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## Mahāpajāpatī's Going Forth in the *Madhyama-āgama*

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# Mahāpajāpatī's Going Forth in the *Madhyama-āgama*

Anālayo<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The present article provides an annotated translation of the *Madhyama-āgama* account of the founding of the Buddhist order of nuns, followed by a discussion of some of its significant aspects, which open new perspectives on the way this event is presented in the canonical scriptures.

## Introduction<sup>2</sup>

In the last two issues of the JBE, I studied the *Bahudhātuka-sutta* and the *Nandakovāda-sutta* in the light of their parallels, examining in particular negativities toward women in general or nuns in particular that are evident in some of these texts.<sup>3</sup>

The present article continues exploring the theme of negative attitudes toward women or nuns in early Buddhist texts. The object of

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<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Rod Bucknell, Alice Collett, Ken Su and Giuliana Martini for comments on a draft version of this article or on my translation.

<sup>3</sup> Anālayo (“Bahudhātuka”) and (“Attitudes”).

my study is the account of the founding of the order of nuns. This account is recorded in a range of texts.<sup>4</sup> The main discourse versions are:

1. A discourse among the Eights of the *Āṅguttara-nikāya*, representing the Theravāda version of this event.<sup>5</sup>
2. A discourse in the *Madhyama-āgama* preserved in Chinese translation,<sup>6</sup> with high probability representing the Sarvāstivāda account of the founding of the order of nuns.<sup>7</sup>
3. A discourse preserved in the Chinese canon as an individual translation (in the sense of being translated on its own, rather than being part of a translation of a collection of discourses), whose school affiliation is uncertain.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In addition to the discourse versions listed below, a brief account of the foundation of the order of nuns, with Gotamī herself beginning the narrative, can be found in T 156 at T III 153c7 to 154a6. A more detailed version of the founding of the nuns' order, being part of a biography of the Buddha, is provided in T 196 at T IV 158a22 to 159b17. The assumption by Laut, that an account of the foundation of the order of nuns can be found in the *Maitrisimit*, an assumption followed by Pinault for a Tocharian counterpart, cf. also Schmidt ("Das tocharische" 276), appears to be based on a misunderstanding; cf. Hüsken ("Legend" 46 note 9) and Anālayo ("Theories" 106-8).

<sup>5</sup> AN 8.51 at AN IV 274,1 to 279,13, a translation of which can be found in Hare (181-5). B<sup>e</sup> and C<sup>e</sup> give the title of the discourse as *Gotamī-sutta*, the "discourse on Gotamī."

<sup>6</sup> MĀ 116 at T I 605a8 to T I 607b16, which has the title "discourse on Gotamī", 瞿曇彌經. The Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, T 1435 at T XXIII 291a1, abbreviates and does not give a full account.

<sup>7</sup> Regarding the school affiliation of the *Madhyama-āgama* cf., e.g., Enomoto ("On the Formation" 21), Enomoto ("Formation and Development"), Lü (242), Mayeda (98), Minh Chau (27), Oberlies (48) and Waldschmidt ("Central Asian" 136).

<sup>8</sup> T 60 at T I 856a6 to 858a6, entitled 佛說瞿曇彌記果經, which I tentatively translate as "discourse spoken by the Buddha [in reply to] Gotamī's declaration regarding the fruits [of recluse-ship]." The title's indication that this is a discourse "spoken by the Buddha", 佛說, is a regular feature of titles of works in the Chinese canon, where in most cases it probably does not render an expression present in the original, but serves as a formula

Moreover, a range of *Vinaya* texts have preserved records of the way the order of nuns was held to have come into being.<sup>9</sup> These are found in:

1. the *Vinaya* in Four Parts of the Dharmaguptaka tradition, preserved in Chinese translation,<sup>10</sup>
2. a *Vinayamāṭṛka* preserved in Chinese translation, which some scholars suggest represents the Haimavata tradition, although this identification is a matter of controversy,<sup>11</sup>

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of authentication of the translated text. Regarding the reference in the title to 記果, “declaration of fruit”, the character 記, a standard rendering of *vyākaraṇa*, does not recur in the discourse. The character 果 makes its appearance again in the context of Gotamī's reference to women's ability to attain the four “fruits” of recluse-ship, hence I assume that the title would have these fruits in mind. Hirakawa (*Monastic* 47 note 2) refers to T 60 just as “*Gautamī-vyākaraṇa-sūtra*.” The progression of the narrative in T 60 is in most aspects so similar to that of MĀ 116 that it seems safe to conclude that this version stems from a closely related line of transmission. According to a suggestion by Mizuno discussed in Hung, T 60 could be part of a group of discourses from a no longer extant *Madhyama-āgama* translation by Dharmanandin and Zhú Fóniàn (竺佛念).

<sup>9</sup> In addition to the *Vinaya* versions listed below, a listing of the eight special rules is also provided in the Saṃmitīya *Vinaya* preserved in Chinese translation, T 1461 at T XXIV 670c5-16. Moreover, a full version of the foundation account can be found in T 1478 T XXIV 945b25 to 947a8. Heirman (“Chinese nuns” 284 note 48) quotes Hirakawa to the effect that T 1478 might be a Chinese compilation, and notes that T 1478 shows the influence of Mahāyāna thought. A survey of the main narrative elements in T 1478, covering also relevant sections that come after the account proper, can be found in Heirman (“Chinese nuns” 284-8).

<sup>10</sup> The relevant section is found in T 1428 at T XXII 922c7 to 923c12.

<sup>11</sup> The relevant section is found in T 1463 at T XXIV 803a22 to 803b24. A Haimavata affiliation has been proposed for T 1463 by Bareau (112), Hofinger (13) Lamotte (148) and Przyluski (316), who points out that T 1463 at T XXIV 819a29 gives the “snowy mountain”, 雪山, as the location for the compilation of the canon of the teachings by the five hundred monks (at the so-called first council), 此是雪山中五百比丘所集法藏, a passage translated by de Jong (289 note 6) as: “c'est ainsi que, dans les montagnes

3. the *Vinaya* of the Mahāsāṃghika tradition, preserved in Sanskrit,<sup>12</sup>
4. the *Vinaya* in Five Parts of the Mahīśāsaka tradition, preserved in Chinese translation,<sup>13</sup>
5. the *Vinaya* of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda tradition, where the episode is extant in Chinese and Tibetan translation, with considerable parts also preserved in Sanskrit fragments,<sup>14</sup>

neigeuses, les Corbeilles de la Loi ont été rassemblées par le cinq cents moines.” As noted by Bareau (112 note 1), “cette phrase ... passe pour attester l’origine haimavata de l’ouvrage.” The character pair 雪山 can render *haimavata*, cf. Hirakawa (*Buddhist* 1241). Heirman (“Chinese Nuns” 277 note 13) points out a reference to a “ten recitation sections *Vinayamāṭṛka*” in T 2063 at T L 947b29: 十誦毘尼每經 (with a variant reading 母 instead of 每). The character pair 十誦 in this context would be indicating that this *Vinayamāṭṛka* belongs to the Sarvāstivāda tradition, cf. Tsai (103), the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* being the 十誦律. It remains unclear, however, if the present reference intends the same text as the 毘尼母經 found at T 1463, on whose title cf. also Clarke (87). Schmithausen (38 note 218) quotes Hirakawa to the effect that the affiliation of T 1463 to the Haimavata or to the Dharmaguptaka tradition, proposed by some scholars, is not sufficiently established (my ignorance of Japanese prevents me from consulting Hirakawa’s arguments myself).

<sup>12</sup> The relevant section can be found in Roth (4-21), with a French translation provided in Nolot (2-12) and a free English rendering in Strong (52-56). The Chinese translation of this *Vinaya* abbreviates, T 1425 at T XXII 471a25, indicating that in this tradition a discourse version of this event was in existence. T 1425 at T XXII 514b4 then gives the title of this discourse as 大愛道出家線經, reconstructed by Brough (675) as “*Mahāprajāpatī-pravajyā-sūtra* (?)”.

<sup>13</sup> The relevant section is found in T 1421 at T XXII 185b19 to 186a28.

<sup>14</sup> The Chinese version is T 1451 at T XXIV 350b10 to 351c2, with its Tibetan counterpart in the ‘*dul ba phran tshegs kyi gzhi*, D 6 da 100a4 to 104b5 or Q 1035 ne 97a7 to 101b8. The Sanskrit fragments have been edited by Ridding and La Vallée Poussin and again by Schmidt (“*Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācanā*”), with a translation by Wilson found in Paul (83-87). On the school affiliation of these fragments cf. Chung (“*Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācanā*” 420), Finnegan (310 note 591), Oberlies (62), Roth (5 note 3b), Schmidt (“Zur

6. the *Vinaya* of the Theravāda tradition, whose account corresponds closely to the discourse version found in the *Āṅguttara-nikāya*.<sup>15</sup>

In what follows, I first translate the *Madhyama-āgama* version, and then study some of its significant aspects.<sup>16</sup>

### Translation<sup>17</sup>

#### The Discourse on Gotamī

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was dwelling among the Sakyans at Kapilavatthu, in the Nigrodha Park, observing the rainy season retreat together with a great company of monks.<sup>18</sup>

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Schulzugehörigkeit”) and Yuyama (6). An extract on the eight weighty principles from a discourse version of the present episode, transmitted within the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda tradition, can also be found in Śamathadeva's commentary on the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, *mngon pa* D 4094 ju 212b6 to 214a3 or Q 5595 tu 242b6 to 244a4.

