

FIRST INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON
**BUDDHIST
WOMEN**

PLENARY PAPERS FROM 1991



EDITED VOLUME BY
VENERABLE DHAMMANANDA BHIKKHUNI

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BUDDHIST WOMEN
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PLENARY PAPERS

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Introduction: A 2022 Reflection on The First Conference
By Ven. Bhikkhuni Dhammananda

Ven. Dhammaparipunna (Dr. Sireerat Chetsumon), my monastic assistant who is in charge of our library noted an old manuscript. To my surprise, the manuscript was a collection of papers presented at the “First Conference on Buddhist Women,” which I organized in 1991 at Thammasat University, Rangsit Campus.

Two visiting Ph.D. Candidates from America, Ms. Daphne Weber from Washington State University and Ms. Katherine Scahill from University of Pennsylvania, worked together to retype the manuscript. Both received Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowships to continue their respective research¹ in Thailand.

I am happy to present these papers without correction or improvement, since I see it as historical record of the Buddhist Women’s movement, which started as early as the 1980s. In the early 1980s, Buddhist women across the continents were very eager to improve the quality of women’s lives. They sought to connect with others and learn together. I recall spending lots of time corresponding in the old fashion way--writing letters and sending them through postal mail. It took one week to send something to the United States and yet another week to receive a response.

At this time, I was waiting for someone to create a way to connect Buddhist women working towards the goal of improving women’s lives. We had a number of conferences, but we needed something more regular to keep contact. During the 1983 Harvard Conference on ‘Women, Religion, and Social Change’, I realized I needed to be more committed to this issue. As a Buddhist academic, I was sitting in the ivory tower with information on bhikkhuni, but not sharing it with the general population. The following year, 1984, I started the quarterly newsletter on ‘Activities of International Buddhist Women’ (N.I.B.W.A.). The newsletter stayed in print for 30 years.

Thus, I established a way of international communication between Buddhist women and nuns. Education and training were common interests, but the issue of bhikkhuni reestablishment

¹ Daphne is working on “Gender, Faith, and Healing: An Analysis of Thai Women’s Experiences as Monks.” And Katherine is working on “Gender and Spiritual Authority in Thai Buddhism: Voice, Subjectivity and Recognition in Female monastic ordination.” Daphne stayed at our temple July – December, Kat stayed during July.

became prominent. To discuss this interest, Ayya Khema,² Ven. Karma Lekshe Tsomo,³ and myself came to together as co-founders of ‘the First International Conference on Buddhist Nuns’. We chose to hold the conference in Bodh Gaya, India in February 1987, the same time that His Holiness the Dalai Lama was visiting. We hoped to attract some people who went to see His Holiness, adding to the conference’s attendance.

Instead, His Holiness the Dalai Lama gave the opening speech for the conference and stayed for lunch. I recall seeing him seated in the center of a long bench with monks of Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana traditions seated on both sides. This conference was the first time we witnessed the fourfold Buddhist communities coming together to bring success for Buddhist women.

At the end of the meeting, Ven. Karma Lekshe Tsomo arranged for us to have a private meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the roof top of the Tibetan Monastery in Bodh Gaya. At this time, he suggested that we should continue organizing this conference and meeting in countries where bhikkhunis did not yet exist, including Sri Lanka and Thailand. Unintentionally, the next conferences just so happened to be held in Thailand (1991) and Sri Lanka (1993), respectively.

After the success of this conference (1987), we were eager to plan for the next one. I suggested that we rebrand as a conference on Buddhist women, rather than nuns, to be more inclusive. Ven. Ayya Khema, the third co-founder of what became Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women, was the deciding voice to expand the area to cover Buddhist women.

The 1991 conference was thus titled “First International Conference on Buddhist Women”. At that time, I was Chair of the Women’s Studies Program at Thammasat University, a post which allowed me to organize the conference logistics. To cut expenses and provide accommodation for our participants, I arranged to hold the conference at Thammasat’s Rangsit Campus during October when the students’ residences would be available.

² Ayya Khema was at that time a well-known German Dhamma teacher particularly in Sri Lanka. She started a center on a small island called Parappaduwa, but had to eventually give up due to political turmoil which lasted many years in Sri Lanka. She returned to Germany, but was active at the first two conferences. She was fully ordained in L.A. in 1988. She passed away in 1997.

³ Ven. Karma Lekshe Tsomo, an American nun, first ordained in the Tibetan tradition, and in 1970s received full ordination as bhikshuni both in Korean and Chinese tradition in Taiwan. At that time, she was studying at School of Dialectics in Dharamsala, India. Being in India, she was mostly responsible for the local organization of the conference in 1987.

To make participation more accessible for international attendees, I raised funds to sponsor two participants from Sri Lanka, one of whom was Mrs. Kusuma Devendra.⁴ In order to provide space for local nuns, we invited 30 maejis so that they could have direct experience with the international bhikkhunis. Ven. Haes Choon Suk, president of Korean bhikkhunis, came to attend with 30 Korean bhikkhunis. Ven. Bhikkhuni Wun Weol helped to translate for this group. We had two female participants from Friends of Western Buddhists (Ven. Sangharakshita's group) from England. In addition, there were nuns from Brazil, Vietnam, etc. among our participants.

On the third day of the five-day conference, we took the participants out to visit nunneries, and Songdhammakalyani Temple hosted them for lunch. It was here that all the senior bhikkhunis of that generation met: Ven. Voramai Kabilsingh (Thailand), Ven. Shig Hiu Wan (Taiwan), Ven. Ayya Khema (Germany), and Ven. Hae Choon Suk (Korea). Madam Ranjani de Silva (Sri Lanka) and I (Thailand), who were still laywomen at the time, were seated on the floor.



(L-R Seated) Ven. Bhikkhuni Ayya Khema, Ven. Bhikkhuni Hiu Wan, Ven. Bhikkhuni Vorami Kabilsingh, and Ven. Bhikkhuni Hae Choon Suk. Two previous presidents of Sakyadhita can be seen: Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh (1991-1994, background) and Mrs. Ranjani de Silva (1995-2000, foreground).

This photo was symbolic, as Ranjani hosted the following conference in Sri Lanka, which we titled the third Sakyadhita Conference. Thus, the conference in Bodhgaya (1987) became, in

⁴ Later she was fully ordained and became bhikkhuni in 1996 with the ordination offered by the Korean Bhikkhu Sangha in Sarnath, India.

retrospect, the first Sakyadhita conference, and the conference in Thailand (1991), became the second Sakyadhita conference.

I was voted president during the conference in Thailand (1991) and was elected for a second term at the conference in 1993. When we moved to Ladakh in 1995, I completed my term and resigned. The real responsibility was with Ven. Karma Lekshe Tsomo who has been at the helm of this organization for the past 35 years. Sakyadhita has now passed onto the new generation.

Indeed, we have come a long way.

The authors of the papers in this book have also moved on.

Ven. Karma Lekshe Tsomo received her Ph.D. from the University of Hawai'i, Manoa and has taught at San Diego University since 2000. I have seen her active at online conferences as recently as November 2021.

Ven. Jampa Tsedron was responsible for organizing the 'First International Congress on Buddhist Women's Roles in the Sangha Bhikkhuni Vinaya and Ordination Lineages' in Germany in 2007. Along with Thea Mohr, she is co-editor of *Dignity and Discipline: Reviving Full Ordination for Buddhist Nuns* (2014), a collection of essays on the possibility of bhikkhuni ordination in the Mulasarvastivada lineage. She is among the few western scholars who read and write well in Tibetan, which has allowed her to conduct in-depth research on the Mulasarvasivada Vinaya. She currently teaches at Hamburg University, Germany.

Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh took early retirement and stepped out of the academic world in 2000. She received samaneri ordination in 2001 and full ordination in 2003, becoming the first Theravada bhikkhuni in Thailand. Now known by her ordained name, Dhammananda, she is active in the ordination and training of the next generation of bhikkhunis in Thailand and Asia. And here, I humbly present to you the papers dated back to 1991.

In Dhamma,

Dhammananda bhikkhuni

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE FUTURE OF BUDDHIST WOMEN

Bhiksuni Karma Lekshe Tsomo

As we read through studies on the interrelationship between Buddhism and political power in the countries of Asia, we are struck by the almost total lack of information on half the population of these countries--their women. We encounter a few brief, scattered references to women as prostitutes or as laywomen in the garb of nuns, yet there is no mention of women playing a role of any importance in religion or politics, two of society's most important spheres of activity. Either women are simply a non-issue in this part of the world or researchers have failed to document their presence and their contributions.

The role of the Sangha in religion and politics is given ample attention. Clearly this sector of society is a powerful force with which to be reckoned in any analysis of Asia. Throughout history, the support of the Sangha has been actively sought as a means of legitimation by those seeking to gain and maintain positions of political power in Buddhist countries. When we look closely at the composition of the Sangha, however, we learn that it is strictly an order of ordained Buddhist males—women are categorically denied admission.

