pūjito bhavissāmi saṅgho cā ti*). The fourfold Sangha is only mentioned in the list of ascending priority of those worthy of offerings [7], which somehow does not reflect the Buddha's mode of teaching, and is probably a late addition. Moreover, the closing verse, which normally is a summary of the discourse's key teaching, gives no hint of the priority list nor mentions the fourfold Sangha at all.

From the overall tone of the Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta as we have it today, it seems to imply that the Buddha does not actually *refuse* the ordination of nuns, but merely *hesitates* to do so as the time was not right yet. Alternately, however, we may also argue that these events did, after all, occur *much later* (after the introduction of the order of nuns), and the verse section was added by the reciters. Whichever way monastic history occurred, the teachings of the discourse—that priority of giving to a highly evolved person brings bountiful benefit, but the gift of the passionless to the passionless is the best. [§13n]

**3.3 M 142, A LATE SUTTA?** Scholars have noted an interesting discrepancy in the Vibhaṅga Vagga, where the Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta is located. All the other vaggas (chapters) of the Majjhima each has exactly ten discourses, except for the Vibhaṅga Vagga.<sup>35</sup> Apparently, scholars propose that **the Bhaddēka, ratta Sutta** (M 131)<sup>36</sup> and the Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta (M 142) are later additions, which does not, however, mean that they are late works. **Analayo**, in his *Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*,<sup>37</sup> gives a helpful summary of the problem here:

Looking back on the altogether four Pāli discourses concerned with the *bhaddēkaratta* verses, a noteworthy circumstance is that the chapter in which they are found, the *Vibhaṅga Vagga*, counts altogether twelve discourses. All other chapters in the *Majjhima Nikāya* consist of ten discourses only. Due to the present chapter's departure from the standard count of ten discourses, the overall count of *Majjhima Nikāya* discourses runs into one-hundred-fifty-two, even though its main division is into three "fifties," *pañṇāsa*, headings which suggests that there should be only one-hundred-fifty discourses.<sup>38</sup>

This suggests the possibility that the *Vibhaṅga Vagga* originally may have had only ten discourses, to which subsequently two discourses were added...

Another discourse that could have made its way into the *Vibhaṅga Vagga* at a later stage is the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta*, a discourse which records how the Buddha refused a gift made to him by his foster-mother and then gave an exposition on the merits of offerings to different recipients.<sup>39</sup> (Analayo at M 3:201, 2005)

— — —

<sup>35</sup> L Renou, "Les divisions dans les texts sanscrits," in *Indo Iranian Journal*, 1957:2 & 29 notes that groups of ten is a principal grouping in Vedic texts, which was also frequently used by the Buddhists and the Jains.

<sup>36</sup> M 121/3:187-189 = SD 8.9: see esp Intro §2.1.

<sup>37</sup> 2005, draft (personal communications).

<sup>38</sup> Norman 1983:48.

<sup>39</sup> M 142/3:253-257.

## 4 Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta

D 16/2:112-114

[The Buddha knew beforehand the formation of the fourfold community.]

[At the Cāpāla Shrine.]

**3.34** “Ānanda, once, when I had just attained the supreme self-awakening, I stayed under the Goat-herd’s Banyan Tree on the bank of the river Nerañjarā at Uruvelā. Then Māra the Evil One came to me, stood at one side and said:

‘May the Blessed One now attain final nirvana, may the Well-farer now attain final nirvana. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s final nirvana.’

**3.35** Then I said to Māra:

‘Evil One, I will not enter final nirvana until I have **monk disciples**<sup>40</sup> who are accomplished, trained, skilled, learned, bearers of the Dharma, trained in accordance with the Dharma, correctly trained and walking the path of the Dharma, who will pass on what they have gained from their Teacher, teach it, declare it, establish it, expound it, analyse it, make it clear; until they shall be able by means of the Dharma to refute false teachings that have arisen, and teach the Dharma in all its wonder.’”

‘Evil One, I will not enter final nirvana [113] until I have **nun disciples** who are accomplished...

