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Pabbajjā: A very short history

How the early monastics were admitted

An essay by Piya Tan ©2014

0 Introduction: 8 ancient methods of admission

0.1 Pabbajjā

0.1.1 *Pabbajjā* (Skt *pravrajya*) is derived from *pa* (a forward-motion prefix) + √VRAJ, “to proceed,” literally meaning to “move forward,” as in renouncing the world or “to go forth,” that is, to take up the ascetic life or becoming a reclusive monastic, especially an itinerant eremite.¹ This is an ancient term common to pre-Buddhist religions, as well as the early Buddhists and all later Buddhist traditions.

0.1.2 The term in the title here is used in a non-technical sense to refer to any kind of “going-forth” in early Buddhism, from the first *ehi, bhikkhu* monk to those admitted by an act of a motion with 3 declarations (*ñattim, catuttha, kamma*). This meaning and usage is also found in such late works as the *Dīpa-* *vamsa* (*Dīpv* 15.76).

0.1.3 In this sense, I have freely used the English terms “admission,” “acceptance” and “going-forth” (and their cognate verbs) for my purposes in this very brief survey of the history of how candidates were admitted into the monastic community. One important purpose of this study is to highlight the fact that the earliest renunciants were admitted as *de facto* sangha members by virtue of their spiritual attainment, that is, awakening to any of the 4 stages of sainthood [2.4.3]. This is the noble sangha (*ariya, saṅgha*), one of the 3 jewels and refuges [2.2.2].

In due course, as the community (*saṅgha*) grew, the Buddha, as it were, transferred some of his authority to the monastics, so that they, too, can admit candidates into the sangha (*saṅgha*), that is, to ordain monks or nuns into the “order”: they became *de jure* monastics, that is, the conventional sangha. Although such a distinction was not clearly made in early Buddhism, it is useful for us today to see this inherent difference reflected in the various *pabbajjā* methods.

0.1.4 In the early usage, the dvandva *pabbajjā, upasampada* is often used to refer to the *ehi, bhikkhu* renunciants. Here, apparently, *pabbajjā* simply means their having gone-forth in some way (either formally, as in the case of the 5 monks, or informally, as in the case Yasa) is recognized by the Buddha, while *upasampadā* (*upa-*, prefix expression direction towards or nearness + *sam-*, prefix or infix expressing completeness + *pada*, “step”), meaning “attaining, obtaining, promoting,” refers to the attaining of some level of sainthood [2.4.3], usually as a streamwinner [1.2.1] or as an arhat [1.2.2.1].

However, with the admission of novices (*sāmaṇera*) [0.3], *pabbajjā* becomes a technical term specifically referring to the novice admission. The term *upasampadā*—which was earlier on often used as a dvandva as *pabbajjā, upasampadā*, or as twin terms² [1.2.1]—takes on a technical sense of “ordination” or “higher ordination” as a monk or a nun.

0.2 THE 8 METHODS OF ADMISSION

0.2.1 In the history of early Buddhism, a total of **8 methods of admission (*pabbajjā*) or ordination (*upasampadā*)** have been recorded in the commentaries, namely:

¹ Technically, an eremite lives a solitary religious life, while coenobites, also recluses, but live communal lives, such as in a community (of up to say 5) or a monastery.

² As in “May I obtain the going-forth...obtain the ordination” (*labheyyāham...pabbajjam...labheyyam upasampadam*): V 1:12,26 ≈ 3:15,7; V 1:12,36 = 20,28 = 3:15,2 = D 1:202,32 = S 1:161,19; D 1:176,14; A 4:276,22; Tha 311, 365.

(1) the “Come, bhikshu!” ordination	<i>ehi, bhikkhūpasampadā</i>	[1]
(2) the ordination by refuge-going	<i>saraṇa, gamanūpasampadā</i>	[2.2]
(3) the ordination by (accepting) admonition	<i>ovādūpasampadā</i>	[2.3]
(4) the ordination by question-answering	<i>pañhāvyaākaraṇūpasampadā</i>	[2.4]
(5) the ordination by an act of motion and 3 declarations	<i>ñatticatutthakammūpasampadā</i>	[8]
(6) the ordination by (accepting) the principles to be respected	<i>garudhammūpasampadā</i>	[2.5]
(7) the ordination by the two sanghas	<i>ubhato saṅghe ūpasampadā</i>	[2.7]
(8) the ordination by proxy	<i>dūtena ūpasampadā</i>	[2.6]

(VA 1:241,9 f ≈ PaṭkA 17,20 f ≈ AA 2:165,17 ≈ VbhA 330,8; ThaA 3:203,28)

0.2.2 Of these eight, (1) is the most significant spiritually, as will be obvious from the first half of this essay. All the rest have been abrogated, except for (5), the ordination by an act of motion and 3 declarations (*ñatti, catuttha, kamma ūpasampadā*), which is the only valid method of monastic ordination today.

0.3 Also common today amongst the Theravāda community is the admission of novices (*sāmaṇera*), that is, candidates not yet full 20 years old or who choose to keep only the 10 novice precepts (*dasa sikkhāpada*).³ This procedure is a short and simple one with the candidate reciting a formula for requesting the refuges and the 10 precepts.⁴ The elder or preceptor then recites the verses, which is repeated line by line by the candidate. There are some minor local or traditional variations in the verses used amongst the Theravada monastic communities of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. [1.5.2]

1 Admissions by the Buddha

1.1 THE FIRST MONKS. The earliest form of monastic admission, or joining the sangha as a monk, is that of the “Come, bhikshu!” going-forth (*ehi, bhikkhu pabbajjā*)⁵ or ordination (*ehi, bhikkhūpasampadā*).⁶ The first to be admitted into the sangha—this is done only by the Buddha—are the group of 5 monks (*pañca, vaggiya bhikkhu*), that is, Añña(ta) Koṇḍañña, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma and Assaji.⁷

1.2 THE EHI ADMISSION

1.2.1 The request formula. As a rule, having heard the Dharma from the Buddha, the candidate(s) attain arhathood or streamwinning, upon which he requests for admission, with these words,

“May I, lord, receive the going-forth before the Blessed One, may I receive the ordination!”
(*Labheyyāhaṃ bhante bhagavato santike pabbajjāṃ, labheyyāṃ ūpasampadan’ti.*) (V 1:12)

The Buddha (only the Buddha uses this formula) then stretches forth his right hand and accepts the candidate by pronouncing, “Come, bhikshu!” (*ehi bhikkhu*) (singular), “Come, bhikshus!” (*etha bhikkhavo*) (plural), or “Come, bhikshuni!” (*ehi bhikkhūṇī*). This is usually followed by this admonition:

“Well taught is the Dharma. Live the holy life for the utter ending of suffering!”
(*Svākkhāto dhammo, cara brahma, caryāṃ, sammā dukkhassa anta, kiriyāyāti.*)⁸ (V 1:12,23)

For two or more candidates admitted together, the second-person singular imperative *ehi*, “Come!” becomes plural, *etha*. Hence, *ehi bhikkhu* (sg) becomes *etha bhikkhavo* (pl).

³ On the 10 precepts (*dasa sikkhāpada*), see Khp 2/22-37; tr in Khp:Ñ 1 f (text), 17-36 (comy).

⁴ For the 3 refuges & 10 precepts, see Khp 1+2/1 f. For trs, see Khp:Ñ 1 f & Comy 1-36.

⁵ Eg MA 3:339; AA 1:190; DhA 1:87; SnA 2:456.

⁶ Eg SA 2:216; AA 2:165; VA 965; UA 95; ThaA 2:145.

⁷ S 56.1 @ SD 1.1; V 1:12 f.

⁸ The Skt version is shorter: “Come bhikshu...! Live the holy life under the Tathagata!” (*ehi bhikṣu...cara tathāgate brahma, caryāṃ*) (Mvst 3:180).

1.2.2 The acceptance formulas

1.2.2.1 There are 2 main kinds of *ehi bhikkhu* admission:

(1) **for arhats**, where the formula is simply, “Come, bhikshu! (*ehi bhikkhu*) (EA1b),⁹ and the plural form; “Come, bhikshus!” (*etha bhikkhavo*)¹⁰ (EA2b); or “Come, bhikshu! Well-taught is the Dharma. Live the holy life” (*ehi bhikkhu, svākkhāto dhammo, cara brahma, cariyam*) (EA1), as in the case of Yasa;¹¹ and

(2) **for non-arhat saints**, where the phrase “for the total ending of suffering” (*sammā dukkhassa anta, kiriyāya*) is added, as in the cases of Yasa’s 4 friends¹² and 50 others.¹³ (ES2)

1.2.2.2 A third category of the *ehi* admission is that of **the nuns**, which is not mentioned in the Commentaries. The feminine version, for admitting nuns, is *ehi bhikkhunī* (“Come, bhikshuni!”), or, more often, the candidate’s name is used, such as in the case of the nun Bhaddā (“Come, Bhaddā!”). [1.5.1]

1.2.2.3 **Past buddhas** were also recorded to have used the *ehi, bhikkhu* formula, as in the cases of the buddhas **Maṅgala**¹⁴ (BA 147), **Sobhita**¹⁵ (BA 168), **Vipassī**¹⁶ (DA 2:318), and **Kassapa**¹⁷ (SnA 293).¹⁸

1.2.3 The candidate and his requisites. It is said that while the formula is being pronounced, the candidate will assume, say the Commentaries, by the power of the Buddha and the candidate’s own karmic support, the appearance of a monk complete with robe and bowl, thus:

He would at once be clean shaven, donning the saffron cloth, along with the 8 requisites, all attached to his body, looking like a 100-year-old elder, sitting down, saluting the Lord.

*Te tāvad eva bhaṇḍū kāsāya, vasanā aṭṭhahi bhikkhu, parikkhārehi sarīra, paṭimukkeh ’eva vassa, satika-t, therā viya bhagavantam namassamānā ’va nisīdimsu.*¹⁹

The Thera, gāthā Commentary on Yasa’s going-forth gives more details:

The the Blessed One stretched his right arm and said, “Come, bhikshu!” Even as these words were uttered, his hair and beard became the length of only two-fingers’ breadth, and he donned the 8 requisites, (looking) like a century-old elder.

Atha bhagavā āyasmantam yasam dakkhiṇam bāhum pasāretvā “ehi bhikkhūti āha. Vacana, samanantaram eva dv’āṅgula, matta, kesam assu aṭṭha, parikkhāra, dharo vassa, saṭṭhika-t, thero viya ahoṣi.
(ThaA 1:243 f)

1.2.4 Awakening without admission

1.2.4.1 LAYMAN ARHAT. However, not all candidates who qualify for the *ehi-bhikkhu* admission actually get to go forth in this way. There are occasions when some past karma prevents such a process. The most famous case here is that of **Bāhiya Dāru, cīriya**, who becomes an arhat while still a layman. The

⁹ The abbreviations key: “E” = *ehi, bhikkhu pabbajjā*; “A” = arhat(s); “S” = streamwinner(s); “1” = one person; “2” = more than one person. [1.3.1]

¹⁰ V 1:12,27 = 24,4 = 33,10 = 43,4; DA 2:473; DhA 1:95,15, 207; SnA 1:293 f.

¹¹ Mv 1.7.15, as in Ce & Se; but both V:Be 2:24,16 & V:Ee 1:17,36 have the phrase *cara brahma, cariyam* (which should be omitted).

¹² Mv 1.9.4 @V 1:19.

¹³ Mv 1.10.4 @ V 1:20. See **The great commission**, SD 11.2(7) §14 n on “Come, Bhikshu!...”.

¹⁴ Maṅgala is a very ancient Buddha, no 22 from our Buddha Gotama. See SD 36.2 (3.4.3).

¹⁵ Sobhita is a very ancient Buddha, no 19 from our Buddha Gotama. See SD 36.2 (3.4.3).