Although the temples of Thailand, Burma, and Sri Lanka are thronged with and supported primarily by female devotees, when we begin to question what role women actually play in the religious hierarchies of these countries, the answer soon becomes painfully clear—none whatsoever. In fact, they are barred from positions of power within religious institutions by virtue of their gender. As in other Asian societies, preconceptions of the inferiority of women are prevalent in Buddhist societies, despite the egalitarian character of the Buddha's original teachings. Until recently, education for women has been extremely limited and access to religious instruction practically nil. Women's role has been narrowly defined, limited to that of wife, mother, and unpaid labor.

The situation for men is quite a contrast, particularly concerning religious matters. Poor boys from the countryside gain access to valuable educational opportunities when they join the Sangha, opportunities that are not similarly available to women. By joining the order, males automatically gain status, receive a good education, and become eligible for positions within the elite and powerful ecclesiastical hierarchy. In Thailand, for example, any boy can theoretically climb the clerical ladder, which culminates in the post of Sangharaja, supreme patriarch,

appointed by the king. Men who disrobe, having gained a high-quality education free of charge, are qualified to apply for administrative posts in the secular sphere, and may assume positions of considerable influence in politics and government, opportunities which are remote for women.

Although the original teachings of the Buddha do not discriminate between men and women in their potential for gaining liberation, the Buddhist institutions that have evolved in the traditional cultures of Asia clearly favor men. The disadvantaged position which women occupy in these cultures traces to patriarchal social mores which show no verifiable connection with Buddhist tenets. Although some writers⁵ have made a weak case to the contrary, historical records paint a fairly dismal picture of Indian women's lot prior to the advent of the Buddha. Recognizing the latent spiritual power of women, as the Buddha did, was a significant departure from the norm which defined women almost entirely in terms of her biological function and her capacity for productive labor.

Significant as it was, this recognition alone was not sufficient to transform the gender stereotypes of an entire culture. Despite the fact that the Bhikkhuni Sangha was established by the Buddha in India, along with regulations for its structure and continuous, harmonious functioning, the Bhikkhu Sangha remained dominant, and this was the pattern that was subsequently transmitted to other countries as Buddhism spread abroad. The pattern, then, is one of affirming the equal enlightenment potential of women on the theoretical level, while assuming that they are incapable of actualizing that potential in the real world, and not providing the encouragement or facilities that would allow them to do so. This assumption of women's spiritual inferiority and the attendant neglect characterize most of Buddhist history.

The explicit as well as tacit policy of excluding women from religious structures in Asia does not necessarily extend to other spheres of human activity. Women are certainly not so consistently barred from the commercial or agricultural spheres. Where there is profit to be gained from her endeavors, profit that will undeniably accrue to the men in her life, she is given free rein. In many cultures, she is in control of affairs within the family, such as the keys, the finances, the children, up to and including decisions of major importance. In the realm of the unseen, the transcendent, however, she is blocked from without if not from within. Could it be

⁵ See, for example, S.R. Goyal, A History of India Buddhism, Kusumenjali Prakashan, Merut, 1987, pp.292-8. Goyal tries to argue that the large number of educated women associated with early Buddhism were actually the product of Brahmanical society, and contends, fancifully enough, that women of that day received equal training in the Vedas.

that the spiritual potential within and among women is perceived as constituting a threat? I would suggest that the issue of gender in religion is an issue of power politics at a very fundamental level.

Meditation is Allowable: Buddhist Women of Burma

In the Theravada countries in South and Southeast Asia, the situation of Buddhist women in Burma seems to be relatively favorable at present. Many women have been active in the renaissance of meditation practice that has taken place since World War II. Women are permitted to study Pali texts and respectable numbers of nuns sit for the annual exams. Women may and do become meditation instructors and teachers of Dhamma. They have reportedly taken to meditation with even greater enthusiasm than men, and often serve as gracious facilitators at retreat centers. Observers have remarked that the faces of these women are radiant with love, peace and joy.⁶

Women remain educationally disadvantaged, however. As recently as 1962, an Australian woman barrister noted: “The village boys still go to the monastery schools and learn to read and write. The girls have no school and do not learn to read and write.”⁷ At the same time that little boys become novices, little girls have their ears pierced. These rites of passage clearly indicate the different expectations of the sexes. Though women handle their husbands’ earnings, do not change their names upon marriage, and excel in business management, often heading large trading enterprises, a pollution stigma still attaches to them.⁸ Although educational opportunities exist, education is still not considered as important for girls as for boys.

Particularly in the sphere of religious activity, we see evidence of discrimination: men are reluctant to see women as teachers and monks strongly oppose any change in the system of nuns’ ordination. Although there is evidence that women did become bhikkhunis in the Pyu kingdom in the south of Burma,⁹ nuns who take ten precepts today are not considered samaneris (novice

⁶ For example, in her book Journey into Burmese Silence (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1962, p.91). Marie Byles comments: “Their faces were beautiful with inner peace and love for all, and there was an atmosphere of happiness and joy you would travel far to find in the West.”

⁷ Ibid., p.102.

⁸ Ibid., p.91. “At one stall, gold leaf was being sold for affixing to a giant Buddha statue and a man was standing on the folded arms of the Blessed One while he did so. I rather fancied a photo of myself fixing fold leaf, but was told women were unclean and might not stand on Buddha statues; they must get a man to fix [CANNOT READ].”

⁹ See Mi Mi Kiang’s The World of Burmese Women, Zed Books, Inc., London, 1984, p.1.

nuns), but instead are known as tila shin (possessors of sila, or morality). This means that Burmese nuns are not considered full-fledged members of the Buddhist order.

Women will not gain equal status as long as they are barred from what is considered the highest calling, the Sangha. As an educated (male) merchant informed an Australian (female) attorney: “Of course men are superior to women because only men can don the yellow robe, and that is the most superior of all!”¹⁰ The yellow robe, thought to be imbued with power and protective magic,¹¹ is revered as a symbol of moral purity and is worn only by the Bhikkhu Sangha. In contradistinction to the monks, nuns wear pale pink garments,¹² including a blouse with uncomfortably high neck and tight sleeves. While a deceased monk will be embalmed and left undisturbed for several days, a nun must be buried the same day of her death. Even in death, there is discrimination.

Nuns could enjoy greater freedom if they wished, since they are not constrained by as many precepts as monks, but they generally follow the discipline strictly, even though they formally cannot vow to do so. The only visible difference is that they must prepare food, since by custom they are offered only uncooked rice. Those who do not receive support from family members go to neighboring villages for alms twice a week and/or travel long distances twice a year to their home villages to collect donations of rice, which they carry in huge bundles on their heads. Most telling of all, when monetary donations are distributed, nuns generally receive only a fraction of what the monks are offered: “Ten kyats are given to a monk when only one will be given to a nun. It is our Burmese custom.”¹³

Since it is supposed that not much merit derives from offering to nuns, there is a noticeable difference in their standard of living.¹⁴ Though they do not seem to resent it, the nuns’ humble dwellings stand in marked contrast to the monks’ palatial quarters. The humility of Burmese women is their virtue in religious terms, yet in political terms, it keeps them consigned to a second-rate status.

¹⁰ Byles, op. cit., p.72.

¹¹ Melford E. Spiro, Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1970, p.263.

¹² Byles, op. cit., p.119: “The more serious nuns wore dark russet red....”

¹³ Ibid., p.86.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.167. Ms. Byles was told that the nuns had had to leave the Leper Meditation Center for lack of support: “There is little merit in giving to healthy nuns, let alone diseased ones, so the nuns could get no food.”

Perseverance Furthers: Buddhist Women of Sri Lanka

From the eleventh century to the twentieth, from the time the bhikkhuni order died out in Sri Lanka until a young Sinhalese woman named Catherine de Alvis returned from a trip to Burma in 1905, there were few opportunities for Sinhalese women to live the religious life. Until that time, monastic life had been the purview of bhikkhus alone; the only women in robes were some ragged old beggars in white. Even after Catherine returned as Sister Sudharmachari and established Lady Blake's Aramaya in 1907, it took many years before the idea of women as renunciates became acceptable; in fact, the struggle for recognition continues to this day.

Many of the wealthy urban women who have patronized the dasasilmatas ("ten precept mothers") in this century have envisioned a social service role for them. But the majority of the dasasilmatas themselves, typically from rural poor backgrounds, are interested only in spiritual pursuits and have thwarted attempts to shunt them into activities such as hospital work and handicrafts. They feel that their objective is Dhamma practice, not spinning and weaving, and if they had wanted to do hospital work, they need not have become nuns. Gradually their supporters are coming to appreciate their sincere religious orientation.

Just as the laity are coming to appreciate this religious practice of its almswomen, the nuns are coming to value themselves and each other. Fortuitously, an upsurge of interest in meditation practice, particularly the technique imported from Burma known as vipassana, has resulted in the construction of new meditation centers all over Sri Lanka that are enthusiastically patronized by women. This phenomenon has led to strong bonds between serious meditators, both lay and ordained. The spiritual communication and mutual encouragement that ensue at these centers are advantageous to both sides-- an overall positive development for women. It has been suggested that eventually, from among these meditators, educated women will begin to take robes, which will lead to a revival of the bhikkhuni order, despite the wide opposition of conservative monks.