‘Evil One, I will not enter final nirvana until I have **layman disciples** who are accomplished...

‘Evil One, I will not enter final nirvana until I have **laywoman disciples** who are accomplished, trained, skilled, learned, bearers of the Dharma, trained in accordance with the Dharma, correctly trained and walking the path of the Dharma, who will pass on what they have gained from their Teacher, teach it, declare it, establish it, expound it, analyse it, make it clear; until they shall be able by means of the Dharma to refute false teachings that have arisen, and teach the Dharma in all its wonder.’

(D 16.3.34-36/2:112-114; cf 16.3.7-9/2:104-106)

## 5 Therīgāthā

### 5.1 Therīgāthā Commentary

In the Commentary to the Therīgāthā (“Verses of the Elder Nuns”),<sup>41</sup> most of the nuns, in some way, allude to their ordination. Of the 73 verses, 24 are ascribed to nuns who state that they went to the monastery of the nuns for their ordination. Twenty-two verses refer to “going forth” in the presence of **Mahā Pajāpati**. Some refer to hearing the Buddha teach, and then being instructed by him to go to the residence of the nuns to be ordained. Only two, namely **Vaḍḍha, mātā** (ThīA 171) and **Ambapālī** (ThīA 207) refer to hearing the Dharma in the presence of a monk, this being on both occasions, their sons.

<sup>40</sup> *Bhikkhū...sāvaka*. D:W renders this as “monks and disciples,” but it seems out of context. I take it as a tatpurusha (P *tappurisa* cpd: see Warder, *Introduction to Pali*, 1974:77 f), or more exactly a “split tatpurusha,” ie as *bhikkhu, sāvaka*, and also *bhikkhūṇi, sāvika*, *upāsakā, sāvaka* and *upāsikā, sāvika*. Following this, EM Hare’s alt tr is “till my monks <nuns, laymen, laywomen> shall be disciples...” (A:H 4:207 f ad A 4:310 f). If we accept Walsh’s tr, then “monks” (*bhikkhū*) here would refer to the “worldlings,” that is, those still outside the path to awakening, while “disciples” (*sāvaka*) refers to those monks on the path, that is, one of the eight types of Saints. This categorization similarly applies to the other three pairs of “followers and disciples.” However, I think the context here refer only to the 4 types of noble saints (*ariya, sāvaka*)—ie the sainthood of the monastic and the lay—and not to the worldly Sangha or unawakened lay assembly.

<sup>41</sup> William Pruitt (tr), *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs* (*Therīgāthā-Aṭṭhakathā Paramatthadīpanī VI*) by Dhammapāla, PTS 1998.

None of the nuns' verses refers to the receiving of the *upasampadā* (higher ordination) from monks. Although an argument from silence cannot be taken as substantial evidence, in the compilation of 73 accounts, the law of averages would suggest that at least a few would refer to monks if indeed these were needed at the ordination of nuns, as suggested in Cullavagga 10 (V 2:253-258). (Liz Williams, 2000:170 f, slightly modified)

## 5.2 Bhaddā Kuṇḍala,kesā (ex-Jain)

[*ehi bhikkhuṇī* ordination]

Low on my knees I worshipped with both hands  
Adoring. "Come, Bhaddā!" the Master said.  
Thereby to me was ordination given.

(Thī 109. Tr CAF Rhys Davids, *Psalm of the Sisters*, 1909)

Having bent the knees, having paid homage to him,  
I stood with cupped hands face to face with him,  
"Come Bhaddā!" he said to me; that was my ordination.

(Thī 109. Tr KR Norman, *Elders' Verses II*, 1989)

Dhammapāla explains the verse's last line as follows: "Come Bhaddā! Go to the residence of the bhikkhuṇīs, and in the presence of the bhikkhuṇīs go forth and be fully ordained." (Pruitt 1998:106). Even here, notes Williams, there is no reference to the double ordination. Dhammapāla then goes to extreme lengths to explain that there is no *ehi bhikkhuṇī* ordination equivalent to that for monks.

