

9

Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī and related teachings**Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta**

The Discourse on the Analysis of Gifts | M 142

Theme: The first nuns and the nature of giving

Translated by Piya Tan ©2002, rev 2018, 2023

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

CONTENTS

SD 1.9 (1)	The Buddha's hesitation to ordain women
SD 1.9 (2)	The ordination of Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī: the principles of respect
SD 1.9(3)	Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta (M 142)
SD 1.9 (4)	Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta (D 16,3.34 f/2:112 f), SD 9: the fourfold community
SD 1.9 (5)	Therīgāthā: Bhaddā Kuṇḍala, kesā (Thī 109); Vaḍḍha, mātā (Thī 204-212)
SD 1.9 (6)	Bhikkhuṇī Vibhaṅga: definition of nun; Dhammapāla's commentary
SD 1.9 (7)	The nuns' order revival controversy in the early 2000s
SD 1.9 (8)	Report from Wat Pa Nanachat regarding Wat Pa Phong decision
SD 1.9 (9)	Brahmavamso on why he was "excommunicated"
SD 1.9 (10)	The Brahmavamso controversy: a reflection

THE TRADITIONAL ACCOUNTS

1 The Buddha's hesitation to ordain women

1.1 Mohan Wijayaratna, in his book, *Buddhist Monastic Life*,¹ 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.

1.2 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 protection in future generations. Indeed, some unfortunate incidents occurred 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.² On another occasion, while the nuns were away, their huts were burned down (V 4:303).

1.3 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

¹ Tr Grangier & Collin, 1990:158-163.

² V 3:35; DhA 2:49 f.

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 (Cv 10.1 @ V 2:253-256; A 8.51)³

2.1 KAPILAVATTHU

At that time the Blessed One stayed amongst the Sakyans in Nigrodha’ Park near **Kapilavatthu**.⁴ There **Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī**⁵ approached the Blessed One, saying:

“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, 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 Sakyans women, and in due course approached the gabled hall in the 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**,⁶ 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.

³ See also Nāṇamoli *Life of the Buddha*, 1972:104-107; Rockhill 60 f; Thomas, *Life*, 108 f.

⁴ This was during the 5th year of the ministry (BA 4). This was soon after king Suddhodana’s death as a lay arhat (ThīA 141).

⁵ 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.

⁶ Mahā Pajāpatī is admitted as a nun in the 5th year (BA 4). Ānanda’s presence here is problematic. He joined the order in the 2nd year (V 2:183; AA 1:191) and was admitted by the Buddha himself (V 1:183), but he only become 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 Pajāpatī’s behalf when he is still a new monk (*navaka bhikkhu*)? See SD 45.16 (2.5).

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-returning, the fruit of non-returning 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 him⁷—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 8 PRINCIPLES OF RESPECT

“If, Ānanda, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī accepts these 8 principles of respect (*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 the nuns 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 6 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*),⁸ a monk may advise or criticize a nun, but a nun may not advise or criticize a monk.

—These 8 principles of respect are never to be transgressed for life.” (Cv 10.1.4 @ V 2:255)⁹ [2.7.1]

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:

⁷ **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142,3/3:253), SD 1.9.

⁸ This indeclinable adverb clearly suggests that there were incidents where nuns had admonished or advised monks!

⁹ For a detailed discussion on the 8 principles, see SD 45.16 (2.5): The ordination by the 8 principles to be respected.

“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 8 principles of respect never to be transgressed for life.”

2.6 THE BUDDHA’S PROPHECY

The venerable Ānanda then approached the Buddha and informed him of Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī’s acceptance of the 8 principles of respect, 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.¹⁰

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 8 principles of respect 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)

2.7 EVALUATION

2.7.1 The 8 principles of respect or “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. Although we may conjecture the Buddha has introduced these “rules” as preventive measures, a more plausible explanation is that these are not Vinaya rules at all, but the Buddha’s instruction to Gotamī—even a pact with her—as the conditions for accepting into the order.