<sup>15</sup> Vin II 253,1 to 256,32, a translation of which can be found in Horner (*Book*, 352-356).

<sup>16</sup> The present paper, part of which I presented at the IABS conference 2011 at Dharma Drum Buddhist College, Taiwan, is a preliminary report based on an ongoing larger research project, eventually to be published as a monograph, in which I translate and compare all canonical versions. A survey of the main narrative pieces in these different versions can be found in Heirman (“Chinese Nuns” 278-284).

<sup>17</sup> The translated text is MĀ 116 at T I 605a8 to T I 607b16. In order to facilitate comparing my translation of the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse with the Pāli version, I use Pāli terminology, except for anglicized terms like “Dharma”, without thereby intending to take a position on the original language of the *Madhyama-āgama* or on Pāli terminology being in principle preferable. In the notes to my translation, I focus on differences between the three discourse versions, as an attempt to cover the differences among all versions would go beyond the bounds of what appears appropriate for footnotes to an article.

<sup>18</sup> AN 8.51 does not mention that the Buddha was observing the rains retreat.

At that time Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī approached the Buddha, paid homage with her head at the Buddha's feet and, standing back to one side, said: "Blessed One, can women attain the four fruits of recluse-ship?"<sup>19</sup> For that reason, [can] women in this right teaching and discipline leave the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path?"

The Blessed One replied: "Wait, wait, Gotamī, do not have this thought, that in this right teaching and discipline women leave the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path. Gotamī, you shave off your hair like this, put on ochre robes and for your whole life practice the pure holy life."<sup>20</sup>

Then, being restrained by the Buddha, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī paid homage with her head at the Buddha's feet, circumambulated him thrice and left.<sup>21</sup>

At that time, the monks were mending the Buddha's robes, [thinking]: 'Soon the Blessed One, having completed the rainy season retreat among the Sakyans, the three months being over, his robes mended and complete, taking his robes and bowl will journey among the people.'

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī heard that the monks were mending the Buddha's robes, [thinking]: 'Soon the Blessed One, having completed the rainy season retreat among the Sakyans, the three months being over, his robes mended and complete, taking his robes and bowl, will journey among the people.'

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<sup>19</sup> In AN 8.51 Gotamī does not bring up the topic of women's ability to attain the four levels of awakening.

<sup>20</sup> No suggestion of this kind is found in AN 8.51.

<sup>21</sup> In AN 8.51 at AN IV 274,<sup>10</sup> Gotamī immediately repeats her request twice, then realizes that the Buddha will not permit it and leaves sorrowful and in tears (without any reference to circumambulations, a recurrent difference between Pāli discourses and their Chinese *Āgama* parallels; cf. also Anālayo (*Comparative Study* 21)). Thus AN 8.51 has no counterpart to the narrative of how the monks mend the Buddha's robes etc.

Having heard it, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī approached the Buddha, paid homage with her head at the Buddha's feet and, standing back to one side, said: "Blessed One, can women attain the four fruits of recluse-ship? For that reason, [can] women in this right teaching and discipline leave the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path?"

The Blessed One again replied: "Wait, wait, Gotamī, do not have this thought, that in this right teaching and discipline women leave the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path [605b]. Gotamī, you shave off your hair like this, put on ochre robes and for your whole life practice the pure holy life."

Then, having been restrained again by the Buddha, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī paid homage with her head at the Buddha's feet, circumambulated him thrice and left.

At that time the Blessed One, having completed the rainy season retreat among the Sakyans, the three months being over, his robes mended and complete, taking robes and bowl, went journeying among the people.

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī heard that the Blessed One, having completed the rainy season retreat among the Sakyans, the three months being over, his robes mended and complete, taking robes and bowl, had gone journeying among the people.<sup>22</sup> Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, together with some elderly Sakyan women, followed behind the Buddha, who in stages approached Nāḍika, where he stayed at the Brick Hall in Nāḍika.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> AN 8.51 does not refer to mending the robes or to taking them along.

<sup>23</sup> AN 8.51 at AN IV 274,29 instead gives as the location the Gabled Hall in the Great Wood at Vesālī. Malalasekera (976) explains that Nāḍika (alternatively spelled Nātika or Nātika) was "a locality in the Vajji country on the highway between Koṭigāma and Vesālī." AN 8.51 also indicates that on this occasion Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī had shaved off her hair and put on robes.



Then Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī approached the Buddha again, paid homage with her head at the Buddha's feet and, standing back to one side, said: "Blessed One, can women attain the four fruits of recluse-ship? For that reason, [can] women in this right teaching and discipline leave the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path?"

A third time the Blessed One replied: "Wait, wait, Gotamī, do not have this thought, that in this right teaching and discipline women leave the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path. Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, you shave off your hair like this, put on ochre robes and for your whole life practice the pure holy life."

Then, having been restrained a third time by the Blessed One, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī paid homage with her head at the Buddha's feet, circumambulated him thrice and left. Then Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī stood outside the entrance, her bare feet soiled and her body covered with dust, tired and weeping with grief.<sup>24</sup>

The venerable Ānanda saw Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī standing outside the entrance, her bare feet soiled and her body covered with dust, tired and weeping with grief. Having seen her, he asked: "Gotamī, for what reason are you standing outside the entrance, your bare feet soiled and your body covered with dust, tired and weeping with grief?"

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī replied: "Venerable Ānanda, in this right teaching and discipline women do not obtain the leaving of the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path."

The venerable Ānanda said: "Gotamī, you just wait here, I will approach the Buddha and speak to him about this matter."

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<sup>24</sup> Gotamī's standing outside weeping is in AN 8.51 at AN IV 275,2 not preceded by another request for women to go forth. In fact, in this version she has already made three requests during her (single) meeting with the Buddha at Kapilavatthu.

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī said: “So be it, venerable Ānanda.”

Then the venerable Ānanda approached the Buddha, paid homage with his head at the Buddha's feet and, holding his hands together in homage toward the Buddha, said: “Blessed One, can women attain the four fruits of recluse-ship? For that reason, [can] women in this right teaching and discipline leave the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path?”<sup>25</sup> [605c]

The Blessed One replied: “Wait, wait, Ānanda, do not have this thought, that in this right teaching and discipline women leave the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path.

“Ānanda, if in this right teaching and discipline women obtain the leaving of the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path, then this holy life will consequently not last long. Ānanda, just like a household with many women and few men, will this household develop and flourish?”

The venerable Ānanda replied: “No, Blessed One.”

[The Buddha said]: “In the same way, Ānanda, if in this right teaching and discipline women obtain the leaving of the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path, then this holy life will not last long.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> In AN 8.51 at AN IV 275,<sup>19</sup> Ānanda describes Gotamī's standing at the entrance and then requests permission for women to go forth, without at this point bringing up any other argument in support of this request. He repeats his request twice, and on being rebuffed each time by the Buddha, at AN IV 276,<sup>3</sup> reflects : “suppose I were to request the Blessed One's [permission] for women to go forth from home to homelessness in the teaching and discipline made known by the Tathāgata in another way.” After this reflection, Ānanda inquires if women who go forth in the Buddha's dispensation can attain the four levels of awakening.

<sup>26</sup> The simile of the household with many women and a reference to the holy life not lasting long occurs in AN 8.51 at AN IV 278,<sup>23</sup> only at a later point, after Gotamī has

“Ānanda, just as a field of rice or a field of wheat in which weeds grow, that field will certainly come to ruin.<sup>27</sup> In the same way, Ānanda, if in this right teaching and discipline women obtain the leaving of the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path, then this holy life will not last long.”

The venerable Ānanda said again: “Blessed One, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī has been of much benefit for the Blessed One. Why is that? After the Blessed One’s mother passed away, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī raised the Blessed One.”<sup>28</sup>

The Blessed One replied: “Indeed, Ānanda, indeed, Ānanda, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī has been of much benefit for me, namely in raising me after my mother passed away. Ānanda, I have also been of much benefit for Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī. Why is that?

“Ānanda, because of me, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī has obtained the taking of refuge in the Buddha, the taking of refuge in the Dharma and the taking of refuge in the community of monks;<sup>29</sup> she is free from doubt in regard

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accepted the eight special rules and Ānanda has conveyed this to the Buddha. In AN 8.51 at AN IV 278,21, the Buddha not only indicates that the holy life will not last long, but also proclaims that the right Dharma will remain for only five hundred years, instead of one thousand. A similar proclamation occurs at a later juncture in MĀ 116.