¹⁶ Vipassī is the 7th Buddha from our Buddha Gotama. See SD 36.2 (3.4.3).

¹⁷ Kassapa is the Buddha just before our Gotama Buddha. For a list of ancient buddhas, see **Āmagandha S** (Sn 2.2), SD 4.24; also SD 36.2 (3.4.3).

¹⁸ For a full list of the 24 past Buddhas, see SD 36.2 (3.3).

¹⁹ DA 2:473 (*etha bhikkhave*), 3:1010; AA 3:47; NcA 120; DhA 1:95; Vism:Be 1:60; cf VA 1:240. Cf Mvst 3:180, 379. See (**Arahatta**) **Bāhiya S** (U 1.10) + esp SD 33.7 (2.2).

Commentaries say that, because of his lack of supporting good karma, all the monastic requisites do not appear spontaneously to him [1.2.3] nor was he able to obtain them in time.²⁰

Even as a lay arhat, he was gored to death that same day by a cow with a year-old calf.²¹ Bāhiya nevertheless dies an arhat, never again to be reborn. The Buddha praises him for his otherwise quick realization of final nirvana, without ever troubling the Buddha himself.²²

1.2.4.2 LAYMAN NON-RETURNER. **The Dhātu Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 140) similarly records another case of a layman arhat who is unable to obtain his robes and bowls for the going-forth. This is the case of the erstwhile king **Pukkusāti**, who becomes a non-returner while listening to the Buddha's teaching. However, he too dies in the same way, being gored to death by an amok cow, without being admitted, but he dies a non-returner.²³

1.2.4.3 THE LAYMAN ARHAT'S FATE. However, it is possible that such an awakening story as that of Bāhiya [1.2.4.1], led to the view that a layman arhat would not last the day, unless he goes forth. This clearly must be the root for the tradition arose that any layman attaining arhathood has either to join the sangha, or to attain parinirvana that same day. This view first appeared in **the Milinda,pañha** (Miln 264).²⁴

1.3 LIST OF *EHI, BHIKKHU* CANDIDATES (FIRST 20 YEARS)

1.3.1 Chronological list. Here follows a chronological list of candidates who have been admitted into the sangha as recorded in the text and commentaries.

²⁰ Comy gives a couple of reasons for this. In the past, it is said, Bāhiya has never given any robe or bowl to any monk. Some say, he has killed a pratyeka buddha with an arrow and stolen his robe and bowl. Hence, he does not have the supporting karma for receiving the robe and bowl, necessary for his going forth (UA 95). See also DhA 2:215; ApA 513.

²¹ AA 1:281; DhA 2:215; UA 95; ApA 513. On the reason for Bāhiya facing such a death, see M 140,35 n @ SD 4.17.

²² (**Arahatta**) **Bāhiya S** (U 1.10), SD 33.7.

²³ M 140,35.2 @ SD 4.17). See also MA 5:61; DhA 2:35.

²⁴ On laymen arhats, see **Naḷaka, pāna S** (M 68), SD 37.4 (4) & **Laymen saints**, SD 8.6 (13) Why no mention of lay arhats? + (19) Destiny of the lay arhat. See also Somaratne, White-clothed celibate arahants in early Buddhism," Hong Kong, 2009.

<u>Number</u>	<u>Candidate(s)</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Sources</u>
1	Koṇḍañña ²⁵	(ES1) ²⁶	full moon of Āsaḷhā	S 56.22,20, V 1:12, VA 240, 965, ThaA 3:203.
2	Vappa	(ES1)	1 st day of dark fortnight ²⁷	V 1:12, VA 965, ThaA 3:203.
3	Bhaddiya	(ES1)	2 nd day of dark fortnight	V 1:12, VA 965, ThaA 3:203.
4	Mahānāma	(ES1)	3 rd day of dark fortnight	V 1:13, VA 965, ThaA 3:203.
5	Assaji	(ES1)	4 th day of dark fortnight	V 1:13, VA 965, ThaA 3:203.
6	Yasa	(EA1)	1 st year	V 1:17, ThaA 1:143 f, 3:203.
7-10	Yasa's 4 friends ²⁸	(ES2)	1 st year	V 1:18 f, ThaA 3:203.
11-60 ²⁹	Yasa's 50 friends ³⁰	(ES2)	1 st year	V 1:20, ThaA 3:203.
61-90	The 30 youths ³¹	(ES2)	1 st year	V 1:23, VA 5:971; ThaA 3:203, DhA 5.6; ApA 86 f.
91-591	Uruvelā Kassapa + 500 ³²	(ES2)	1 st year	V 1:33, VA 2:506, AA 1:199, SA 2:215, ThaA 3:203, ApA 86 f, 517, 548 (Nadī Kassapa), 559 (Gayā Kassapa); ThaA 2:143, 145 (Gayā Kassapa), 160 (Uruvelā Kassapa); BA 20; J 1:82.
592-892	Nadī Kassapa + 300	(ES2)	1 st year	See under Uruvelā Kassapa.
893-1093	Gāyā Kassapa + 200	(ES2)	1 st year	See under Uruvelā Kassapa.
1094-1345	Upatissa, Kolita ³³ + 250	(ES2)	2 nd year	VA 2:506, 976; SA 2:215; ThaA 3:95; DhA 1.8 esp 1:95; ApA 211.
1346	Aṅguli,māla ³⁴	(ES2)	20 th year	M 86,6 = Tha 870; VA 240; MA 3:334; ThaA 3:69.

Note here that Aṅgulimāla is admitted in the 20th year of the Buddha's ministry. However, there is a big hiatus from the 3rd year to the 19th year of the ministry. It is very likely that we can include the other *ehi, bhikkhu* monks [1.4] and those admitted by someone other than the Buddha or ordained by the sangha [1.5].

²⁵ More fully, Añña(ta) Koṇḍañña ("the one who has understood") (S 56.22,20), SD 1.1.

²⁶ The abbreviations key: "E" = *ehi, bhikkhu pabbajjā*; "A" = arhat(s); "S" = streamwinner(s); "1" = one person; "2" = more than one person. [1.2.2]

²⁷ *Pātipada, divase*, "the reversal day or 1st day" (of the fortnight), which I take to mean the day following the full moon, the 15th, ie the dark fortnight or waning moon), hence the 16th day of the month of Āsaḷhā. Called "reversal," because the moon begins to move back into its waning or "dark" phase. See VvA:M 107 n102.

²⁸ Vimāla, Subāhu, Puṇṇaji and Gavampati, the "4 householder companions" (*cattāro gihi, sahāyaka*, V 1:19; ThaA 3:203).

²⁹ Note here that these are the first 60 arhats in the world, admonished by the Buddha to "go forth" into the world for their benefit and happiness (V 1:21). Surely they must have converted many, but we have no records of who these new converts were or how they were admitted. It is possible that they were admitted by refuge-going [2.2] in these early years. Or, more likely, they brought these new converts back to meet the Buddha who then admitted them himself. Understandably, the the figures for the monks and nuns here are only the minimum.

³⁰ "The 50 householder companions" (*paññāsa, mattā gihi, sahāyaka*, V 1:20,10): *mattā* here is sometimes tr as "some," but here simply means "measure." Comy mentions "55 companions" (*sahāya, bhūtā pañca, paññāsa*), a cumulative number which includes Yasa and his 4 friends.

³¹ Called "the group of the fortunate 30" (*tiṃsa, mattā bhadda, vaggiya*) (V 1:23,5; ThaA 3:203): for their story, see **Bhadda, vaggiya Vatthu** (DhA 5.6/2:31-33), SD 92.6.

³² The followers of the 3 fire-worshipping Kassapa brothers total 1000, and are called (*purāna, jaṭila*).

³³ Called Sāriputta and Moggallāna after being admitted.

³⁴ See **Aṅgulimāla S** (M 86,6 = Tha 870) n, SD 5.11.

We do not know the exact date of the admission of the first nun, but the sangha of nuns must have surely existed by the 5th year of the ministry when Mahā Pajā,patī Gotamī was admitted [2.5.4.1].

1.3.2 Two tallies. There are at least two list and tallies of those admitted with the *ehi* formula: one given by Buddha,ghosa and the other by Dhamma,pāla. **Buddha,ghosa’s** tally is given as follows:

<i>Tīṇi satam sahasaṇ ca cattālīsam punāpare eko ca thero sappañño sabbe te ehi,bhikkhukāti</i>	Three hundred and a thousand, and forty more in addition, and one elder with wisdom— these are all <i>ehi,bhikkhu</i> monks. (VA 1:240)
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Buddhaghosa’s tally therefore is 1341 *ehi,bhikkhu* monks, which is 9 persons less than that of Dhamma,pāla’s total.

Dhamma,pāla, on the other hand, in his Thera,gāthā Commentary, gives the following total number of *ehi-bhikkhu* monks:

<i>Sata-t,tayam sahasaṇ ca paññāsaṇ ca punāpare ete therā mahā,paññā sabb’eva ehi,bhikkhukā’ti</i>	Three hundred and a thousand, and a further fifty, too. These are the elders of great wisdom, everyone of them are “Come!” monks. (ThaA 3:203)
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The Thera,gāthā Commentary thus gives a total of 1350 monks admitted by the “Come, bhikkhu!” admission, which is 9 persons more than Buddhaghosa’s tally. We could surmise that Dhamma,pāla has rounded off the number to 50. Of course, we could ask why not round off to 40 which is nearer to “41” of Buddhaghosa’s total, and to actual total of 1346 *ehi* bhikshus (above). The probable answer is that it is only proper to be inclusive of all the monks, rather than to omit anyone by such a rounding off. It is otherwise unlikely that any monks were inadvertently left out by Dhamma,pāla.

1.4 OTHER *EHI,BHIKKHU* CANDIDATES

1.4.1 If we follow the commentaries, then we could say that the following list of “the rest” of those admitted by the *ehi,bhikkhu* formula [1.3.2], might reflect admissions *after* the first 20 years, or during the “second period”³⁵ of the Buddha’s ministry. However, as we have noted, there is a huge gap between the 2nd and the 20th years of the ministry. During that time, surely the Buddha would have himself admitted many others using the *ehi,bhikkhu* formula. In other words, these *ehi,bhikkhu* admissions could have occurred in the latter part of the first period³⁶ (say, from the 3rd year of the ministry onwards).

In the Vinaya Commentary, Buddhaghosa remarks that “these [the *ehi,bhikkhu* monks, 1.3] are not the only ones, but there are many more” (*na kevalaṇ ca ete eva, aññepi bahū santi*), and then lists the names below, closing with the remark, “these are the rest” (*evam ādayo*, VA 1:240 f).

³⁵ On the 2 periods in the Buddha’s ministry, see **Notion of *diṭṭhi***, SD 40a.1 (1.3).

³⁶ On the 2 periods in the Buddha’s ministry, see **Notion of *diṭṭhi***, SD 40a.1 (1.3).

<u>Total</u>	<u>Candidates</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Sources</u>
301	Sela + 300 students	(ES2) ³⁷	2 nd period	M 92,23 n = Sn 3.7 (SD 45.7a), MA 3:406,19, SnA 456, ThaA 3:50, 203.
302-1302	Mahā Kappina + 1000	(ES2)	?	ThaA 3:203
1303-11302	10,000 Sakyas ³⁸	(ES2)	2 nd year (?)	ThaA 3:203
11303-12317	The 16 youths + 16000 ³⁹	(EA2)	?	ThaA 3:203
1	(Piṅgiya) see preceding	(ES1)	?	SnA 603, NcA 81

1.4.2 However, a careful search of the suttas and Commentaries will reveal that there are some more *ehi, bhikkhu* monastics beyond those listed above [1.3.1+1.4.1]. Here is a list of those “unlisted” names from an electronic search of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgīti Tipiṭaka SD (CSCD):

<u>Number</u>	<u>Candidates</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Sources</u>
1250	1250 arhats ⁴⁰	<i>ehi</i> ⁴¹	Māgha Pūjā	MA 3:209; BA 126.
1250	1250 arhats ⁴²	<i>ehi</i>	?	D 14,1.10; M 92,1, MA 3:398 f.
500	Sakya & Koliya youths ⁴³	(EA2)	?	SnA 569.
1	Puṇṇa of Sunāparāntaka	(EA1)	?	M 145; MA 5:91; Divy 22.14. ⁴⁴
1	the ascetic Sacca, bandha	(EA1)	?	M 145 @ SD 20.15 (1.5.2); MA 5:91, SA 2:379.
1	Sunīta	(ES2)	?	Tha 625, ThaA 2:264.
1	naked ascetic Jambuka	(EA1)	?	ThaA 2:119.