The alternative explanation—which is less likely—is that these rules were not introduced by the Buddha, but a later interpolation by the elders. They were introduced—traditionally by way of a legitimizing account—by attributing to the Buddha himself. In that case, it was likely that the rules were introduced when the monastics were more organized in huge urban monasteries, and when patriarchalism was strongly evident and widespread.¹¹

2.7.2 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 8 principles of respect were introduced by the Buddha probably in connection with

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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 SD 45.16 (2.5.2).

Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī's ordination—and this is surely the case. After Suddhodāna's death, it might be said that Pajāpatī, as Suddhodāna'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.¹² [7]

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Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta

The Discourse on the Analysis of Gifts

M 142

[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 gone up to the Blessed One, she saluted him and sat down at one side.

Seated thus at one side, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī said 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 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.”¹³

For a second time, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī said 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 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 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 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.”

¹² For the context of nuns in early monastic history, see SD 45.16 esp (2.5). For further details on the 8 principles to be respected, see SD 45.16 (2.5).

¹³ On the benefits of offering to the sangha, see also Miln 240.

Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī's virtue

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

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

3.2 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.

3.3 Bhante, the Blessed One, too, has been of great service to 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.

3.4 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.¹⁴

3.5 Bhante, on account of the Blessed One, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī is

accomplished in **wise faith**¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

3.6 Bhante, on account of the Blessed One, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī is

free of doubt¹⁷ 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 Pajāpatī Gotamī.”

¹⁴ On her status as a laywoman observing the 5 precepts, see “Notes on the Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta” under “Contradiction” [3.1] below here.

¹⁵ “Wise faith,” *avecca-p, pasadā*. 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 in 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 2001:107; my emphases).

¹⁶ These are the 4 qualities of a streamwinner (D 33/3:227; S 55.1, 55.7). Evidently, she is already a streamwinner at this point. See Bodhi's n on the streamwinner, S:B 2000:1517 f.

¹⁷ This can be taken as the basis for a streamwinner's faith.

The limbs of a streamwinner¹⁸ and their blessings

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

- (1) 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,¹⁹ or by saluting him with a low bow, or by proper services, or by providing him with robes, almsfood, lodging, and medicine, support and necessities for the sick.

- (2) 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 medicine, support and necessities for the sick.

- (3) 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 medicine, support and necessities for the sick.

- (4) 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 medicine, support and necessities for the sick.

The 14 kinds of gifts

5 Ānanda, there are these **14 individual gifts** (*cuddasa pāṭipuggalikā dakkhiṇā*).

What are the 14?²⁰

¹⁸ *Sotāpanassa aṅga: (Tad-ah’)* Uposatha S (A 3.70,4-7), SD 4.18; Pañca Vera Bhaya S 1 (S 12.41,10-14), SD 3.3-(4.2).

¹⁹ Be Ce Se *paccuṭṭhāna-*; Ee *paccupaṭṭhāna-*, “by serving her.” The former reading fits the idea-flow better here.

²⁰ 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).

- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) One gives a gift to <u>the Tathagata</u> ,
the arhat [worthy one], fully self-awakened one ²¹ — | this is the 1 st individual gift. |
| (2) One gives a gift to <u>a pratyeka Buddha</u> ²² — | this is the 2 nd individual gift. |
| (3) One gives a gift to <u>an arhat disciple</u> of the Tathagata— | this is the 3 rd individual gift. |
| (4) One gives a gift to one <u>on the way to realize</u> the fruition of arhathood— | this is the 4 th individual gift. ²³ |
| (5) One gives a gift to <u>a non-returner</u> — [255] | this is the 5 th individual gift. |
| (6) One gives a gift to one <u>on the way to realize</u>
the fruition of non-returning— | this is the 6 th individual gift. |
| (7) One gives a gift to <u>a once-returner</u> — | this is the 7 th individual gift. |
| (8) One gives a gift to one <u>on the way to realize</u>
the fruition of once-returning— | this is the 8 th individual gift. |
| (9) One gives a gift to <u>a streamwinner</u> — | this is the 9 th individual gift. |
| (10) One gives a gift to one <u>on the way to realize</u>
the fruition of streamwinning— | this is the 10 th individual gift. ²⁴ |
| (11) One gives a gift to <u>one outside (the path) who is free</u>
<u>from sensual lust</u> ²⁵ — | this is the 11 th individual gift. ²⁶ |

²¹ *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 Tathagata ...”). Pali idiom, however, would follow the former.