His explanation appears to be merely a denial of something he is not comfortable with, that is, that the Buddha ordained women in the same way as men, implying an equivalent status to men. His opinion is that: 'On still other occasions [something] is mentioned that is not possible, or that does not exist.' [Pruitt 1998:380]" (Williams 2000: 172)

## 5.3 Vaḍḍha,mātā (Vaḍḍha's mother)

[A nun admonishing a monk.]

Vaḍḍha,mātā, too, makes her resolve under former Buddhas, and accumulates wholesome supporting conditions in various rebirths, culminating in our Buddha-era, when she is reborn in a clansman's family in the town of Bhārukaccha. She marries and bears a son who is named Vaḍḍha. From that time she is known as Vaḍḍha,mātā, Vaḍḍha's mother. Hearing a monk teach, she becomes a follower, and, handing her child over to her relatives, she goes to the monks and joins the order. The rest, not told here, may be filled in from Vaḍḍha's story as told in the Thera,gāthā.<sup>42</sup>

Vaḍḍha, it is said, visits his mother, now a nun, all by himself, without his outer robe, going into the nuns' quarters. Seeing him, she says, "Why have you come in here alone?" and admonishes him as follows:

**204** May you, Vaḍḍha, ever have no craving for the world.  
Son, have no share of pain over and again.

**205** The sages, Vaḍḍha, free from lust, doubts cut off, dwell happily indeed,  
become cool, attained to self-taming, free from mental influxes.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> **Vaḍḍha Tha** (Tha 335-339); **Vaḍḍha,mātā Thī** (Thī 204-212).

<sup>43</sup> "Mental influxes," *āsava*. The term *āsava* (lit "cankers") comes from *ā-savati* "flows towards" (ie either "into" or "out" towards the observer). It has been variously tr as taints ("deadly taints," RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the influxes of (1) sense-desire (*kām'āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav'āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh'āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāśava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as "floods"

- 206 Vaḍḍha, devote yourself to the way followed by those seers  
for attaining insight, for making an end of suffering.
- 207 Confidently indeed you speak of this matter to me, mother.  
Now I'm sure that craving is not found in you, mother.
- 208 Whatever formations, Vaḍḍha, low, high, or middling,  
no craving, even minute, no matter how minute, none is found in me.
- 209 Having meditated, being vigilant, all my influxes are destroyed:  
attained are the three knowledges,<sup>44</sup> done is the Buddha's teaching.
- 210 Truly, my mother, out of sympathy,  
applied a glorious goad, the verses declaring the highest goal, to me!
- 211 Having heard her word, her instruction,  
I felt the Dharma urgency for attaining security from bondage.
- 212 Resolute in my effort, unrelenting day and night,  
urged on by my mother, I gained the peace supreme.

### Comment

This story is about how a nun admonished her own son who was a monk then. Such a deed would contravene the eight strict rules [2]: “A monk can admonish and advise a nun, but a nun cannot admonish or advise a monk.”<sup>45</sup>

### 6 Bhikkhunī Vibhaṅga (V 4:214)

[*ehi bhikkhunī* ordination]

**Nun** means:

she is a nun because she is a collector of alms,  
she is a nun because she resorts to walking for alms,  
she is a nun because she is one who wears the patchwork robes,  
she is a nun because by designation (of others),  
she is a nun because of her acknowledgement,  
she is a nun (to whom it was) said, “**Come O nun!**.”  
she is one ordained by the Going for the Three Refuges,  
she is a nun who is auspicious,  
she is a nun who is the essential,  
she is a nun who is a learner,  
she is a nun who is an adept,  
she is a nun ordained by both Orders by means of a formal act at which the motion is put  
followed by three proclamations, irreversible and fit to stand. (V 4:214)

---

(*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 33.1.10(20)/3:216; M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these āsavas is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict, under āsava.

<sup>44</sup> That is, the three knowledges of the arhat, namely, the knowledge of the recollection of past lives, the divine eye (knowledge of the arising and passing away of beings according to their karma) and the knowledge of the destruction of the mental cankers (D 3:220, 275; A 2:163, 165; A 1:146, 192, 194; cf V 2:83; Sn 594, 656).

