AN 8.51 — With Gotamī

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Numbered Discourses 8.51

6. Gotamī

With Gotamī

At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Sakyans, near Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Tree Monastery. Then Mahāpajāpati Gotamī went up to the Buddha, bowed, stood to one side, and said to him:

“Sir, please let ladies gain the going forth from the lay life to homelessness in the teaching and training proclaimed by the Realized One.”

“Enough, Gotamī. Don’t endorse the going forth for ladies from the lay life to homelessness in the teaching and training proclaimed by the Realized One.”

For a second time …

For a third time, Mahāpajāpati Gotamī said to the Buddha:

“Sir, please let ladies gain the going forth from the lay life to homelessness in the teaching and training proclaimed by the Realized One.”

“Enough, Gotamī. Don’t endorse the going forth for ladies from the lay life to homelessness in the teaching and training proclaimed by the Realized One.”

Then Mahāpajāpati Gotamī thought, “The Buddha does not permit ladies to go forth.” Miserable and sad, weeping, with a tearful face, she bowed, and respectfully circled the Buddha, keeping him on her right, before leaving.

When the Buddha had stayed in Kapilavatthu as long as he pleased, he set out for Vesālī. Traveling stage by stage, he arrived at Vesālī, where he stayed at the Great Wood, in the hall with the peaked roof. Then Mahāpajāpati Gotamī had her hair shaved, and dressed in ocher robes. Together with several Sakyan ladies she set out for Vesālī. Traveling stage by stage, she arrived at Vesālī and went to the Great Wood, the hall with the peaked roof. Then Mahāpajāpati Gotamī stood crying outside the gate, her feet swollen, her limbs covered with dust, miserable and sad, with tearful face.

Venerable Ānanda saw her standing there, and said to her, “Gotamī, why do you stand crying outside the gate, your feet swollen, your limbs covered with dust, miserable and sad, with tearful face?”

“Honorable Ānanda, it’s because the Buddha does not permit ladies to go forth in the teaching and training proclaimed by the Realized One.”

“Well then, Gotamī, wait here an hour while I ask the Buddha to grant the going forth for ladies.”

Then Venerable Ānanda went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him:

“Sir, Mahāpajāpati Gotamī is standing crying outside the gate, her feet swollen, her limbs covered with dust, miserable and sad, with tearful face. She says that it’s because the Buddha does not permit ladies to go forth. Sir, please let ladies gain the going forth from the lay life to homelessness in the teaching and training proclaimed by the Realized One.”

“Enough, Ānanda. Don’t endorse the going forth for ladies from the lay life to homelessness in the teaching and training proclaimed by the Realized One.”

For a second time …

For a third time, Ānanda said to the Buddha:

“Sir, please let ladies gain the going forth from the lay life to homelessness in the teaching and training proclaimed by the Realized One.”

“Enough, Ānanda. Don’t endorse the going forth for ladies from the lay life to homelessness in the teaching and training proclaimed by the Realized One.”

Then Venerable Ānanda thought, “The Buddha does not permit ladies to go forth. Why don’t I try another approach?”

Then Venerable Ānanda said to the Buddha, “Sir, is a lady able to realize the fruits of stream-entry, once-return, non-return, and perfection once she has gone forth?”

“She is able, Ānanda.”

“If a lady is able to realize the fruits of stream-entry, once-return, non-return, and perfection once she has gone forth. Sir, Mahāpajāpati has been very helpful to the Buddha. As his aunt, she raised him, nurtured him, and gave him her milk. When the Buddha’s birth mother passed away, she nurtured him at her own breast. Sir, please let ladies gain the going forth from the lay life to homelessness in the teaching and training proclaimed by the Realized One.”

“Ānanda, if Mahāpajāpati Gotamī accepts these eight principles of respect, that will be her ordination.

A nun, even if she has been ordained for a hundred years, should bow down to a monk who was ordained that very day. She should rise up for him, greet him with cupped palms, and observe proper etiquette toward him. This principle should be honored, respected, esteemed, and venerated, and not transgressed so long as life lasts.

A nun should not commence the rainy season residence in a monastery without monks. This principle should be honored, respected, esteemed, and venerated, and not

transgressed so long as life lasts.

Each fortnight the nuns should expect two things from the community of monks: the date of the sabbath, and visiting for advice. This principle should be honored, respected, esteemed, and venerated, and not transgressed so long as life lasts.

After completing the rainy season residence the nuns should invite admonition from the communities of both monks and nuns in regard to anything that was seen, heard, or suspected. This principle should be honored, respected, esteemed, and venerated, and not transgressed so long as life lasts.

A nun who has committed a grave offense should undergo penance in the communities of both monks and nuns for a fortnight. This principle should be honored, respected, esteemed, and venerated, and not transgressed so long as life lasts.

A trainee nun who has trained in the six rules for two years should seek ordination from the communities of both monks and nuns. This principle should be honored, respected, esteemed, and venerated, and not transgressed so long as life lasts.

A nun should not abuse or insult a monk in any way. This principle should be honored, respected, esteemed, and venerated, and not transgressed so long as life lasts.

From this day forth it is forbidden for nuns to criticize monks, but it is not forbidden for monks to criticize nuns. This principle should be honored, respected, esteemed, and venerated, and not transgressed so long as life lasts.

If Mahāpajāpati Gotamī accepts these eight principles of respect, that will be her ordination."

Then Ānanda, having learned these eight principles of respect from the Buddha himself, went to Mahāpajāpati Gotamī and said:

"Gotamī, if you accept eight principles of respect, that will be your ordination.

A nun, even if she has been ordained for a hundred years, should bow down to a monk who was ordained that very day. She should rise up for him, greet him with cupped palms, and observe proper etiquette toward him. This principle should be honored, respected, esteemed, and venerated, and not transgressed so long as life lasts. …

From this day forth it is forbidden for nuns to criticize monks, but it is not forbidden for monks to criticize nuns. This principle should be honored, respected, esteemed, and venerated, and not transgressed so long as life lasts. If you accept these eight principles of respect, that will be your ordination."

"Ānanda, suppose there was a woman or man who was young, youthful, and fond of adornments, and had bathed their head. After getting a garland of lotuses, jasmine, or liana flowers, they would take them in both hands and place them on the crown of the head. In the same way, sir, I accept these eight principles of respect as not to be transgressed so long as life lasts."

Then Venerable Ānanda went up to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and said to him:

“Sir, Mahāpajāpati Gotamī has accepted the eight principles of respect as not to be transgressed so long as life lasts.”

“Ānanda, if ladies had not gained the going forth from the lay life to homelessness in the teaching and training proclaimed by the Realized One, the spiritual life would have lasted long. The true teaching would have remained for a thousand years. But since they have gained the going forth, now the spiritual life will not last long. The true teaching will remain only five hundred years.

It’s like those families with many women and few men. They’re easy prey for bandits and grain-jar thieves. In the same way, the spiritual life does not last long in a teaching and training where ladies gain the going forth.

It’s like a field full of rice. Once the disease called ‘white bones’ attacks, it doesn’t last long. In the same way, the spiritual life does not last long in a teaching and training where ladies gain the going forth.

It’s like a field full of sugarcane. Once the disease called ‘red rot’ attacks, it doesn’t last long. In the same way, the spiritual life does not last long in a teaching and training where ladies gain the going forth.

As a man might build a dyke around a large lake as a precaution against the water overflowing, in the same way as a precaution I’ve prescribed the eight principles of respect as not to be transgressed so long as life lasts.”