Again here, it is difficult to be certain of the dates of the admission of these monks. However, except for the first 1250 monks, it is likely that the rest were all admitted during the second period of the ministry (the last 25 years).⁴⁵ It is likely that the 1250 monks comprised the earliest of the *ehi* monks, such as the 3 Kassapa brothers and

³⁷ On the meanings of these abbreviations, see (1.3.1) n.

³⁸ These have been sent by king Suddhodana to invite the Buddha back to Kapilavatthu. The last of these emissaries is **Kaḷudāyi**, who is also admitted as an *ehi, bhikkhu* (VA 1004; AA 1:190, 302; BA 23; ThaA 2:222; ApA 91, 359; J 1:86). Comy says that when the Buddha goes on his first return visit to Kapila, vatthu, he has with him a “retinue of 20,000 monks” (*vīsati, sahassa, bhikkhu, parivāro*, AA 1:190).

³⁹ These are the 16 students of the brahmin Bāvāri from the Godhāvarī region, ie Ajita (SnA 2:558; NcA 8 f), Tissa Metteyya, Punnaka, Mettāgū, Dhotaka, Upasīva, Nanda, Hemaka, Todeyya, Kappa, Jatu, kannī, Bhadrāvudha, Udaya, Posāla, Mogha, rāja (AA 1:337) and Piṅgiya: see **Pārāyana Vagga** (Sn 5.1-18). Each of them has 1000 followers (thus totally 16000), all of whom become arhats, except for Piṅgiya (who thinks of Bāvāri) and so becomes a non-returner (SnA 603 f).

⁴⁰ This is called the “four-factored assembly” (*catur-aṅgika, sannipāta*). See **Dīgha, nakha S** (M 74), SD 16.1(6).

⁴¹ We only know they are all *ehi, bhikkhu* monks, but have no record of which exact kind of *ehi, bhikkhu* admission are used for them.

⁴² **Sela S** (M 92,1) says that the Buddha’s retinue comprises 1250 monks (*aḍḍha, telasehi bhikkhu, satehi*), which Comy glosses as *aḍḍhena telasehi dvādasahi satehi paññāsāya* (MA 3:398 f). These monks are accompanying the Buddha on his Dharma-tour of Aṅg’uttarāpa, where they stay outside Āpaṇa, where the matted-hair ascetic Keniya offers them a meal, and the brahmin Sela and his 300 students go forth (M 92), SD 45.7a.

⁴³ They are the audience of **Atta, daṇḍa S** (Sn 4.15), at the conclusion of which they all become arhats (SnA 569). Note however that Ānanda is said to have a “preceptor” (*upajjhāya*), one who ordains another, named Belaṭṭha, sīsa (V 1:202), which seems to suggest that he is admitted by a more formal method. Otherwise, we might assume that “preceptor:” here simply refers to his Dharma teacher.

⁴⁴ J Tatelman, *A Translation and Study of the Pūrṇāvādāna*, McMaster Univ, 1988:95 f; A Rotman (ed), *Divine Stories: Divyāvadāna pt I*, Boston, 2008:88.

⁴⁵ On the 2 periods in the Buddha’s ministry, see **Notion of diṭṭhi**, SD 40a.1 (1.3).

their followers (totalling 1000 monks), and Sāriputta and Moggallāna and their following of 250.⁴⁶ The number of *ehi, bhikkhu* monks, however, in quite early times, even in the first few years, totalled much more than that.⁴⁷

1.5 EHI, BHIKKHUṆĪ CANDIDATES

1.5.1 Accounts of *ehi, bhikkhuṇī* admissions are rare, but what we have is enough to give us a good idea of how women are admitted into the nuns' community in the Buddha's time. The feminine version, for admitting nuns, is *ehi bhikkhuṇī* ("Come, bhikshuni!"),⁴⁸ or sometimes the name is used, as in the case of the erstwhile Jain, Bhaddā, *ehi bhadde* ("Come, Bhaddā!").⁴⁹

The **Bhaddā Therī, gāthā** goes like this:

<i>Nihacca jāṇuṃ vanditvā</i>	Bent on my knees, paying homage	
<i>sammukhā pañjalim ahaṃ</i>	I put my palms together lotuswise before him.	
<i>ehi bhadde'ti maṃ avaca</i>	"Come, Bhaddā!" he said to me:	
<i>sā me āsūpasampadā'ti</i>	that was my ordination.	(Thī 109) ⁵⁰

And also in the Therī Apadāna, we have this remark:

<i>Āyācito tadā āha</i>	(When) entreated (for admission), said	
<i>ehi bhadde'ti nāyako</i>	the Leader, "Come, Bhaddā!"	
<i>tadā'haṃ upasampannā</i>	with that, I was ordained—then,	
<i>parittam toyam addasan'ti</i>	I saw a little water.	(ThīA 297) ⁵¹

Clearly, this is **Bhaddā Kuṇḍala, kesī**, an erstwhile Jain, whose admission into the community is also mentioned in her Therī Apadāna, which mentions the formula, *ehi bhadde*.⁵² This verse is vitally interesting, because it is likely proof that women were admitted as nuns, probably well before Mahā Pajāpatī's time.⁵³

1.5.2 From Bhaddā's verse (Thī 109), we know that the female candidate requesting for admission would *kneel* with their palms together lotuswise before an elder. A male candidate would, in the early days, squat on their haunches to request for the admission. However, today, the male candidates, too, as a rule, kneel with lotus-palms before an elder to request for admission, whether as a novice or as a monk. [0.3]

1.5.3 Strangely, Dhamma, pāla strenuously, with obvious contrivance, tries to deny that there were *no* nuns ever admitted by the *ehi, bhikkhuṇī* formula. The words "Come, Bhaddā!" are explained away as simply being the Buddha's "instruction" or "command" (*āṇā*) to Bhaddā to approach! The main reason that he gives is even more troubling: "Because none of them had done (the appropriate) meritorious deed" (*tathā katādhikārānaṃ*)⁵⁴ *abhāvato*, ThīA 298).⁵⁵

⁴⁶ See SD 16.1 (6.2.3).

⁴⁷ On the possible identities of the 1250 monks, see SD 16.1 (6.2).

⁴⁸ *Ehi bhikkhuṇī*, ThīA 297 f. Also V 4:214; Thī 109; ThīA 297,27 f; Ap 563,23.

⁴⁹ *Ehi bhadde'ti*, Thī 109 (Thī:N 84 nn 107-11, 107); Ap 563,23; ThīA 105,24* = 197,32*. At ThīA 297 f, Dhamma, pāla calls her Subhaddā Kuṇḍala, kesī.

⁵⁰ Also ThīA 297. On alt trs and Dhamma, pāla's views on *ehi bhikkhuṇī* admission, see SD 1.9 (5.2).

⁵¹ For alt Eng tr, see ThīA:P 380.

⁵² ThīAp 21.43-44/563 = ThīA 105. See ThīA:P 140 for Eng tr.

⁵³ See **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142) + SD 1.9.

⁵⁴ This term is also late, implying the doing of good for someone else, like a "transference" of merit.

⁵⁵ For full tr of ThīA 297-299, see ThīA:P 380-382.

2 Other admission methods

2.1 FOUR TYPES OF FORMAL ORDINATIONS. The Commentaries tell us that there were no other ordination (*upasampadā*) methods other than the *ehi, bhikkhu*, except for these 4 methods of ordination:⁵⁶

(1) The ordination by going for refuge	<i>saraṇa, gamanūpasampadā</i>	[2.2]
(2) The ordination by the acceptance of admonition	<i>ovāda, paṭiggahaṇūpasampadā</i>	[2.3]
(3) The ordination by question-answering	<i>pañhā, vyākaraṇūpasampadā</i>	[2.4]
(4) The ordination by a fourfold act ⁵⁷	<i>ñatti, catuttha, kammūpasampadā</i>	[3]

It should be noted that all these admission methods include one universal formula, that is, the above refuge-going formula, as in (1). For example, in (2), after the candidate has received Dharma instruction, he would then recite the 3 refuges, after which he is formally accepted as having gone forth and joined the monastic community.⁵⁸

As regards these admission methods (other than the *ehi, bhikkhu* method) became the rule quite early in the Buddha's ministry (starting with the admission of Rāhula in the second year of the ministry).⁵⁹ We have no records that the Buddha himself admitted any candidates using any of these formulas.

Furthermore, these methods have been introduced to allow, for the first time, the monastics themselves to admit candidates into the community. This is a very strategic move in the history of early Buddhism which has helped to perpetuate it to this day.

2.2 THE ORDINATION BY THE GOING FOR REFUGE

2.2.1 Rāhula's admission. During the Buddha's first visit to Kapila, vatthu (in the second year of his ministry), his 7-year-old son, Rāhula, approaches him to ask for his inheritance. Since the Buddha has only the Dharma as his own inheritance, this is the legacy he passes on to Rāhula. He then instructs Sāriputta to admit Rāhula into the sangha.⁶⁰ A later account adds that Moggallāna acts as Rāhula's ordination teacher, pronouncing the "words of the act" (*kamma, vācā*), that is, three-refuge verses, and conducting the whole procedure of admission.⁶¹

The Buddha instructs that Rāhula is to be admitted with the going for 3 refuges (*ti, saraṇa, gaman' - upasampadā*).⁶² Rāhula dons the monastic robes, bows to the preceptor, and then on his haunches (or squatting), with joined palms, recites the refuge formula [2.2.2].

2.2.2 Admission by refuge-going instituted. The Buddha proclamation of refuge-going as a means of admission is recorded in the Vinaya as follows:

I allow, bhikshus, that you yourselves may now let go forth, may ordain in any quarter, in any district. And thus, bhikshus, should one let go forth, should one ordain:

First, having had him shave off hair and beard, put on the saffron robes, arrange an upper robe over one shoulder, made him bow at the monks' feet, made him sit down on his haunches, made him salute with joined palms, he should be told,

⁵⁶ *Evam vuttato aññe na ehi, bhikkhu, bhāvena upasampadā, te pana saraṇa, gamanūpasampadā, ovāda, paṭiggahaṇūpasampadā, pañhā, vyākaraṇūpasampadā, ñatti, catuttha, kammūpasampadā 'ti imehi catūhi ākārehi laddhūpasampadā* (ThaA 3:202 f).

⁵⁷ In this ecclesiastical act, the motion (*ñatti*) (say, the proposal of a candidate for ordination) is recited or proclaimed thrice. When the conclave remains silent during all three proclamations, the motion is carried, becomes as a resolution, which is the "fourth" step. Technically, it should be treated as "the act with the (carried) motion as the fourth."

⁵⁸ "From the beginning, those elders who gain monkhood by the 'Come, bhikshu!' (formula), it is just as if they have been allowed ordination by the Blessed One himself by the going for refuge" (*ādito hi ehi, bhikkhu, bhāvūpagatā therā, tesam bhagavā pabbajam viya tīhi saraṇa, gamaneh'eva upasampadam pi anuññāsi*, ThaA 3:203).