<sup>45</sup> This reference was pointed out to me by Ven. S. Pamaratana during one of my weekly NUS Buddhist Society Sutta Study classes.

## Dhammapāla's Commentary

Dhammapāla seems to explain away the inclusion of the “Come O nun!” in **the Bhikkhuṇī Vibhaṅga** (V 2:214) by saying, “It is not an expression that makes clear the independent existence of full ordination of bhikkhuṇīs by [the formula] ‘Come bhikkhuṇī’ because there are no bhikkhuṇīs [admitted to] full ordination in this way.” (Pruitt 1998:379). **Liz Williams** comments:

Dhammapāla is thought to have lived in South India in the sixth century CE, so his commentary dates from almost a millennium after the time of the Buddha. His views of and attitude towards women are obviously coloured by the socio-historical context in which he was writing. Blackstone<sup>46</sup>, in discussing the attitude of disgust and disapproval of the body and its functions in the *Therī/Theragāthā*, recognizes that “those bodies that are of an unspecified sex are designated female by the commentary.” (Blackstone, 1998:64)

Thus, even from the earliest days of the monastic Sangha, shortly after the decease of the Buddha, and for centuries later, women were denied **that status, respect and recognition that was acknowledged by the Buddha**. The same wariness and fear of women's achievement has filtered down through the centuries to the present day, and is still reflected in the lack of opportunity for women to realize their aspirations and to offer a significant and valuable contribution to the Theravādin monastic Sangha.”

(“A Whisper in the Silence” in *Buddhist Studies Review* 17,2 2000:173)

## 7 Bhikshuni Order revival in the 2000s

**7.1 SUMMARY OF EVENTS.** On Thursday 22nd October 2009, Sisters Vāyāmā, Nirodhā, Serā and Hassapaññā were ordained as Theravāda bhikshunis in a dual ordination ceremony held at Bodhinyana Buddhist Monastery in Perth, Western Australia. Ayya Tathālokā, from the United States, was the Preceptor (*pavattinī*). Ajahn Brahm and Ajahn Sujato performed the certifying acariya (*anusāsana*) chanting in the bhikshus' part of the ceremony. The ordination of Theravada bhikshunis in Australia was fully supported by the Australian Buddhist community.

However, no such support came from the Western monks in Europe associated with Thailand. Indeed, the leading Western monks in England, together with the Western monks in Thailand, formally requested Ajahn Brahm to be “excluded” or excommunicated from Wat Pah Pong, which is the monastery where he was trained under Ajahn Chah. He was summoned to a meeting in Thailand on 1 November 2009, where, after much harsh discussion, he was given the choice of publicly stating that the ordination was invalid or else be excommunicated from the Wat Pah Pong community.

He refused to “recant” as he was not willing to disavow an ordination procedure which was valid according to the Vinaya, nor was he willing to go against the wishes of the Australian Sangha Association and the thousands of lay Buddhists from around the world who supported the full integration of women into Theravada Buddhism.

It was indeed a sad day when those monks who believe in the ordination did not speak up to support Ajahn Brahm's courageous act. Instead, a group of monks at Wat Pah Pong who lacked foundation in the Vinaya, used excommunication as a means for imposing control and to preserve “tradition.”

However, there was overwhelming support for Ajahn Brahm from around the world, including Bhikhu Bodhi, the well known translator of the early Pali texts, and Ajahn Brahm's large following in Singapore, especially the members of the Buddhist Fellowship, which is leading the Buddhist reform there.<sup>47</sup>

**7.2 AJAHN BRAHMAVAMSO'S STATEMENT ON HIS EXCOMMUNICATION.** In an email I received from an Australian Dharma friend dated 8 November 2009, Ajahn Brahm made this statement (reproduced here as is):

<sup>46</sup> For a discussion of attitudes to the body in the *Therī/Theragāthā*, see Kathryn Blackstone, *Women in the Footsteps of the Buddha: Struggle for Liberation in the Therīgāthā*, Richmond, Surrey, 1998.