²² *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). **Nidhi,kaṇḍa S** (Kh p 8) mentions *pacceka,bodhi* (stanza 15). See also M 3:68; S 1:92; U 50. See Ria Kloppenberg, *The Pacceka Buddha*, Leiden: E J Brill, 1974. See **Aputtaka S** (S 3.20), SD 22.5 (2.1).

²³ *Arahatta,phala,sacchikiriyāya paṭipanne*.

²⁴ 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 & MAṬ explain that this term can be used to include even a lay follower who has gone for refuge to the 3 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 (**Okkanta Saṃyutta**).

²⁵ *Bāhirake kāmesu vīta,rāge*. An “outsider” here is one who is not yet on the path of awakening, ie, not yet even a streamwinner. See foll n.

²⁶ Comy: “One with the 5 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. Comy however says it refers to those outside the Dharma-Vinaya (SA 2:229); this gloss does not apply here. I propose that *bāhiraka here* refers to one “outside the path,” ie one not a path saint, rather than “outside the religion,” which is too broad. It should be noted that (10) is “a streamwinner-to-be,” while (12) is “a virtuous worldling” (*puthujjana,sīla.vanta*). Moreover, **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 **Ṭikā** adds that here it means that such a person “should not

- (12) One gives a gift to a virtuous worldling— this is the 12th individual gift.²⁷
 (13) One gives a gift to an immoral worldling— this is the 13th individual gift.
 (14) One gives a gift to an animal— this is the 14th individual gift.

6 In this regards, Ānanda, having made a gift to an animal, one may expect a hundredfold gift.²⁸

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, 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-returning?

What more to speak of a once-returner?

What more to speak of one on the way to realize the fruition of once-returning?

What more to speak of a non-returner?

What more to speak of one on the way to realize the fruition of arhathood?

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?

7 kinds of offerings

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

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

be overcome by shamelessness, but be spiritually accomplished by nature" (*tena na alajji, dhātuko pakati, siddho idha puthujjana, sīlavā ti adhipeto ti dasseti*, DAṬ:VRI 2:191). We can safely assume that here the "good worldling" (*kalyāna, puthujjana*) 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 tittha, 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 & Anu-vyāñjana**, SD 19.14. On *puthujjana*, see **Nakula, pitā S** (S 22.1), SD 5.4 (3). On *kalyāṇa, puthujjana, sekha & asekhā*, see **Indriya, bhāvanā S** (M 12), SD 17.13.

²⁷ Comy: One who constantly keeps to the precepts as naturally 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 5 precepts at least.

²⁸ 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.

- (2) One gives to both sanghas (of monks and of nuns)²⁹
after the Buddha has passed away— this is the 2nd offering to the order.
- (3) One gives to the sangha of monks— this is the 3rd offering to the order.
- (4) One gives to the sangha of nuns— this is the 4th offering to the order.
- (5) One gives, saying,
 “Appoint so many monks and nuns from the sangha” [256] — this is the 5th offering to the order.
- (6) One gives, saying, “Appoint so many monks from the sangha”— this is the 6th offering to the order.
- (7) One gives, saying, “Appoint so many nuns from the sangha”— this is the 7th offering to the order.

Prophecy

8 In the future, Ānanda, there will be clan-members [(religious) lineage members] who are “yellow-necks,”³⁰ immoral, of bad nature.³¹ People will give them gifts for the sake of the sangha.

Even then, Ānanda, I say, an offering made to the sangha is immeasurable.³² And, Ānanda, I say that in no way is an individual gift ever more fruitful than an offering made to **the sangha**.³³

The 4 purifications of giving

9 Ānanda, there are these **4 purifications**³⁴ of giving (*catu dakkhiṇa, visuddhi*). What are the four?