Seen But Not Heard: Buddhist Women of Thailand

Women have been an important force in the recent economic development of Thailand. They make up approximately one-half of the total work force, participating in agriculture, commerce, manufacturing, education, and health services. Their participation cannot be said to

be on an equal footing with men, however, since they have few opportunities for government or management positions. Women's largest roles are in agricultural production, fishing, petty trade, domestic labor, food services, and manufacturing jobs that are lower paid, if paid at all. The most respected profession, the Sangha, is off-limits. When a woman does elect a religious vocation, she becomes a mae-ji (“mother ascetic”), wearing the white robes of a layperson, receiving little support, and enjoying no prestige.

One of the most common reasons for a woman becoming a nun is to fulfill a vow. She vows to become a nun for some specified period of time if her wish, such as recovery from illness or respite from some personal difficulty, is fulfilled.¹⁵ The result is that many of these women do not stay in robes for long, nor do they necessarily exhibit interest in Dhamma practice. This should come as no surprise; opportunities for religious study for women are so limited and the status of nuns so low, the vocation generally does not attract talented or educated women. Furthermore, there is little or no material support for women in robes, so once their savings are exhausted, these temporary nuns have no choice but to revert to lay life.

Less we imagine that women enjoy great opportunities in the worldly sphere, however, we are reminded that between 250,000 and 500,000 women ply their trade as prostitutes in Thailand. This would indicate a certain lack of other lucrative career opportunities. So we find that women are frustrated in their attempts at worldly success as well as their spiritual aspirations, and until now, there have been few viable alternatives. Women's best hope and highest meaning is thought to be bearing children and enhancing the family income through productive activities. Her most acceptable religious role is nurturing: conscientiously supporting the male Sangha and mothering a son who will become a monk. Despite their best efforts, women continue to be excluded from positions of power both in worldly life and in religious life.

Lands in Turmoil: Buddhist Women of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam

Buddhism in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam has been seriously threatened and very nearly obliterated by war and political unrest in recent years. Not only have indigenous Buddhist

¹⁵ This custom is similar to the custom of rowzeh popular among urban Muslim women in Iran. These women make a request through God as an intermediary and vow to sponsor a particular religious ceremony if the boon is granted. These ceremonies have become popular social occasions, so the practice is often criticized. See Anne H. Betteridge's article “The Controversial Vows of Urban Muslim Women in Iran,” Unspoken Worlds (Ed. Falk and Gross), Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1980.

institutions and culture been severely disrupted, survival itself has been the issue. Women have struggled against all odds to maintain their families and their mental health.

By 1978, 65,000 monks had been killed in Cambodia and Buddhism was declared dead. Of the few hundred nuns who have escaped abroad or live in camps on the Thai border, most hold eight precepts and became nuns after raising families. Like other refugees, they have been traumatized by their war-time experiences. Cambodian and Laotian nuns,¹⁶ like the Thai nuns, occupy a subordinate ambiguous status in society. Since domestic violence, suicide, rape, and severe depression are rife in Cambodian refugee camps, women turn to these nuns with their problems. Yet the nuns, trained only in the devotional aspects of Buddhism, are ill-equipped to handle psychological disorders, family crisis, and other problems of this dimension. Neither Sangha nor lay, lacking education and financial support themselves, they have little consolation to offer their constituency.

Buddhism in Vietnam has endured, miraculously, despite the massive destruction of war and the oppression suffered under both Christian and communist governments. Although the early history of the bhikkhuni order in Vietnam remains shrouded in uncertainty,¹⁷ nuns have worked enthusiastically to promote the Dhamma in Vietnam, building temples, teaching, and establishing the bhikkhuni order. Laboring always under the patriarchal legacy of Confucian values, women did not gain positions in either the religious or secular spheres, but nevertheless played a valuable role in inculcating Buddhist values and transmitting devotional practices. Vietnamese women are themselves convinced that it was through the women that Buddhism was transmitted from generation to generation. A Vietnamese refugee, who is now a lay leader of a temple in the United States, told me that everything she knows about Buddhism she learned from her grandmother. Although the women were mostly illiterate (even in Vietnamese, to say nothing of the Chinese in which Buddhist texts were written), they had a good grasp of basic Buddhist principles, and it was they who imparted these principles to the younger generation, especially through the medium of stories. The men of the village, she said, worshipped at the small temple

¹⁶ Older nuns are known as *yay chee*, while younger nuns are called *mae chee*.

¹⁷ One historical source, the *Dai Nam Thien Hyen Truyen Dan Tap Luc*, states that a princess of the Ly dynasty, Dieu Nhan (d. 1113), became the first Vietnamese bhiksuni. Other sources, cited by Ven. Thich Man Giac in his article "Establishment of the Bhiksuni Order in Vietnam," assert that the first bhiksuni in Vietnam, named Pho Minh, was ordained seven centuries earlier, in 429 A.D. The latter chronology coincides with the arrival of the Bhikkhu Sangha. Thich Man Giac states that Bhiksuni Pho Minh was ordained by a bhiksu, Truc Phap Do. The orthodox procedure for the ordination of bhiksunis requires bhiksuni as well as bhiksu preceptors.

where Confucius and other deities were enshrined, while the women all went to the pagoda, located at the respected “head” direction of the village, to worship the Buddha. When questioned why, then, men hold the top Buddhist positions, she responded that it was due to Confucian attitudes toward gender, which dictated a quiet, unobtrusive role for wives and daughters. The women never put themselves forward or held public positions, since that was considered inappropriate behavior for them; instead, they voiced their ideas through the vehicle of their husbands. The informant’s husband confirmed this, venturing that ninety percent of the real power was in women’s hands.

In the last few years, religion has been reviving, with women as powerful participants in the process. Of the thousands of nuns that existed prior to 1962, many were killed during the Vietnam conflict or disrobed in its aftermath. The decade following the fall of Saigon was one of dislocation and deprivation; the future of Buddhism appeared very uncertain. Recently, however there is a resurgence of interest in religious life, with women entering the order in far greater numbers than men. Unlike pre-communist days, nuns and monks now depend on their own agricultural production for a livelihood. With limited time, little education, and few opportunities for religious instruction, it is unclear exactly what role nuns will play in the future, yet numbers alone indicate they will be a force in Vietnamese Buddhism which will lead to a change in the status of women within the religious order.

Quiet Voices: Women in Japan

Even if they have rarely captured the limelight, Buddhist women have contributed significantly to the history of Japanese Buddhism. According to the Genkoji chronicles, the first Japanese to become fully ordained were three nuns, named Zenshin, Zonzo, and Kenzen.¹⁸ They travelled by ship to Korea and received the bhikkhuni ordination in the kingdom of Paekche in 590 A.D., considerably before the Chinese master Ganjin reached Japan in 754 by invitation of the imperial court at Nara to initiate an authentic lineage of ordination for monks. The three nuns failed to establish a Bhikkhuni Sangha in Japan, however, since five or more bhikkhunis are needed to preside over a valid ordination procedure. We have no way of knowing why more nuns did not go to Paekche to receive the ordination or why Korean bhikkhunis were not invited to Japan.

¹⁸ Akira Hirakawa, “The History of Japanese Nuns,” *Buddhist Christian Studies* 12 (1992): 143–58.

It is also unclear whether women after this time were self-ordained, ordained with the ten precepts of a novice, or with the bodhisattva precepts, but in any case, nuns figure prominently in the early literature of Japan. Their renunciation follows a standard scenario: an abandoned lady at court, realizing the transience of life and the futility of worldly involvements through her disappointment in love, cuts her hair and retires to a secluded hermitage for the rest of her life. Some nonetheless managed to exert considerable influence at court despite their seclusion.

Though Japanese Buddhism has more or less relinquished the monastic model, communities of well-disciplined nuns continue to exist even today. Whereas male religious specialists in Japan typically marry and raise families, passing their temples to a son (or occasionally a daughter), most nuns live a celibate, reclusive lifestyle. Although a few Japanese masters who affirmed the enlightenment potential of women, notably Dogen (1200-1253) and Nichiren (1222-1282), women generally have been relegated to a subservient position in the society, especially in the sphere of religion.

No doubt the most well-known nun in Japan today is Setouchi Jakucho, an extremely popular novelist who was ordained on Mt. Tendai after a full and cosmopolitan life. In a private conversation in 1990, she related that, while women can receive ordination on a par with men and be assigned to take charge of temples, they do not receive support sufficient to maintain the temples and therefore many are forced to abandon the religious life. This betrays a belief found lurking in many Buddhist cultures—that women's spiritual practice is somehow less potent or karmically beneficial than that of men. As long as such a belief is commonly held by ordinary people, women have difficulty moving up or even surviving as religious specialists. Thus economics, even more than the onslaught of modern materialistic values, is probably the chief factor in the decreasing numbers of female religious in Japan.