<sup>47</sup> For a wide range of information on the revival of the nuns' order by the forest monastics of Ajahn Brahmavamso, see Ajahn Sujato's website <http://santifm1.0.googlepages.com/>.

### Ajahn Brahm on why he was “excommunicated”

A Theravada Bhikkhuni Ordination was held in Perth on Thursday 22nd October. The decision to proceed with the Bhikkhuni Ordination was finalised only on 20th September 2009, when the Committee of The Buddhist Society of Western Australia unanimously gave their support. We did realise this was a sensitive matter and resolved to keep it in-house for the next month as we finalised the preparations. On Wednesday 13th October, 24 days after the decision was finalised, I informed Ajahn Sumedho in Amara-vati, as a matter of courtesy, during my brief visit to the UK to see my mother (who has severe dementia).

The matter of Bhikkhuni Ordination had been discussed in Wat Pah Pong about two years ago and, as I recall, they resolved to follow the lead of the Mahatherasamakom (the supreme Monks’ Council of Thailand). I was and remain under the impression that the ordination of Bhikkhunis outside of Thailand was not contravening the rulings of the Mahatherasamakom. This is because I had consulted with the acting Sangharaja, Somdej Phra Pootajarn, well beforehand to ask him precisely his opinion on the ordination of Bhikkhunis outside of Thailand. His response, which I have circulated amongst the Western Sangha for a long time now, was “Thai Sangha law does not extend outside of Thailand”. He repeated this another two times to make his intention clear.

Even though my ordination as a monk was in Thailand, I understood that my obligations were to the Dhamma and Vinaya, not to the Thai state. Nor was allegiance to Thailand part of the advice given to me by the Acting Sangharaja who presented me with the Thai ecclesiastical honour of Tan Chao Khun. The certificate that I received at the ceremony merely states that “Phra Brahmavamsa of Bodhinyana Monastery in Australia is a monk of Royal Grade with the title of Phra Visuddhisamvarathera. May he accept the duty in the Buddha’s dispensation of teaching, settling Sangha business and looking after the monks and novices in his monastery in an appropriate manner. And to develop happiness and well being in the Buddha’s Dispensation.”

At the meeting in Wat Pah Pong on Sunday 1st November 2009, to which I was summoned at very short notice, it was apparent that the senior Thai monks had a poor understanding of the Vinaya rules concerning sanghakamma (formal acts of Sangha governance). For example, it took a long time to convince them that a Bhikkhuni Ordination is a double sanghakamma. The first part being performed by a gathering of Bhikkhunis presided over by the Preceptor (“Upajjhaya” or “Pavattini”—Ayya Tathaaloaka from the USA) and the second part where the new Bhikkhunis approach the Bhikkhu Sangha to have their ordination confirmed by a ñatticatutthakamma (a formal motion followed by 3 announcements). I was one of the two Bhikkhus who chanted the ñatticatutthakamma in the Bhikkhu Sangha.

Once the senior Thai monks understood that I was not the Upajjhaya, they were willing to let the matter drop, provided I would promise in the midst of the Sangha not to participate in the ordination of any more Bhikkhunis. Remembering the example of Venerable Ananda at the First Council, I made that promise to the assembled Sangha three times. It looked as if harmony would be restored.

However, some senior monks raised the question of the status of the four women who had received Bhikkhuni Ordination. I accepted that they would not be regarded as Bhikkhunis in Thailand under the present climate, but the ordination was legitimate and they were Bhikkhunis. A senior monk then claimed that the ordination was invalid because of “ditthi vipatti”, which he explained as meaning without the approval of the Sangha of Wat Pah Pong. As anyone with a basic knowledge of sanghakamma knows, this is nonsense. However, that unfounded view held sway and the meeting came down to a single clear choice: If Ajahn Brahm would state in the midst of the Sangha that the four women were not Bhikkhunis then there would be no penalty, otherwise Bodhinyana Buddhist Monastery would be removed from the list of branch monasteries of Wat Pah Pong. I paused for a minute to reflect and, considering that I could not go against the Vinaya and state the Bhikkhunis were not properly ordained, nor could I go against the wishes of the Sangha of Bodhinyana and the thousands of lay Buddhists that support the Bhikkhuni Ordination, I refused to recant.