<sup>27</sup> AN 8.51 at AN IV 279,1 speaks of mildew affecting a field of ripe rice, followed by also bringing up the example of a disease known as ‘red rust’ affecting a field of ripe sugarcane. Both similes come in AN 8.51 at the end of the discourse, after the Buddha has agreed to permit women to go forth. T 60 at T I 856c4, which up to this point agrees closely with MĀ 116, differs in that in its version of the present simile the problem is not caused by weeds, but by hail.

<sup>28</sup> The argument of the Buddha’s indebtedness to Gotamī occurs earlier in AN 8.51 at AN IV 276,16, after Ānanda gets the Buddha to admit that women can attain the four levels of awakening. The Buddha responds to this argument by right away stipulating the eight special rules, without pointing out in what way he had benefitted Gotamī.

<sup>29</sup> In early Buddhist texts a reference to the community of monks is the standard phrasing for the taking of refuge and represents any Buddhist monastic, with or without higher ordination, male or female. Recollection of the *Saṅgha*, however, rather

to the Three Jewels and in regard to *dukkha*, its arising, its cessation and the path [to its cessation]; she is accomplished in faith, maintains the moral precepts, broadly develops her learning, is accomplished in generosity and has attained wisdom; she abstains from killing, abandoning killing, abstains from taking what is not given, abandoning taking what is not given, abstains from sexual misconduct, abandoning sexual misconduct, abstains from false speech, abandoning false speech, and abstains from alcoholic beverages, abandoning alcoholic beverages.

“Ānanda, if because of a person one obtains the taking of refuge in the Buddha, the taking of refuge in the Dharma and the taking of refuge in the community of monks, becoming free from doubt in regard to the Three Jewels and in regard to *dukkha*, its arising, its cessation and the path [to its cessation]; one becomes accomplished in faith, maintaining the moral precepts, broadly developing learning, being accomplished in generosity and attaining wisdom; one abstains from killing, abandoning killing, abstains from taking what is not given, abandoning taking what is not given, abstains from sexual misconduct, abandoning sexual misconduct, abstains from false speech, abandoning false speech, and abstains from alcoholic beverages, abandoning alcoholic beverages; then, Ānanda, it is impossible to repay the kindness of such a person even if for the whole life one were in turn to support him with robes and blankets, beverages and food, beds, medicines and all [other] requisites.

“Ānanda, I shall now set forth for women eight weighty principles to be honored, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life [606a].

“Ānanda, just as a fisherman or his apprentice makes a dike in deep water to conserve the water so that it does not flow out,<sup>30</sup> Ānanda, in the

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takes the four types of noble disciples as its object, who could be monastic or lay, male or female.

<sup>30</sup> The simile of the dike has a counterpart at the end of AN 8.51 at AN IV 279,9.

same way I shall now declare for women eight weighty principles to be honored, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life. What are the eight?<sup>31</sup>

“Ānanda, a nun should seek higher ordination from the monks. Ānanda, I set forth for women this first weighty principle to be honored, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life.<sup>32</sup>

“Ānanda, a nun should every half-month approach the monks to receive instruction.<sup>33</sup> Ānanda, I set forth for women this second weighty principle to be honored, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life.

“Ānanda, in a dwelling-place where no monks are staying, a nun cannot spend the rainy season retreat. Ānanda, I set forth for women this third weighty principle to be honored, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life.

“Ānanda, a nun who has completed the rainy season retreat should ask in both assemblies regarding three matters: seeking [invitation (*pavāraṇā*)] in regard to what has been seen, heard or suspected. Ānanda, I set forth for women this fourth weighty principle to be honored, which

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<sup>31</sup> The eight special rules for the nuns appear in AN 8.51 at AN IV 276,21 in the following sequence: 1) even if ordained for hundred years a nun still has to pay respect to a recently ordained monk; 2) a nun should not spend the rains retreat where there are no monks; 3) every fortnight a nun should come for exhortation; 4) a nun should observe *pavāraṇā* in both communities; 5) for a serious offence a nun should observe *mānatta* in both communities; 6) the higher ordination of a nun requires both communities; 7) a nun should not revile a monk; 8) a nun is not allowed to criticize a monk.

<sup>32</sup> AN 8.51 at AN IV 277,9 adds that a candidate for higher ordination needs to have trained as a probationer (*sikkhamānā*) for two years in six principles.

<sup>33</sup> AN 8.51 at AN IV 276,30 adds that the nuns should also inquire about the date of the observance day (*uposatha*).

women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life.

“Ānanda, if a monk does not permit questions by a nun, the nun cannot ask the monk about the discourses, the *Vinaya*, or the Abhidharma. If he permits questions, the nun can ask about the discourses, the *Vinaya*, or the Abhidharma.<sup>34</sup> Ānanda, I set forth for women this fifth weighty principle to be honored, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life.

“Ānanda, a nun cannot expose a monk's offence; a monk can expose a nun's offence.<sup>35</sup> Ānanda, I set forth for women this sixth weighty principle to be honored, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life.

“Ānanda, a nun who has committed an offence requiring suspension (*saṅghādisesa*) has to undergo penance (*mānatta*) in both assemblies for fifteen days. Ānanda, I set forth for women this seventh weighty principle to be honored, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life.

“Ānanda, although a nun has been fully ordained for up to a hundred years, she should still show utmost humility toward a newly ordained monk by paying homage with her head [at his feet], being respectful and reverential, speaking to him with hands held together [in homage]. Ānanda, I set forth for women this eighth weighty principle to be honored [606b], which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life.

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<sup>34</sup> AN 8.51 at AN IV 277,12 instead indicates that nuns should not revile or abuse monks.

<sup>35</sup> AN 8.51 at AN IV 277,15 does not specify that the point at issue is an offence. T 60 at T I 857a11 speaks of “what has been seen, heard or known.”

“Ānanda, I set forth for women these eight weighty principles to be honored, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life. Ānanda, if Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī upholds these eight weighty principles to be honored, this is her going forth in this right teaching and discipline to train in the path, her receiving of the higher ordination and becoming a nun.”

Then, having heard what the Buddha said, having received it well and remembered it well, the venerable Ānanda paid homage with his head at the Buddha’s feet, circumambulated him thrice and left. He approached Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and said to her:

“Gotamī, women do obtain the leaving of the household out of faith in this right teaching and discipline, becoming homeless to train in the path. Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, the Blessed One has set forth for women eight weighty principles to be honored, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life. What are the eight?

“Gotamī, a nun should seek higher ordination from the monks. Gotamī, this is the first weighty principle to be honored which the Blessed One has set forth for women, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life.

“Gotamī, a nun should every half-month approach the monks to receive instruction. Gotamī, this is the second weighty principle to be honored which the Blessed One has set forth for women, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life.

“Gotamī, in a dwelling-place where no monks are present, a nun cannot spend the rainy season retreat. Gotamī, this is the third weighty principle to be honored which the Blessed One has set forth for women, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life.

“Gotamī, a nun who has completed the rainy season retreat should ask in both assemblies regarding three matters: seeking [invitation (*pavāraṇā*)] in regard to what has been seen, heard or suspected. Gotamī, this is the fourth weighty principle to be honored which the Blessed One has set forth for women, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life.

“Gotamī, if a monk does not permit questions by a nun, the nun cannot ask the monk about the discourses, the *Vinaya*, or the Abhidharma. If he permits questions, the nun can ask about the discourses, the *Vinaya*, or the Abhidharma. Gotamī, this is the fifth weighty principle to be honored which the Blessed One has set forth for women, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life.

“Gotamī, a nun cannot expose a monk's offence; a monk can expose a nun's offence. Gotamī, this is the sixth weighty principle to be honored which the Blessed One has set forth for women, which women should not transgress [606c], which women are to uphold for their whole life.

“Gotamī, a nun who has committed an offence requiring suspension (*saṅghādisesa*) has to undergo penance (*mānatta*) in both assemblies for fifteen days. Gotamī, this is the seventh weighty principle to be honored which the Blessed One has set forth for women, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life.

“Gotamī, although a nun has been fully ordained for up to a hundred years, she should still show utmost humility toward a newly ordained monk by paying homage with her head [at his feet], being respectful and reverential, and speaking to him with hands held together [in homage]. Gotamī, this is the eighth weighty principle to be honored which the Blessed One has set forth for women, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life.



“Gotamī, the Blessed One has set forth these eight weighty principles to be honored, which women should not transgress, which women are to uphold for their whole life. Gotamī, the Blessed One has said this: ‘If Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī upholds these eight weighty principles to be honored, this is her going forth in this right teaching and discipline to train in the path, her receiving of the higher ordination and becoming a nun.’”

Then Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī said: “Venerable Ānanda, listen while I deliver a simile. On hearing a simile the wise will understand its meaning. Venerable Ānanda, just as if a warrior girl, or a Brahmin [girl], or a householder [girl], or a worker [class] girl,<sup>36</sup> handsome and beautiful, bathes so as to be totally clean, applies perfume to her body, puts on bright clean clothes, and adorns herself with various ornaments.