²⁹ The mention of nuns (*bhikkhūṇī*) 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).

³⁰ *Kāsāva, kaṇṭhā*. See foll n.

³¹ “Clan-members ... of bad nature,” *gotrabhuno kāsāva, kaṇṭhā dussilā pāpa, dhammā*. Comy says that these “clan-members” (*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, kaṇṭhā*, see M 3:256,7; It 43, 90 (ItA 177); Dh 307a (Dh:P 113, Dh:P 113 *kāṣāya, kaṁthā*; Uv 11.9 *kāṣāya, kaṇṭhā*; DhA 3:478) qu at V 3:90,35* (VA 486,22); 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 Oskar von Hinüber, *Selected Papers in Pāli Studies*, Oxford, 1994:92 f. See foll n.

³² 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)

³³ 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 what is meant by the Sutta here. The offering is made to the sangha—it is a “sangha” offering, not an individual gift—even when the sangha has, in its midst, one or a few false monks. See eg **Ādiya S** (A 5.41, SD 2.1) where it is stated that a householder should donate a part of his income 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, SD 2.3) 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.

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------------|
| (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, bad by nature.

Thus, Ānanda, is the gift purified on account of the giver, but not the recipient.

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

Here, Ānanda, the giver is immoral, bad 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, bad by nature, and
the recipients are immoral, bad 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.”³⁵ [257]

These, Ānanda, are the 4 kinds of purification of giving.

CONCLUSION

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

15 When the virtuous gives to the immoral
a gift rightly obtained, with a heart that is truly bright,³⁶
firm in the faith³⁷ that its karmic fruit is great³⁸—
the gift is purified by the giver.

16 When the immoral gives to the virtuous
a gift wrongly obtained, with a heart that is not bright,

³⁴ MA says that “purification” (*visuddhi*) here refers to relative fruitfulness (*maha-p,hala,tara*) (MA 5:76), ie, the more conditions are fulfilled the more fruitful the giving.

³⁵ This particular type of giving—the virtuous giving to the virtuous—is expanded into the six-limbed gift (*cha-ḷ-aṅga,samannāgata dakkhiṇa*) in (**Sumana**) **Dāna S** (A 6.37/3:36 f), SD 22.1.

³⁶ *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).

³⁷ “Firm in the faith,” *abhisaddaḥaṃ* (Be Ce), pres part m of *abhisaddahati*.

³⁸ “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).

- without any firm faith that its karmic fruit is great—
the gift is purified by the one who receives.
- 17** 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.
- 18** 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.
- 19** 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.³⁹

— evaṃ —

Notes on the Dakkhina Vibhaṅga Sutta

3.1 CONTRADICTION?

The statement that Gotamī is *pure in the 5 precepts* (M 142.3.3 above) clearly means that she is a laywoman at that time (and the next paragraph [§3.3] 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 Bhikkhūṇī Saṅgha to bring the latter into the scheme of offerings to the sangha.” (M:ÑB n1291).

Liz Williams argues that the order of nuns may have already been in existence and the story of its foundation at Mahā Pajāpati’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 bhikkhūṇīs in existence. It would seem then that this is evidence of the existence of bhikkhūṇīs *before* Mahā-pajāpati 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,

³⁹ 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.

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. (Liz Williams 2000:170)

3.2 ĀNANDA

Ānanda plays an important active role in the Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta in intervening on Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī's behalf [§3.1]. Ānanda's active intervention on behalf of Mahā Pajāpatī is also recorded in the two Chinese parallels to the Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta.⁴⁰ 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 20th year at the earliest.⁴¹ And the Dakkhiṇa 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 Dakkhiṇa-vibhaṅga-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 sangha is mentioned in the Sutta [§7]. However, we still have the mention of her keeping the 5 precepts, that is, as a laywoman [§3.2]. **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 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, Gotamī, 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.

