The Maiden Who Fell in Love with a Thief: Considerations on the Story of the Nun Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā

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Abstract

Buddhist literature has given us many extraordinary figures who have proven to possess considerable, enduring appeal. Exceptional even by these high standards is Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā, as she is author, protagonist, or inspirer of some of the world's earliest poetry by women, of a great epic dedicated to her and of popular songs and movies that are still played in the twenty-first century. The nun Bhaddā was a direct disciple of the Buddha and came to be known for her quick wit, the type of ordination she received, her prowess as debater, and the speed at which she gained awakening once taught by the Buddha.

There is little that we know with certainty about the *historical* Bhaddā. This is because a great deal of the material we have cannot be ascertained to be historically accurate or is likely to be legendary. Irrespective of the degree of accuracy of our sources, Bhaddā as a *literary character* is highly interesting for a number of reasons, including ethical questions in connection with an incident of self-defense killing and the way this killing is depicted and commented upon in the story; the portrayal of women in the religions and literatures of Asia; and the ways the character develops and changes over the centuries. Furthermore, Bhaddā's is a good story, a tale of love, deceit, drama, death, penance and final redemption, with a plot containing elements of a *Bildungsroman*.

Bhaddā's story has been retold a number of times in traditional and modern sources. Some authors have provided translations or brief commentaries, for instance in connection with her initiation into the Saṅgha and in the context of current discussions about reviving full ordination for Buddhist nuns, or in connection with the great Tamil epic *Kuṇṭalakēci* that unfortunately only survives in fragments. However, there has been very little scholarship that has gone beyond simply restating or summarizing her life and very little, if any, analysis. This article fills this lacuna by providing an analysis of Bhaddā's story based on the *Verses of Therīs* (*Therīgāthā*) and *Wish Fulfiller* (*Manorathapūraṇī*) as well as with reference to several other sources.

Contents

Keywords

Bhaddā; self-defense; ordination; Verses of Therīs (Therīgāthā); Wish Fulfiller (Manorathapūraṇī)

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The first part of the title is indebted to Eugene W. Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends: Translated from the Original Pali Text of the Dhammapada Commentary Part 2: Translation of Books 3 to 12* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1921), 227–232.

1. Introduction

South Asian Buddhist literature has given us many extraordinary figures who have proven to possess considerable, enduring appeal. Exceptional even by these high standards is Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā, as she is author, protagonist, or inspirer of some of the world's earliest poetry by women, of a great epic dedicated to her and of popular songs and movies that are still played in the twenty-first century.[1] The nun Bhaddā was a direct disciple of the Buddha and came to be known for her quick wit, the type of ordination she received, her prowess as debater, and the speed at which she gained awakening once the Buddha taught her.[2]

We will see that there is little that we know with certainty about the *historical* Bhaddā's life. This is because a great deal of the material we have cannot be ascertained to be historically accurate or it is likely to be legendary. Irrespective of the degree of accuracy of our sources, Bhaddā as a *literary character* is highly interesting for a number of reasons, including ethical questions in connection with an incident of self-defense killing and the way this killing is depicted and commented upon in the story; the portrayal of women in the religions and literatures of Asia; and the ways the character develops and changes over the centuries. Furthermore, Bhaddā's is a good story, a

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1 Continuing the tradition of popular interest in Bhaddā is the very recent short book by Bhikkhu Sujato, *Dreams of Bhaddā: Sex. Murder. Betrayal. Enlightenment. A Historical Novella*, Digital Edition (Santipada, 2012). Adding the word "sex" perhaps makes for a somewhat catchy title –if predictable and wanting in refinement– but sex is not mentioned in any of the sources I have seen on Bhaddā. The same author deals with the story of Bhaddā elsewhere, but this treatment too is not satisfying scholarly: Bhikkhu Sujato, *White Bones Red Rot Black Snakes: A Buddhist Mythology of the Feminine* (n/a: Santipada, 2012).

2 The epithet "Kuṇḍalakesā" (also, "Kuṇḍalakesī") means "curly locks." The reason why Bhaddā was given this epithet is explained in section III below. The feminine name "Bhaddā" and the masculine "Bhadda," also in compounds, were fairly common. See George P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, vol. III (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1997), 348ff. There is another well-known Bhaddā in the Pali canon; she was a contemporary of Kuṇḍalakesā and had the epithet "Kāpilānī" (see *ibidem*, 354-355).

tale of love, deceit, drama, death, penance and final redemption, with a plot containing elements of a *Bildungsroman*.

Bhaddā's story has been retold a number of times in traditional and modern sources. Some authors have provided translations or brief commentaries, for instance in connection with her initiation into the Saṅgha and in the context of current discussions about reviving full ordination for Buddhist nuns, or in connection with the great Tamil epic *Kuṇṭalakēci* that unfortunately only survives in fragments.[3] However, there has been very little scholarship that has gone beyond simply restating or summarizing her life and very little, if any, analysis. One of my article's aims, then, is to provide analysis of a number of issues and only occasionally will I point out differences between various versions of the story, because most of them are not,

3 Eugene W. Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends: Translated from the Original Pali Text of the Dhammapada Commentary Part 2*: *Translation of Books 3 to 12* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1921). Hellmuth Hecker, "Buddhist Women at the Time of The Buddha," trans. Sister Khema, accessed March 9, 2013, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/hecker/wheel292.html#bhadda>. Isaline B. Horner, *Women in Early Buddhist Literature*, BPS Online Edition. Originally published in 1961, The Wheel Publication 30, 2008, http://what-buddha-said.net/library/Wheels/wh_030.html. Zenno Ishigami, *Disciples of the Buddha* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Company, 1989). George P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, Indian Texts Series (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1997). Susan Murcott, *The First Buddhist Women: Translations and Commentaries on the Therigatha* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1991). Ranjini Obeyesekere, *Portraits of Buddhist Women: Stories from the Saddharmaratnāvaliya* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001). William Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs: Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā: Paramatthadīpanī VI by Ācariya Dhammapāla*, Reprinted with corrections, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists* v. 47 (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1999). Jonathan S. Walters, "A Voice from the Silence: The Buddha's Mother's Story," *History of Religions* 33, no. 4 (1994): 358–379. Shōkō Watanabe 照宏渡照, 釋尊をめぐる女性たち: 仏教女性物 (Tokyo: 大法輪閣, 1976). Moritz Winternitz, *Geschichte der indischen Litteratur. Bd. 2, H. 1, Die buddhistische Litteratur* (Leipzig: C.F. Amelangs Verlag, 1913). Serinity Young, *Courtesans and Tantric Consorts: Sexualities in Buddhist Narrative, Iconography and Ritual* (New York: Routledge, 2004). Kamil V. Zvelebil, Lexicon of Tamil Literature (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1995). For more relevant sources see also Vijitha Rajapakse, "*Therīgāthā*: On Feminism, Aestheticism and Religiosity in an Early Buddhist Verse Anthology," *Buddhist Studies Review* 12, no. 1–2 (1995): 7–8. in footnote 1 to 4, and Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs* xi, footnote 1.

to borrow Gregory Bateson's famous dictum, differences that make a difference as far as my current goals are concerned.