“Suppose there is, furthermore, someone who thinks of that girl, who seeks her benefit and well-being, who seeks her happiness and ease.<sup>37</sup> He takes a head wreath made of lotuses,<sup>38</sup> or a head wreath of champak flowers, or a head wreath of great-flowered jasmine (*sumanā*), or a head wreath of Arabian jasmine (*vassikā*), or a head wreath of roses, and gives it to that girl.<sup>39</sup> That girl will with great joy accept it with both hands and place it on her head.

“In the same way, venerable Ānanda, these eight weighty principles to be honored, which the Blessed One has set forth for women, I receive on my head and uphold for my whole life.”

<sup>36</sup> AN 8.51 at AN IV 278,5 mentions a young man or woman and does not refer to the possibility that they could be from any of the four classes.

<sup>37</sup> AN 8.51 gives no information about the giver of the garland.

<sup>38</sup> Adopting the variant 鬘 instead of 鬘.

<sup>39</sup> T 60 at T I 857b14 only mentions four types of head wreaths; AN 8.51 at AN IV 278,6 has just three types.

At that time Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī went forth in this right teaching and discipline to train in the path, she received the higher ordination and became a nun.<sup>40</sup>

Then, at a [later] time, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī was followed and surrounded by a great company of accomplished nuns, who were all elder and senior nuns, who were known to the king and who had been living the holy life for a long time.<sup>41</sup> Together with them she approached the venerable Ānanda, paid homage with her head at his feet and, standing back to one side, said:

“Venerable Ānanda, may you know that these are all elder and senior nuns who are known to the king and have been living the holy life for a long time. [In regard to] those young monks who have just started to train, who have recently gone forth and not long come to this right teaching and discipline, [607a] let these monks pay homage with their heads at the feet of those nuns in accordance with seniority, being respectful and reverential, greeting them with hands held together [in homage].”

Then, the venerable Ānanda said: “Gotamī, you just wait here, I will approach the Buddha and speak to him about this matter.”

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī said: “So be it, venerable Ānanda.”

Then the venerable Ānanda approached the Buddha, paid homage with his head at the Buddha's feet and, standing back to one side and holding his hands together [in homage] toward the Buddha, he said:

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<sup>40</sup> A similar remark is in T 60 at T I 857b17 spoken by Ānanda, instead of being an indication made by the narrators of the discourse.

<sup>41</sup> This episode is not recorded in AN 8.51, although a comparable account can be found in Vin II 257,26.

“Blessed One, today Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, together with a company of accomplished nuns, all elder and senior nuns who are known to the king and who have been living the holy life for a long time, approached me, paid homage with her head at my feet and, standing back to one side and holding her hands together [in homage], said to me:

“Venerable Ānanda, these are all elder and senior nuns who are known to the king and have been living the holy life for a long time. [In regard to] those young monks who have just started to train, who have recently gone forth and not long come to this right teaching and discipline, let these monks pay homage with their heads at the feet of those nuns in accordance with seniority, being respectful and reverential, greeting them with hands held together [in homage].”

The Blessed One replied: “Wait, wait, Ānanda, guard your words, be careful and do not speak like this. Ānanda, if you knew what I know, [you would realize that] it is not proper to say a single word, let alone speaking like this.

“Ānanda, if in this right teaching and discipline women had not obtained the leaving of the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path, Brahmins and householders would have spread their clothes on the ground and said the following: ‘Diligent recluses, please walk on this! Diligent recluses, practice what is difficult to practice, so that we may for a long time get benefit and welfare, peace and happiness.’<sup>42</sup>

“Ānanda, if in this right teaching and discipline women had not obtained the leaving of the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path, Brahmins and householders would have spread their hair on

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<sup>42</sup> These and the following descriptions, as well as the reference to the five inabilities of women, are not found in AN 8.51 (or in Vin). Stepping on an article spread on the ground for good luck appears to have been a custom in ancient India, as Vin II 129,15 records an allowance for monks to step on cloth when asked to do so by laity for the sake of good fortune.

the ground and said the following:<sup>43</sup> 'Diligent recluses, please walk on this! Diligent recluses, practice what is difficult to practice, so that we may for a long time get benefit and welfare, peace and happiness.'

"Ānanda, if in this right teaching and discipline women had not obtained the leaving of the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path, then Brahmins and householders, on seeing recluses, would have respectfully taken various types of beverages and food in their hands, stood at the roadside waiting and said the following: 'Venerable sirs, accept this, eat this, you may take it and go, to use as you wish, so that we may for a long time get benefit and welfare, peace and happiness.'

"Ānanda, if in this right teaching and discipline women had not obtained the leaving of the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path, [607b] then faithful Brahmins [and householders], on seeing diligent recluses, would respectfully have taken them by the arm to lead them inside [their houses], holding various types of valuable offerings and saying to those diligent recluses the following: 'Venerable sirs, accept this, you may take it and go, to use as you wish, so that we may for a long time get benefit and welfare, peace and happiness.'

"Ānanda, if in this right teaching and discipline women had not obtained the leaving of the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path, then even this sun and moon, who are of such great power, of such great might, of such great fortune, of such great majesty, would not have matched the majesty and virtue of diligent recluses, what to say of those lifeless and skinny heterodox practitioners?

"Ānanda, if in this right teaching and discipline women had not obtained the leaving of the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in

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<sup>43</sup> Adopting the variant 地 instead of 施.

the path, then this right teaching would have remained for a thousand years. Now it has been decreased by five-hundred years and will remain for [only] five-hundred years.

“Ānanda, you should know that a woman cannot assume five roles. It is impossible that a woman could be a Tathāgata, free from attachment, rightly awakened; or a wheel-turning king; or the heavenly ruler Sakka; or King Māra; or the great god Brahmā. You should know that a male can assume these five roles. It is certainly possible that a male could be a Tathāgata, free from attachment, rightly awakened; or a wheel-turning king; or the heavenly ruler Sakka; or King Māra; or the great god Brahmā.”

The Buddha spoke like this. The venerable Ānanda and the monks heard what the Buddha said, delighted in it and received it respectfully.

### Analysis

The above translated *Madhyama-āgama* discourse offers several significant clues that help in reassessing the way the foundation of the Buddhist order of nuns has been recorded in early Buddhist canonical texts.

One of these indications is that the Buddha’s refusal of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī’s request is accompanied by an alternative suggestion: “Gotamī, you shave off your hair like this, put on ochre robes and for your whole life practice the pure holy life.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> MĀ 116 at T I 605a17: 瞿曇彌，如是汝剃除頭髮，著袈裟衣，盡其形壽淨修梵行。 I already drew attention to this feature in a presentation at the International Congress on Buddhist Women’s Role in the Saṅgha, Hamburg 2007, published in the proceedings, cf. Anālayo (“Women’s Renunciation” 94-96).

Similar suggestions made by the Buddha are recorded in the discourse version individually translated into Chinese, in the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya* and in the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*.<sup>45</sup> The version of this statement in the individual translation is closely similar to the *Madhyama-āgama* version, reading: “Gotamī, you can always shave your hair, put on ochre robes and until the end [of your life] practice the pure holy life.”<sup>46</sup>

According to the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, the Buddha explained that such a form of practice had already been undertaken under former Buddhas, when “women who had taken refuge in a Buddha, staying at home they shaved their heads, wore ochre robes and energetically practicing with effort they obtained the fruits of the path. With future Buddhas it will also be like this. I now permit you to undertake this practice.”<sup>47</sup>

The relevant Sanskrit fragment of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* reads: “in this way, Gautamī, with head shaven and putting on a monastic robe (*saṃghātī*), for your whole life practice the holy life that is totally complete, pure and perfect, which will for a long time be for your welfare, benefit and happiness.”<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> For what appears to be comparable passage cf. also T 196 at T IV 158a27 and T 1478 at T XXIV 945c1.

<sup>46</sup> T 60 at T I 856a14: 汝瞿曇彌, 常可剃頭, 被袈裟, 至竟行清淨梵行。

<sup>47</sup> T 1421 at T XXII 185b27: 諸女人輩自依於佛, 在家剃頭, 著袈裟衣, 勤行精進, 得獲道果, 未來諸佛亦復如是, 我今聽汝以此為法。

<sup>48</sup> Schmidt (“Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācanā” 242,5): *evam eva tvaṃ gautami muṇḍā saṃghātīprāvṛtā yāvajjīvaṃ kevalaṃ paripūrṇaṃ parisuddhaṃ paryavadātaṃ bra[h](maca)ryaṇ cara, tat tava bhaviṣyati dīrgharātram arthāya hitāya s[u]khāye ti*. The translation by Wilson in Paul (83) reads: “just you alone, O Gotamī, with shaven head, with robes of a nun, for as long as you may live, will be fulfilled, purified and cleansed. This chaste and holy life will be for your benefaction and welfare over a long period.”

Since Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī had asked for permission to become a homeless one, it seems that according to these versions what the Buddha does not permit is her becoming a homeless wanderer. Instead, he suggests that she should live a celibate spiritual life, having shaved her hair and put on robes, in the more protected environment at home.

The versions that do not record the above suggestion nevertheless report that Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and a group of like-minded women shaved their heads and put on robes.<sup>49</sup> This would be quite a natural action to take if the Buddha had given them permission to do so.