⁵⁹ J 1:82, 85. See Nakamura 2000:327.

⁶⁰ Mv 1.54 @ V 1:82 f.

⁶¹ SnA 340,10; J 2:393. In other words, Moggallāna is the "act-announcing teacher" (*kamma, vācācariya*), which at this early stage would not have such a formal role as in the *ñatti, catuttha, kamma* ordination [3].

⁶² V 1:22, 82. For details, see SD 43.4 (4.2.3.5).

“Speak thus:

<i>Buddham saraṇaṃ gacchāmi</i>	To the Buddha for refuge I go.
<i>Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi</i>	To the Dharma for refuge I go.
<i>Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi</i>	To the Sangha for refuge I go.
<i>Dutiyam pi buddham saraṇaṃ gacchāmi</i>	For the second time, to the Buddha for refuge I go.
<i>Dutiyam pi dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi</i>	For the second time, to the Dharma for refuge I go.
<i>Dutiyam pi saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi</i>	For the second time, to the Sangha for refuge I go.
<i>Tatiyam pi buddham saraṇaṃ gacchāmi</i>	For the third time, to the Buddha for refuge I go.
<i>Tatiyam pi dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi</i>	For the third time, to the Dharma for refuge I go.
<i>Tatiyam pi saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi</i>	For the third time, to the Sangha for refuge I go.

I allow, bhikkhus, the going-forth and the ordination by these going to the 3 refuges.⁶³

(Mv 1.12.4 @ V 1:22)

With the admission of the 7-year-old Rāhula, this formula and the 10 precepts⁶⁴ are used for admitting novices (*sāmaṇera*).⁶⁵ The contemporary method used by the Theravada monastics is to have the candidates kneeling (instead of sitting on their haunches) and repeating the formula, line by line after the preceptor.⁶⁶

2.3 THE ORDINATION BY THE ACCEPTANCE OF ADMONITION. This is a unique form of admission given only to Mahā Kassapa by the Buddha known as “the ordination by the acceptance of admonition” (*ovāda, paṭiggahaṇūpasampadā*). This famous admission method, with its admonitions, are recorded in **the Cīvara Sutta** (S 16.11), as follows:

19 Therefore, you, Kassapa, should train yourself thus:

‘I will maintain keen moral shame and moral fear towards the new and middling elders.’

(*Tibbam me hir’ottappam paccupaṭṭhitam bhavissati thesesu navesu majjhimesūti.*)

Thus, Kassapa, you should train yourself.

20 Therefore, you, Kassapa, should train yourself thus:

‘Whatever Dharma I hear that is connected with the wholesome, paying attention with all my heart,⁶⁷ all ears, I will listen, mentally noting the meaning [purpose] of all that.’

(*Yam kiñci dhammaṃ suñissāmi kusalūpasamhitam sabbam tam aṭṭhim katvā manasikarivā sabba, cetasā samannāharitvā ohita, soto dhammaṃ suñissāmīti.*)

Thus, Kassapa, you should train yourself.

21 Therefore, you, Kassapa, should train yourself thus:

‘I will never neglect the mindfulness towards the body that is associated with the pleasant.’⁶⁸

⁶³ *Anujānāmi bhikkhave tumhe’va dāni tāsu tāsu disāsu tesu tesu janapadesu pabbājetha upasampādettha. Evañ ca pana, bhikkhave, pabbājetabbo upasampādetabbo. Paṭhamam kesa, massum ohārāpetvā [v] ohāretvā, kāsāyāni vatthāni acchādāpetvā, ekamsam uttarā, saṅgam kārāpetvā, bhikkhūnam pāde vandāpetvā, ukkuṭikam nisīdāpetvā, añjalim paggañhāpetvā, evam vadehīti vattabbo: buddham saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, dhammam saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, saṅgham saraṇaṃ gacchāmi; dutiyam pi buddham saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, dutiyam pi dhammam saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, dutiyam pi saṅgham saraṇaṃ gacchāmi; tatiyam pi buddham saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, tatiyam pi dhammam saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, tatiyam pi saṅgham saraṇaṃ gacchāmi. Anujānāmi bhikkhave imehi tīhi saraṇa, gamanehi pabbajjam upasampadan’ti. (Mv 1.12.3-4 @ V 1:22). On the 3 refuges (*ti, saraṇa*), see Khp 1/1 & Comy, KhpA 13-22; tr in Khp:Ñ 1 (text) & 4-16 (Comy).*

⁶⁴ For the 3 refuges & 10 precepts, see Khp 1+2/1 f. For trs, see Khp:Ñ 1 f & Comy 1-36.

⁶⁵ Mv 1.54.3-4 @ V 1:82.

⁶⁶ See SD 30.8 (2.2.6.2). For a discussion on refuge-going, see SD 43.4 (4.2.3).

⁶⁷ “All my heart,” *sabba, cetasā*, explained by Comy as “attending with a fully attentive mind (*sabbena samannāhāra, cittena*), without ever allowing the mind to stray” (SA 2:198).

⁶⁸ Comy: This is the mindfulness of the body, in its impurities and the in-and-out-breath, that is associated with joy (*sukha, sampayutta*) on account of the first dhyana (SA 1:198).

(*Sāta,saha.gatā ca me kāya,gatā,sati na vijahissatīti.*)

Thus, Kassapa, you should train yourself.

(S 16.11,19-21/2:220), SD 77.5; quoted in VA 1:241 & ThaA 3:203

This special admission is given by the Buddha to Mahā Kassapa to highlight his spiritually serious personality and also his seniority, so that in due course he would be able to guide the community in the right direction. In fact, he is traditionally said to have convened the first council to recite the Dharma and Vinaya for the benefit of posterity.⁶⁹

2.4 THE ORDINATION BY QUESTION-ANSWERING

2.4.1 Another unique case of going-forth is that of the precocious 7-year-old novice (*sāmaṇera*), Sopāka, who is an arhat! His verses are preserved as **Tha 480-486**. We have no sutta record of how he is admitted, but the Commentaries reports thus:

While walking up and down in the Eastern Park, the Blessed One asked,
 “The perception⁷⁰ of a bloated carcass, Sopāka, and (*vā*) the perception of form—are these things different in meaning, different in the letter, or are they the same in meaning, same in the letter?” and so on.

With these questions relating to foulness (of the body), the Blessed One asked the 7-year-old novice Sopāka who had approached him.

“The perception of a bloated carcass, Blessed One, and the perception of form—these are one in meaning, but different only in the letter,” and so on, he answered.

By putting together his knowledge of all there is to know, he answered these questions, winning the Blessed One’s heart, and who granted him the ordination.

This is the ordination by the question-answering.

Yā pubb’ārāme caṅkamantena bhagavatā

*Uddhumātaka,saññā’ti vā sopāka rūpa,saññā’ti vā ime dhammā nān’atthā nānā,vyañjanā,
 udāhu ekatthā vyañjanam eva nānan’ti ādinā*

asubha,nissitesu pañhesu pucchitesu bhagavantam upasaṅkamantena satta,vassikena sopāka,sāmaṇerena.

Uddhumātaka,saññā’ti vā bhagavā rūpa,saññā’ti vā ime dhammā ek’atthā, vyañjanam eva nānan’ti ādinā vissajjitesu.

Iminā sabbaññūta-ñ,ñāṇena saddhim samsandivā ime pañhā vyākatā’ti āradhā,cittena bhagavatā anuññāta,upasampadā.

Ayam pañhāvvyākaranūpasampadā nāma.

(ThaA 3:204; VA 1:242 (briefer). Cf KhpA 76; ThaA 2:201 f; DhA 4:176 f; ApA 1:64 f)

2.4.2 The commentary on **the Sopāka Thera,gāthā** mentions the “boy’s questions” (*kumāra,pañhā*), but these do not refer to the above. Instead, it refers to the well know 10 questions of **Khp 4**, and states that *this* constitutes his ordination (ThaA 2:202).⁷¹ It is possible that these 10 “boy’s questions” were put to him besides those above, or that it refers to another namesake.⁷²

⁶⁹ For a fuller study and discussion, see **Cīvara S** (S 16.11), SD 77.5.

⁷⁰ Comy to Vism (on *āhāre paṭikkūla,saññā*) notes that here “perception” (*saññā*) is used in **the Dharma** (suttas) with the characteristic of perceiving (*sañjānana*), as in the case of “perception of form, perception of sound,” etc; in **insight** (*vipassanā*), as in “the perception of impermanence, the perception of suffering”; and in **calm** (*samatha*), as in the passage, “The perception of a bloated carcass, Sopāka, and the perception of form—are these same in meaning or different in meaning?” (sic) and so on. Here, however, it should be understood as the preparatory work (*parikkamma*) for calm. For, it is the apprehending of the repulsive aspect in food, or the access dhyana produced by that means, that is meant here by “perception of repulsiveness in food.” (VismT 334 f = Be 334 f)

⁷¹ On the 10 questions and “reasonable questions” (*saha,dhammika pañha*), see SD 40a.7 (2.2.4).

⁷² Thera,gāthā has **Sopāka 1** (Tha 33) and **Sopāka 2** (Tha 480-486)—the latter is prob our namesake here. On the confusion of novices with the name of Sopāka, see Tha:N 129 n33 & 199 n480-86.

2.4.3 According to the Vinaya, the minimum age for going forth (*pabbajjā*) is 15 (V 1:70). The fact that Sopāka (Tha 486) is admitted at 7, and is an arhat—like Sumana (Tha 429), Bhadda (Tha 479) and others—means that such admissions are done in pre-Vinaya days, clearly within the “first period” (during the first 20 years) of the Buddha’s ministry.⁷³

Understandably, here the admission is simply a recognition of a pre-existing spiritual attainment. The *ehi* admission is a formal acceptance into the monastic community. However, by attaining any of the 4 stages of sainthood,⁷⁴ the saint, monastic or lay, is automatically a member of the noble community (*ariya, saṅgha*).

2.5 THE ORDINATION BY ACCEPTING THE 8 PRINCIPLES TO BE RESPECTED (*garu, dhamma, paṭiggahaṇūpasampadā*)

2.5.1 Twin categories of ordinations

2.5.1.1 According to Dhamma, pāla, there are only two kinds of ordinations: that from the Teacher himself (*satthu, laddhūpasampadā*) and that from the monastic community (*saṅghato laddhūpasampadā*) (ThīA 297). Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī (the Buddha’s aunt and foster mother) and the 500 Sakya women who follow her to seek admission. In due course, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī is uniquely admitted by her “accepting the 8 principles to be respected” [2.5.2]—this is the only ordination, says Dhamma, pāla, given by the Buddha himself. The rest are all given by the sangha. (ThīA 297)

2.5.1.2 Nuns are admitted into the community in two ways: by single ordination (*ekato, upasampannā*, that is, by the community of monks or *bhikkhu, saṅgha*) or by double ordination (*ubhato, upasampannā*, that is, the community of monks, *bhikkhu, saṅgha*, and the community of nuns, *bhikkhunī, saṅgha*). (ThīA 297)⁷⁵

2.5.2 The 8 principles to be respected (*garu, dhamma*)

2.5.2.1 It’s important to note here what these 8 *garu, dhammā* are *not*. The Sanskrit cognate of the term is *guru, dharma*, “the dharma to be respected.”⁷⁶ It does not mean “heavy” in the sense of entailing a “heavy” offence (pace DP). In fact, they are not “rules” in the normal sense of the word, nor are they rules of obedience, as early Buddhism rejects all dogmas and authoritarianism, especially such as those found in God-religions. They are simply ethical rules, or better, “principles” (*dhamma*), to help Mahā Pajāpatī curb her Sakya pride so that (1) no one would accuse the Buddha of favouring his aunt and foster-mother,⁷⁷ and (2) that she would fit humbly and harmoniously into the community.⁷⁸

2.5.2.2 Before comment on “the 8 principles to be respected” (*aṭṭha garu, dhamma*), let us look at its locus classicus in the Vinaya, which reads as follows:

“If, Ānanda, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī accepts these ‘8 principles to be respected,’ **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. (*Vassa, satūpasampannāya bhikkhuniyā tad-ah’ upasampannassa bhikkhuno abhivādanam paccuṭṭhānam añjali, kammaṃ sāmīci, kammaṃ kātabbam.*)
- (2) A nun is forbidden to spend the rains retreat in a place where there is no monk. (*Na bhikkhuniyā abhikkhuke āvāse vassam vasitabbam.*) [Bhī Pāc 46 @ V 4:313, 14 f]
- (3) Every fortnight, a nun is to ask two things of the monks: the date of the uposatha ceremony (for the recitation of the Pātimokkha) and to teach them Dharma. (*Anvaddha, māsam bhikkhuniyā*

⁷³ On the 2 periods in the Buddha’s ministry, see **Notion of *diṭṭhi***, SD 40a.1 (1.3).