2. *Verses of Therīs*

While commentators and re-tellers have not shied away from providing a substantial amount of information concerning her life, in reality not a great deal can be said about Bhaddā that is beyond reasonable doubt. The earliest source at our disposal is the collection named *Verses of Therīs* (*Therīgāthā, henceforth, Verses*), related to the similarly-titled and also deservedly famous *Verses of Thera*s (*Theragāthā*).[4] Both have been translated multiple times into several European and Asian languages in the last century or so. This is not the place to assess the worth of different translations and as far as the present article is concerned, suffice to say that, while improved translations are always welcome, readers are well served by what is currently available.[5]

In addition to being the earliest source for the study of Bhaddā, the *Verses* is a particularly important text for several other reasons, including: it is an early and very significant collection of verses by/about women, indeed, the first known of this kind in South Asia.

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4 Both are part of the collection known as "Khuddaka Nikāya," which is itself contained in the Basket of Teaching section (*suttapiṭaka*) of the Pali/Pāli canon. For a schematic comparison of the *Thera*- and *Therīgāthā* see Kōgen Mizuno 弘元 水野, "長老偈、長老尼偈の対応表," 仏教研究 22 (1993): 3–84. For a comparison that is more directly relevant to the present article see Kumkum Roy, "Of *Theras* and *Therīs*: Visions of Liberation in the Early Buddhist Tradition," in *Re-searching Indian Women*, ed. Vijaya Ramaswamy (Delhi: Manohar, 2003), 75–95.

5 I am not aware of a bibliography on the *Thera/Therīgātha*, nor of an up-to-date, comprehensive list of translations. As far as I know, the earliest complete translation is Karl E. Neumann, *Die Lieder der Mönche und Nonnen Gotamo Buddho's: Aus den Theragāthā und Therīgāthā zum ersten mal übersetzt von Karl Eugen Neumann* (Berlin: Ernst Hofmann & Co., 1899). I trust the author's *zum ersten mal übersetzt*. Worthy of mention is also the first Pali Text Society translation of the text by Caroline A. F. Rhys Davids, *Psalms of the Sisters* (London: Pali text Society, 1909).

On this issue and in contrast to other South Asian traditions, Alice Collett notes that "Jaina literature leaves to posterity no *Therīgāthā* equivalent [… and] the literature of Brahmanism does not supply us with voices of women from the ancient world."[6] Also, the nuns who appear in the *Verses* manifest their religiosity in highly interesting ways, and in the text we find expressed remarkable "sensitivities to beauty (poetic, human and natural),"[7] some of which will be surprising to readers who are familiar with only certain types of Pali or early Buddhist literature. Furthermore, the *Verses* is widely discussed in the secondary literature on women in Buddhism and more generally on women in South Asian religion and so a basic acquaintance with it is part of the vocabulary shared by specialists. And finally, as many have said before me, the *Verses* at times is a touching compilation of great beauty, worthy of attention even only on the basis of its literary merit.[8]

I have just claimed that the *Verses* is a collection by/about women and this assertion requires some clarifications. Briefly stated, not every verse was uttered by or is attributed to a woman. For instance, many verses are said to have been uttered by the Buddha and a number of other verses by relatives of a given nun.[9]

The following passage contains all that is attributed to Bhaddā in the *Verses*:

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6 Alice Collett, "Buddhism and Gender: Reframing and Refocusing the Debate," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 22, no. 2 (2006): 57.

7 Rajapakse, "*Therīgāthā*: On Feminism, Aestheticism and Religiosity in an Early Buddhist Verse Anthology," 153. Parentheses in the original.

8 On the *Verses* as work of South Asian poetry see Siegfried Lienhard, "Sur la Structure Poétique des Theratherīgāthā," Journal Asiatique 263, no. 3–4 (1975): 375–396. In English, see the same author's *A History of Classical Poetry: Sanskrit - Pali - Prakrit* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), 75ff. Cf. also the remarks in Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature* (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 53.

9 On issues of authorship see Kenneth R. Norman, *The Elders' Verses II* (London: Pali Text Society, 1971), xix–xxii. Norman (xix) helpfully lists the alleged speakers of the various verses. On the compilation of the *Verses* see ibidem xxiv-xxvii.

> With hair cut off, wearing dust, formerly I wandered, having only one robe, thinking there was fault where there was no fault and seeing no fault where there was fault. [107]
>
> Going out from my daytime resting place on Mount Vulture Peak, I saw the stainless Buddha attended by the Order of Bhikkhus. [108]
>
> Having bent my knee, having paid homage to him, putting my raised hands together, I stood face to face with him. "Come Bhaddā." He said to me. That was my full ordination. [109]
>
> I wandered over Aṅga and Magadha, Vajjī, Kāsī, and Kosala. For fifty years without debt, I have enjoyed the alms of the kingdoms. [110]
>
> Truly he produced much merit. Truly wise was that lay follower who gave a robe to Bhaddā, who is now completely freed from all bonds. [111][10]

These five verses are all that there is in this collection that is attributed to Bhaddā, and no other information about her is given therein. Nevertheless, to the extent that what is found in those five verses can be considered to be historically reliable, it appears that:

− Bhaddā was already a wandering mendicant, probably a Jain, for at least some time before she met the Buddha.[11]

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10 107: *lūnakesī paṅkadharī ekasāṭī pure cariṃ avajje vajjamatinī vajje cāvajjadassinī*. 108: *divāvihārā nikkhamma Gijjhakūṭamhi pabbate addasaṃ virajaṃ Buddhaṃ bhikkusaṅghapurakkhataṃ*. 109: *nihacca jāṇuṃ vanditvā sammukhā añjaliṃ akaṃ ehi Bhadde ti maṃ avaca. sā me āsˈ ûpasampadā*. 110: *ciṇṇā Aṅgā ca Magadhā Vajjī Kāsī ca Kosalā anaṇā paṇṇāsavassāni raṭṭhapiṇḍam abhuñjˈ ahaṃ*. 111: *puññaṃ vata pasavi bahuṃ sappañño vatˈ āyaṃ upāsako yo Bhaddāya cīvaraṃ adāsi vippamuttāya sabbaganthehī ti."* Pali from William Pruitt, *Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā: Paramatthadīpanī VI by Ācariya Dhammapāla* (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1998), 104–105. The translation is quoted, with minor stylistic changes, from William Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs: Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā: Paramatthadīpanī* VI, Reprinted with corrections. *Sacred Books of the Buddhists* v. 47 (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1999), 141. Pruitt's translation is itself nearly identical to that found in Kenneth R. Norman, *The Elders' Verses II* (London: Pali Text Society, 1971), 14.

11 As pointed out by Nakamura, what I, following Pruitt and Norman, translate

− At the time of her meeting with the Buddha and her subsequent special type of ordination, Bhaddā was residing in the area of Mount Vulture Peak near Rājagaha (Skt.: Rājagṛha, the ancient capital of Magadha corresponding to modern-day Rajgir in Bihar).