Having shaved off their hair and wearing robes they then follow the Buddha, presumably motivated by the wish to benefit from his presence and to show that they were willing to brave the living conditions of wandering around in ancient India.

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This seems not to do full justice to the original, which does not appear to intend restricting this injunction to her “alone.” In the present context, *kevalam* is not an adverb, but an adjective in the accusative that introduces the qualifications of the *brahmacarya* as *paripūrṇa*, *parisuddha* and *pariyavadāta*, the whole set being a standard phrase found recurrently in early Buddhist texts; cf., e.g., Bechert (123) and von Simson (54,18). The same sense would then apply to the counterpart passage in the Chinese version, T 1451 at T XXIV 350b16, which instructs that she should “cultivate in this holy life single and complete purity, without blemish,” 修諸梵行純一圓滿清淨無染, and to the Tibetan version, which enjoins: “cultivate the holy life with single and complete perfection, complete immaculacy and complete purity”, D 6 da 100b2 or Q 1035 ne 97b4: 'ba' zhiḡ pa la yongs su rdzogs pa yongs su dag pa yongs su byang bar tshangs par spyad pa spyod cig.

<sup>49</sup> This is the case for the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, T 1428 at T XXII 922c18, the Haimavata (?) *Vinayamāṭṛka*, T 1463 at T XXIV 803a29, the Mahāsāṃghika *Vinaya*, Roth (6,14), and the Theravāda version, AN 8.51 at AN IV 274,30 or Vin II 253,22.

Apparently laity would at times follow the Buddha for quite some distance on his journeys,<sup>50</sup> so that for Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and her group to trail the Buddha would not have been unusual and would have fallen short of leaving the household life behind for good. Such an action would not have been something the Buddha had explicitly forbidden.

However, for them to shave the head and wear robes on their own initiative, without having received some sort of suggestion in this respect by the Buddha, would be an improbable course of action to take. Had the Buddha flatly refused Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī's request without suggesting any alternative, as he does in some versions, her decision to shave off the hair and don robes on her own account would become an act of open defiance.<sup>51</sup> This seems unlikely in view of the authority the Buddha was invested with according to early Buddhist texts and in view of the fact that these women must have considered themselves his disciples.

In fact, most versions give quite explicit indications that Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī should be reckoned a stream-enterer at the present juncture of events.<sup>52</sup> In the standard descriptions in the early

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<sup>50</sup> Vin I 220,21 depicts the Buddha being followed by a whole group of lay people wishing to make offerings in turn, a group apparently so large that it took a long time before each could get its turn; another such reference can be found in Vin I 238,33.

<sup>51</sup> Blackstone (302), based on studying only the Theravāda version, comes to the conclusion that "in defying the Buddha, Mahāpajāpatī ... poses a direct challenge to the Buddha's authority."

<sup>52</sup> The description of the benefits she had gained thanks to the Buddha in T 60 at T I 856c10 is closely similar to that in MĀ 116, which clearly implies her attainment of stream-entry. The Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, T 1428 at T XXII 923a21, reports that she had attained the right path, which can be taken to refer to the same. The Haimavata (?) *Vinayamātrka* does not take up the topic of how the Buddha benefitted her at all. The Mahāsāṃghika *Vinaya*, Roth (15,13), refers to her insight into the four noble truths (cf. also T 196 at T IV 158c11 and T 1478 at T XXIV 946b15), another characteristic of stream-entry. The Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, T 1421 at T XXII 185c13, is ambivalent, only mentioning her acquisition of faith in the three jewels. The Chinese version of the (Mūla-



discourses, a stream-enterer is qualified as one who has unshakeable faith in the Buddha and maintains firm moral conduct, with some passages indicating that even in case of very minor breaches of conduct a stream-enterer will immediately confess.<sup>53</sup> This conveys a sense of eagerness to follow the Buddha's commands that makes it highly unlikely that a stream-enterer would be depicted as deliberately challenging the Buddha and publicly acting contrary to the instructions he or she has received directly from the Buddha.

Moreover, the narrative in the extant versions records no criticism or reproach of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and her companions having a shaved head and wearing monastic robes. None of the canonical versions reports any remark by the Buddha about this action, even though in some versions Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī approaches him directly with her hair shaved off and dressed in monastic robes.<sup>54</sup> Had this been an act of open defiance, or even just a personal whim, this would naturally have led to at least a passing comment on her behavior, if not to open censure.

Even when Ānanda asks Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī what is making her cry, in several versions he does not refer at all to her shaven head or wearing monastic robes, but merely notices that she is sad and exhausted from traveling.<sup>55</sup> Had this not been preceded by some kind of

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)Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, T 1451 at T XXIV 350c23, explicitly speaks of her stream-entry. (The whole section on how the Buddha benefitted her is not found in the Sanskrit or Tibetan versions.)

<sup>53</sup> Sn 232 and its counterpart in the *Mahāvastu*, Senart (1: 292,7).

<sup>54</sup> This is the case for the Mahāsāṃghika *Vinaya*, Roth (6,22) and for the Chinese version of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, T 1451 at T XXIV 350b22 (the relevant section is not extant in the Sanskrit fragment), with its Tibetan counterpart in D 6 da 101a2 or Q 1035 ne 98a4.

<sup>55</sup> When approaching Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī to inquire about what afflicts her, in the Mahāsāṃghika *Vinaya*, Roth (8,2), Ānanda just asks what makes her cry; in the Theravāda version, AN 8.51 at AN IV 275,8 or Vin II 254,4, cf. also T 1478 at T XXIV

allowance by the Buddha, her sudden appearance with her hair shaved off and donning robes would have merited a comment.<sup>56</sup>

In sum, closer consideration suggests that for the Buddha to tell Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī that she can live a semi-monastic life at home quite possibly constitutes an early piece of the narrative that was lost in some versions. This is rather significant, since it changes the picture of the Buddha's refusal considerably. Once he proposes such an alternative, the issue at stake is not stopping women from becoming nuns in principle.<sup>57</sup> Instead, his refusal would be just an expression of concern that, at a time when the Buddhist order was still in its beginnings, lack of proper dwelling places and the other living conditions of a homeless life might be too much for the Sakyan ladies.<sup>58</sup>

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946a13, he also comments on her bodily condition after travelling. The corresponding section in the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, T 1421 at T XXII 185c7, does not report Ānanda's query in full, only indicating that he "inquired after the reason" for her behavior. As this is preceded by reporting that she was standing at the entrance and weeping, this case also seems to conform to the same pattern.

<sup>56</sup> In the Dharmagupta *Vinaya*, T 1428 at T XXII 922c21, and in the Haimavata (?) *Vinayamātrka*, T 1463 at T XXIV 803b2, Ānanda's inquiry contains a reference to the fact that they have shaven heads and wear robes, although the way this is formulated does not appear to imply a reproach, but is just part of the description by Ānanda, on a par with their being sad and worn out by travelling.

<sup>57</sup> A refusal in principle would stand in contrast to the report that he planned to have an order of nuns from the outset, cf. DN 16 at DN II 105,8, Sanskrit fragment 361 folio 165 R2-3 in Waldschmidt (*Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* 1: 53), DĀ 2 at T I 15c4, T 6 at T I 180b27, T 7 at T I 191b28, T 1451 at T XXIV 387c27, with the Tibetan parallel in Waldschmidt (*Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* 2: 209,23); cf. also the *Divyāvadāna* in Cowell (202,10). For a more detailed discussion cf. Anālayo ("Women's Renunciation" 65-7 and 91-2).

<sup>58</sup> Evans (115) queries: "were the purely physical privations and hazards of the wanderer's life thought acceptable to women?" Kabilsingh (24) suggests that "the Buddha was reluctant to accept women into the Order primarily because he was aware that it was not simply a question of the admission of women, but that there were many other problems involved thereafter. The immediate objection was possibly Mahāpajāpatī herself. Since she ... had never been acquainted with the experience of

Once Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and her companions show that they are willing to brave these difficult conditions, it would also be understandable why the Buddha relents and permits their entry into the order. In this perspective, then, the extended depiction of how Ānanda convinced him to let women go forth may be a later development. In fact, it seems as if at the time when the order of nuns appears to have come into being, Ānanda was not yet a monk.<sup>59</sup>

Besides, the way the Buddha is depicted elsewhere in the early texts does not give the impression that he was easily influenced, once he had taken a decision.<sup>60</sup> The parallel versions in fact differ in regard to what persuaded the Buddha to accept women in his order, in spite of his supposed misgivings, giving the impression that the need to account for the Buddha being persuaded has been dealt with in different ways.

Here the *Madhyama-āgama* version furnishes another significant hint, since in its account the argument regarding the spiritual ability of women to attain the four stages of awakening is made by Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī right at the outset, when she requests the going forth for the first time, yet the Buddha refuses. The same is the case for the individually translated version and the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* account.<sup>61</sup> That is, in contrast to the impression conveyed by some other

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hardship, it was almost unimaginable to see the queen going from house to house begging for meals”; cf. also Wijayaratna (25).

<sup>59</sup> For a more detailed discussion cf. Anālayo (“Women’s Renunciation” 86-90).