⁴⁰ MĀ 180 = T1.721c28 & T84 = T903c4.

⁴¹ 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.

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 IS 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 10 discourses, except for the Vibhaṅga Vagga.⁴² Apparently, scholars propose that **the Bhaddekaratta Sutta** (M 131)⁴³ 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*,⁴⁴ gives a helpful summary of the problem here:

Looking back on the altogether four Pāli discourses concerned with the *bhaddekaratta* 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.⁴⁵

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.⁴⁶

(Analayo at M 3:201, 2005)

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⁴² Louis Renou, "Les divisions dans les textes sanskrits," in *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 1957:2 & 29 notes that groups of 10 is a principal grouping in Vedic texts, which was also frequently used by the Buddhists and the Jains.

⁴³ M 121/3:187-189 @ SD 8.9: see esp Intro §2.1.

⁴⁴ 2005, draft (personal communications).

⁴⁵ Norman 1983:48.

⁴⁶ M 142/3:253-257.

4

Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta

D 16,3.34 f/2:112 f (SD 9)

[The Buddha's preknowledge of 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 Bad 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:

‘Bad One, I will not enter final nirvana until I have monk disciples⁴⁷ 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, **[113]** 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.”

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

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

‘Bad 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 f/2:112 f; cf 16,3.7-9/2:104-106)

— — —

⁴⁷ *Bhikkhū ... sāvaka*. D:W renders this as “monks and disciples,” but it seems out of context. I take it as a tatpuru-
sha (P *tappurisa* cpd: see Warder, *Introduction to Pali*, 1974:77 f), or more exactly a “split tatpuru-
sha,” ie as *bhikkhu, sāvaka*, and also *bhikkhuṇī, sāvikā, upāsakā, sāvaka* and *upāsikā, sāvikā*. 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 Walshe'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 8 types of saints. This categorization simi-
larly applies to the other 3 pairs of “followers and disciples.” However, I think the context here refers 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.

5 Therīgāthā

5.1 Therīgāthā Commentary

In the Commentary to the Therīgāthā (“Verses of the Elder Nuns”),⁴⁸ 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 Pajā,patī**. 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 **Amba,pālī** (ThīA 207) refer to hearing the Dharma in the presence of a monk, this being on both occasions, their sons.

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 C A F Rhys Davids, *Psalms 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 K R 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]”

(Liz Williams 2000: 172)⁴⁹

⁴⁸ William Pruitt (tr), *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs (Therīgāthā-Aṭṭhakathā Paramatthadīpanī VI)* by Dhammapāla, PTS 1998.

⁴⁹ However, see SD 45.16 (1.5.1).

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.⁵⁰

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.⁵¹
- 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,⁵² 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.

⁵⁰ **Vaḍḍha Tha** (Tha 335-339); **Vaḍḍha,mātā Thī** (Thī 204-212).

⁵¹ “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 translated (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, bad (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 influxes of (1) sense-desire (*kāma’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhava’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjā’sava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*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 influxes is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict, under *āsava*.

⁵² 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 influxes (D 3:220, 275; A 2:163, 165; A 1:146, 192, 194; cf V 2:83; Sn 594, 656).

Comment

This story is about how a nun admonished her own son who was a monk then. Such a deed would contravene the 8 principles of respect [2]: “A monk can admonish and advise a nun, but a nun cannot admonish or advise a monk.”⁵³ This very likely means that Vaḍḍhā was ordained before the 8 rules were introduced.

6 Bhikkhunī Vibhaṅga (V 4:214)

[*ehi bhikkhunī* ordination]

6.1 Definition of nun (*bhikkhunī*)

Nun (*bhikkhunī*) 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 3 refuges,
 she is a nun who is auspicious,
 she is a nun who is the essence,
 she is a nun who is a learner,
 she is a nun who is an adept,

she is a nun, by harmony of both orders, 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)⁵⁴

6.2 Dhammapāla’s Commentary

Dhammapāla seems to explain away the inclusion of the “Come O nun!” in **the Bhikkhunī Vibhaṅga** (V 2:214) by saying, “It is not an expression that makes clear the independent existence of full ordination of bhikkhunīs by [the formula] ‘Come bhikkhunī’ because there are no bhikkhunīs [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,⁵⁵ 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**

⁵³ This reference was pointed out to me by Ven S Pamaratana during one of my weekly NUS Buddhist Society Sutta Study classes.