⁷⁴ The 4 kinds of saints are the streamwinner (*sotāpanna*), the once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), the non-returner (*anāgāmi*) and arhat (*arahata*): see **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22, 42-47), SD 3.13 ≈ **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118, 9-12), SD 7.13.

⁷⁵ On Mahā, pajāpatī’s ordination and the 8 principles to be respected, further see SD 1.9 (2).

⁷⁶ See Sujato ch 2, 2007:46-74, 2009:51-81; Analayo 2013a, 2013b.

⁷⁷ Imagine how, when a mother (or mothers from both sides) lives together with a married couple, it would benefit everyone to have some house rules to respect the couple and to ensure that the marriage works!

⁷⁸ See the humility and beauty of her verses at **Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī Therī Apadāna** (Ap 2.17.27-25/531): **Dh 97 @ SD 10.6 (3.4)**.

bhikkhu,saṅghato dve dhammā paccāsīsitabbā: uposatha,pucchakañ ca, ovādupasaṅkamaṇā ca.) [Bhī Pāc 59 @ V 4:315,24-26]

- (4) At the end of the rains retreat, a nun must address the triple “invitation” (*pavāraṇā*) to both the sanghas (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). (*Vassam,vuṭṭhāya bhikkhuniyā ubhato,-saṅghe tīhi thānehi pavāretabba: diṭṭhena vā sutena vā parisankāya vā.*) [Bhī Pāc 57 @ V 4:-314,9-11]
 - (5) A nun who has committed a serious [heavy] offence must undergo probation (*mānatta*) before both sanghas. (*Garu,dhammam ajjhāpannāya bhikkhuniyā ubhato,saṅghe pakkha,mānattam caritabbam.*)
 - (6) Ordination as a nun must be sought from both sanghas only after a postulant (*sikkhamānā*) has kept to the 6 precepts [that is, the 5 precepts and the rule regarding not eating during wrong hours] for two years. (*Dve vassāni chasu dhammesu sikkhita,sikkhāya sikkhamānāya ubhato,-saṅghe upasampadā pariyesitabbā.*) [Bhī Pāc 63 @ V 4:319,33 f]
 - (7) A nun should on no account revile or abuse a monk. (*Na bhikkhuniyā kenaci pariyāyena bhikkhu akkositabbo paribhāsītabbo.*) [Bhī Pāc 52 @ V 4:309,7 f]
 - (8) **From this day forth** (*ajja-t-agge*),⁷⁹ a monk may admonish or criticize a nun, but a nun may not admonish or criticize a monk. (*Ajja-t-agge ovaṭo bhikkhunīnam bhikkhūsu vacana,patho, anovaṭo bhikkhūnam bhikkhunīsu vacana,patho.*) [Cf monks’ Pāc 21-24.]
- These 8 principles to be respected are never to be transgressed for life.”⁸⁰ (Cv 10.1.4 @ V 2:255)

2.5.2.3 At the end of each of these “rules,” it is stated that “This principle is to be revered, respected, esteemed, honoured, not to be transgressed for life” (*ayam pi dhammo sakkatvā garukatvā mānetvā pūjetvā yāva,jīvam anatikkamanīyo*). Note that there is no mention of any offence that is entailed in case of any actual breach.

Interestingly, too, it should be noted that all the 8 “rules,” except nos (1) and (5), already have some those rules in the “expiation” (*pacittiya*) category of the Pātimokkha. In other words, these expiation rules were introduced *before* the 8 principles were. Indeed, if any of these 8 principles were already in existence, then, the text would prescribe that they should be dealt with “according to the rule” (*yathā,dhamma*).⁸¹

2.5.2.4 The whole passage rests on the key opening statement that “If, Ānanda, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī accept these ‘8 principles to be respected,’ **they would constitute her ordination.**” In other words, these “rules” concern only Pajā,patī, and no one else: it is her unique method of admission. [2.5.3(5)]

The Dhammapada Commentary records a short account of some nuns’ reaction to Pajāpatī’s ordination. Some nuns, thinking that Pajā,patī is not properly ordained—she had neither teacher nor preceptor, but by herself obtained her monastic robes—are reluctant to participate in the uposatha with her. When the matter is brought to the Buddha’s attention, he declares that her admission is proper, as it consists in her accepting the 8 principles to be respected.⁸²

⁷⁹ This indeclinable adverb clearly suggests that there were incidents where nuns had admonished or advised monks! However, if we read this as applying *only* to Pajāpatī (as her manner of admission), then it makes very good sense.

⁸⁰ 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 Bhikkhūṇi Vinaya). However, despite the Buddha’s careful precautions, many untoward incidents later does occur involving the nuns. For an example, see [2.5.3(7)] below. It is likely that these 8 principles to be respected were formulated after the Buddha’s time, when the monastics were more urbanized in times when patriarchalism 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>.

⁸¹ Eg V 1:78, 2:67, 132, 173, 4:144. See V:RO 1:203.

⁸² DhA 26.8/4:149 ad Dh 391; VA 1:242).

2.5.3 Significance of the 8 principles

(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.* This very first *garu, dhamma* is not only abruptly one-sided in contrast to the Buddha's characteristically reasoned and harmonious approach, even in the Vinaya itself.

It is likely that this rule is rooted in such situations as the rude conduct of Thullā, nandā who would not rise in respect to Mahā Kassapa, a venerable elder monk [2.5.4.3].⁸³ Otherwise, this rule has no counterpart anywhere else in the early Buddhist texts. It seems to oddly stand all alone by itself. Anyway, there is a better, more positive, explanation for this rule of principle.

In the Kūṭa, danta Sutta (D 5) and the Soṇa, daṇḍa Sutta (D 4), prominent brahmins of the day praise the Buddha's friendliness and courtesy, by pointing out that

“Indeed, sirs, the recluse Gotama is one who bids all welcome, congenial, courteous, never frowning, approachable, the first to greet others [the first to speak].”

Samaṇo khalu bho gotamo ehi, sāgata, vādī sakhilo sammodako abbhā, kuṭiko uttāna, mukho pubba, bhāsī. (D 5,7(18)/1:132 @ SD 22.8) & D 4,6/1:116 @ SD 30.5; cf CA 287, 304)

On account of such qualities and many more, the Buddha is honoured by the fourfold company, and many gods and humans have faith in him, so that “near whichever village or market-town that the recluse Gotama resides, non-humans do not trouble the humans therein,” and so that he is the leading teacher, too.

The compassion and wisdom of the Buddha in introducing even just this measure actually works. Other than the drama of her arduous efforts to join the sangha, we hear very little else of Pajāpatī in the suttas.⁸⁴ However, her humility is clearly evident in her moving verses recorded in **the Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī Therī Apadāna (Ap 531)**.⁸⁵

(2) *A nun is forbidden to spend the rains retreat in a place where there is no monk.* This is, in fact, the **Bhikkhuṇī Pācittiya 46** (V 4:313,14 f), a rule whose breach only entails “expiation” (righting the wrong), usually by way of a contrite confession.⁸⁶ Here “no monk” (*abhikkhuka*), means that it is not possible for the nuns to have access to qualified monks for exhortation (*ovāda*) and communion (*saṃvāsa*).

In fact, it is for these two important reasons that the rule is introduced, that is, so that the nuns have access to qualified monks: (1) for exhortation (*ovāda*), and (2) for communion (*saṃvāsa*), defined as “of one formal act, of one monastic code,⁸⁷ of harmony in training” (*eka, kammaṃ ek'uddeso sama, sikkhātā*) (V 4:214,31), and (2). In our own times, “a more liberal interpretation would allow for contact via phone or email, since this would still allow the essential teaching to be transmitted.”⁸⁸

(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.* This is the same as **Bhikkhuṇī Pācittiya 59** (V 4:315,24-26). Obviously, this is not merely a matter of knowing the dates (which can easily be known from the calendar), but participating in the activity that each date entails that is highly significant. This rule then is to ensure the nuns' education in the Dharma-Vinaya, and that the monks should see to

⁸³ This is, of course, assuming that Mahā Pajāpatī was *not* the first nun, that there were nuns even before her. See **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142), SD 1.9.

⁸⁴ She is however prominently featured in **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142), SD 1.9, & an important teaching on the criteria for true Dharma is given to her at (**Mahā Pajāpatī Ovāda S** (A 8.53) = V 2:258 f, SD 102.3, which closely parallels **Satthu, sāsaṇa S** (A 7.83), SD 102.4.

⁸⁵ Ap 2.17.27-25/531: see **Dh 97** @ SD 10.6 (3.4).

⁸⁶ For those who might be troubled by the notion that this suggests some kind of God-centred religious control factor, it should be noted that the practice of wholesome confession predates the God-religions of today.

⁸⁷ Here *uddesa* refers the various chapters or sections of the Pātimokkha (see Vajirañāṇavarorasa 1973:106). This is, in fact, what defines the Thera, vāda sangha as being distinct from other sects, eg the Dharma, guptaka, who are regarded as being of a “different communion” (*nānā, saṃvāsa*).

⁸⁸ Sujato 2007:59, 2009:64.

this. The Pātimokkha conclave is a vital reminder of a monastic's spiritual fellowship and purpose, and listening to the Dharma reminds us of the blessings and duties of such a state.

The foremost of the monks who are teachers of the nuns is Nandaka, as evident from **the Nandak'ovāda Sutta** (M 146).⁸⁹ Other monks who are recorded as having instructed the nuns include Ānanda⁹⁰ and Mahā Kassapa.⁹¹ In places where women are still treated as being socially inferior or subservient, and lack education (as in the case of ancient brahminical system which prohibits women from learning or reciting the sacred texts), this rule is an “affirmative action” for their social upliftment, too. Hence, this rule has to do with Buddhist education.

(4) *At the end of the rains retreat, a nun must address the triple “invitation” (pavāraṇā) to both the sanghas (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).* This is identical to **Bhikkhuṇī Pācittiya 57** (V 4:314,9-11), and concerned the “invitation” (*pavāraṇā*) ceremony that is held at the end of every rains retreat in place of the usual uposatha of the Patimokkha conclave. This is a time of mutual respect and clearing the air amongst monastics who live as a close community. Of course, if for good reason, no monks can be found by the nuns, then they have not broken this rule.

(5) *A nun who has committed a serious [heavy] offence must undergo probation (mānatta) before both sanghas.* Normally, “probation” (*mānatta*) is the rehabilitation procedure for a serious offence that entails the convening and deliberation of a sangha (*saṅgh'ādi,sesa*). As the term *saṅgh'ādi,sesa*, the procedure is examined, deliberated and monitored by the sangha from beginning (*ādi*) and right up to the end (*sesa*), that is, the rehabilitating of a healed and contrite community member.