<sup>60</sup> Horner (*Women* 107) comments that for the Buddha “it would have been in complete discordance with his character to have let people’s wishes and desires, however lofty, supplant or overcome what he knew to be right. Nor was he likely to take any step which might strike at the integrity of the Order.”

<sup>61</sup> T 60 at T I 856a11 and the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* version in Schmidt (“Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācānā” 242,1), with the Chinese counterpart in T 1451 at T XXIV 350b15 and the Tibetan version in D 6 da 100a7 or Q 1035 ne 97b2; cf. also T 196 at T IV 158a25 and T 1478 at T XXIV 945b27.

versions, to judge from these accounts women's spiritual potential was not what changed the Buddha's mind.

Now, according to a range of sources the Buddha's initial decision to teach the Dharma at all was based on surveying the potential of human beings to reach awakening.<sup>62</sup> Thus, he would have been well aware that women do have such potential, without needing a reminder.

In the *Madhyama-āgama* version, what precedes the Buddha's relenting is a reference by Ānanda to the services of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī as the Buddha's fostermother.<sup>63</sup> A similar exchange between Ānanda and the Buddha is reported in the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga-sutta* and its parallels, where Ānanda's intervention has the purpose of convincing the Buddha that he should accept a robe that Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī wishes to offer to him.<sup>64</sup> The parallel versions agree that, in the case of the relatively insignificant issue of accepting the offering of a robe, Ānanda's intervention was not successful.

<sup>62</sup> This is reported in MN 26 at MN I 169,6, T 189 at T III 643a20, T 190 at T III 806c12, T 191 at T III 953a15, *Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra* fragment M 480 R1-3, Waldschmidt (*Das Catuṣpariṣatsūtra* 1: 43f), the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, T 1428 at T XXII 787a20, the *Mahāvastu*, Senart (3: 318,1), the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, T 1421 at T XXII 104a4, and the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, Gnoli (130,1), with its Chinese counterpart in T 1450 at T XXIV 126c18 and its Tibetan counterpart in Waldschmidt (*Das Catuṣpariṣatsūtra* 2: 117,11).

<sup>63</sup> A similar reminder can be found in T 60 at T I 856c7, the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, T 1428 at T XXII 923a6, the Mahāsāṃghika *Vinaya*, Roth (14,8), the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, T 1421 at T XXII 185c11, the Chinese translation of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, T 1451 at T XXIV 350c20 (such a reminder is not reported in the corresponding section in the Sanskrit fragment or in the Tibetan version), and in the Theravāda version, AN 8.51 at AN IV 276,15 and Vin II 254,37; cf. also T 196 at T IV 158c5 and T 1478 at T XXIV 946b7.

<sup>64</sup> MN 142 at MN III 253,18, MĀ 180 at T I 722a6, *mngon pa* D 4094 ju 254a7 or Q 5595 tu 289b8. The same is the case for Bajaur Kharoṣṭhī fragment 1 line 7 (I am indebted to Ingo Strauch for putting a transliteration of the so far unpublished fragment at my disposal), Sanskrit fragment SHT III 979 in Waldschmidt (*Sanskrithandschriften* 241f), Tocharian fragment YQ 1.26 1/1 verso 6 in Ji (172), and Uighur fragment folio 7b11 in Geng (196); cf. also Tekin (70). On the Buddha's indebtedness to Gotamī cf. also Ohnuma.

This makes it difficult to conceive of the same argument being more successful as part of an attempt to convince the Buddha to permit women to go forth, if he had indeed been unwilling to have an order of nuns. This is all the more the case if he knew that this permission was going to shorten the duration of his dispensation.<sup>65</sup> Besides, in most versions of this exchange the Buddha clarifies that he has already settled his debt of gratitude by establishing Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī in taking refuge and the precepts, as well as in becoming a stream-enterer.<sup>66</sup>

A perhaps more natural explanation would be that the exchange between Ānanda and the Buddha regarding the service provided by Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī originally arose in a context similar to what is described in the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga-sutta* and its parallels. This exchange would then subsequently have been incorporated into the account of the founding of the order of nuns in order to provide a rationale for the Buddha's relenting.<sup>67</sup>

The Mahāsāṃghika *Vinaya* offers still another perspective, as in its presentation the Buddha gives in, thinking: “let not the mind of Ānanda, the son of Gautamī, be adversely affected, let not the teachings he has heard become confused, even though my true Dharma remains for [only] five hundred years.”<sup>68</sup> The suggestion that the Buddha wanted to avoid Ānanda getting confused and forgetting the teachings seems as

<sup>65</sup> Cf. in more detail Anālayo (“Women’s Renunciation” 78-82).

<sup>66</sup> MN 142 at MN III 253,21 differs from its parallels in so far as, according to its account, these points were made by Ānanda.

<sup>67</sup> The Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya* could be testifying to an intermediate stage in this process, as it has the offering of robes as part of its account of the founding of the order of nuns, cf. T 1421 at T XXII 185b20.

<sup>68</sup> Roth (16,14): *mā haivānandasya gautamīputrasya bhavatu cittasyānyathātvam mā pi se śrutā dharmā sammoṣaṇ gaccha(n)tu, kāmaṇ pañcāpi me varṣaśatāni saddharmo sthāsyati*. Yet another perspective is presented in T 156 at T III 153c28, where the Buddha relents once Ānanda has argued that Buddhas of the past had four assemblies.

unsuccessful as the other versions in providing a cogent reason for the Buddha to permit something he does not want to happen and he knows to have dire consequences for his dispensation.

Another noteworthy aspect of the *Madhyama-āgama* version is that it takes up the consequences of admitting women to the order twice: The first occasion is when Ānanda makes his initial request for women to go forth. The Buddha replies that the holy life will not last long if women go forth, comparable to a household with many women and few men, which will not develop properly. The second instance occurs toward the end, as part of a depiction of several negative repercussions of allowing women to join the order, because of which the Buddha's right teaching will remain for only five hundred years, instead of the thousand years it could have remained.

The formulation used in these two instances shows a minor but significant difference. The first instance reads: "Ānanda, if in this right teaching and discipline women obtain the leaving of the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path, then this holy life will consequently not last long."<sup>69</sup>

In this passage, the point at stake is the duration of the "holy life", the *brahmacariya*, a term that also stands for celibacy. A reference to the holy life can also be found in the corresponding passage in some of the parallel versions.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> MĀ 116 at T I 605c3: 阿難，若使女人得於此正法律中至信，捨家，無家，學道者，令此梵行便不得久住。

<sup>70</sup> T 60 at T I 856b28 also takes up this theme in two separate statements, where the first speaks of the duration of the holy life, 梵行, while the second indicates that the "inheritance of the teaching", 遺法, will remain for only five hundred years, cf. T I 857c29. The Theravāda version, AN 8.51 at AN IV 278,<sup>18</sup> or Vin II 256,<sup>15</sup> speaks first of the "holy life", *brahmacariya*, and then of the "right teaching", *saddhamma*, both

The second instance in the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse then reads: “Ānanda, if in this right teaching and discipline women had not obtained the leaving of the household out of faith, becoming homeless to train in the path, then this right teaching would have remained for a thousand years.”<sup>71</sup> Similar references to the “right teaching”, the “Buddha’s teaching”, the “teaching and discipline” or the “well-taught teaching and discipline” occur in several of the other parallel versions.<sup>72</sup>

Now, considering the first instance of this passage in the *Madhyama-āgama* on its own, independent of the second instance, the reference to the holy life could be applying to the nuns in particular. On this interpretation, the point made would be that, if women become homeless wanderers, their living of the holy life in celibacy will not last long.

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occurring together as part of a single sentence; cf. also T 196 at T IV 158c2, which speaks of the “Buddha’s pure holy life”, 佛清淨梵行, and T 1478 at T XXIV 946a28, where a reference to the holy life occurs together with the Buddha’s teaching.

<sup>71</sup> MĀ 116 at T I 607b8: 阿難, 若女人不得於此正法律中至信, 捨家, 無家, 學道者, 正法當住千年.

<sup>72</sup> In the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, T 1428 at T XXII 923a1, it is the “Buddha’s teaching”, 佛法, that will not last long. The Haimavata (?) *Vinayamāṭṛka*, T 1463 at T XXIV 803b9, instead speaks of the duration of the “right teaching”, 正法, as is the case also for the Mahāsāṃghika *Vinaya*, Roth (16,14), which refers to the *saddharma*. According to the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, T 1421 at T XXII 186a14, the decrease in duration will affect the “Buddha’s right teaching”, 佛之正法. The Sanskrit version of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, Schmidt (“Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācānā” 244,4), speaks of the “teaching and discipline”, *dharmavinaya*, with its Chinese counterpart, T 1451 at T XXIV 350c12, referring to the “Buddha’s teaching,” 佛法, and the “right teaching”, 正法, and its Tibetan counterpart to the “well-taught teaching and discipline”, D 6 da 102a1 or Q 1035 ne 99a3: *legs par bshad pa’i chos* (Q: *kyi*) ’dul ba.