⁵⁴ For more details, see SD 45.16 (4.3).

⁵⁵ 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.

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 The nuns’ order revival controversy in the early 2000s

7.1 SUMMARY OF EVENTS & COMMENTS

7.1.1 On Thursday 22nd October 2009, Sisters Vāyāmā, Nirodhā, Serā and Hassa,paññā were ordained as Theravāda nuns 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 (*anusāvana*) chanting in the bhikshus’ part of the ceremony. The ordination of Theravada nuns in Australia was fully supported by the Australian Buddhist community.

7.1.2 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 Pa Phong, 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 Pa Phong community.

7.1.3 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.

7.1.4 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 Pa Phong who lacked foundation in the Vinaya, used excommunication as a means for imposing control and to preserve “tradition.”

7.1.5 However, there was overwhelming support for Ajahn Brahm from around the world, including Bhikkhu 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.⁵⁶

7.2 BRAHMAVAMSO’S EXCOMMUNICATION FROM WAT PA PHONG

Here are two salient documents on this matter: the first is a statement by Wat Pa Nanachat (the International Forest Monastery of Ajahn Chah’s lineage) [8] and the second Brahmavamso’s own response [9]. For further responses, see under the respective “Sources.”

⁵⁶ 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/>.

8 Report from Wat Nanachat regarding Wat Pa Phong decision

Written by Wat Pah Nanachat Wednesday, 4 November 2009

[8.1] Receiving ordination as a bhikkhu in Thailand, entails acceptance of the authority not only of the Vinaya, but also that of the Mahatherasamakom, (the Thai Sangha's governing body) and the laws of the land. The Wat Pa Phong Sangha considers as a matter of course, that all of its members are ethically bound to respect their commitments to the Mahatherasamakom and to the Thai State. Ajahn Brahmavamso deliberately and unilaterally performed a ceremony knowing it to be considered illegal by the Thai state, illegitimate by the Mahatherasamakom and thus unacceptable to the WPP Sangha. There could be little doubt that by doing so he was, in effect, turning his back on continued membership of the Wat Pa Phong Sangha.

[8.2] Wat Pa Phong and its branch monasteries constitute an informal grouping within the Thai Sangha. Membership of this group is voluntary and dependent on a willingness to conform to certain broad standards, most of which were established by Ajahn Cha. They include dhutanga practices such as daily alms-round and eating one meal a day from the alms-bowl. Special allowances are granted for overseas monasteries and generally speaking, abbots are almost completely autonomous in the running of their own monasteries. However, in the case that a monastery develops practices that significantly deviate from the Wat Pa Phong template, the matter is raised at the annual general meeting in June. The abbot in question is interviewed and asked to choose between the unacceptable practice or exclusion from the group. This procedure was followed in the case of Ajahn Brahmavamso with a meeting held on 1st November [2009].

[8.3] Exclusion from the Wat Pa Phong Sangha is primarily intended to maintain the harmony and integrity of the group. It is not a punitive measure, although in Thailand at least, exclusion may lead to a certain loss of prestige and material gains. Ajahn Brahmavamso is unlikely to be adversely affected by the exclusion. His reputation and fund-raising activities may well be enhanced. His social ties with Wat Pa Phong were already weak. He has neglected relations with his Thai colleagues for some time now. Over the last few years several of his trips to Thailand have been devoted to teaching laypeople without including visits to Ubon (most notably the one that coincided with the Wat Pa Phong annual general meeting of June 2009 in which the bhikkhuni issue was discussed).