− Bhaddā traveled around an area corresponding to parts of North India and the Terai (the southern, lowland region of Nepal). There is, unsurprisingly, quite a degree of overlap between Bhaddā's range and the area in which the Buddha lived and was active.

− Bhaddā was a mendicant for at least fifty years.

− Eventually, she became an Arhat.

It is evident that, relying exclusively on these five verses, we are left with exceedingly little information about Bhaddā and to find more we have to look at other texts.

3. Bhaddā after the *Verses of Therīs*

In addition to the verses just seen, information about Bhaddā is contained in a number of later sources and the situation opens up some methodological alternatives. In my condensed biography here to follow, I provide information based on the earliest post-canonical source.[12] Here, my main authority is Buddhaghosa's *Wish Fulfiller* (*Manorathapūraṇī*), a commentary on the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*.

There is a source earlier than the *Wish Fulfiller*, viz., the collection

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as "having only one robe" refers to a rule belonging to Śvētāmbara Jainism: "「唯だ一つの衣をまとう」というのは、ジャイナ教のうちの白衣派のきまりである." Hajime Nakamura 元 中村, 仏弟子の告白, 尼僧の告白 : テーラガーター, テーリーガーター (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1984), 394, note 107. Cf. also the *Kuṇḍalakesātherīapadāna*, verse 36: "I went into the presence of the White Robed ones and went forth." *santikaṃ setavatthānaṃ upetvā pabbajiṃ ahaṃ*. Pali from William Pruitt, *Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā*, 103.

12 Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 61., remarks that the "*Apadāna*, which is not recognized as canonical by the Dīghabhāṇakas … is one of the last books added to the canon." Following the Dīghabhāṇakas, then, the *Apadāna* does not count as a canonical source.

known as *Noble Deeds* (*Apadāna*) which is, like the *Verses*, part of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*.[13] The *Noble Deeds* has been defined as "a kind of supplement to the *Thera/Therīgāthā*" and as being "parallel to the *Jātaka* describing the former lifes [*sic*] of the Buddha."[14] I have already mentioned that I do not wish to track every difference between the surviving versions of Bhaddā's story. There is one comment that I wish to make, however. While no two versions of the story are identical, the plot of the *Apadāna*'s version is more different than the others, as it contains some unique features and it lacks some characteristics common to all other post-*Verses* versions. Accordingly, it better lends itself to be treated in isolation, or comparatively, whereas the other texts, in so far as they share more, can for my purposes more readily be treated together.

Another source is a commentary on the *Dhammapada* (*Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*), which is also traditionally (but problematically) attributed to Buddhaghosa;[15] finally, I refer to Dhammapāla's commentary on the *Verses* (*Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā*).[16] Another source, particularly interesting for its position in Sri Lanka, is the *Jewel Garland of the True Doctrine* (*Saddharmaratnāvaliya*), a 13th century Sinhala work of the Sri Lankan monk Dharmasēna Thera.[17] The *Jewel Garland* contains a translation of Bhaddā's story

13 The translation *Noble Deeds* for *Apadāna* is based on Kenneth R. Norman, *Pāli Literature: Including the Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of All the Hīnayāna Schools of Buddhism*, vol. VII.2, A History of Indian Literature (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), 190. But see Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 61: "The exact meaning of the title, which corresponds to Skt. *avadāna*, and which designates a class of literature, is not known."

14 Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 61. I have expanded Hinüber's abbreviations for the sake of clarity. Norman, *Pāli Literature*, 89, defines the *Apadāna* as "almost an appendix to the Theragāthā and Therīgāthā, since it connects together the past and present lives of the *theras* and *therīs*."

15 Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 131.

16 For remarks on what sources exist, which have been neglected, etc., in the study of women in Buddhism in South Asia see Collett, "Buddhism and Gender: Reframing and Refocusing the Debate."

17 For information on the historical, literary and cultural background of the *Jewel*

based on the version found in the *Dhammapada* commentary.[18] Bhaddā is also the protagonist of one of the five great Tamil epics, the *Kuṇṭalakēci*, "perhaps a composition much like the *Maṇimēkalai*, a long poetic Buddhist narrative in an elegant and difficult literary style, full of complex concepts and vocabulary."[19] Unfortunately, only fragments survive of what was probably a great composition. Those fragments that do survive are found in the *Nīlakēci*, which Kamil Zvelebil colorfully described as "a Jaina counter-blast against the Buddhist *Kuṇṭalakēci*."[20]

Now, every single one of these texts is interesting in its own right, and no two of them retell Bhaddā's story identically. As I have already mentioned, my main goal with this article is not to point out the numerous differences between the several versions of accounts of Bhaddā's life.

Schematically, the above information can be presented as follows:

Verses (*Therīgāthā*)	Various authors	Compiled over a number of centuries[21]	Pali

Garland and related works see Mahinda Deegalle, "Buddhist Preaching and Sinhala Religious Rhetoric: Medieval Buddhist Methods to Popularize Theravāda," *Numen* 44, no. 2 (1997): 180–210.

18 On differences between the *Dhammapada* commentary and the *Jewel Garland* see Ranjini Obeyesekere, *Jewels of the Doctrine: Stories of the Saddharma Ratnāvaliya* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), x–xxii. Obeyesekere's translation of Bhaddā's story from the *Jewel Garland* appears in her *Portraits of Buddhist Women*, 117–125.

19 Anne E. Monius, *Imagining a Place for Buddhism: Literary Culture and Religious Community in Tamil-Speaking South India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 144.

20 Kamil V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, A History of Indian Literature; V. 10: Dravidian Literatures; Fasc. 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974), 139; See also the same author's *Lexicon of Tamil Literature*, 495.

21 Kenneth R. Norman, *Pāli Literature: Including the Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of All the Hīnayāna Schools of Buddhism*, vol. VII.2, A History of Indian Literature (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), 77.: "There is nothing in the poem which seems to put it outside the limit of about three centuries after the time

Noble Deeds (*Apadāna*)	Various authors	Compiled over a number of centuries[22]	Pali
Wish Fulfiller (*Manorathapūraṇī*)	Buddhaghosa	5th century	Pali
Commentary on the Dhammapada (*Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*)	Not known	~5th century?[23]	Pali
Commentary on the Verses (*Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā*)	Dhammapāla	~6th century[24]	Pali
Kuṇṭalakēci	Nātakuptaṉār	900-950[25]	Tamil
Nīlakēci	Not known	950-1000[26]	Tamil
Jewel Garland of the True Doctrine (*Saddharmaratnāvaliya*)	Dharmasēna Thera	13th century	Sinhala

of the Buddha." Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature* (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 53.: "Probably both [*Thera-* and *Therīgāthā*] have been growing over a long period, slowly absorbing verses commemorating monks or nuns living at quite different times, for although the commentary states that Ānanda recited these collections at the first council …, other verses are supposed to be much younger even by tradition, and as having been added on the occasion of the second council … or still later at the time of the third council under Aśoka."