Note again that “both sanghas” are mentioned, which clearly suggests that *both* the monks' sangha and the nun's sangha are already in existence at that time. This also means that Pajāpatī is not the first nun to be ordained. However, she is clearly the most prominent candidate to be ordained. After all, it is the “queen mother” of the Buddha and the Sakyas who is joining the community. She will need to be properly received into the community so that she is properly trained in the Dharma-Vinaya, and that she harmoniously blends with the other members.

Further, what is ironic here is that, although there is mention of *mānatta*, there is *no* mention of the penalty for the transgression of any of the *garu,dhammas* anywhere in the Vinaya or the suttas. This is highly significant: it means that the *garu,dhammas* are not “rules” in the normal sense of the word: they are simply principles to be followed by an individual as her manner of admission into the sangha—that of Pajāpatī [2.5.2.4]. As such, this “rule” is simply stressing what is already there in the Vinaya (the penalty and rehabilitation process for a *saṅgh'ādi,sesa* offence).

(6) *Ordination as a nun must be sought from both sanghas only after a postulant (sikkhamānā) has kept to the 6 precepts⁹² for two years.* This “rule” parallels **Bhikkhuṇī Pācittiya 63** (V 4:309,7 f). The origin story is about how some nuns were ordained without training, and as such were unskilled. It should be noted that women, especially in the non-Buddhist system or under their influence, generally view that women, on account of their sex and sexuality.

Some ancient Jain authorities, for example, hold that women would not be able to properly meditate or be liberated because of their wanton and weak nature, as well as their bodily impurities (such as menstruation).⁹³ The ancient brahmin texts, too, consistently advocate that women must never be independent, that they must always be subject to their father, their husband, or their son.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ M 146 @ SD 66.12.

⁹⁰ S 47.10 @ SD 24.2; A 4.159 @ SD 10.14; A 9.37 @ SD 34.2.

⁹¹ S 16.10 @ SD 92.7.

⁹² See <http://sikkhamana.googlepages.com/6rules>. See Sujato 2007:163-168 (7.1), 2009:176-182.

⁹³ Digambara mendicant, Kundakunda (c 2nd cent CE). Svetambara preceptor, Meghavijaya (c1653-1704), in his *Yukti,prabodha* (with comy Svopajnavrtti, 1929), further insists on a ritual humiliation of women to be purified of such setbacks: P S Jaini, *Gender and Salvation*, Berkeley, 1991:3 f, 162. See also P Dundas, *The Jains*, London, 2nd ed, 2002:58 f.

⁹⁴ See Dharma,śāstra, eg Vāśiṣṭha 5.1-2; Baudhāyana 2.2.3.44-45; Viṣṇu 25.12-13; Manu 9.2-3. All this is also very reminiscent of traditional Chinese society which upheld the Confucian notion of the “3 obediences” (Chin *san-*

This “rule” poses an interesting dilemma. If it is accepted as a nun’s rule, then ordination for women would be impossible. Except for Pajāpatī (if she were the first nun), all other women candidates would need to spend 2 years as *sikkhāmānās* from both sanghas! To begin with if they are all trainees, from whom then can proper ordination be obtained? In other words, this “rule” presumes that the nuns’ sangha is already in existence.⁹⁵

(7) *A nun should on no account revile or abuse a monk.* This “rule” parallels **Bhikkhuṇī Pācittiya 52** (V 4:309,7 f). Its origin story is in Vesālī where an elder of the group of 6 nuns has died. They cremate her, build her a stupa and wailed noisily, disturbing the monk Kappitaka who lives in the same cemetery. Later, Kappitaka levels the stupa. When the nuns find out, they plan to kill him.

When the elder Upāli hears of this, he warns Kappitaka, who goes into hiding. The nuns destroy his hut, thinking that they have killed him. Later when they discover that Kappitaka has actually escaped and that Upāli has helped him, they go up to Upāli and rudely abused him. When the Buddha learns of this, he institutes the rule that nuns should not abuse monks.⁹⁶

Clearly here, the nun’s Pācittiya 52 precedes the *garu,dhamma* because it is impossible that the Buddha would promulgate the rule, as the *garu,dhamma* is already instituted. Indeed, despite such rules, we still have cases where undisciplined nuns like Thullā Nandā (S 2:219) and Thullā Tissā (S 16.10) who rudely abused Mahā Kāssapa [2.5.4.3].

We do, however, have a situation where some unscrupulous monks actually abused this rule. In the case history of the monks’ **Pācittiya 21**, the notorious group of 6 monks, for the sake of gains, go to the nuns’ quarters and admonish them only briefly, and spend the rest of the time in frivolous chatter. When the Buddha asks the nuns if the teaching is effective, they complain of the monks’ improper conduct. So here, we have a situation where nuns actually complain about the misconduct of monks, (although, however, this does not amount to reviling or abusing them in any way).⁹⁷

(8) *From this day forth (ajja-t-agge), a monk may admonish or criticize a nun, but a nun may neither admonish nor criticize a monk.* The rules for admonition in this connection are found in the monks’ **Pācittiya 21-24**.⁹⁸ Otherwise, this “rule” has no counterpart in the Vinaya of any school. From the contexts of the keyword *vacana,patha*, “speech-patterns,” a word used in its broadest senses in **the Kakacūpama Sutta** (M 21), where it refers to 5 pairs of speech-patterns: *timely or untimely, true or false, gentle or harsh, connected with the goal or not connected, and with lovingkindness or with hate*.⁹⁹

Clearly here, *vacana,patha* has both the positive sense (“admonish” in a timely manner, with truth, gently, with what is connected with the goal, and with lovingkindness) or the negative sense (“criticize” in an untimely manner, with untruths, harshly, with what is connected with the goal, and with hatred).

However, from the context of the Kakacūpama Sutta, it is clear that *vacana,patha* is not something pleasant. In other words, while it is true that we would not be happy with negative speech-patterns, we can also find that, for various reasons, we might be unhappy with positive “speech-patterns” if we have a big ego or feel that we do not deserve such admonition.¹⁰⁰

Again, here, if we see this as relating to educating the nuns, the situation at once becomes clear. Although this *garu,dhamma* is part of Pajāpatī’s admission method, as a principle it also applies to other women, most of whom, unlike her, are uneducated and live in an oppressive environment, so that they

cong 三從) of a woman, ie, obeying her father before marriage, her husband during marriage, and her son after her husband’s death (禮記 *Li ji*, “Book of Rites”).

⁹⁵ For a more detailed analysis, see Sujato ch 7, 2007:160-189 & 2009:181-205.

⁹⁶ It should be noted that verbal abuse of anyone by a monk or a nun is already covered by monks’ **Pāc 13**, so it is actually redundant, or we can take the above rule (Bhī Pāc 52) as a corollary to Pāc 13. Moreover, the nun’s rule is also very similar to or included in *garu,dhamma* (8). All this again shows that this *garu,dhamma* is not actually a rule.

⁹⁷ V 4:49-53.

⁹⁸ Pāc 21 (V 4:51,3 f); Pāc 22 (V 4:55,9 f); Pāc 23 (V 4:57,1-4); Pāc 24 (V 4:58,10 f).

⁹⁹ M 21,11 @ SD 38.1.

¹⁰⁰ Such as in the cases of accusations brought against a monk, as exemplified in **Khaluṅka S** (A 8.14), SD 7.9.

have to learn to speak in a wholesome manner. After all, the women candidates have all joined the sangha as neophytes and students.

This also explains the otherwise puzzling presence of the adverb *ajja-t-agge*, “from this day forth.” This means that before that day, nuns *have* been admonishing and criticizing the monks—which is not very pleasant or wholesome, and might have got out of hand. Hence, with Pajāpati’s admission, it is time to set things right for the education of the nuns and other female renunciants.

2.5.4 A few problems and issues

2.5.4.1 Mahā Pajā,patī is admitted as a nun in the 5th year (BA 4). She (also on behalf of the 500 women, erstwhile wives of 500 Sakyas who have renounced) requests for admission when the Buddha visits Kapila,vatthu. The Buddha rejects the request, and moves on to Vesālī. Pajā,patī and the 500 women follow him there, where Ānanda is said to have interceded on their behalf so that the Buddha finally, but reluctantly, as it were, admitted.

Ānanda’s involvement here is problematic. He joined the sangha in the 2nd year (V 2:183; AA 1:191) and was admitted by the Buddha himself (V 1:183), but he only became close to the Buddha as his personal attendant at the end of the 20th year. Are we to take it that the newly ordained Ānanda would presume to intercede on Pajāpati’s behalf when he is still only a new monk (*navaka bhikkhu*)? This is one of the reasons for suspecting that this account was probably contrived and interpolated into the Vinaya after the Buddha’s time.¹⁰¹

2.5.4.2 Technically, the ordination by accepting the 8 “principles to be respected” (*garu, dhamma*) is a subset of the ordination by acceptance of admonition, as in the admission of Mahā Kassapa [2.3]. However, both are unique methods for very special individuals. In the case of Mahā Kassapa, we have a great saintly elder who goes on to become an exemplary forest monk and who is instrumental in perpetuating the teaching by convening the first Buddhist council to recite the Dharma-Vinaya.

In the second case—that of Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī—we have the story of the introduction of the nuns’ sangha. Although by now, modern scholarship is more certain that she is not the first nun, the story of her unique ordination by the acceptance of the 8 principles to be respected, highlights the problems of admitting women into the sangha.¹⁰²

2.5.4.3 These 8 principles to be respected are interesting because, traditionally, the Buddha would only make a rule or amend one after the fact, that is, only *after* a problem incident (such as a public complaint) or an infringement of a rule has occurred. In the case of the ordination of women, he has introduced preventive procedures, rather than *corrective* or *restorative* measures (which were compiled later for the nuns as the Bhikkhūnī Vinaya).¹⁰³

However, despite the Buddha’s careful precautions, many untoward incidents do occur later involving the nuns. There are cases where indisciplined nuns like Thullā Nandā (S 2:219) and Thullā Tissā (S 16.-10), who rudely abused Mahā Kāssapa. It is likely that these 8 principles to be respected were formulated after the Buddha’s time, when monastics were more urbanized, wealthier, worldlier, and when patriarchy was prevalent.¹⁰⁴

2.6 THE ORDINATION BY PROXY (*dūtenūpasampadā*). In Kassapa¹⁰⁵ Buddha’s time, Aḍḍha,kāsī¹⁰⁶ was a nun who kept the precepts well. However, once she reviled an arhat nun, calling her a prostitute. When her karma ripened, she was reborn in a hell-state.

¹⁰¹ See eg Tathaaloka Bhikkhuni, 2009: <http://www.dhammadharini.net/dhamma/dhamma-talks-from-the-bhikkhuni-sangha/aranya-bodhi-hermitage/non-historicity-of-the-eight-garudhammas>.

¹⁰² See **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142) + SD 1.9.

¹⁰³ **Bhikkhūnī Vibhaṅga**: V 4:211-351.

¹⁰⁴ 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>. See also Sujato 2009

¹⁰⁵ Kassapa is the Buddha just before our Gotama Buddha. [1.2.2.3]

¹⁰⁶ Also called Aḍḍha,kāsikā: see V 2:282 (V:H 5:392) and CPD sv. For her story by Dhamma,pāla (ThīA 30-33), see ThīA:M 44-48.

In the time of our Buddha, she is the daughter of a rich and eminent resident of Benares. However, because of her former bad speech, she is inclined to become a courtesan (*gaṇikā*) in Rājagaha. One day, after hearing the Buddha teaching, she decides to join the sangha of nuns.

Wishing to obtain her ordination (*upasampadā*) from the sangha, she sets out for Sāvattī, but some libertines who know of her reputation, try to waylay here. Turning back, she then sends a man to ask the Buddha's advice. He permits her to be ordained by a messenger (*dūta*), that is, by proxy.¹⁰⁷ Later, she attains arhathood. This is another unique admission method, done only for Aḍḍha, kāsī.