[8.4] The most common view of the Western theras is that Ajahn Brahmavamso had agreed to host a "World Abbots Meeting (WAM)" in December in which discussion of the bhikkhuni question was on the agenda. If he had waited until that meeting, and after talking things through, announced his decision to leave the WPP Sangha in order to follow a path he felt deeply to be correct and noble, his actions would have been considered regrettable but honourable. In planning a bhikkhuni ordination for a couple of months before the WAM was to take place, in concealing his plans until a week before the ordination, and in carrying out the ceremony without speaking to either his preceptor, Somdet Buddhajahn, or the leader of the WPP Sangha, Luang Por Leam beforehand at all, he acted in a way that suggested deceit and disrespect.

[8.5] For most of the Wat Pa Phong theras, the intellectual argument over the validity of bhikkhuni ordination is not the point. Their lack of knowledge of the latest studies on the subject is, in their eyes, irrelevant. To them the issue is that Ajahn Brahmavamso reneged on commitments implicit in his ownership of a Thai monastic passport, his role as abbot of a Wat Pa Phong branch monastery, his position as an officially sanctioned preceptor, and his acceptance of the Jow Khun title (formalizing his member-

ship in the elite strata of the Thai monastic order). In the meeting of the 1st November, it was the perception that Ajahn Brahmavamso had acted disrespectfully to his teachers and lineage, that aroused emotions, not his wish to elevate the status of women.

[8.6] Time only will tell if the bhikkhuni ordination at Bodhinyana monastery in October 2009 will be seen as a key breakthrough in the acceptance of a Theravada bhikkhuni order, or as an overly hasty and confrontational move that alienated many of those it was intended to persuade.

Wat Pah Nanachat, 4th November 2009

Source: Wat Pah Nanachat's statement (4 Nov 2009) on the real issue regarding Brahmavamso:
<http://www.bsv.net.au/data/uploads/newsletters/bsvsummer2010.pdf>

9 Brahmavamso on why he was “excommunicated”⁵⁷ (7 Nov 2009)

“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 Amaravati, 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 Pa Phong 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 Brahmavamso 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 Pa Phong 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 Tathaaloka

⁵⁷ Technically, it is a formal act (*saṅgha, kamma*) known as “suspension” (*ukkhepanīya, kamma*): SD 56.2 (3.2.2.3).

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 Pa Phong. 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 Pa Phong. 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 Pa Phong. 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

Sources, see also:

(1) Sujato’s response: <http://sujato.wordpress.com/2009/11/05/statement-from-wat-pa-nanachat/>.

(2) Sujato’s blog: <http://sujato.wordpress.com/2009/11/07/ajahn-brahm-on-why-he-was-excommunicated/>

10 The Brahmavamso controversy: a reflection

Wat Pa Nanachat’s statement [8] on the Brahmavamso controversy is most interesting, not from what is actually stated, but what it implies. Reading between the lines of the statement’s somewhat diplomatic and oblique language (characteristic of most Buddhist monastics), we can surmise the following points, along with some reflections of their significance:

10.1 All Thai ordained monks are subject to “the Mahatherasamakom [the Supreme Council of Elders] and the state” [8.1]. Despite having a Thai monastic passport and holding a “royal chapter” (*Rāja Gaṇa*)

title and holding positions of authority by virtue of Wat Pa Pong [8.5], Brahmavamso had effectively “relegated” on his commitments to them [8.5]. In short, Brahmavamso has become a loose cannon, a maverick going on his own steam.

A wise monastic would see the advantage of keeping communion (*samvāsa*) with his own monastic order, both for religious authenticity (beneficial for worldly support) and for common harmony (beneficial as a support for spiritual practice). At the same time, such a monastic teacher would inspire his committed lay followers with his vision of the current relevance and future growth of the Dharma. Without a community of trained and committed lay Dharma teachers and workers, the monastics would have to straddle most uncomfortably between the two worlds, even falling into the abyss in between.