22 Kenneth R. Norman, *Pāli Literature: Including the Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of All the Hīnayāna Schools of Buddhism*, vol. VII.2, A History of Indian Literature (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), 90.

23 Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 135.

24 Norman, *Pāli Literature*, VII.2:137.: "We shall perhaps not be far out if we assume that Dhammapāla composed his works about the middle of the sixth century A.D." Oskar von Hinüber, A Handbook of Pāli Literature, 171, gives "somewhere about AD 550–600" but see also the remarks on page 169.

25 Kamil V. Zvelebil, *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature*, Handbuch der Orientalistik. Zweite Abteilung, Indien Ergänzungsband 5 (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1992), 72.

26 Ibid.

As we are about to see, by the time of the *Wish Fulfiller* information about Bhaddā has grown manifold in size and detail compared to what is found in the *Verses*, and the *Wish Fulfiller* also includes a number of fantastic or mythical events.

Before we proceed, the historical accuracy of the accounts of Bhaddā's life in post-*Verses* texts needs to be evaluated in a few words: in brief, I prefer to err on the side of caution and so I consider them to be, essentially, *fables* (irrespective of whether authors such as Buddhaghosa saw them as such). Even the earliest commentary –the *Wish Fulfiller*– is separated from the events it recounts by almost a millennium and it contains a significant amount of detail that is nowhere to be found in the *Verses*. To give an example, the very fact that Bhaddā ever got married is not found anywhere in the *Verses*. Furthermore and most importantly, several parts of her story, including the marriage to a thievish husband and the way he is killed, are found elsewhere –for instance, in the South Asian fables adopted and adapted by Buddhists as *Birth Stories* (*Jātaka*)– but sometimes with differently-named protagonists, showing that the oral traditions to which they belonged were fluid and porous, allowing for inter-textual borrowing, influence, and exchange.[27] At any rate, here I will only present the most salient points of Bhaddā's expanded biography and these will be interspersed with my commentary. For the sake of readability, direct quotes from primary sources are in italics.[28]

> Bhaddā and her future husband are born on the same day in the city of Rājagaha: Bhaddā in the family of a wealthy merchant (*seṭṭhikula*) and he in that of the king's

27 For some remarks on the portrayal of women in the *Jātakas* see Naomi Appleton, "Temptress on the Path: Women as Objects and Subjects in Buddhist Jātaka Stories," in *New Topics in Feminist Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Pamela Sue Anderson (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2009), 103–115.

28 Mabel Bode, "Women Leaders of the Buddhist Reformation (Continued from Page 566)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1893): 777–785.

priest (*purohita*).[29] The birth of the husband-to-be was accompanied by an ominous portent, namely, at the time of his birth weapons in the whole city were ablaze, beginning with those at the royal palace. The following day the priest explains that though the child is an enemy (*sattu*) of the whole city, no misfortune will befall the king; as consequence, the child is spared and he is given the name "Enemy" (*sattuka*). Enemy grows up to be a skilled, highly accomplished thief and eventually there is not a house in the whole city that he has not plundered. The king finally decides to take action and has Enemy captured and sentenced to death.[30]

Up to this point Bhaddā and Enemy have separate lives but then, just as Enemy inches closer to his death, they finally make a connection:

> One day Bhaddā, then a teenager, sees Enemy being carried by the king's men to the top of a mountain where he is to be executed. She immediately falls in love with him and her feelings are such that she tells her parents that she can not live without him:
>
> *If I have him I shall live; if I don't, there is only death for me.*[31]

Here one marvels at the speed with which Bhaddā desperately falls in love. According to the *Dhammapada* commentary, she was sixteen at the time and "women who are of this age desire and long for men."[32] Sixteen may seem young, but it is the same age at which the Buddha and Yasodharā were married. And of course, for the sake of comparison, Shakespeare's Juliet was thirteen or fourteen at the time of the events that take place in *Romeo and Juliet*, and, as in Bhaddā's

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29 The *purohita* was an important figure with both priestly and ministerial duties.

30 I am not providing information about Bhaddā's previous lives as it is not relevant to my study.

31 *Wish Fulfiller* (773): *etaṃ labhamānā jīvissāmi alabhamānāya me maraṇam evāti*.

32 Harry C. Norman, *The Commentary on the Dhammapada*, vol. II (London: Pali Text Society, 1970), 217.: *tasmiñ ca vaye ṭhitā nāriyo purisajjhāsayā honti purisalolā*.

love story, those events only span a few days.

The story in the *Wish Fulfiller* proceeds as follows:

> Bhaddā's family, troubled about her sorry condition, bribe the town's watchman with a thousand pieces of gold to release Enemy. Freed, he is washed, adorned with jewels and brought to her.

The fact that Bhaddā is allowed to choose whom to marry is itself noteworthy, and particularly so because it is a known thief who is the chosen companion.[33]

So far, so good. Enemy is spared his life and Bhaddā happily proceeds to serve him. This does not last very long, however:

> A few days pass and Enemy starts to covet Bhaddā's jewels; he tells Bhaddā that prior to being rescued he had sought the mountain deity's help and vowed to offer jewels should the deity save him. Having been saved through the deity's graces, he must now make an offering. Accordingly, they set about going to the mountain, Bhaddā wearing her jewels. On the way there, Enemy's demeanor gives away his intention. Learning that Enemy does not care about the deity ("I'd rip out and eat this deity's liver")[34] and that he intends to kill her and take her jewelery, Bhaddā asks the husband whether she can embrace him one last time, face to face and from behind.

The final part of this episode deserves a closer look. On understanding that the rogue husband wants to kill her, Bhaddā speaks to the effect

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33 As Collett puts it, "Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā's story challenges ideas about women's right to choose (outside of the *svayaṃvara*) whom they marry. Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā demands that she is allowed to take the hand of a thief she becomes enamoured with, a wish granted by her parents." Alice Collett, "Historio-Critical Hermeneutics in the Study of Women in Early Indian Buddhism," *Numen* 56, no. 1 (2009): 112–113, doi:10.1163/156852708X373276. On marriage in ancient India in general see Arthur L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India: A Survey of the History and Culture of the Indian Sub-continent before the Coming of the Muslims*. (London: Grove Press, 1959), 165-170.

34 *Wish Fulfiller*, 775: *aham pi imissā devatāya yakanaṃ ubbatetvā khādeyyaṃ*.

that not only her jewels but indeed *her very self* are as much her own as his:

> *Lord, whose ornaments are these? Whose am I? We know no such thing as something belonging to you and something to me.*[35]

Then there happens a dramatic change: from a fully devoted wife, who seems resigned to her fate and who considers her possessions and indeed her own self to be her husband's, in an instant Bhaddā turns into a killer. It is interesting to note that Enemy dies in the same manner as he would have died had her family not bribed the watchman to spare his life. This, incidentally, means that Bhaddā does what the executioner did not do:

> Enemy consents to a final embrace from both the front and back, and when Bhaddā is behind him, she finally pushes him so that he falls down the cliff, whereupon he is killed, crushed to bits.

