AN 4.159 — Bhikkhuni Sutta: The Nun

English translation by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.159.than.html

Source revision: sha256:7c411108530c04aafcca0ac43267ed12227cbb2653320e8ae0bb686e566bb783

License: CC-BY-NC-4.0 — https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

License URL: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Copyright: ©1997 Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

License notice: The text of this page ("Bhikkhuni Sutta: The Nun", by Thanissaro Bhikkhu) is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of the license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. Documents linked from this page may be subject to other restrictions.

Attribution: ©1997 Thanissaro Bhikkhu. The text of this page ("Bhikkhuni Sutta: The Nun", by Thanissaro Bhikkhu) is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of the license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. Documents linked from this page may be subject to other restrictions. Transcribed from a file provided by the translator. Last revised for Access to Insight on 30 November 2013. How to cite this document (a suggested style): "Bhikkhuni Sutta: The Nun" (AN 4.159), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.159.than.html .

Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Ananda was staying in Kosambi, at Ghosita's Park. Then a certain nun said to a certain man, "Go, my good man, to my lord Ananda and, on arrival, bowing your head to his feet in my name, tell him, 'The nun named such-and-such, venerable sir, is sick, in pain, severely ill. She bows her head to the feet of her lord Ananda and says, "It would be good if my lord Ananda were to go to the nuns' quarters, to visit this nun out of sympathy for her."'"

Responding, "Yes, my lady," the man then approached Ven. Ananda and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Ananda, "The nun named such-and-such, venerable sir, is sick, in pain, severely ill. She bows her head to the feet of her lord Ananda and says, 'It would be good if my lord Ananda were to go to the nuns' quarters, to visit this nun out of sympathy for her.'"

Ven. Ananda accepted with silence.

Then in the early morning, having put on his robes and, carrying his bowl and outer robe, he went to the nuns' quarters. The nun saw Ven. Ananda coming from afar. On seeing him, she lay down on a bed, having covered her head.

Then Ven. Ananda approached the nun and, on arrival, sat down on a prepared seat. As he was sitting there, he said to the nun: "This body, sister, comes into being through food. And yet it is by relying on food that food is to be abandoned.

"This body comes into being through craving. And yet it is by relying on craving that craving is to be abandoned.

"This body comes into being through conceit. And yet it is by relying on conceit that conceit is to be abandoned.

"This body comes into being through sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse is to be abandoned. With regard to sexual intercourse, the Buddha declares the cutting off of the bridge.

"'This body, sister, comes into being through food. And yet it is by relying on food that food is to be abandoned.' Thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said? There is the case, sister, where a monk, considering it thoughtfully, takes food — not playfully, nor for intoxication, nor for putting on bulk, nor for beautification — but simply for the survival & continuance of this body, for ending its afflictions, for the support of the holy life, [thinking,] 'Thus will I destroy old feelings [of hunger] and not create new feelings [from overeating]. I will maintain myself, be blameless, & live in comfort.' Then he eventually abandons food, having relied on food. 'This body, sister, comes into being through food. And yet it is by relying on food that food is to be abandoned.' Thus was it said, and in reference to this was it said.

"'This body comes into being through craving. And yet it is by relying on craving that craving is to be abandoned.' Thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said? There is the case, sister, where a monk hears, 'The monk named such-and-such, they say, through the ending of the fermentations, has entered & remains in the fermentation-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having known & realized them for himself in the here & now.' The thought occurs to him, 'I hope that I, too, will — through the ending of the fermentations — enter & remain in the fermentation-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having known & realized them for myself in the here & now.' Then he eventually abandons craving, having relied on craving. 'This body comes into being through craving. And yet it is by relying on craving that craving is to be abandoned.' Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.

"'This body comes into being through conceit. And yet it is by relying on conceit that conceit is to be abandoned.' Thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said? There is the case, sister, where a monk hears, 'The monk named such-and-such, they say, through the ending of the fermentations, has entered & remains in the fermentation-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having known & realized them for himself in the here & now.' The thought occurs to him, 'The monk named such-and-such, they say, through the ending of the fermentations, has entered & remains in the fermentation-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having known & realized them for himself in the here & now. Then why not me?' Then he eventually abandons conceit, having relied on

conceit. 'This body comes into being through conceit. And yet it is by relying on conceit that conceit is to be abandoned.' Thus was it said, and in reference to this was it said.

"This body comes into being through sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse is to be abandoned. With regard to sexual intercourse, the Buddha declares the cutting off of the bridge."

Then the nun — getting up from her bed, arranging her upper robe over one shoulder, and bowing down with her head at Ven. Ananda's feet — said, "A transgression has overcome me, venerable sir, in that I was so foolish, so muddle-headed, and so unskilled as to act in this way. May my lord Ananda please accept this confession of my transgression as such, so that I may restrain myself in the future."

"Yes, sister, a transgression overcame you in that you were so foolish, so muddle-headed, and so unskilled as to act in this way. But because you see your transgression as such and make amends in accordance with the Dhamma, we accept your confession. For it is a cause of growth in the Dhamma & Discipline of the noble ones when, seeing a transgression as such, one makes amends in accordance with the Dhamma and exercises restraint in the future."

That is what Ven. Ananda said. Gratified, the nun delighted in Ven. Ananda's words.