The reasons for such an indication are not difficult to find, as the situation in ancient India for women who were not protected by a husband would have been rather insecure and rape seems to have been far from uncommon.<sup>73</sup> In the Jain tradition, which otherwise exhibits a keen concern to avoid any type of violence, specific instructions were apparently given in case nuns were staying in a dwelling without lockable doors. In such a situation, a stout nun should stand on guard close to the entrance at night with a stick in hand, ready to drive away intruders.<sup>74</sup>

The assumption that the original point at stake could have been the precarious situation of homeless nuns would also fit the simile of a household that has many women and few men, given at this juncture in the *Madhyama-āgama* version, a simile found in nearly all parallel

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<sup>73</sup> The Theravāda *Vinaya* reports several cases of the raping of nuns, cf., e.g., Vin I 89,10, Vin III 35,7, Vin IV 63,8, Vin IV 65,9, Vin IV 228,13 and Vin IV 229,25, cf. in more detail Perera (107f).

<sup>74</sup> Deo (475f). Deo (489) notes that in Jain texts “numerous instances are recorded of nuns who were harassed by young people, bad elements, householders and kings ... licentious persons ... followed them up to their residence and harassed them while they were on the alms tour. Cases of kidnapping occurred on a large scale.” The way nuns were apparently seen in mainstream Brahminical society is reflected in a commentary on the *Manusmṛti*, quoted in Jyväsjärvi (80), which defines females who have become homeless (*pravrajitā*) as “women without protectors ... [who], being lustful women, are disguised in the dress (of ascetics).” Although stemming from a historically later period, it seems quite possible that similar notions were already in existence in ancient times. On the position of women in general, Bhattacharji (54) comments that “woman has been a chattel in India ever since the later Vedic times.” A telling example can be found in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 6.4.7, which recommends that, in case a woman after her menstrual period is not willing to have sex and trying to bribe her (with presents) has also been unsuccessful, she should be beaten with a stick or one's fists and be overpowered. Once such attitudes are condoned in a text like the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, in the case of a woman who goes forth and thus is perceived by others to be without the protection of her rightful owner or protector—her father, husband or son—it seems highly probable that she would run the risk of being considered by some males as an easily available commodity.



versions.<sup>75</sup> The image conveyed by this simile would aptly illustrate the difficulties of adequately protecting women who have become homeless celibate wanderers from interference and abuse.

The same could then also apply to an image found in most versions, which depicts a field of corn or sugar cane affected by some disease or some weather calamity.<sup>76</sup> The original point of such simile(s) may have been to illustrate the traumatic effect of rape and similar abuse on Buddhist nuns, obstructing the natural ripening of the seeds of their spiritual potential.

On the assumption that the present passage could have originally implied that women joining the order will be in a precarious situation and their practicing of the holy life might not last long, the reference to a shortening of the lifespan of the Buddha's teaching from a thousand years to five hundred would be a subsequent development.

In the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse, it is in fact puzzling that the Buddha should have kept quiet about the threat posed to the thousand years' duration of his right teaching when Ānanda could still have been prevented from continuing his request on behalf of Gotamī. Instead, he only refers to this threat after the fact accomplished. The progression of the narrative in the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse thus gives the impression that these two instances could be an earlier and a later version of the same pronouncement, the earlier one speaking of the holy life, the later

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<sup>75</sup> T 60 at T I 856b29, the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, T 1428 at T XXII 923a1, the Haimavata (?) *Vinayamāṭṛka*, T 1463 at T XXIV 803b7, the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, T 1421 at T XXII 186a15, the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, Schmidt ("Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācānā" 244,1), T 1451 at T XXIV 350c12 and D 6 *da* 102a2 or Q 1035 *ne* 99a4, and the Theravāda version, AN 8.51 at AN IV 278,23 or Vin II 256,16; cf. also T 196 at T IV 158b28 and T 1478 at T XXIV 946a26. The simile is not found in the Mahāsāṃghika *Vinaya*, where the texts at this point is not complete, as the manuscript has apparently lost one simile, cf. Roth (10 note 11).

<sup>76</sup> Such a simile is not found in T 1421 and T 1463.

one taking up the thousand years' duration of the Buddha's right teaching.

Regarding the second instance, to predict that the Buddha's teaching will suffer a decline simply because women have gone forth is indeed a rather curious suggestion. Besides the implausibility of the Buddha being convinced to do something that will be detrimental to the duration of his own teaching, another problem is that a range of discourses speak of the presence of the nuns as something positive that ensures the duration of the Buddha's teaching, which would be deficient unless he had nun disciples.<sup>77</sup> Such references stand in direct contrast to the notion that women's going forth could adversely affect the duration of the Buddha's dispensation, further supporting the impression that this could be one of the later elements of the account of how the order of nuns came into being.

In the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse, the reference to a shortening of the duration of the Buddha's right teaching is part of a series of negative implications of women's going forth, together with a reference to the five impossibilities for women, a notion which in another paper I suggested probably represents a later development.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. in more detail Anālayo ("Women's Renunciation" 67-72).

<sup>78</sup> Anālayo ("Bahudhātuka"). Needless to say, in an oral tradition for a textual piece to appear somewhere it need not be taken away from another place, a situation that differs in this respect from the type of change that comes about through a misplacing of a folio in a manuscript. Had the five impossibilities been original to the *Bahudhātuka-sutta* exposition, their addition to the present exposition would not have required any change affecting their original placing. Instead of being an original part of the early teachings, the most probable scenario appears to be that the notion of these five impossibilities arose later, but early enough still to find a placing during oral transmission in different discourses. One such placing is the listing of impossibilities in the Theravāda version of the *Bahudhātuka-sutta*, in which case the Sarvāstivāda version does not have such a reference. In the Sarvāstivāda tradition the same piece has instead found a place among various negative assessments of women in the present discourse, in which case the Theravāda version does not mention the five impossibilities.

Now, it is significant that in the case of the *Madhyama-āgama* version this outburst of negativity toward women comes right after Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī has asked for nuns to be respected according to seniority. This stands in a curious contrast to her previous happy acceptance of the eight special rules, one of which stipulates that even the most senior nun has to pay respect to a newly ordained monk.

Inconsistencies with these eight special rules have already been noted by several scholars,<sup>79</sup> one of the problems being that some of these rules presuppose the existence of an order of nuns. Another problem is the apparent existence of nuns ordained with the simple formula “come nun.”<sup>80</sup> This gives the impression that, at least for some time after Gotamī's going forth, the presence of both communities may not have been required for the ordination of a nun, contrary to what is stipulated in one of the special rules. In sum, it seems impossible for these eight special rules to have been promulgated at the time when the order of nuns was about to be founded. In fact, the promulgation of these rules conflicts with a basic principle observed consistently elsewhere in the *Vinaya*, where a regulation is set forth only when a case requiring it has happened, not in advance.

Thus, the curiosity mentioned above, where Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī happily accepts a certain mode of conduct as part of the eight special rules and then later goes to the Buddha to get this changed, need not be taken to reflect female weakness.<sup>81</sup> Instead, it appears to be simply

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<sup>79</sup> For surveys of these eight rules cf., e.g., Anālayo (“Women’s renunciation” 82-86), Chung (“Gurudhamma”), Chung (“Ursprung” 13), Heirman (“Gurudharma”), Heirman (“Some Remarks” 34-43), Hirakawa (*Monastic notes* to 49-95), Horner (*Women* 118-61), Hüskens (“Eight”), Hüskens (“Legend” 46-58), Hüskens (*Vorschriften* 346-60), Nagata (283f), Nolot (397-405), Salgado, Sujāto (51-81) and Waldschmidt (*Bruchstücke* 118-21).

<sup>80</sup> Cf., e.g., Thī 109; for further references cf. Anālayo (“Women’s renunciation” 84f).

<sup>81</sup> Sujāto (59) suggests that in this way Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī “exhibits yet another womanly weakness, changing her mind and getting Ānanda to ask a special privilege

a sign of internal inconsistency in the account, supporting the impression that the eight special rules are a later addition.

Regarding Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī's request, according to the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse she refers to several senior nuns of long standing when making this appeal. That is, by the time of her plea for nuns to be respected according to seniority, some time has passed since the order of nuns was founded. Given that nuns in other contemporaneous Indian traditions were apparently not respected by their male counterparts in accordance with seniority,<sup>82</sup> the same would probably have happened in the Buddhist tradition, once nuns had been in existence for some years and thus had acquired some degree of seniority.

It would be natural for senior nuns, who had met with such disrespect several times, to approach the Buddha in order to get clarification about this matter. According to the Theravāda *Vinaya*, the Buddha explicitly noted that by refusing such a request he was just following already existing customs.<sup>83</sup>

This incident, and the way the Buddha reacted to it, could then have been part of a process of textual growth that eventually resulted in the set of eight special rules, which assemble various regulations

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from the Buddha: that they forget this rule, and allow paying respect according to seniority."

<sup>82</sup> A quote from the *Upadeśamālā*, translated in Jaini (168), indicates that this was the case for the Jain tradition.