2.7 THE DOUBLE ORDINATION

2.7.1 The “double ordination” is a simple name for the instituted method of ordination for nuns, which is properly called the “ordination by the two sanghas” (*ubhatosaṅghe ūpasampadā*) or the ordination of eight proclamations or “eight-voiced ordination” (*aṭṭha, vācikūpasampadā*). This method of admission is listed as (6) [2.5.2.2].

The Vinaya Commentary explains the double ordination as follows:

The ordination of 8 proclamations is so called because there is the act of a motion with 3 proclamations by the nuns' sangha, and the act of a motion with 3 proclamations by the monks' sangha, that is to say, an ordination with two formal acts.

Aṭṭha, vācikūpasampadā nāma bhikkhuniyā bhikkhuni, saṅghato ñatti, catutthena bhikkhu, saṅghato ñatti, catutthenāti imehi dvīhi kammehi upasampadā. (VA 1:242)¹⁰⁸

2.7.2 Clearly, this method is rooted in rule (6) of the 8 principles to be respected [2.5.2], which states that “Ordination as a nun must be sought from both sanghas only after a postulant (*sikkhamānā*) has kept to the 6 precepts [that is, the 5 precepts and the rule regarding not eating during wrong hours] for two years.” (Cv 10.1.4). Although offhand, we could say that the double ordination of the nuns is rooted in the ordination by the 8 principles to be respected, due to the lack clear textual evidence, we cannot really know which precedes which.

It is possible, for example, that the double ordination arose first, but with the admission of Mahā Pajā, patī, it was incorporated as rule (6) of the 8 principles to be respected. Rule (8), for example, says: “**From this day forth** (*ajja-t-agge*), a monk can admonish and advise a nun, but a nun cannot admonish or advise a monk.” This rule suggests that there were incidents where nuns had advised or chided monks before!¹⁰⁹

3 The ordination by an act of a motion with 3 proclamations

3.1 TYPES OF ORDINATION

3.1.1 Two kinds of ordinations. Generally, we can historically divide ordination (*upasampadā*), meaning here full admission into the sangha, as being of two kinds: (1) those admitted by the “Come, bhikshu!” method, and (2) those who are not. Or, we can classify these two ways as: (1) those ordained before the Buddha (*sammukha*) and (2) those ordained “before others” (that is, other elders) (*param, mukha*).¹¹⁰

Those ordained by the Buddha himself, while he lives, on account of their attaining the noble birth (*ariyāya jātiyā jātā*), such as Aññāsī Koṇḍañña and the rest, are said to be “the disciples ordained before the Buddha” (*sammukha, sāvakā*). However, after the Buddha's final nirvana, the mindful who realize the

¹⁰⁷ V 2:277, 282; VA 1:242; Thī 25-26; ThīA 30-33; ThīAp 32/2.610 f.

¹⁰⁸ See also V 5:137,7 (Vajirabuddhiṭṭkā (Vjb) [Hinuber, *Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 1996: §§367-371]). Cf V 2:273,20 f & 274,8 f.

¹⁰⁹ **Cīvara S** (S 16.11), in fact, records a case where the nun Thullā, nandā berates Mahā Kassapa for chiding Ānanda (S 16.11, 10-11), SD 77.5. Such episodes would have been instrumental in the introduction of no (6) of the principles to be respected.

¹¹⁰ *Yathā ehi, bhikkhu, bhāvena upasampadā, na ehi, bhikkhu, bhāvena upasampadā 'ti duvidhā, evaṃ sammukhā, - parammukhā, bhedato 'pi duvidhā.* (ThaA 3:203)

excellence (*visesa*) of awakening (that is, sainthood), whether the Teacher's body of Dharma is evident [within sight] or not, are called the disciples (ordained) before others.¹¹¹ (ThaA 3:203)

The point of this note by the commentator Dhammapāla is that even though the Buddha is no more around to admit candidates or ordain monastics, the sangha is now empowered to do so. The phrase “whether the Teacher's body of Dharma is evident [within sight] or not”¹¹² is enigmatic, but it probably means whether the Dharma is evident to the world or not, that is, as long as the sangha exists, it is possible to admit candidates.

3.1.2 Origin story. The origin story of the ordination method that is still in use today by the Theravāda community is recorded in the Vinaya, but we only know of his name from the Commentaries. Before becoming a monk, **Rādha** is a poor brahmin neglected in old age by his children. Rādha lives with the monks and assists in the daily monastic chores. Although the monks are kind to him, none of them is willing to ordain him. As a result, Rādha becomes depressed and thin.

The Buddha, noticing his condition, goes to him, and hearing of his wish to join the sangha, summons the monks and asks if any of them remembers any favour done by Rādha. Sāriputta answers that he once received a ladleful of Rādha's own food while on almsround in Rājagaha. Sāriputta then agrees to admit Rādha into the sangha. The Buddha praises Sāriputta for his exemplary show of gratitude.¹¹³

3.2 A FORMAL ACT

3.2.1 Institution of the method. When Sāriputta asks the Buddha how Rādha should be admitted, the Buddha announces the institution of the ordination by an act of a motion with 3 proclamations *ñatti, catuttha, kammūpasampadā*¹¹⁴ [2.1], thus:

Then, the Blessed One, on that occasion, having given a Dharma talk regarding this matter, addressed the monks, “Bhikshus, from this day forth that ordination by going to the 3 refuge that I had permitted is abolished from today onwards. Bhikshus, I permit ordination by an act of a motion with 3 declarations.

Atha kho bhagavā etasmim̐ nidāne etasmim̐ pakaraṇe dhammim̐ katham̐ katvā bhikkhū āman-tesī, yā sā, bhikkhave, mayā tīhi saraṇa, gamanehi upasampadā anuññātā, tam̐ ajja-t-agge paṭi- khipāmi. Anujānāmi, bhikkhave, ñatti, catutthena kammaena upasampādetum̐.

(Mv 1.28.5-6 @ V 1:56,8)¹¹⁵

This is in fact the precursor of a parliamentary act, where a motion (or “bill”) is presented before the house, and after three readings, debated on, and if passed, it becomes law.

3.2.2 The formal action of ordination. The method itself is laid out in the Mahā, vagga as follows:

(1) *Evañ ca pana bhikkhave upasampādetabbo.*

Vyattena bhikkhunā paṭibaleṇa saṅgho ñāpetabbo:

(2) *Sunātu me bhante saṅgho. Ayam̐ itthan, nāmo itthan, nāmassa āyasmato upasampadāpekkho.*

Yadi saṅghassa patta, kallaṃ, saṅgho itthan, nāmaṃ upasampādeyya itthan, nāmena upajjhāyena.

Esā ñatti.

(1) Bhikshus, this is how one should be ordained.

The sangha should be informed by an experienced competent monk, thus:

(2) “Bhantes, let the sangha hear me. This so-and-so wishes for ordination from venerable so-and-so [the preceptor's name].

If it seems proper for the sangha, may the sangha ordain so-and-so with so-and-so as preceptor. **This is the motion.**

¹¹¹ *Ye hi satthu dharamāna, kāle ariyāya jātiyā jātā, te aññāsi, koṇḍaññ'ādayo sammukha, sāvakā nāma. Ye pana bhagavato parinibbānato pacchā adhiḡata, visesā, te sati 'pi satthu dhamma, sarīrassa paccakkha, bhāve satthu sarīrassa apaccakkha, bhāvato param, mukha, sāvakā nāma. (ThaA 3:203)*

¹¹² *Satthu dhamma, sarīrassa paccakkha, bhāve satthu sarīrassa apaccakkha, bhāvato.*

¹¹³ Mv 1.18 @ V 1:54 f; DhA 6.1/2:104-108; ThaA 2:12 f.

¹¹⁴ A 2.300/1:99; V 1:317, 2:89, 91 f, 4:152.

¹¹⁵ Be Ee *upasampadetum̐*; Ce Se *upasampadam̐*. Mv 1.28.5-6 @ V 1:56,8; also V 1:317,37, 3:24,8; VA 242,31 = Vbh 246,5; 1:99,16; VA 1195,13+25.

(3) *Suñātu me bhante saṅgho. Ayaṃ itthan, nāmo itthan, nāmassa āyasmato upasampadāpekkho.*

Saṅgho itthan, nāmaṃ upasampādeti itthan, nāmena upajjhāyena.

Yass'āyasmato khamati itthan, nāmassa upasampadā itthan, nāmena upajjhāyena, so tuṅhassa; yassa na-k, khamati, so bhāseyya.

(4) ***Dutiyam pi etam atthaṃ vadāmi:***

Suñātu me bhante saṅgho. Ayaṃ itthan, nāmo itthan, nāmassa āyasmato upasampadāpekkho.

Saṅgho itthan, nāmaṃ upasampādeti itthan, nāmena upajjhāyena.

Yass'āyasmato khamati itthan, nāmassa upasampadā itthan, nāmena upajjhāyena, so tuṅhassa; yassa na-k, khamati, so bhāseyya.

(5) ***Tatīyam pi etam atthaṃ vadāmi:***

Suñātu me bhante saṅgho. Ayaṃ itthan, nāmo itthan, nāmassa āyasmato upasampadāpekkho.

Saṅgho itthan, nāmaṃ upasampādeti itthan, nāmena upajjhāyena.

Yass'āyasmato khamati itthan, nāmassa upasampadā itthan, nāmena upajjhāyena, so tuṅhassa; yassa na-k, khamati, so bhāseyya.

(6) *Upasampanno saṅghena itthan, nāmo itthan, nāmena upajjhāyena. Khamati saṅghassa, tasmā tuṅhī, evam etaṃ dhārayāmi.*¹¹⁶

(3) Bhantes, let the sangha hear me. This so-and-so wishes for ordination from venerable so-and-so.

The sangha is ordaining so-and-so with so-and-so as preceptor.

If the ordination of so-and-so with so-and-so as preceptor is acceptable, the let them be silent. Let him who disapproves, speak!

(4) For the second time, I speak this matter.

Bhantes, let the sangha hear me. This so-and-so wishes for ordination from venerable so-and-so.

The sangha is ordaining so-and-so with so-and-so as preceptor.

If the ordination of so-and-so with so-and-so as preceptor is acceptable, the let them be silent. Let him who disapproves, speak!

(5) For the third time, I speak this matter.

Bhantes, let the sangha hear me. This so-and-so wishes for ordination from venerable so-and-so.

The sangha is ordaining so-and-so with so-and-so as preceptor.

If the ordination of so-and-so with so-and-so as preceptor is acceptable, the let them be silent. Let him who disapproves, speak!

(6) Ordained by the sangha is so-and-so with so-and-so as preceptor. The sangha approves, therefore it is silent. Thus will I bear it in mind.

Section (1) is the textual introduction. The actual text of the formal act (*kamma, vācā*) begins at (2) when the “act-announcing teacher” (*kamma, vācācariya*) proclaims the “motion” (*ñatti*). (3) is the first proclamation. The conclave is asked if anyone has any issue to raise. Silence mean consensus: this is technically known in western legal terminology as *qui tacet consentire videtur*, (Latin) “he who is silent is taken to agree” or “silence means consent.”¹¹⁷

This proclamation is repeated twice more (4+5), with the conclave giving their consensus throughout. Immediately after the third proclamation, the consensus is complete. The (6) the act-announcing teacher intones in a higher minor key, announcing that the motion has been carried. The preceptor then notes the exact time that the candidate has been accepted. This recorded time is used as a seniority marker, so that those ordained even a minute later would be junior to him, and should show him respectful deference.