10.2 All members of Ajahn Chah’s lineage are expected to keep to the strict forest tradition, with some proper latitude for overseas branches [8.2]. A gentle hint here is that Brahmavamso was lax in his Vinaya practice. Indeed, he was known to often grace social functions (such as dinners and stage performances), and his “fans” were often seen treat to him in unseemingly familiar ways even in public, which is against the Vinaya and which the Thai forest monastics would clearly eschew.

In March 2006, for example, Brahmavamso attended a state dinner in honour of Queen Elizabeth of UK (when she visited for the Commonwealth Games) in Australia, representing the Buddhists of Australia. This was of course a great honour for both him personally and Australian Buddhists generally. A number of minor Vinaya rules were broken, but no grave offence committed.

We could see such an event not so much as a problem, but more as a symptom of the current Buddhist situation. In a significant way, we (at least the Theravada Buddhists) tend to be monk-centred and status-conscious. It would have been more appropriate for a learned lay Dharma practitioner/teacher to represent the Buddhists on such an occasion. Why do we not have such a person? If not, why? This is a question worth a serious discussion and, more importantly, followed up with appropriate action.

10.3 Brahmavamso has effectively “lost touch” with the Wat Pa Phong Sangha. A hint here is that he was being too close with the laity, “devoted to teaching laypeople without including visits to Ubon,” and too engaged in “fund-raising,” a reminder that the forest tradition has no dealings with money or wealth of any kind [8.3]. The traditional forest monks refuse to “accommodate” modern developments for the simple reason that once the Vinaya rules are bent, the rules no more seem effective, or worse, when something is bent too often, it would break.

Again here, we can have more experienced anagarikas (lay renunciants) or well-trained lay practitioners to perform tasks that would be too worldly for monastics. This lack of a meaningful role of the laity in the Dharma seems to necessitate monastics to go out of the eightfold way to fill the social gaps, as it were.

10.4 Brahmavamso should have waited for consultation with the World Abbots Meeting (WAM) in December 2009, and the Thai monastic authorities instead of “secretly” having the nuns ordained on his own [8.4]. In other words, he had personal influence and moral authority over this event.

A vital moral obligation of a true monastic is to work in harmony with the sangha. In an important sense, there are no mavericks in a monastic community.⁵⁸ Where it is difficult to get the consensus of all the significant elders of the sangha, a maverick would be left to work alone. However, in the case of Brahmavamso, who is a cult-figure in certain parts of the world, he would surely be successful in forming his own reformed modern monastic community, one that is Vinaya-based and Dharma-inspired.

⁵⁸ See eg (Anuruddhā) Upakkilesa S (M 128,12.1:156) = SD 5.18. For other examples, see **Spiritual friendship**, SD 8.1.

10.5 The nuns' ordination was "not the issue." The real issue was that Brahmavamso was disrespectful to his elders and lineage [8.5], even confrontational [8.6]. This suggests that the traditional elders might have supported the nuns' ordination if there were a consensus or some kind of meaningful majority acceptance of the idea at WAM or the elders of Ajahn Chah's lineage. Brahmavamso did not consult them fully, and he went his own way.

As far as I understand things, Brahmavamso was in no way remorseful of what he did nor did not do. He well knew that his popular support would not be negatively affected. On the contrary, many would see him as some kind of "modern champion of women's rights." The sangha of Wat Pa Phong knew this with these insightful, even fateful, words:

"Exclusion from the Wat Pa Phong Sangha is primarily intended to maintain the harmony and integrity of the group. It is not a punitive measure, although in Thailand at least, exclusion may lead to a certain loss of prestige and material gains. Ajahn Brahmavamso is unlikely to be adversely affected by the exclusion. His reputation and fund-raising activities may well be enhanced." [8.3]

The monastics of our times are wise enough, or at least pragmatic enough, not to do anything to bring about any schism in their own monastic order. However, even if there were a schism, a technical break-up of the Buddhist community, this would make no significant difference today to the laity, who would continue to support their own favoured parties or remain blissfully unaffiliated. However, the idea that two important groups of monastics are not in communion (*samvāsa*), have no fellowship, with one another, is simply disturbing, to say the least.

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[See SD 1, Main Bibliography]

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