The largest community of nuns in Japan today is the Aichi Semmon Nisodo, a convent in Nagoya. This convent belongs to the Soto Zen school, which is said to have about a thousand nuns altogether, and provides thorough training in meditation and the traditional arts such as tea and ikebana (flower arrangements). In recent decades, there has also been a move to ordain the wives of priests after a short period of religious training, according them a position parallel to that of non-celibate male priests. In some cases, these women are known as nuns (niso) and included in nun's associations. Although they may shave their heads once during the time of their training, however, they ordinarily do not shave them afterwards or wear robes. They

primarily serve in a supportive role to their husbands, making arrangements for ceremonies, offering words of advice to parishioners, and fulfilling ~~at~~ all the duties necessary for maintaining a temple, in addition to their own personal family responsibilities. Though their efforts are essential for the smooth functioning of the temple, such women are often overworked and underacknowledged, and one may question whether their accommodation to the status quo will significantly improve conditions for women in religion.

Powerfully Isolated: Korea

Buddhism was integral to Korean national identity and culture, flourishing in both the cities and countryside, until the Choson dynasty (1392-1910), when it suffered persecution due to the government's Neo-Confucian ideology. Under Japanese colonization (1910-1945), Korea was then subjected to intensive missionary activities by various Japanese Buddhist denominations, most of which were lay in orientation in contradistinction to the celibate monastic orientation of the Korean schools.

While some of the male religious specialists were swayed from their celibate persuasion (whether by political considerations, human frailty, or both), most nuns managed to preserve their monastic lifestyle throughout this period of hardship. Unable to adequately voice their concerns within the established, male-dominated monastic (Chogye) order, Eunyeong Sunim even founded Pumun-Jong, an independent order of nuns. Though this movement is no longer a force, today there are several thousand bhikkhunis united through the Korean Bhikkhuni Association under the leadership of Ven. Hye Chun Sunim, as well as several thousand female novices (samaneri) in training for full ordination.

Seeing it as a political threat, successive regimes have attempted to isolate Buddhism in the countryside. This has suited the meditation-minded monastics until recently, when Buddhism began losing large numbers of followers to Christianity (and increasing secularization). Concerted efforts are now being made to reach out and serve the needs of the increasingly urban society, in order to stem the tide. In response to improved standards of secular education, greater opportunities for religious education are being made available to both women and men. Efforts are also being made to instill Buddhist values in the younger generation through such activities as Sunday school classes and other programs after the Christian model. Against the background

of Korean Buddhism's traditional isolationism, women, especially the nuns, are taking an active role in these activities.

Partially in response to repressive politics, large numbers of young people today continue to be attracted to monastic life, with several hundred taking vows annually. In recent years women have been seeking ordination in even greater numbers than men, sparked by religious aims and a concern for the social good. Even so, positions of power and responsibility in the Buddhist world here, as elsewhere, are totally controlled by men. Privately powerful but publicly overshadowed, Korean nuns have taken the lead in opting for independent organizational structures, an interesting model for women in general to explore.

The Success Story: Taiwan

In all of East Asia, no place can boast a resurgence of Buddhism equal to that of Taiwan. Spurred by the relocation of mainland Chinese masters fleeing communism in the early nineteen-fifties, a hardworking core of dedicated indigenous Taiwanese nuns have led a spirited revival of Buddhist thought and practice in the Republic of China. Quietly but relentlessly challenging Confucian preconceptions of the servile wife and daughter, women in Taiwan have transformed public opinion by proving their strength in all fields. Having served as helpmates to the monks who arrived as friendless and indigent refugees, nuns have become the backbone of a Buddhist renaissance, gaining fame in education, the arts, and more recently, social welfare programs, as well as temple activities.

Although still under-represented in the thoroughly male-dominated bastions of ecclesiastical power, Buddhist women in Taiwan exert their influence through material generosity and sheer numbers. Women entering monastic life outnumber men more than three to one; more importantly, on the whole they are younger, better educated, and more active. As the present generation of top Buddhist scholars passes away, their places will inevitably be taken by women teachers, despite the tendency to place men in positions of power. Young nuns are currently taking advanced degrees in Japanese and American universities in preparation for scholarly careers. Their academic and personal merit will go a long way toward righting the gender balance in the upper echelons of Taiwanese Buddhism, and open the door to a new perspective on this venerable tradition.

Minority Buddhist Women: Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines

Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand have significant ethnic Chinese populations engaged primarily in business. Within these enclaves, which include a significant proportion of Buddhists, ethnic Chinese nuns have established temples and devoted themselves to chanting sutras, performing rituals for lay devotees, and supervising the upkeep of the temples. A few of these nuns have travelled abroad to study Buddhism and train in monastic discipline, primarily in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Those who are highly motivated and have the financial resources aspire to participate in the month-long Triple Platform Ordination¹⁹ that is held annually in Taiwan, with its exemplary standards of discipline and quality instruction.

As members of a frequently persecuted minority, sometimes even denied citizenship on the basis of race, these nuns keep a very low profile. Confucian societal mores and politics conspire to keep them silently in the shadow. Many of these nuns have no formal schooling; they may be unable to speak the national or regional language, or even Mandarin, functioning entirely in their own Chinese dialect. Their usefulness is in serving their temples' followers within the local Chinese community. Disenfranchised, extremely isolated, and generally unaware of any large role they might play, the cultural pattern for women's behavior which these nuns typify is antiquated when viewed from a Western perspective.

A Tragic Case: Tibet

Women have distinguished themselves in spiritual practice time and again throughout the centuries of Tibetan Buddhist history. In the teachings of the Tantric tradition, which thrived in the Tibetan milieu, women were guaranteed the possibility of enlightenment "in this very life, in this very body." Even without the possibility of full ordination, whether as samaneras or as laity, women were presented practical opportunities for achieving the spiritual goal. Among those who availed themselves of this precious opportunity, perhaps the most famous is Machig Labronma, whose heroic example inspired generations of Tibetan women. In the twentieth century as well, we have the examples of Samding Dorje Palmo and Shugseb Jetsun Lochon Rinpoche, both of whom are said to have reached high levels of spiritual realization.

¹⁹ The Triple Platform Ordination refers to receiving the novice precepts, the precepts of a fully-ordained bhiksuni or bhiksu, and the bodhisattva precepts.

Unfortunately, social and political factors have intruded and perforce compromised many ordinary women's spiritual potential. Mundane realities such as societal expectations of women's roles, the time-consuming duties of family life, and in recent years, the takeover of the Tibetan homeland by an uncompromising communist government, have mitigated against large numbers of women being recognized for their religious attainments. The potential to embody such enlightened female meditational deities as Tara, Vajrayogini, Saraswati, and Prajnaparamita is ever present. The mystique of legendary female spiritual masters such as Gelongma Palmo, Yeshe Tsogyal, Mandarava, Niguma and others, remains to inspire women on the path; yet in actual fact, most Tibetan women see their chances for imminent enlightenment as somewhat remote. Many are content to simply pray for a male rebirth and indeed, for most, Buddhist practice consists in doing their best in everyday life situations. It would be a feminist presumption to see them as consciously oppressed.

Still, there are a number of improvements that might be made to enhance Tibetan women's spiritual well-being. A fundamental one is greater literacy, and subsequently, greater educational opportunities at all levels, both secular and religious. Another is better facilities for religious study and practice for both lay and ordained women. But crucial to the process is an improved image of the feminine, within the hearts of all Tibetan women and men. We might extend this hope to all cultures.

An Order of Nuns is Born: Mongolia

Buddhism spread to Mongolia as a natural aftermath of its introduction to Tibet. It took the form of the Gelugpa tradition pioneered by the Tibetan reformer and scholar Tsongkhapa (1357-1419). Due to his emphasis on monastic discipline and moral purity, the Gelugpa tradition nurtured what became probably the world's largest monastic order, with one-third the male population of Tibet becoming monks. The Mulasarvastivadin lineage of bhikkhu ordination, transmitted to Tibet from India, was subsequently transmitted to Mongolia, on the steppes beyond. Since the bhikkhuni lineage had not been transmitted from India to Tibet, there was nothing to pass on to Mongolia. Apparently the Tibetan custom of ordaining nuns with the ten novice precepts did not take hold; consequently, until recently Mongolia was bereft of nuns. This is not to say that Mongolian women were not ardent supporters of the faith; as in all Buddhist countries, they have been enthusiastic and generous devotees for centuries. Despite

this, as in other Buddhist countries without a bhikkhuni order, they have been considered ineligible for admission to the Sangha. Rumors of devout women who wished to practice as nuns began circulating in recent years, and it has now been confirmed that thirty women received the ten precepts of a samaneri from Mongolian bhikkhus last year.²⁰ This community of nuns is situated not far from Ganden Moanstery in Ulan Bator; its members receive private tutoring in Buddhist doctrine. Lacking historical precedents for such matters as dress and education, the community will no doubt be influenced by egalitarian socialist ideology as well as Tibetan custom. The mix may well be worth the wait.

The Buddhist Feminist Movement: Western Countries

The social and cultural factors affecting the future of Western Buddhist women are quite different from those that affect Asian women. Yet while Western women comprise only a small minority of the total number of Buddhist women, probably less than one percent, the factors that affect their assimilation and practice of Buddhism warrant consideration, in that these same factors will increasingly affect Asian societies influenced by Western values. Foremost among these factors are feminism, individualism, egalitarianism, scientific logic, anti-authoritarianism, consumerism, changes in family orientation, and not least of all, materialism. Scientific logic and egalitarianism are thoroughly compatible with original Buddhist tenets, but other dominant values of Western societies are at variance with or even the direct antithesis of the Buddhist world view. The process by which Buddhist women evaluate these various viewpoints—rejecting, rationalizing, or assimilating them—is certain to be a struggle though hopefully a meaningful one.