3.2.3 Significance. This is the method that is still used today, and is the only valid one allowed by the Vinaya. It actually has two parts: (1) the “going-forth” (*pabbajjā*), when the candidate goes for refuge and then recites the 10 novice precepts, and so is admitted as a novice (*sāmaṇera*).¹¹⁸

The *ñatti, catuttha, kammūpasampadā* [2.1] is an ordination by way of a formal act (*saṅgha, kamma*) or called sangha act or ecclesiastical act, with an announcement of the motion before the conclave, followed by three proclamations of the motion (that is, an act of a motion with 3 proclamations). Traditionally, the

¹¹⁶ Mv 1.29/V 1:56.

¹¹⁷ See SD 44.1 (2.6). This is the “silence procedure” of the mediaeval west, where we have the French term, *procédure d'approbation tacite*: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silence_procedure.

¹¹⁸ On novice training, see Jinavarasirivadḍhana 1983.

conclave would remain silent throughout the procedure to show their consensus (unless they do not approve of the ordination). The motion, the “fourth” part of the process, is then carried. The candidate is now a sangha member.

3.3 THE ORDINATION PROCEDURE TODAY

3.3.1 Traditions. Amongst the traditional ethnic Buddhists of Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand, the ordination ceremony is a time of merit-making and merriment. The ordination method followed today by the Thera, vāda communities in these countries and elsewhere are basically identical, except for minor local differences such as the spelling or the pronunciation of some words,¹¹⁹ and the inclusion of extra pujas or verses.¹²⁰

3.3.2 Preconditions

3.3.2.1 According to the Thai Theravāda, a candidate must fulfill the 5 basic conditions (*sampatti*) for **the monk ordination**, this is,

- (1) He should be a male.
- (2) He should be full 20 years from date of conception (lunar calculation).¹²¹
- (3) He should not be physically defective in any way (such as being a eunuch or a paraplegic).
- (4) He should not have committed any serious crimes, such as killing a parent.
- (5) He should not have committed any serious offences, such as those entailing “defeat” (*pārājika*) if previously ordained, or he has a wrong view and follows another religion.¹²²

3.3.2.2 In the ordination text (*kamma, vāca*) itself, the candidate would be asked the following as preconditions for ordination:

(1) The candidate should have ready a monk’s bowl and the triple robe to be presented to the preceptor which will then be returned to him, and each ritually identified.

(2) He is then ascertained that he does not have any of these 5 diseases, that is, sores (*kuṭṭha*), boils (*gaṇḍa*), leprosy (*kilāsa*), consumption (*soso*), or epilepsy (*apāmāra*).

(3) He is asked to ascertain that he is a human, a male, a freeman (not a prisoner or fugitive), debt-free, not in government service, and has his parents’ consent.

(4) Finally, he is asked if his bowl and robes are ready, what his Pali name is, and who his preceptor is. These two questions on names are to ascertain the Pali names to be used in the formal act.¹²³

3.3.3 Pabbajjā, upasampadā

3.3.3.1 The full ordination procedure itself comprises (1) the novice admission (*pabbajjā*), and (2) the monk ordination (*upasampadā*). If it is only a **novice admission** (*pabbajjā*), only the preceptor is needed, and he will administer the 10 precepts.¹²⁴ The novice should be at least 15 years old, or if younger, he should be able to “scare crows away.”¹²⁵ He should have a bowl and two robes (that is, without the upper robe or *saṅghāṭi*). Only monks are allowed the third robe.¹²⁶ The novice will also be informally given a bowl after the ceremony.

3.3.3.2 A candidate for monkhood [3.3.2] must go through the double procedure of admission and ordination (*pabbajjā, upasampadā*), which are done together in a single ceremony even for a novice who is ordaining. The formal act only applies within the ordination procedure when all the preconditions are

¹¹⁹ In Wat Srales, Bangkok, where I was ordained in 1972, eg, the opening word of the whole procedure is pronounced as *ukāsa* instead of the usual *okāsa* (“permit me”) and the 3 refuges is pronounced in a Sanskrit style as *buddham saraṇam gacchāmi, dhammam saraṇam gacchāmi, saṅgham saraṇam gacchāmi* (ie with labial ending of the first two words of each refuge instead of the usual nasal *-am*), followed by the traditional style (with the nasal endings).

¹²⁰ For the Mahā, nikāya ordination of the Wat Srales style, see Piyasīla 1972.

¹²¹ In other words, this would conventionally be 20 years and 9 months (or 10 lunar months).

¹²² Vajirañāṇavarorasa 1969:4 f.

¹²³ On this whole section, see Piyasīlo 1972:26 f.

¹²⁴ For the 3 refuges & 10 precepts, see Khp 1+2/1 f. For trs, see Khp:Ñ 1 f & Comy 1-36.

¹²⁵ Mv 1.51 @ V 1:79. Note how the rule is made flexible here to allow a boy who is physically adept and independent to go forth.

¹²⁶ On robes and bowls, see Vajirañāṇavarorasa 1973:11-36.

fulfilled. In an ordination, a sponsor, usually family members, would donate the robes, bowls and other requisites.

3.3.3.3 Of special significance is **the quorum** of monks needed for the ceremony. Originally, the Vinaya stipulates a conclave of at least 10 monks for an ordination.¹²⁷ And a preceptor should be at least 10 years (*vassa*) in the order.¹²⁸

In due course, the Buddha gave allowance to ordinations in the “border districts,” that is, outside of the central Gangetic plain (“the holy land”). Only a minimum of 5 monks with the fifth who is a Vinaya expert is needed as a quorum for ordination now.¹²⁹

4 Definitions of *bhikkhu* and *bhikkhunī*

4.0 There are two kinds of definitions of “monk” (*bhikkhu*)—the Vinaya definition and the Abhidhamma definition—but only one definition of “nun” (*bhikkhunī*), that is, the Vinaya. Both the Vinaya definitions are found in the Old Commentary (*pada, bhājanīya*, “word explanation”)¹³⁰ of the Vinaya [4.1; 4.3], while the Abhidhamma definition is given in chapter 12 of **the Vibhaṅga**, the one on the analysis of dhyana (*jhāna vibhaṅga*) [4.2].

4.1 VINAYA DEFINITION OF BHIKKHU. The Vinaya definition of “monk,” anglicized as “bhikshu” (*bhikkhu*), is found in **the Sutta Vibhaṅga** (*sutta* here refers to the rules),¹³¹ that is, the analysis of the very first rule in the Pāṭimokkha, the “defeat” rule (*pārājika*) regarding sexual misconduct.

Monk means

- (1) a monk is one who lives on almsfood
- (2) a monk is one who resorts to walking for alms
- (3) a monk is one who wears patchwork robes
- (4) a monk by designation
- (5) a monk by acknowledgement
- (6) a monk (to whom it was said,) **“Come, bhikshu!”**
- (7) a monk ordained by the going for the 3 refuges
- (8) a monk who is auspicious,
a monk who is the essence,
a monk who is a learner,
a monk who is an adept,
by harmony of the sangha, by means of
a formal act of a motion followed by 3
proclamations, irreversible and fit to stand,
a monk.

Bhikkhūti

- (1) *bhikkhako 'ti bhikkhu*
- (2) *bhikkhā, cariyam ajjhupagato 'ti bhikkhu*
- (3) *bhinna, paṭa, dharo 'ti bhikkhu*
- (4) *samaññāya bhikkhu*
- (5) *paṭiññāya bhikkhu*
- (6) *ehi bhikkhūti bhikkhu*
- (7) *tīhi saraṇa, gamanehi upasampanno 'ti bhikkhu*
- (8) *bhadro bhikkhu*
sāro bhikkhu
sekho bhikkhu
asekho bhikkhu
samaggena saṅghena
ñatti, catutthena kammena
akuppena ṭhānārahena upasampanno 'ti
bhikkhu. (V 3:24)

4.2 ABHIDHAMMA DEFINITION OF BHIKKHU. The Abhidhamma definition of *bhikkhu* appears in chapter 12, the one on the analysis of dhyana (*jhāna vibhaṅga*), which gives us a good idea of the nature of the definition of monk in terms of meditation.

¹²⁷ Mv 1.31.2 @ V 1:58.

¹²⁸ Mv 1.31.10 @ V 1:59.

¹²⁹ Mv 5.13.11-12 @ V 1:197.

¹³⁰ VA 95, 901; PaṭkA (Kaṅkhā, vitarāṇī) 26,29. On the Old Aṭṭhakathā, see VA 617,12-620,25. For further details, see Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature*, 1996 §22.

¹³¹ Technically, *sutta* means “thread,” as in the flow of connected developments of a particular rule. Also, more specifically, this is the *bhikkhu vibhaṅga* (dealing with the analyses of the monks’ rules), as contrasted to the *bhikkhunī vibhaṅga* (the analyses of the the nuns’ rules) [4.3].

Monk means

- (1) a monk by designation, a monk by declaration,
- (2) a monk is one who live on almsfood,
a monk is one who habitually lives on almsfood,
- (3) a monk is one who resorts to walking for alms
- (4) a monk is one who wears patchwork robes,
- (5) a monk is one who destroys bad unwholesome states,
- (6) a monk on account of destroying bad unwholesome states,
- (7) a monk by the limited abandoning of defilements,
a monk by the unlimited abandoning of defilements,
a monk who is a learner,
a monk who is an adept,
a monk who is neither a learner nor an adept,
a monk who is foremost,
a monk who is fortunate,
a monk who is refined,
a monk is who is the essence,
by the harmony of the sangha, by means of
a formal act of a motion followed by 3
proclamations, irreversible, and fit to stand,
a monk.

Bhikkhūti

- (1) *samaññāya bhikkhu, paṭiññāya bhikkhu,*
- (2) *bhikkhatīti bhikkhu,*
bhikkhako'ti bhikkhu,
- (3) *bhikkhā, cariyam ajjhupagato'ti bhikkhu,*
- (4) *bhinna, paṭa, dharo'ti bhikkhu,*
- (5) *bhindati pāpake akusale dhamme'ti bhikkhu,*
- (6) *bhinnattā pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ*
dhammānaṃ
bhikkhu, odhiso kilesānaṃ pahānā bhikkhu,
anodhiso kilesānaṃ pahānā bhikkhu,
sekkho bhikkhu,
asekkho bhikkhu,
n'eva, sekkha, nāsekkho bhikkhu,
aggo bhikkhu,
bhadro bhikkhu,
maṇḍo bhikkhu,
sāro bhikkhu,
samaggena saṅghena ñatti, catutthena
kammena akuppena ṭhānārahena
upasampanno bhikkhu.

(Vbh 245 f)

4.3 VINAYA DEFINITION OF BHIKKHUṆĪ. The Vinaya definition of “nun” (*bhikkhunī*) is given as follows:

Nun means:

- (1) a nun is a collector of alms,
- (2) a nun is one who resorts to walking for alms,
- (3) a nun is one who wears patchwork robes,
- (4) a nun by designation (of others),
a nun by acknowledgement,
a nun (to whom it was) said, “**Come, bhikshuni!**”
- (5) a nunone ordained by the going for the 3 refuges,
- (6) is a nun who is auspicious,
a nun who is the essence,
a nun who is a learner,
a nun who is an adept,
a nun, by the harmony of both sanghas, by means of
a formal act at which the motion is put, followed
by three proclamations, irreversible and fit to stand.

Bhikkhunī'ti

- (1) *bhikkhikā'ti bhikkhunī*
- (2) *bhikkhā, cariyam ajjhupagatā'ti bhikkhunī*
- (3) *bhinna, paṭa, dharā'ti bhikkhunī*
- (4) *samaññāya bhikkhunī*
paṭiññāya bhikkhunī
ehi bhikkhunī'ti bhikkhunī
- (5) *tīhi saraṇa, gamanehi upasampannā'ti bhikkhunī*
- (6) *bhadrā bhikkhunī*
sārā bhikkhunī
sekhā bhikkhunī
asekhā bhikkhunī
samaggena ubhato, saṅghena
ñatti, catutthena kammena
akuppena ṭhānārahena upasampannā'ti
bhikkhunī

(V 4:214)

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