As a result, Bodhinyana Buddhist Monastery was removed as a branch monastery of Wat Pah Pong. I emphasized that this decision had nothing to do with the process, secretive or otherwise, through which

the ordination took place. The decision to excommunicate Bodhinyana Buddhist Monastery rested solely on my refusal to state that the Bhikkhuni Ordination was invalid.

After the meeting formally concluded I paid my respects to many of the senior monks who reminded me of their continued friendship. For example, one old friend said to me “meuan derm” (meaning “just as before”). I hope that a similar attitude will prevail among all my friends in the Western Sangha.

With mega metta, Ajahn Brahm

— — —

## Bibliography

Analayo

- 2005 *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*. Draft. 2005. See esp Bahu, dhātuka Sutta (M 115) & Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta (M 142).
- 2008 “Theories on the foundation of the nuns’ order—A critical evaluation.” *Journal of the Centre for Buddhist Studies, Sri Lanka* 6: 105–42. Download from <http://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/pdf/analayo/TheoriesFoundation.pdf>.
- 2009 “Theories on the foundation of the nuns’ order—A critical evaluation,” *Journal of the Centre for Buddhist Studies, Sri Lanka* 6 2009:105-142.
- 2010 “Women’s renunciation in early Buddhism—The four assemblies and the foundation of the order of nuns,” in *Dignity & Discipline: The Evolving Role of Women in Buddhism*, Thea Mohr & Jampa Tsedroen (eds), Boston: Wisdom, 2010:65-97.

Brahmavamso, Ajahn

- 2007 “Dakkhinavibhanga Sutta—The Exposition of Offerings.” [M 142] BSWA Sutta Study Podcast. Perth: Buddhist Society of Western Australia, 9 July 2007. Accessible from [Brahmavamso 2007\\_07\\_08.mp3](http://www.brahmavamso.com.au/2007_07_08.mp3)

Dhammapāla

- 1998 *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs (Therīgāthā-Aṭṭhakathā Paramatthadīpanī VI)* by Dhammapāla, tr William Pruitt, Oxford: PTS 1998.

Gross, Rita M.

- 2001 “Women in Buddhism.” In Harvey 2001:205-234 (ch 7).

Harvey, Peter (1951- )

- 2001 (ed) *Buddhism*. London & NY: Continuum, 2001.

Hinüber, Oskar von

- 2008 “The foundation of the bhikkhunīsamgha.” {Orig in Annual Report in the International Research for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University for the academic year 2007, 11 (2008), S [3]-29.} Download from [http://www.freidok.uni-freiburg.de/volltexte/6755/pdf/Hinueber\\_The\\_foundation\\_of\\_the\\_bhikkhunismamgha.pdf](http://www.freidok.uni-freiburg.de/volltexte/6755/pdf/Hinueber_The_foundation_of_the_bhikkhunismamgha.pdf).

Nattier, Jan

- 1991 *Once Upon a Future Time: Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline*. Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1991.

Pruitt, William →Dhammapāla, 1998.

Sponberg, Alan

- 1991 “Attitudes toward women and the feminine in early Buddhism.” In José Ignazio Cabezón, ed. *Buddhism, Sexuality and Gender*. Albany, NY: State University of NY Press, 1991:3-36.

Wijayaratna, Mohan

- 1990 *Buddhist Monastic Life*. Tr Claude Grangier & Steven Collins. [1983, *Le Moine Bouddhique Selon les Textes du Theravada*. Paris.] Cambridge: Cambridge Univ Press, 1990.

Williams, Liz

2000 “A Whisper in the Silence.” *Buddhist Studies Review* 17,2 2000:167-173.

2002 “Red Rust, Robbers and Rice Fields: Women’s part in the precipitation of the decline of the Dhamma.” *Buddhist Studies Review* 19,1 2002:41-47.

110110