An in-depth treatment of the interplay of these views is beyond the scope of the present study, but a brief look at one of these factors will help us understand possible future directions Western Buddhism may take. For example, an application of feminist ideology to religion dictates respect for woman's spiritual potential, recognition for her endeavors both spiritual and practical, opportunities for full ordination and for leadership at the highest levels of religious organization, use of non-sexist language in presenting doctrinal tenets, as well as full treatment of such topics as sexuality, family life, intuition, and emotion. The history of Buddhism reveals

²⁰ Report of D. Batsukh, president of the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace, Ulan Bator, April 1991.

its remarkable tolerance of indigenous beliefs and practices. It is certain that in the West, Buddhism will eventually absorb feminist elements, by which it may be significantly enriched.

Reflecting on Buddhist history, we see the recurrent paradigm of populist renewal in response to elitist stagnation. Whether the ascetic ideal of Theravada, or the transcendent ideal of Mahayana, such lofty heights are often seen as beyond the reach of ordinary mortals; hence, we witness periodic revivals which to reaffirm Buddhism's relevance to everyday life. In the twentieth century, especially in Western societies confronted by traditional Asian forms, we can expect the question of relevance to arise again and again. In line with scientific pragmatism, the forms of Buddhist practice that are most relevant and most effective on a practical level will become most widely accepted. Though it is impossible to precisely envision what forms Buddhism will eventually take in the West, they will no doubt be syncretic, incorporating Western psychological insights and Western people's ways.

Modern Buddhist Women's Role in Social Change

In exploring the conditions of Buddhist women in Asia and the status of women vis-à-vis the power structures of their respective countries, it becomes clear that, apart from a few isolated cases, the women in these countries act primarily as supportive adjuncts to the men in their lives, taking primary responsibility for the welfare of their families, but generally without power or position to make major contributions or changes in the society. Women's disadvantaged situation must change. With our world in the throes of technological revolution, with society and the economy suffering a serious lag in adjusting to the changes, with wars and ecological disaster threatening humanity's very existence, the potential of all the world's citizens, female and male, must be maximized.

There is nothing really radical in advocating social change. The Buddhist world view is one of transformation: of transforming the inner world and transforming the outer world. Buddhist history is full of accounts of social change; where things have stagnated, they must change. In some cases, the agents of social change have been laypeople, such as U Nu in Burma and Dr. Ambedkar in India, and in some cases they have been members of the traditional clerical elite, such as Prince Mongkut in Thailand and the Dalai Lamas of Tibet. Other individual monks, notably in Burma, Sri Lanka, Tibet, and Vietnam, have served as symbols of national identity

and forces for political independence and social progress. Until now, women have rarely played such roles, but the time has come when they must.

My thesis is that, in order to mobilize for the good of society, women must create for themselves avenues of spiritual evolution as well as gain hold of the tools for substantially benefitting society. Only through creating an ideology that unites women for common goals and developing a methodology to accomplish those goals, will women deservedly gain access to the channels of power to work for positive social change. While spiritual and material well-being are interrelated and should evolve in tandem, women of different inclinations will naturally choose to concentrate on one field of endeavor or the other. Buddhist women have excellent spiritual resources to draw on; what is needed is to reinforce spiritual practice with economic and societal well-being, and vice versa. Uniting locally and globally, women need to gain strength through spiritual development, and simultaneously, work for social and material progress in ways consistent with spiritual values.

Buddhist Women as Leaders in Social Transformation

Assuming that Buddhist women recognize the problems faced by humanity today and wish to mobilize to benefit the global community in practical as well as spiritual ways, it follows that some women must develop as leaders. Already women in the world have proven themselves capable of leading companies, organization and also governments. In the realm of religious and humanitarian endeavors as well, working with altruistic motivation, women need to overcome a traditional reticence to put themselves forward. They must consciously develop inner strength to withstand the ripples created by going against the current of outdated social conventions. Women who value Buddhist principles must play an active role if they wish to see the world transformed, and some among them must take the lead. This raises several important issues.

One basic issue to be considered is how women can prepare themselves to serve society effectively when they have only limited time, limited resources, limited access to education, secular or religious, and most importantly, limited access to the positions of power where changes can actually be made. To be able to radically transform society, women need to gain access to positions of authority where decisions are made, not with a desire for fame or gain, but to guide social policy in positive directions. In order to transform society from its very foundation, there is a need for fundamental changes in the way society views woman's work, and

women's spiritual capabilities. There is a need for fundamental changes in organizations and in governments to allow for women's input and full participation at every level of society, including at the top.

Another important issue is the expectations that are placed on women in the service professions, including their work in the home. For example, whether due to genetic, innate qualities or early conditioning, women often exhibit a spontaneous concern for the welfare of others. Yet feminists have noted that women's nurturing and compassionate nature can easily be exploited. Women fit society's archetype of selfless servant; as a result, they are often taken for granted or taken advantage of. They often do not get paid, nor even expect to get paid, for their work. In today's materialistic society, women may construe this to mean that their labors are worthless, and by extension, that they are worthless. It is important that women learn to value themselves, their abilities, and each other, regardless of society's often distorted standards. It is premature to expect society as a whole to value women equally with men if its women still regard themselves as inferior. As long as women are guilty of gender discrimination, such as regarding monks as superior to nuns, the gender imbalance cannot be righted. Women must work to divest themselves of such prejudices if men are to be expected to change.

Regard for women extends to women's work. In the Buddhist value system, spiritual practice and serving the needs of living beings are accorded the highest rank. At the same time, it is unrealistic to expect women to serve others if their own basic needs are not being met. This point has been raised in reference to Christian nuns who are left destitute in old age after devoting their entire lives to service. Women often have unrealistically high expectations of themselves, perhaps unconsciously compensating for a poor sense of self-worth, with a tendency to discouragement, over-achievement, and/or exhaustion. To remedy this syndrome, full value and recognition should be given to the efforts women are making to transform themselves and society. This need not undermine the ideal of selfless service.

While many wives and mothers understandably have little time and energy for involvements beyond the family unit, a dedicated articulate cadre needs to begin working to change Buddhist women's attitudes toward themselves and, eventually, male-dominated society's attitudes toward women as a whole. The advancement of our world community, and possibly its very survival, depends on this. There is a need for knowledge, a need for organization, and a need for involvement: knowledge of skillful means for changing attitudes,

organization to facilitate change, and involvement to carry it through. On the practical level, many Buddhist women in the world today stand in dire need of improved education and training in all fields. A lack of systematic education puts women at a serious disadvantage in society and, coupled with gender discrimination, explains their absence in positions of power. While literacy is not essential to human happiness, for many women, literacy is the first step on the way to well-being. Literacy is literally empowerment. It gives women access to improved livelihood, to information on health and hygiene, to upward social mobility, to personal development and greater self-confidence, to greater educational options for their children, and to the texts that explain their religious traditions. Adult literacy programs are extremely cost-effective—all that is needed are teachers and a few books. Women learning to read can benefit greatly from having women teachers who also serve as counsellors, role models, and spiritual friends. It does not take vast resources or government initiative to set up a reading class; women can do it themselves. Never before have Buddhist women united and risen to the challenge of transforming the world, yet the need has never been greater. While some place their hopes in a future generation of socially-enlightened young monks, this is still only a dream. Even should open-minded monks gain access to positions of power in the world, this would not ensure changes that would benefit women. Those in positions of power rarely relinquish their privileged positions with grace. Therefore, women must work for their own social and spiritual liberation.

Preliminary to this, Buddhist women must fully embrace the idea that women's practice is as valuable as men's. Once this re-valuing of women's spiritual worth is affirmed, much progress can be made. In consonance with the Buddha's teachings on loving kindness, women can begin playing a more active role to create a world where human beings live in health and dignity. As important as compassionate social service is, however, it would be unfair to promote the idea that women do social work while men meditate. This implies that the two are mutually exclusive—an either/or situation in which people either meditate or serve humanity—whereas some may be capable of both simultaneously. It also implies that women have less aptitude for spiritual attainment and can best be used as a labor resource. Women's contributions to human development in both the social or religious spheres, in line with their own inclinations and special capabilities, will translate to their own inner development as well. It is important to support and applaud each woman's unique contribution to society.

In affirming the needs and potentials of women, we are dealing with an issue of social justice. Human beings have a duty to consider, and to care, whether their neighbor has the necessities of life. Buddhists have a duty to consider whether their fellow Buddhists have access to the requirements for practicing the Buddha's teachings. Thich Nhat Hanh has said that "If a teaching is not in accord with the needs of the people and the realities of society, it is not truly Buddhist."²¹ On the issue of women, Buddhists are not yet dealing adequately with the needs of all the people and the realities of the whole society. As admirable as the various Buddhist social action platforms are, none has yet, to my knowledge, faced the problem of the injustices being suffered by Buddhist women.