The mountain deity makes an appearance by way of uttering a comment in the form of two verses, which are introduced by the *Wish Fulfiller* and the commentaries on the *Verses* and on the *Dhammapada* in positive terms:[36]

> *A man is not clever on all occasions; even a woman is clever, watchful here and there.*
>
> *A man is not clever on all occasions; even a woman is clever, quickly discerning what is useful.*[37]

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35 Ibid.: *kassa pana ayya pasādhanaṃ, kassa ahan ti. mayaṃ evarūpaṃ na jānāma, aññaṃ tava santakaṃ aññaṃ mama santakan ti*.

36 *Wish Fulfiller*, 775: *tāya kataṃ vicitrabhāvaṃ ñatvā pabbate adhivatthā devatā guṇakittanavasena imā gāthā āha ...*; Pruitt, *Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā*, 98: *tāya kataṃ acchariyaṃ disvā pabbate adhivatthā devatā kosallaṃ vibhāventī imā gāthā abhāsi …*; Norman, *The Commentary on the Dhammapada*, 221: *tesaṃ dvinnam pi kiriyaṃ disvā tassā itthiyā sādhukāraṃ datvā imaṃ gātham āha ...*

37 Pruitt, *Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā*, 98: *na hi sabbesu ṭhānesu puriso hoti paṇḍito itthī pi paṇḍitā hoti tattha tattha vicakkhaṇā na hi sabbesu ṭhānesu puriso hoti paṇḍito itthī pi paṇḍitā hoti lahum atthavicintikā ti*. Pruitt, *The Commentary on*

I have translated the passage literally. The point it makes is that men are not *always* clever and even a woman can be clever *at times*. In any event, this is the earliest episode in Bhaddā's story where she shows her intellectual abilities. Here it is her quick-wittedness that is showing. In the words of Obeyesekere: "the confrontation with death transforms the infatuated young girls into a mature woman who from that point on makes clear rational choices that highlight her intelligence."[38] Returning to Bhaddā, the story proceeds as follows:

> Having killed her own husband, Bhaddā thinks that she cannot return home and so asks a community of Jains whether she can join. On being asked in what manner she wants to go forth, she says that she wants whatever is highest for them, and accordingly her hair is pulled out and eventually grows back in curls, hence the epithet "Curly locks" (*kuṇḍalakesā/ī*).

This is worth looking at more closely. Through an unexpected and dramatic turn of events, the teenager burning with passion and love is completely transformed. Bhaddā's story is, briefly put, more theatrical than most of the stories of other nuns retold in the *Wish Fulfiller* and in the commentary on the *Verses* for example. There are some that are at the same time more tragic and more life-like than Bhaddā's. A calamitous event, sudden grief caused by the loss of husband,[39] children or family, these and similar dramatic upheavals, as well as the state of widowhood, were all common reasons that pushed women

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the Verses of the Therīs, 134, renders *paṇḍito/ā* with "wise." I, like Bode, *Wish Fulfiller*, 782, however, prefer the rendering "clever." Even though Bhaddā's actions were preemptive, it was still a matter of murder, and I hesitate to associate this with wisdom in a Buddhist context. Burlingame has "wisdom" and "wise." See Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends Part 2*, 229.

38 Obeyesekere, *Portraits of Buddhist Women*, 121.

39 Widowhood is still a central factor in female asceticism in India. See Lynn T. Denton, *Female Ascetics in Hinduism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 41–48.

to join the Saṅgha.[40] Among the best known there is certainly the story of Kisā Gotamī, the grieving mother who brought her dead child to the Buddha for medicine.[41] In the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, she is used as example of a person losing her mind and becoming insane due to great sorrow.[42] Another moving story is that of the *therī* Paṭācārā, who, in a very short period of time, loses her husband to a poisonous snake, one child to a hawk, the other child to drowning, her parents and brother due to their home's collapsing, and finally loses her sanity too.[43]

Regarding the loss of one's husband, due his death or decision to join the Saṅgha, Serinity Young has made the following remark:

> Being a wife completely defined a woman's life in ways being a husband did not, and being a widow, but not a widower, was considered so inauspicious that Buddhist women deserted by their husbands were left in a highly questionable and vulnerable state. … Without a husband a woman was nothing

40 "The burdens of family life are heavier for women than for men, but few of the nuns whose verses are collected in the *Therīgāthā* mention escape from the bonds of marriage as their motivation for entering the order. Many of these women speak instead of their grief over involuntary separation from cherished family members as their motivation for becoming nuns. The sympathetic advice they received from the Buddha and his followers alleviated the pain of losing children, parents, and husbands and brought them into the religious community. Tradition credits one nun, Paṭācārā, with bringing into the order five hundred women whose grief over deceased relatives she had relieved." Quoted from Karen C. Lang, "Lord Death's Snare: Gender-Related Imagery in the Theragāthā and the Therīgāthā," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2, no. 2 (1986): 73.

41 Pruitt, *Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā*, 169-176. For a translation see Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of Therīs*, 222-232.

42 *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, T1509.25.118c23-24: 又如翅舍伽憍曇比丘尼。本白衣時七子皆死。大憂愁故失心發狂. The Sanskrit title is probably **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*.

43 Pruitt, *Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā*, 106-114. For a translation see Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of Therīs*, 143-154. For a pertinent discussion of both Kisā Gotamī and Paṭācārā see Reiko Ohnuma, "Mother-Love and Mother-Grief: South Asian Buddhist Variations on a Theme," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 23, no. 1 (2007): 95–116, doi:10.2307/20487889. and the same author's *Ties That Bind: Maternal Imagery and Discourse in Indian Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 36–65.

> … and due to her possible inauspiciousness she was excluded from the round of celebratory events that make up family life.[44]

Returning to Bhaddā's story, we have seen that she chooses the highest ordination, and has the hair of her head painfully plucked out.[45] The story proceeds thus:

> In time Bhaddā grasps all the teachings of the Jains she joined, and eventually, thinking that she has nothing left to learn, leaves and wanders from place to place, meeting and learning from a variety of *paṇḍita*s. After becoming highly knowledgeable, she travels around villages and towns challenging anyone to debate with her.

Apart from her superior intellectual capacities, the depiction of Bhaddā here and henceforth could hardly be more different than that of the young Bhaddā. Growing up and undergoing extensive training, Bhaddā has turned into a dedicated mendicant and skilled debater who travels into villages and towns and, as far as our sources tell us, remains undefeated is spite of issuing her challenge to whomever wanted to accept it.[46] The activity of and skill in debating was taken very seriously in South Asia. Their exact nature remains obscure, but we know from the *Ṛg Veda* that already in the second millennium BCE verbal contests took place.[47] That debating was see as an important activity is shown by the fact that South Asian hagiographies quite commonly depict their religious heroes as being highly-skilled

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44 Young, *Courtesans and Tantric Consorts*, 87; See also Kathryn R. Blackstone, *Women in the Footsteps of the Buddha: Struggle for Liberation in the Therīgāthā* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998), 117.