<sup>83</sup> Vin II 258,2: "Ānanda, those followers of other traditions, with their badly proclaimed teachings, do not pay homage to, rise up [from the seat], hold their hands folded [in homage] and behave respectfully towards women. How could the Tathāgata then permit the paying of homage, rising up [from the seat], holding the hands folded [in homage] and behaving respectfully towards women?"

promulgated in response to different situations that arose when the order of nuns was already in existence.

The circumstance that in the *Madhyama-āgama* version an outburst of negativity toward women comes right after Mahāpajāpati Gotamī has asked for nuns to be respected according to seniority could be of further significance. Reading between the lines, it seems that the negativity toward the nuns comes to the surface when they are no longer as deferential and submissive as some monks would have liked. This part of the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse thus hints at what would have fomented negativity toward nuns, an attitude evident in all versions of the account of how the order of nuns began.

Such negativity would have become acute once the Buddha was no longer alive. After the Buddha had passed away, the struggle for survival among other competing religious groups in ancient India must have become rather acute for the Buddhist monastic community, who needed to ensure at any cost that the laity remained well disposed toward them and provided the required support and offerings.<sup>84</sup>

Lacking the central authority of the Buddha, a sizeable section of the order of monks could have become increasingly nervous about the independent behavior of the nuns and their close relationship with the laity, facilitated by the circumstance that nuns for reasons of security were not able to live in secluded spots in the way this was possible for monks and would thus naturally have tended to be in closer contact with lay followers.

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<sup>84</sup> Nagata (285) comments that “when Śākyamuni, the leader of the community, died, the question was: ‘Could a Buddhist community that included nuns continue to enjoy the respect of the laity?’”

Other scholars have already noted indications that nuns were becoming increasingly independent,<sup>85</sup> something that might well have been perceived as a challenge by some monks, all the more if nuns were more easily able to influence lay opinion. Such a situation might well have motivated some monks to attempt to steer away from a development that they saw as endangering the smooth continuity of the Buddhist tradition in the way they conceived it.

The apparently felt need to put the nuns in their place becomes particularly evident with the eight special rules, mentioned in all versions.<sup>86</sup> Notably, the Pāli discourse version of the foundation account occurs among the Eights of the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*. This gives the impression that, from the viewpoint of the reciters, these eight rules are the key aspect of the whole narrative. These eight special rules are apparently of such importance that, besides being recorded in the *Vinaya*, they are also placed into a discourse collection, thereby being destined for a wider audience, including the laity at large. In other words, this discourse informs the laity: we are keeping the nuns under control.<sup>87</sup>

Once monks perceived nuns as problematic, it would have been natural for these monks to read that meaning into the similes that depict the adversities suffered by a field of corn or sugar cane, or the image of a

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<sup>85</sup> Cf., e.g., Hüsken (*Vorschriften* 476) and Schopen.

<sup>86</sup> Wilson (145) sums up that “women were admitted to the *sangha* under one decisive condition: that they submit to male authority. That is the gist of the eight special rules.”

<sup>87</sup> Barnes (44) comments that “the story of the founding of the *bhikṣunī saṃgha* publicly proclaims that the formal structure of the *saṃgha* reflects that of the society around it: Buddhism would be no threat to the values that governed lay society.” Young (81) notes that the “story of the first ordination of the nuns ... is *descriptive* of existing conditions [at the time of reaching its final form], the subordination of the nuns to the monks, rather than a *prescription* by the Buddha that this is the way it should be.”

household with many women and few men. That is, instead of illustrating a danger for nuns, from the viewpoint of monks apprehensive of nuns these images would of course have portrayed the danger posed by nuns.<sup>88</sup> Such a change of perspective would then inevitably have influenced the way these similes were preserved in the canonical records. This could also easily have led to giving a more explicit expression to their apprehensions about the need to ensure the continuity of the Buddhist tradition, culminating in the notion that the teachings would last only five hundred years—a number of recurrent use in the early texts and with obvious symbolic significance<sup>89</sup>—whereas without those “problematic” nuns it would last twice as long.

The *Madhyama-āgama* discourse in fact expresses quite vividly apprehensions regarding the existence of Buddhist nuns and their competition in regard to support and respect received from the lay community. Had an order of nuns not come into existence, householders would have invited the monks to step on their clothes and even on their hair.<sup>90</sup> Householders would also have stood waiting by the roadside with

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<sup>88</sup> Dash (102) suggests that a reason for the Buddha’s initial refusal to let women go forth could have been that “there was every possibility of teasing and insulting [of] monastic women” taking place, noting that “harassment [directed] to a monastic woman is, directly or indirectly, an offence to the saṅgha itself.” This suggests the possibility of a gradual transition between the two alternative perspectives on the significance of these similes, in that the vulnerability of nuns would have automatically had an effect on the overall image of the community. In other words, such a problem for nuns would inevitably have become a problem for the whole community. This in turn would have naturally led to an increasing emphasis—among the male reciters of the texts—to the whole community as that which is being affected.

<sup>89</sup> On the symbolism of the number five hundred cf. Anālayo (*Comparative Study* 417f).

<sup>90</sup> In the *Madhyama-āgama* collection, a similar depiction of lay people putting their hair on the ground for monks to step on recurs in MĀ 131 at T I 621c1, as well as in its parallels T 66 at T I 865c3, T 67 at T I 867c15, and Waldschmidt (“Teufeleien” 143), except for the Pāli parallel MN 50, which does not mention any spreading of hair on the ground. The context is an account of events at the time of a past Buddha. The respectful behavior of the laity is then instigated by Māra in order to get the monks under his

food and drinks ready, inviting the monks to take anything from their homes. Even competition with other religious groups in ancient India would have been no issue at all.

The *Madhyama-āgama* version then rounds off its testimony to the disapproving attitudes toward nuns among those who were responsible for the final shape of this discourse with a reference to the five impossibilities for women, found also in the individually translated discourse and in the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*.<sup>91</sup> This listing does not stand in any meaningful relation to the remainder of the account and thus seems to have found its placing here simply because it fits the general trend of negative sentiments about women in general or nuns in particular.

Such trends, as shown by my two previous studies, have made their appearance in various ways and cannot be confined to a particular tradition or school. In the present case, negative attitudes toward nuns appear to be the main driving force behind several parts of the account of how the Buddhist order of nuns came into existence. This is perhaps not surprising, since such an account would be the most natural place for voicing such feelings.

Now, reconstruction of historical events based on purely textual accounts is certainly hazardous. Nevertheless, based on what can be culled from the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse in comparison with the other versions, it seems possible to arrive at a coherent narrative of the

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control. Notably, the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, T 1421 at T XXII 186a24, indicates that Ānanda's intervention in favor of women's going forth was because he had been influenced by Māra. Similar to the case noted above in note 67, in this case, too, the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya* could be showing an intermediate stage in a process of incorporation of this piece from its original context as a tale related to a past Buddha into the narrative of the foundation of the order of nuns.

<sup>91</sup> T 60 at T I 858a1 and T 1421 at T XXII 186a12; cf. also T 196 at T IV 159b10 and T 1478 at T XXIV 949b15.



account of the foundation of the order of nuns. A sketch of such a version would be more or less like this:

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī requests permission for women to go forth, which the Buddha refuses because conditions are not yet suitable for such a move, as her living the holy life in celibacy might not last long if she were to become a homeless wanderer. Therefore, he tells her that she should better live a celibate life in the more protected environment at home, having cut off her hair and put on robes.

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and a group of women follow this suggestion and shave off their hair and put on robes. After the Buddha has left, they decide to follow him, thereby proving their willingness to brave the conditions of a homeless life. On witnessing their keenness and ability to face the difficulties of a homeless life, or else on being informed of it, the Buddha gives them permission to join the order.

By way of conclusion to my study of the Discourse on Gotamī, I would like to turn to a stanza that according to tradition was spoken by her. Besides expressing her gratitude to the Buddha, this stanza also highlights what appears to have been a key motivation of her quest for becoming a nun—a motivation expressed similarly right at the outset of the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse—thereby adopting a life style she would have felt to be most adequate for her aspiration: liberation from *dukkha*.

Homage to the Buddha, the hero,  
supreme among all beings,  
who made me, as well as many others,  
[find] release from *dukkha*.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Thī 157: *buddha vīra namo ty atthu, sabbasattānam uttama, yo maṃ dukkhā pamocesi, aññañ ca bahukaṃ janam.*

*Mahāpajāpatīgotamītherīgāthā***Abbreviations**

AN	<i>Āṅguttara-nikāya</i>
B <sup>e</sup>	Burmese edition
C <sup>e</sup>	Ceylonese edition
D	Derge edition
DĀ	<i>Dīrgha-āgama</i> (T 1)
DN	<i>Dīrgha-nikāya</i>
MĀ	<i>Madhyama-āgama</i> (T 125)
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>
Q	Peking edition
SHT	Sanskrit handschriften aus den Turfanfunden
Sn	<i>Sutta-nipāta</i>
T	Taishō (CBETA)
Thī	<i>Therīgāthā</i>
Vin	<i>Vinaya</i>

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