The issue of women in Buddhism is an issue of social justice. There exists a situation of grave inequality between the rights and opportunities of male and female Buddhists. Whereas all the teachings of the Buddha are universal and equally applicable to all human beings, the practical reality is that conditions for men and women in Buddhism, especially the conditions of monks and nuns, are very different. It is not a case of different but equal, it is a case of different and very unequal. The responsibility for redressing the situation rests with women as well as with men. Until women are accorded equal opportunities that reflect their capabilities and commitment, Buddhism will not progress and the world will be the poorer.

²¹ Thich Nhat Hanh, *Innerbeing: Commentaries on the Tiep Hien Precepts* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1987), p.17.

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- The Need to Be Aware of Other Traditions
Prof. Sulak Sivaraksa

I am glad that I am talking with those who claim to be practising Buddhists—not to Indologists, Buddhologists or hard-headed western scholars of Buddhism. As you may know, in the nineteenth century, not all European scholars were even prepared to accept that such a historical person as Gautama the Buddha had even existed; and though such an extremity of skepticism now seems absurd, many scholars since have been prepared to argue either that we no longer have the Buddha's authentic teachings or that we only have a very few, the rest of the purported teachings being garbled or distorted by the later tradition.

Western scholars have indeed contributed a great deal to Buddhist studies, especially in the field of textual criticism and the development of Buddhist thought in various schools. Yet,

their approach is claimed to be objective and scientific, as if Buddhism were a physical object, or they regard themselves as learned lawyers calling the Buddhist texts as witnesses into the dock, and declaring after cross-examination that their testimony leaves much to be desired.

Do the texts claim that there are four Noble Truths? But western or Aristotelian logic tells them that the third is corollary to the second, so there should only be three. Nor is there any need for the Noble Eightfold Path? Three will be sufficient since the path deals only with thoughts, words and actions.

Worse, it is alleged that the very accounts of the Buddha's enlightenment are inconsistent. For example, he or his followers could apparently not make up their minds whether the crucial step is to get rid of all moral defilements or to know that one has done so. Many similar findings are alleged—each scholar selecting his own and, accordingly, devising a different line of development for early Buddhism.

Those of us who claim to be practicing Buddhists should be aware of the scholarly western traditions. We should not believe western scholars easily nor should we reject them outright. If we firmly believe that the teachings of the Buddha is “to be seen here—now, beyond time, inviting one to come and see, leading onward, to be realized by each wise person for himself or herself, then one should be patient with western scholars who at one time even doubted the existence of our historical Buddha. They will eventually become wise and see the authenticity and the truth of the Dhamma as expounded excellently by the Buddha.

I do not wish to mention other religious traditional approach to or criticism of Buddhism, However, I would like to quote a contemporary English Christian Divine, Dom Aelred Graham, who said, “Buddhists, like Christians, have their mutual differences and a variety of sects; but if one may risk a generalization, Christians appear to differ fundamentally with regard to superficial matters, whereas Buddhists differ only superficially on that which is fundamental.

I think if we take this remark by our Christian friend seriously, we shall be aware of different Buddhist traditions mindfully and positively. Otherwise, Buddhists, too, can be sectarian, egocentric, nationalistic and male Chauvinistic at the expenses of others.

To be a practicing Buddhist, one must have faith in the Three Gems, for, without faith, no virtuous Dhamma will grow. Faith (Saddha) is the Mother of all preliminary practices. It is the source of all qualities. It is faith which removes all confusion and all our illusions, especially pride. If scholars have less pride, they will be humble and may find happiness.

However, differences do exist in different Buddhist traditions.

First, let us remind ourselves of the usual interpretation between the Greater and lesser Vehicles. It is in the Mahayana texts that the word “Hinayana” first appears. A very common “explanation” by Mahayana is that the Lesser Vehicle represents a “provisional teaching” which the Buddha preached for disciples of lesser ability. This explanation stresses that all teachings in the world, including the religions of outsiders, are, in fact, expedient means (upaya) for leading beings to the highest truth as taught in Mahayana.

On the other hand, Hinayana schools, when they are designed to mention Mahayana at all, although no reference is made to the term, usually label it as “going beyond the Buddha’s word.”

Yet, followers of both Yanas go to the same three Gems for refuge and, moreover, they wish ultimately to attain the same fruit as that enjoyed by Gautama, the Buddha.

Now, let us examine a few historical and doctrinal aspects of the two Yanas. (I do not mention Vajrayana or Tibetan Buddhism here, because it is part and parcel of Mahayana although it has its own uniqueness.)

According to the facts agreed upon by both Schools of Buddhism, Gautama the Buddha followed the way of the wise being (bodhisatta or bodhisattva) with the aspiration to become a Fully Enlightened One, so he traversed the long and difficult course. In order to realize his aspiration, both Schools of Thought also agree that the Buddha-to-be had systemically cultivated the Perfections (parami) for a longer period than was necessary for an Enlightened Disciple (savaka). At the same time, we should also remember that the Buddha is also called an Arahant.

Although in the Suttas of the Pali canon, the Buddha denies he is omniscient (in the sense of being all knowing in one instant as Creator God is said to be), he seems to admit the possibility of total knowledge regarding any particular subject of enquiry in one who is Sabbannu (all knowing). However, later sources in both Schools make reference to the Buddha as though he was all knowing about everything, all the time. This is, of course, part of the process of glorifying the Buddha which went on for many centuries, and one of its results was to widen the rift between the attainment of the Arahant—which is called an Anubuddha—and that of the Samma Sambuddha. There is also a Paccekabuddha—the fully Enlightened One who is not a Disciple, and who does not teach others to be enlightened.

The three levels of Buddhahood, Samma Sambuddha, Paccekabuddha and Anubuddha, are accepted by both Schools of Buddhism.

The Venerable Rahula, who wrote the famous book, ‘What the Buddha Taught?’, once told me that in Sri Lanka a devout Buddhist would always make a solemn vow to be a Samma Sambuddha; and if failing at that, to be a Paccekabuddha; and if failing at that, to be an Arahant or an Anubuddha.

In this country, it is widely believed that the late venerable Phra Acariya Man Bhuridatto was a Fully Enlightened Disciple. In his hagiography which is now available in English, it is said that, at first, he aspired to be a Samma Sambuddha, but feeling that it would take so many aeons more to achieve this end, he, therefore, resolutely determined to be an Arahant in this very life.

A question usually asked is whether one who wishes to become an Arahant trains only for his own good and whether it is possible to call an Arahant selfish.

The first question is answered by the Commentary to Majjhima Nikaya, which praises the best sort of disciples as these practicing “for their own good and for that of others”. Many other Pali passages can be found to underline the altruistic nature of the Arahant and other disciples.

The second question begins to lose its meaning when one considers that the Arahant must have penetrated the experience of Anatta or Sunyata and, thereby, shattered all misconceptions about the self (atta). Therefore, how can we speak of “selfishness” in this context.

To be enlightened, both Schools of Buddhism stress that one has to be accomplished in Paramita—Perfections.

The Mahayana started with a well-ordered set of six Perfections: giving, moral conduct, patience, endeavor, concentration and wisdom. Later, it added four more. This, again, is almost the same as in the Hinayana or Theravada tradition. Both Schools emphasize that anyone who seriously attempts to practice the Paramitas must be accounted as a Bodhisattva and if he or she does not receive a prediction in this life, then he or she may have already had this in the past or it may be yet to come.

Almsmen, almswomen, laymen and laywomen in most Mahayana countries take the initiation into the Bodhisattva vows which may be either 58 in China or 64 in Tibet. In fact, they are all derived from the 10 Paramitas.

In Theravada countries of South and Southeast Asia, all the 10 Paramitas are always stressed in all Jataka stories which are preached in all traditional temples.

From what I have said so far, one can notice that the differences are not at all significant if we study and respect other traditions. And I limit myself to the areas where great differences have been stressed. I do not wish to go into the details of different dresses, habit of eating, etc. This depends much on the time, place, and circumstances.

Yet, these seemingly superficial matters have created many Buddhist Councils and sects. I sometimes feel sad when the so-called practicing Buddhists claim that their method of meditation alone is the right one. Only their meditation master is enlightened, others are only mediocre. It would indeed be a great help to all of us if we bear in mind what the Buddha says: “The essentials of the holy life do not consist in the profits of gain, honour, and good name; nor yet in the profits of knowledge and insight; but the sure heart’s release, brethren; that, brethren, is the meaning; that is the essence; that is the goal of living the holy life.”

Theravadins or Hinayanists may doubt why there are so many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas—in the Mahayana tradition—not to mention Buddhasaktis and their emanations as the Dalai Lama, etc.

Concerning this matter, Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu has helped us a great deal with his concepts of worldly language and Dhammic language. When one sees the Lady Kuan Yin or the thousand armed Avalokitesavara Bodhisattva, one should realize that this is an expression in worldly language. In Dhammic language, this is the Buddha’s compassion which is boundless and cannot be expressed adequately in any language or symbol. Likewise, the Dalai Lama could be a simple monk or could be a Bodhisattva. In the Mahayana tradition, there are Dhyani Buddhas, Divine Buddhasakti, Divine Bohisattvas, as well as Mortal Buddhas, Mortal Buddhasaktis and Mortal Bodhisattvas.