45 On the Jaina *keśaluñcana* see N. Shântâ, *La Voie Jaina: Histoire, Spiritualité, Vie des Ascètes Pélerines de l'Inde* (Paris: O.E.I.L., 1985), 415. The entire book contains a great deal of material on female Jaina ascetics.

46 On debates in Buddhism see Alberto Todeschini, "On the Ideal Debater: *Yogācārabhūmi*, *Abhidharmasamuccaya* and *Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣya*," *Journal of Indian and Tibetan Studies* 15 (2011): 244–272. especially 244-251.

47 See Franciscus B. J. Kuiper, "The Ancient Aryan Verbal Contest," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 4, no. 4 (1960): 217–281.

in debate and by the fact that there exist debate manuals belonging to different traditions.[48] Some of these texts discuss topics such as strategies to win debates or sophisticated rules for adjudicating winner and loser in a debate.[49] It is worth mentioning that, although not much information is given about her activity as debater, it seems that these were very courteous encounters, from which Bhaddā wanted to deepen her learning. This type of amicable exchange has been discussed by Bhikkhu Anālayo, and as far as can be seen from early scriptures was not an uncommon occurrence.[50]

There is another observation to make. While up to this moment Bhaddā is depicted as a young woman very much embodying standard gender roles and stereotypes, from now onwards Bhaddā is there mostly in a mere *grammatical* sense, that is to say, very little of Bhaddā is left that is specifically characteristic of a woman, even though the texts do use female pronouns when referring to her.

In connection with the act of leaving home, Steven Collins has identified three stages:

> first, one must leave home physically by abandoning household life for monkhood. Then, one must abandon home psychologically, by destroying desire for and attachment to the present 'individuality'. Third and last, one must – at

48 For background see Joy Manné, "The Dīgha Nikāya Debates: Debating Practice at the Time of the Buddha," *Buddhist Studies Review* 9, no. 2 (1992): 117–136. Johannes Bronkhorst, "Modes of Debate and Refutation of Adversaries in Classical and Medieval India: A Preliminary Investigation," *Antiquorum Philosophia* 1 (2007): 269–280. José I. Cabezón, "Buddhist Narratives of the Great Debates," *Argumentation* 22, no. 1 (2008): 71–92.

49 Outside of Buddhism, mention can be made of the *Carakasaṃhitā* and of the *Nyāya Sūtra* as containing noteworthy treatments of debating practices. On rules for debating see the article mentioned in the previous footnote as well as the same author's "Twenty-Two Ways to Lose a Debate: A Gricean Look at the *Nyāyasūtra*'s Points of Defeat," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 38, no. 1 (2010): 49–74, doi:10.1007/s10781-009-9083-y.

50 Bhikkhu Anālayo, "*Chos sbyin gyi mdo* – Bhikṣuṇī Dharmadinnā Proves Her Wisdom," *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal* 24 (2011): 3–34.

death of the 'body-house' – leave home ontologically by abandoning forever the village of *saṃsāra*.[51]

The third stage we shall not see, because Bhaddā's story does not include her death. Bhaddā has abandoned her household, leaving for what was supposed to be a short trip with her husband. So the physical act of leaving home was not originally done with any intent of joining an order, Buddhist or otherwise. Rather, she was still behaving like the ideal wife, and simply did what she thought would please her husband. Even so, eventually leave she did.

We find no details in the in the *Wish Fulfiller*, but according to the *Dhammapada* commentary, when Bhaddā opts for a career of doctrinal study rather then meditative practice, upon joining the Jains.[52] Subsequently, "no one was able to match question and answer with her; in fact, such a reputation did she acquire that whenever men heard the announcement … they would run away."[53] Though exceptional in her skill, Bhaddā was not the only woman known to be a strong debater: Nanduttarā's career shares some characteristics with that of Bhaddā, including having been a Jain, being highly skilled in debate, and traveling from place to place to issue her challenge.[54] The most famous examples, however, are found outside of Buddhism. In particular, I am referring to Gārgī Vācaknavī, whose case has been discussed fairly extensively, including in connection with the shattering of heads.[55] A less clear case is that of Maitreyī, who is

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51 Steven Collins, *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravāda Buddhism* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 171.

52 Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends Part 2*, 230. It is unclear to me why the narrative introduces a choice here instead of having Bhaddā pursue both.

53 Ibid.

54 For more information see Murcott, *The First Buddhist Women*, 47–48.

55 Ellison B. Findly, "Gārgī at the King's Court: Women and Philosophic Innovation in Ancient India," in *Women, Religion, and Social Change*, ed. Yvonne Y. Haddad and Ellison B. Findly (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 37–58. Michael Witzel, "The Case of the Shattered Head," *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 13/14 (1987): 363–415.

described as *brahmavādinī*, which may only be "a technical term for a person who participates in public debate (of which we have no direct evidence for Maitreyī) or it may simply mean that she had a direct interest in discussing religious and philosophical matters."[56]

It is interesting to note that for our sources Bhaddā, the former Jain, is a Buddhist heroine.[57] And yet, in an act of rhetorical denigration not uncommon against women, according to the Tamil Jain epic *Nīlakēci*, Bhaddā, "who is said to have defended Buddhist philosophical doctrines and spread her faith widely, was a prostitute."[58]

Another noteworthy issue is the way that Bhaddā issues her challenge, which is analogous to Nanduttarā's. This was done by making a heap of sand by the city gate and sticking a branch of a *jambu* (also, *jambū*) tree in it. Bhaddā would tell children standing near the mound that anyone who deems himself able to debate with her should trample the branch. In the literature that mentions Bhaddā the *jambu* tree is frequently taken to be the rose-apple, which incidentally is related to neither rose nor apple trees. However this identification may not quite

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56 Steven E. Lindquist, "Gender at Janaka's Court: Women in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Reconsidered," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 36, no. 3 (2008): 421, footnote 58, doi:10.1007/s10781-008-9035-y. Parentheses in the original.

57 That she was a Jain is explained in Dhammapāla's commentary on the *Verses*, in which "formerly I wandered, having [only] one robe" is explained as follows: "In verse 107, *with hair cut off* means: with my hair cut off, pulled out. It is said with reference to them that when going forth among the Jains they pull out their hair with a palm kernel. ... *Having* [*only*] *one robe* means: one who wears one robe because of the practice of the Jains. *Formerly I wandered* means: having been a Jain previously, I wandered in this way." Pruitt, *Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā*, 105: *tattha lūnakesī ti lūnā luñcitā kesā mayhan ti lūnakesi. nigaṇṭhesu pabbajjāya tālaṭṭhinā luñcitakesā, taṃ sandhāya vadati. ekasāṭī ti nigaṇṭhacārittavasena ekasāṭikā. pure carin ti pubbe nigaṇṭhī hutvā evaṃ vicariṃ*. Translation, with minor changes, quoted from Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs*, 141. I am rendering *tattha* with "In verse 107" for the sake of readability.

