

# Skinny

Translated from the  
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## Gotamī and the Mustard Seed



After flowing-on for a hundred thousand ages,  
she evolved in this Buddha-era among gods and men  
in a poor family in Sāvatti.  
Her name was Gotamī-tissa,  
but because her body was very skinny  
she was called 'Skinny Gotamī'.  
When she went to her husband's family,  
she was scorned [and called] 'daughter of a poor family'.

Then she gave birth to a son,  
and with the arrival of the son she was treated with respect.  
But that son, running back and forth  
and running all around, while playing met his end.  
Because of this, sorrow-to-the-point-of-madness arose in her.  
She thought: "Before I was one who received only scorn,  
but starting from the time of the birth of my son I gained honour.  
These [relatives] will now try to take my son,  
in order to expose him outside [in the charnal ground]."



Under the influence of her sorrow-to-the-point-of-madness,  
she took the dead corpse on her hip and  
wandered in the city from the door of one house to another  
[pleading]: "Give medicine to me for my son!"  
People reviled her, [saying] "What good is medicine?"  
She did not grasp what they were saying.

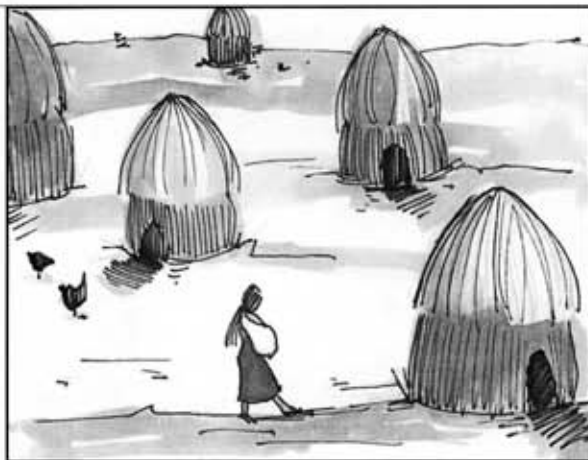
And then a certain wise man, thinking  
"This woman has had her mind deranged by sorrow for her son;  
the ten-powered [Buddha] will know the medicine for her,"  
said: "Mother, having approached the fully awakened one,  
ask about medicine for your son."



She went to the vihāra  
at the time of the teaching of dhamma and said,  
"Blessed One, give medicine to me for my son!"  
The master, seeing her situation, said,  
"Go, having entered the city,  
into whatever house has never before experienced any death,  
and take from them a mustard seed."



"Very well, Sir." [she replied],  
 and glad of mind she entered the city and came to the first house:  
 "The master has called for a mustard seed  
 in order to make medicine for my son.  
 If this house has never before experienced any death,  
 give me a mustard seed."  
 "Who is able to count how many have died here?"  
 "Then keep it. What use is that mustard seed to me?"  
 And going to a second and a third house,  
 her madness left her and her right mind was established  
 —thanks to the power of the Buddha.



She thought, "This is the way it will be in the entire city.  
 By means of the Blessed One's compassion for my welfare,  
 this will be what is seen."  
 And having gained a sense of spiritual urgency from that,  
 she went out and covered her son in the charnel ground.

She uttered this verse:  
**It's not just a truth for one village or town,  
 Nor is it a truth for a single family.  
 But for every world settled by gods (and men)  
 This indeed is what is true—impermanence.**

And so saying, she went into the presence of the master.  
 Then the master said to her,  
 "Have you obtained, Gotamī, the mustard seed?"  
 "Finished, sir, is the matter of the mustard seed" she said.  
 "You have indeed restored me."

And the master then uttered this verse:  
**A person with a mind that clings,  
 Deranged, to sons or possessions,  
 Is swept away by death that comes  
 —Like mighty flood to sleeping town.**



At the conclusion of this verse, confirmed in the fruit of stream-entry,  
 she asked the master [for permission] to go forth [into the homeless life].  
 The master allowed her to go forth.  
 She gave homage to the master by bowing three times,  
 went to join the community of nuns,  
 and having gone forth, received her ordination.

It was not long before, through the doing of deeds with careful attention,  
 she caused her insight to grow ...and she became an arahant.