Likewise, in the Theravada tradition, the local spirits or Nat in Burma and Phii in Siam, as well as the Hindu Gods, have all been converted to worship the Buddha. These deities could really be helpful or harmful.

If one is not skillful in the practice of the Dhamma, these iconographies and images can be real hindrances; but if one is aware that all these deities can help those who are resolute in practicing the Ten Perfections, they can enrich various Buddhist traditions so that the

practitioners will be able to walk on the Noble Eightfold Path or the Buddhist Middle Way for the ultimate goal of liberation.

Let me now return to a major theme of differences between the Greater and Lesser Vehicles. The last point to be clearly understood concerns helping oneself as against helping others.

Verses in the Dhammapada clearly indicate that one should first help oneself. The simile used by the Buddha, who asks whether one man stuck in the mud would be able to pull out another stuck in the same predicament, points to the same teaching. How can one, indeed, help others if, like them, one is bogged down in greed, hatred and delusion?

Much is said in praise of Mahayana altruism; but how can this be given expression while one remains in the midst of selfishness?

The vow to save all beings is a noble aspiration but as Acariya Shantideva, the great Mahayana master, says: “If one like me, still not free from the defilements, should propose to set free from the defilements the beings extending through the ten directions, I should speak like a mad man, ignorant of my limitations. Hence without turning back, I shall always fight the defilements.”

This practical attitude has also characterized the lives of many great masters of meditation in the Mahayana. Besides numerous Chinese Ch’an teachers, for example the famous Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng who lived for many years in remote places, we have the wonderfully inspiring life of Milarepa who dwelt throughout this life in the mountain fastnesses of Tibet. Yet, he declared that by doing so, he was truly benefitting all beings, and those who became his disciples, no doubt, had great causes to thank him for his strictness in this respect.

Indeed, the sort of “help” that one can give before one has pulled oneself out of the mud is always liable to be stained by meddling and self-interests as one can see clearly in the recent case of Mr. Bush on the Persian Gulf crisis.

The “do-gooder” is a typical example of one who would like to set others’ house in order before he or she tidies his or her own.

This explains, for instance, why the world suffers from a surfeit of such missionaries and development agencies from western lands, including the World Bank and IMF, while the successful Dhammaduta bhikkhu or bhikkhuni is harder to find.

Before helping others, he or she must, to some extent, have helped himself or herself. And as Milarepa stresses, the greatest help that one can possibly give to others is to personally experience Enlightenment—in whatever degree. For this stage, all self-interest and selfishness disappear and one's conduct manifests only wisdom and compassion.

Indeed, one comes across many paradoxical utterances which are not at all logical. They are usually by well-known Zen teachers. These are, again, similar to the sayings of many meditation masters in the Theravada tradition. This shows that for those who really practice Buddhism, the outward differences become meaningless.

Before reaching that stage, one should be respectful of other traditions. Do not assess others as heretics or with wrong views, merely because what they believe and practice do not appear to tally with our own limited traditions.

The best guide to bear in mind, whether one's own or others' tradition is in the right or wrong direction, should always refer to the words of the Buddha given to his aunt and stepmother, the first Bhikkhuni in the world.

Whatever are the states of which you, Gotami, may know; these states lead to passion, not to passionlessness; they lead to bondage, not to absence of bondage; they lead to piling up (of rebirths), not to the absence of piling up; they lead to wanting much, not to wanting little, not to solitude; they lead to indolence, not to putting forth of energy; they lead to difficulty in supporting oneself, not to ease in supporting oneself; of such states you should know with certainty, Gotami; this is not Dhamma, this is not Discipline, this is not the Teacher's instruction.

Bearing the above question in mind, one must admit that each tradition has its own limitations. While one should respect one's own tradition and practice the Dhamma accordingly, one must also be critical of one's own tradition. At the same time, one should develop deep respect and broad understanding for other Buddhist traditions that are just as important as one's own, then one can learn from other traditions what one lacks in one's own. For instance, the Theravada of Hinayana tradition should acknowledge that the disappearance of the Bhikkhuni order is a great tragedy. It could be restored if we would ask for help from our Mahayana brothers and sisters.

Yet, that is easier said than done, because most religious traditions are conservative and are difficult, in which to maintain a proper radical conservatism, which a living religion should be. In this regard, the Ven. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu is not waiting to have the order of Bhikkhuni

restored in his country, he is just starting a new order of Dhamma Mata—in honour of our mothers. Members of this new order will be trained to lead the holy life, not to be involved in household affairs, for passionlessness, to detachment, to decrease worldly gains, to frugality, to contentment, to delight in the good.

Fifty-nine years ago the Octogenarian monk, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, started the Garden of Liberation for almsmen, laymen and laywomen. Yet, he feels he has not done enough to honour his mother. Hence for its diamond jubilee, there will be a new order of Dhamma Mata to properly honour the sex of our mothers. From this very practical step, let us hope that the Order of Almswomen will eventually be restored meaningfully in all Theravada countries.

In Mahayana tradition, it is wonderful that the Bhikkhuni order still exists. Yet, the order of almswomen, as well as the status of lay women should really be uplifted to be equal to that of almsmen and laymen. After all, the Buddha said the two orders were equal as men and women are equal.

It is true that the Buddha's injunction was for Holy men to take precedence over the Holy women. One must also bear in mind that the Buddha conformed to the tradition of his time, although he was much ahead of his contemporaries.

If the Order for Almsmen and Almswomen are to be equal, bearing in mind the Vinaya that their practices of the Dhamma are for their ultimate liberation from bondage of births and deaths, then, I think, we should interpret our Buddhist traditions rightly in the essence or the spirit of the Buddha's instruction for our time.

Before ending my talk, let me quote a passage from the Ven. Kyabgon Sakya Trizin Rinpoche, Head of the Tibetan Sayka tradition, who said: "Nowadays there are very many people who wish to study Dharma, and they follow different schools, different orders, and one thing which it is very important to note is that all these orders are from the same origin; they all have the same effect and the same value. Of course, I do not mean to say that everybody should follow all the schools, which is difficult to do, but whichever specific order one follows, that is of course due to one's own karma—whichever school one has the karmic link with, one must follow that, but at the same time, it is very important to have complete faith and respect for all the different schools, because if you hold one particular order, but have less respect for another school then it is a great mistake and very harmful, and everybody should bear this in mind. Apart from that I don't have anything to say but I wish you all a very successful spiritual Path and with

this I conclude the course. Whatever merit we have earned through studying and meditation, we dedicate so that all the people gathered here may get ultimate Enlightenment in order to help limitless other sentient beings to be free from the ocean of sufferings of samsara.”

FEMINISM, LAY BUDDHISM, AND THE FUTURE OF BUDDHISM

Rita M. Gross

University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

Western Buddhism, in which about half of the converts to Buddhism are laywomen who take their Buddhist practice very seriously, offers new models of a Buddhist lifestyle. These ways of combining life in the modern world with serious Buddhist practice will be, in my opinion, significant for the future of Buddhism worldwide and for Buddhist women in every Buddhist country. For I believe that the future of Buddhism will increasingly depend on lay, rather than monastic, practitioners and that many of the most interesting and creative developments in Buddhism will initially come from lay Buddhists. Furthermore, I believe that feminist reconstructions of Buddhist life must be an important component of this new lay Buddhism.

Two major areas of concern need to be addressed. The first is that Buddhism offers very weak models for meaningful lay Buddhist life and must forge new paths in the West and in the modern world, without reference to the questions and issues raised by feminism. The second set of issues concerns creating styles of lay Buddhist life that accord with feminist vision of androgyny beyond the unsatisfaction mutual incompetence fostered by patriarchal gender roles.

Classical Buddhism was in many ways the religion and lifestyle of its monastic elite. Monastics not only kept the simple ethical code of Buddhism, but also pursued its philosophical and meditational disciplines, thought to be essential to attaining enlightenment. The laity, by contrast, were taught and observed the lay version of the ethical precepts, but were not expected to have the time, interest, or will power to pursue Buddhist meditation and philosophy seriously. Therefore, Buddhism, as a lay tradition, is faced with serious structural problems. Since Buddhism values neither pious devotion to deities, unquestioning adherence to doctrines, nor faithful performance of ritual as effective means to release, one is left with a very serious question. What is Buddhist observance for the non-monastic householder in a tradition that regards the deep personal transformation which results from protracted meditation and study as the only means to release?

Classical Buddhism worked out an answer to this question that promoted a deeply symbiotic relationship between the lay and monastic communities and that provided a means for lay Buddhists to work towards their own eventual enlightenment. Called the “two

accumulations,” this solution thought of the whole process of spiritual attainment as quite long and occurring in different stages. To be free, one needed to accumulate sufficient merit and sufficient wisdom. Merit was earned mainly through generosity, and brought one to the life situation in which the accumulation of wisdom, which actually fosters enlightenment, would be possible through study and meditation. The most effective method of accumulating merit was generosity to those who are engaged full time in the accumulation of wisdom. Thus, lay Buddhists could participate meaningfully in the perpetuation of the tradition, while at the same time promoting their own future spiritual well-being through the practice of generosity.