58 Vijaya Ramaswamy, "Chaste Widows, Cunning Wives, and Amazonian Warriors: Imaging of Women in Tamil Oral Traditions," *Asian Ethnology* 69, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 141. Zvelebil dates the *Nīlakēci* to around 950-1000. See Kamil V. Zvelebil, *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature*, Handbuch der Orientalistik. Zweite Abteilung, Indien Ergänzungsband 5 (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1992), 72.

be accurate, as has been pointed out by Dominik Wujastyk, according to whom the tree is the Jambul or Black Plum.[59]

Whatever the precise identity of *jambu* may be, returning to Bhaddā's and Nanduttarā's stories, I must confess that in spite of extensive research and querying the exact symbolism of their making a mound and sticking a branch is not entirely clear to me (but see below for my hypothesis). Apart from these two instances, I have been unable to find references to this custom anywhere else in Buddhist, Hindu or Jaina literature. The latter would be particularly relevant in view of the fact that both Bhaddā and Nanduttarā were Jains before becoming followers of the Buddha. There is evidence that the significance of erecting a mound of sand and sticking a branch from a *jambu* tree was not universally clear at the time of the commentaries, namely, eventually Bhaddā does find someone who takes up her challenge to debate, and the person to do so is Sāriputta. We will see their momentous encounter shortly, but I am bringing up Sāriputta now for the following reason: the *Wish Fulfiller* and the commentary on the *Verses* tell us that when Sāriputta sees the mound of sand with the branch sticking out of it, he is not aware of its significance and accordingly inquires about it.[60] Sāriputta was not an ordinary monk. He was, with Moggallāna, foremost among the Buddha's disciples, he was particularly known for his wisdom, he frequently preached in lieu of the Buddha and was instrumental in a number of conversions

59 Dominik Wujastyk, "*Jambudvīpa*: Apples or Plums?," in *Studies in the History of the Exact Sciences in Honour of David Pingree*, ed. Charles Burnett and others (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004), 293: "Just to be clear: the well-known, traditional tree native to India, which figures in Sanskrit *purāṇic* literature and whose Sanskrit name is '*jambu*', is the *Eugenia jambolana*, Lam. All the Sanskrit-English dictionaries cited above [such as those by Monier-Williams, Böhtlingk and Roth, Mayrhofer, Apte,] are correct on this point. However, the English name of this tree is 'Jambul' or 'Black Plum', not 'Rose Apple'." The brackets are mine. But see also Michael W. Meister, "Exploring Kāfirkot: When Is a Rose Apple Not a Rose?," *Pakistan Heritage* 1 (2009): 109–128.

60 *Wish Fulfiller*, 776; Pruitt, *Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā*, 99.

to Buddhism.[61] Granted, his being unaware of the significance of the *jambu* branch in the sand mound is not binding evidence, but it does lend weight to the claim that it was not a common occurrence.[62]

Whatever its exact identity or the meaning of Bhaddā's and Nanduttarā's way of issuing their challenge, the *jambu* tree is of special significance in South Asia. One of the reasons it is known in Buddhism is on account of a famous incident in the Buddha's life. The Buddha received a visit by Saccaka, referred to also as "Aggivessana." The two discuss various practices engaged in by recluses and brahmins, and the Buddha also recalls extreme ascetic practices he himself had undertaken, until, the Buddha tells Saccaka, the following recollection occurred to him:

> I considered: 'I recall that when my father the Sakyan was occupied, while I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. Could that be the path to enlightenment?' Then, following on that memory, came the realisation: 'That is the path to enlightenment.' [63]

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61 On Sāriputta see André Migot, "Un Grand Disciple du Buddha: Sâriputra. Son Rôle dans l'Histoire du Bouddhisme et dans le Développement de l'Abhidharma," *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 46, no. 2 (1954): 405–554. On people converted by him see p. 471, footnote 4.

62 Chakravarti states: "[Kuṇḍalakesī] established in front of the city gate a branch of the rose apple tree, the symbol of religious challenge." Quoted from A. Chakravarti, *Neelakesi: The Original Text and the Commentary of Samaya-Divakara-Vamana-Muni* (Kumbakonam: A. Chakravarti, 1936), 141. As I do not read Tamil, I am unable to ascertain whether "the symbol of religious challenge" is in the original, in the commentary, or Chakravarti's addition.

63 *Mahāsaccaka Sutt*a (*Majjhima Nikāya* 36), translated in Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 340. A related incident is found in chapter 5 of Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*. For a translation see Edward Conze, *Buddist Scriptures* (London: Penguin, 1959), 42. For a comparative evaluation of this sutta see Bhikkhu Anālayo, *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima-nikāya* (Taipei: Dharma Drum Publishing, 2011), vol. 1, 232-246.

However, I suspect that the connection between Bhaddā's and Nanduttarā's usage of a *jambu* branch is not with the incident just seen, but rather with the well-known connection of the *jambu* tree with cosmology.[64] Furthermore, the continent named *Jambud(v)īpa* is of particular importance, in that it is only on this continent that Buddhas and 'wheel-turners' are born (*cakkavatti; cakravartin*). Perhaps one possible interpretation is that by erecting the *jambu* branch and using it to issue the challenge they are showing their willingness to debate anyone throughout the whole land.

Bhaddā's life takes a momentous turn when she meets Sāriputta:

> In due course Bhaddā arrives at the city gate of Sāvatthi and again issues her challenge; Sāriputta, general of the Dhamma,[65] walks into the city and accepts the challenge. The event is very courteous and during the encounter Sāriputta is able to answer all of Bhaddā's questions, but she cannot answer the one question put to her. Bhaddā falls to Sāriputta's feet and asks to take refuge in him; Sāriputta tells her to go for refuge to the Buddha instead.[66]

Sāriputta answers each and every one of Bhaddā's questions, to the extent that she has nothing left to ask; Bhaddā, even though theretofore unbeatable in debate, is unable to offer reply to Sāriputta's one single query. The encounter, which happens in front of a large crowd of spectators, is very respectful. Once defeated, Bhaddā shows

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64 The *jambu* tree is connected with Mount Meru, the *axis mundi*. See Ian W. Mabbett, "The Symbolism of Mount Meru," *History of Religions* 23, no. 1 (1983): 64–83, doi:10.2307/1062318; more generally, see Padmanabh S. Jaini, "Lokākāśa and Lokadhātu: A Comparison of Jain and Buddhist Cosmology," in *Victorious Ones: Jain Images of Perfection*, ed. Phyllis E. Granoff (New York; Ahmedabad; Ocean Township: Rubin Museum of Art, New York; In association with Mapin Publishing, 2009), 70–89.

65 *Wish Fulfiller*, 782: *dhammasenāpati*.

66 On women's motivation to join the Saṅgha see Arvind Sharma, "How and Why Did the Women in Ancient India Become Buddhist Nuns?," *Sociology of Religion* 38, no. 3 (1977): 239 –251, doi:10.2307/3709804. Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā is briefly mentioned on p. 244.

to be very keen to become Sāriputta's disciple and, when he says that she should rather go to the Buddha, she readily agrees. This part of Bhaddā's biography too is similar to the way Nanduttarā was led to converting to Buddhism, but in her case this was due to her debating with the other leading disciple of the Buddha –Mahā Moggallāna, who was renowned for his powers (*iddhi*). There is very little material left in our three sources that covers what happens after Bhaddā's encounter with Sāriputta:

> On the evening of the same day Bhaddā goes to meet the Buddha, who utters the following verse to her (this is also verse 101 in the *Dhammapada*):
>
> *A verse's word that, hearing it, one becomes calm, is better than a thousand verses of meaningless words.*[67]
>
> There and then Bhaddā attains Arahatship with the four knowledges.[68] Bhaddā then asks to go forth;[69] with the Buddha's assent, she goes to the monastery of the *bhikkhunī*s and finally goes forth.[70] As disciples talk of how Bhaddā became *arahat*, the Buddha declares that of the

67 Pruitt, *Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā*, 100: *sahassam api ce gāthā anatthapadasaṃhitā ekaṃ gāthāpadaṃ seyyo yaṃ sutvā upasammatī ti*. The Pali is identical *Wish Fulfiller*, 777. I confess that I do not understand this verse's presence here. Nowhere in our sources is there any reference to verses in connection with Bhaddā. Of course, Bhaddā allegedly authored the five verses I quoted at the beginning of the paper, but these would have been uttered after her encounter with the Buddha.

68 Pali: *paṭisambhidā*, corresponding to Sanskrit *pratisaṃvid*. Definitions from a Theravāda perspective can be found in Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary*, 258–261. For more information see Étienne Lamotte, *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse de Nāgārjuna* (*Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*), vol. III (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1970), 1614–1624. Lamotte provides reference to several sources on the *pratisaṃvid*s as well as a translation of a relevant passage from the *Da zhidu lun*, T. 1509, 246a22.

69 *Wish Fulfiller*, 777: *pabbajjaṃ yāci*.

70 On Bhaddā's ordination see Gisela Krey, "Some Remarks on the Status of Nuns and Laywomen in Early Buddhism," in *Dignity & Discipline: Reviving Full Ordination for Buddhist Nuns*, ed. Thea Mohr and Jampa Tsedroen (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2010), 45–48.

> nuns characterized by quick understanding, Bhaddā was foremost.[71]

It may seem that Bhaddā became an *arahat* incredibly swiftly, but as commonly the case for nuns whose stories are depicted in the commentary on the *Verses*, we are told that Bhaddā had performed meritorious deeds and practiced extensively in previous lives.[72] Furthermore, it was not unusual for *therī*s to attain arahatship upon hearing one or multiple verses and sometimes this happened while the Buddha was not physically present, but rather had sent forth his radiance.[73] But there definitely is something extraordinary about the course of events surrounding Bhaddā's attainment of Arahatship, namely, she became *arahat* before joining the Saṅgha.[74] This, as remarked by I.B. Horner, was unusual.[75]

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71 *Wish Fulfiller, 771: khippābhiññabhikkhunīṇaṃ Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakesā aggā*.

72 Pruitt, *Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā*, 97.

73 Cf. the *Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā* on a little *therī* (*therikā*), verse 1; on Sumanā, verse 14; on another Sumanā, verse 16; on Abhirūpa Nandā, verses 19-20; on Abhayā, verses 35-36; on Guttā, verses 163-168; on Kisā Gotamī, verses 213-223; etc. The situation regarding *therīs* and arahatship is complex, as demonstrated by Ellison B. Findly, "Women and the 'Arahant' Issue in Early Pali Literature," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 15, no. 1 (April 1, 1999): 57–76, doi:10.2307/25002352. Much relevant material can also be found in Naomi Appleton, "In the Footsteps of the Buddha? Women and the Bodhisatta Path in Theravāda Buddhism," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 27, no. 1 (2011): 33–51.

74 This is the order of events as they are retold in the *Wish Fulfiller* and in the *Verses* commentary. According to the commentary on the *Dhammapada*, however, she becomes *arahat* after her ordination rather than before. See Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends Part 2*, 232.

75 Horner, *Women in Early Buddhist Literature*. First published in 1961. Accessed 10/1/2012. Digital version with no page number given. Elsewhere Horner states that among the authors of verses there was only one (Sujātā) or at most two (Sujātā and Khemā) who became *arahat* while still laywomen. See Isaline B. Horner, *Women Under Primitive Buddhism: Laywomen and Almswomen* (London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1930), 170. For canonical references to lay people who became *arahat*, see Isaline B. Horner, *The Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected: A Study of the Arahan* (London: Williams & Norgate ltd., 1936), 109, footnote 2. See also the relevant comment in Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs*, 167, footnote 1: "[According to the *Wish Fulfiller* and the commentary on the *Verses*,] a lay person who becomes an Arahat must either pass away or go forth the same day."

Bhaddā's story ends rather suddenly once she has entered the Saṅgha. In a way, both in terms of her life and of the pedagogical function of the tale, the mission is, so to speak, accomplished with the double event of attaining Arahatship and entering the Saṅgha. These show that even someone who has committed such heinous act as killing her own husband can be fully redeemed to the extent of being able to achieve the highest goal and of being allowed to join the Saṅgha in the very same life as the killing took place.

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愛上竊賊的女子：跋陀比丘尼故事的探究

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摘要：

佛教文學中出現許多恆久吸引人們注意的傑出人物。即使從這樣的傑出人物的高標準來看，跋陀比丘尼仍是特別突出的。她是歷史上最早的女詩人之一，佛教詩文學中的女主角。她的故事啓發古代的女性詩作、成爲以她爲主的史詩、傳唱的歌謠以及 21 世紀仍然上映的電影的題材。跋陀比丘尼是佛陀的第一代弟子，聰慧敏捷，她有不尋常的受戒，是個超凡的辯論者。她一聽到佛陀的說法就即刻開悟。

我們對於眞正歷史上的跋陀比丘尼所知甚少，因爲我們無法證實經典文獻關於她的故事是事實還是傳說。即使如此，作爲一個文學人物，跋陀比丘尼是個極具議題性的人物：例如關於自衛殺人及其殺人方式的道德問題、亞洲文學與宗教中的女性呈現、此人物角色流傳數百年的發展與轉變。再者，跋陀的故事是集愛情、欺騙、戲劇、死亡、懺悔及救贖情節交錯的「教化小說」。

跋陀比丘尼的故事在傳統以及現代的文本中多次地被重述，有的是翻譯，有的是註解，例如在她的出家受戒的故事中，在今天討論南傳 / 藏傳佛教重建比丘尼的脈絡中，或者關於重要的泰米爾佛教史詩《昆達拉凱奇》（可惜現在現存只有一小部分）。

然而，目前對跋陀比丘尼的研究僅局限在敘述或摘錄她的生平故事，並無任何深入的分析。本文以《長老尼偈》以及《增支部》注釋書 -《滿足希求》爲主對跋陀的故事提出深入的分析，期望填補這個研究空缺。

關鍵詞：

跋陀、自衛、受戒、長老尼偈、增支部注