In this system, laywomen, if they controlled their own resources, were not at any disadvantage to laymen. Buddhist literature contains accounts of highly admired generous laywomen, such as Vesakha, who sometimes were more committed to Buddhism than were their husbands. In cases in which the household as a whole was committed to the support of monks, the laywomen, who managed food and other household resources, were the actual donors who, day by day, ladled out the food supplies into the monks’ begging bowls. Women were at a disadvantage only in situation in which they did not control resources and their husbands or fathers disapproved of the monks. Such stories also occur in Buddhist literature.

However, this system also presumes the existence of a large body of Buddhists who have both the financial resources to support monastics and the wish to delay their own intensive involvement in Buddhist study and practice. As such, it is a highly unlikely model for Western Buddhists to adopt. Not too many wealthy Westerners are adopting Buddhism. Furthermore, most people who take on Buddhism as their religion of choice, whether wealthy or not, are primarily interested in it as fullscale discipline of study, practice, and ethics for themselves—though most of them do not want to become monks or nuns in the process of taking on commitments to serious Buddhist study and practice. If they could support someone in monastic practice, they would, but very very few have such resources available. Virtually everyone contributes to the maintenance of meditation centers, etc. but they also use these centers extensively themselves and a large portion of their financial support to the institutions is in the form of fees they pay to attend programs.

Thus a very different model of non-monastic lay Buddhism is being created among Western Buddhists. In this model, for lay as well as for monastic practitioners of the religion, the heart of their involvement in Buddhism is a commitment to the practice of meditation and the

study of Buddhist teachings. They may not do such disciplines as intensively as do monks and nuns, but they do them frequently, at intermittent intervals, quite intensively. Many Western Buddhist laywomen, using this method of combining worldly life with serious Buddhist practice, have actually been able to pursue more advanced meditation practices and philosophical studies than do Buddhist nuns in many Asian contexts.

This model is largely dependent on the needs of Western Buddhists, who do not have the economic basis to be or to support monks or nuns, but I think it is also much more adequate than the classic symbiotic model. In the model of lay meditators at the heart of the Buddhist community, a much more complete version of Buddhism is being followed by the average Buddhist. For, while generosity is central to Buddhist values, no one would claim that it is sufficient for the full practice of Buddhism. For that, study and practice are also required, in all versions of Buddhism, with the exception of East Asian Pure Land Buddhism. This model perhaps also accords with the needs of contemporary people in general, since lay meditation has also become quite important in Buddhist revivals in several Asian countries.

However, this model of lay Buddhist life also brings up certain issues that intersect with central feminist concerns. The young Westerners first attracted to Buddhism in the sixties and seventies were childless and marginally employed, for the most part. Ten years later they had both careers and children. Meditation centers, probably for the first time in Buddhist history, were struggling to provide childcare for meditators attending intensive meditation sessions. The Western women who became Buddhists became Buddhists, not enablers of Buddhist men. When the women insist on practicing Buddhism as fully as the men, and when lay Buddhists with families and careers insist that the heart of their involvement in Buddhism is meditation and study, not just donating to others who meditate and study, vast changes are required. Fortunately, feminist thought had already considered related problems in great depth.

Much of the most practical feminist thought deals with an evaluation of patriarchal gender roles and with proposals for more attractive, equitable, and humane alternatives. Both the critique and the proposed alternative are summarized quite well in the desirable to avoid mutual incompetence. With the extreme of male specialization in production and economic activities and female specialization in reproduction and caretaking that were the stereotypical ideal, a state of rather advanced mutual incompetence has been achieved in all patriarchal religions and

societies. Extremely strong, rigid, and fixed gender roles always result in caricatures, half-humans who are emotionally stunted and inept at many essential life tasks.

The alternative is not to banish all specialization, for people do have special abilities that warrant fostering. But specialization should not be expected to follow gender, as they do under patriarchy, since the results of psychological tests show overlapping curves for women and men in all areas. Men may, on the average, have higher test scores in certain areas, and vice versa. But many women will have more ability at that tested ability than a significant number of men, and vice versa. This fact is simply ignored by those who demand conformity to gender stereotypes, citing averages garnered from test results as their justification.

To avoid the mutual incompetence fostered by rigid gender roles, some basic competencies should be expected of all human beings, rather than being assigned along gender lines. All people should be able and willing to take some responsibility for livelihood, rather than being dependent on others completely, as some women have believed is their right. And all people should be able and willing to nurture themselves and others emotionally and psychologically, rather than remaining “relational retards,” to quote a friend’s characterization of some men. Furthermore, these expectations beyond mutual incompetence are not merely unwelcome obligations thrust upon an unwilling victim by social reformers. They are integral to becoming fully human, to realizing one’s innate potential to be both competent and nurturing, which is the only way to live up to the opportunities that come with the “precious human birth.”

More explicitly, of course, the well-known feminist suggestion that women share in the burdens and joys of livelihood and that men share in the burden and joys of housework and childcare is the agenda for going beyond mutual incompetence toward androgyny. The prevailing patriarchal ways of constructing both production and reproduction and linking them with gender have already become obsolete and dysfunctional. But, to date, in moving from mutual incompetence toward androgyny, women have made considerably more progress than have men. Both women and men seem to be more eager for, and comfortable with, women moving into male roles and specializations than vice versa. Women have taken on the responsibilities for livelihood and self-sufficiency to a considerably greater degree than men have taken on responsibility for housework and childcare or for emotional maturity and communication skills. Once again, the shame associated with femaleness in patriarchal culture

makes many people, of both sexes, reluctant to encourage men to become more womanly, though encouraging women to be more manly is frequently regarded as good advise.

In the Buddhist world, this was brought home to me very clearly in a small, but indicative example. Once, when I taught a course on Buddhism and feminism to a mainly Japanese American Buddhist congregation, the men became quite enthusiastic at a certain point. They eagerly told me that they had decided they wanted to pass a rule that the presidency of the congregation should alternate between a woman and a man. At the time we were feasting on a wonderful meal that the women had prepared in the temple kitchen. I suggested that that was a wonderful idea, which should be balanced by the men doing some of the work in the temple kitchen, so that the women could, indeed, sit on the board without becoming overworked. The men's faces fell dramatically and drastically.

In the context of lay Buddhist practice, responsibilities for both livelihood and reproduction, the stereotypical male and female specializations, must be structured in way that is compatible with and fosters serious lay Buddhist practice. For lay Buddhists to be seriously involved with the accumulation of wisdom, not only the accumulation of merit, means that the priority is on one's Buddhist practice, whatever that comes to mean, not on one's livelihood or domestic involvements. The feminist critique of conventional ways of handling both livelihood and domestic life meshes well with Buddhist concerns to balance and limit these activities sufficiently to be able to engage in a serious Buddhist practice. In the remainder of this paper, I will suggest lay feminist Buddhist methods of dealing with livelihood and reproduction.

To some, the primary feminist approach to the workplace is its demand for equal opportunity at all levels of employment and its advocacy that women be economically competent, rather than continuing to rely on men for their maintenance. Indeed, these are important concerns, the former in the interests of promoting justice and the latter in the interests of promoting human wholeness and psychological well-being. These dimensions of the feminist assessment of livelihood recognize that it is dangerous for women when they are discriminated against in the workplace, because they are then vulnerable economically and psychologically, and that most human beings develop a sense of vocation beyond their own domestic nest if they are not sequestered in their immediate environment. Though less clearly recognized, this agenda also frees men from the unfair and unreasonable expectations sometimes placed upon them to provide others with economic support.

However, that is only the first agenda in the feminist discussion of livelihood and the workplace. Congruent with the more radical feminist insight that women ultimately want, not just to play the men's game using their rules, but to help write more humane and sane rules, feminists want not only access to the workplace but a better working environment once there. Though there are many facets to this desire for a more humane, less alienating work environment, one of the most important, and most relevant to Buddhists, concerns the unreasonable demands, in terms of time, called for in many professions. One constantly hears of the difficulties of working mothers trying to balance demanding, time-intensive careers with their desire to spend time with their children. This visible and discussed problem is only the tip of the iceberg, however. Work is scheduled and structured in a way to make it almost inimical to self-development, psychological growth, and long-term well-being. This generalization is more, rather than less true, in more rewarding, creative, and prestigious livelihoods. Parents wanting to spend more time with children and finding it difficult due to work demands only highlight the situation faced by everyone who wants both to contribute meaningfully through livelihood and to lead a meaningful and balanced life. When workdays readily creep up to twelve hours in length, insufficient time is left for becoming fully human through friendship, family time, artistic endeavors, exercise, and spiritual discipline. This is a doubly insane situation, for not only are people with careers prohibited from developing their full humanity, but many other people are shunted into work situations in which their potential is underutilized and yet others are unemployed.

For the lay Buddhist meditator, this situation presents serious obstacles. Traditionally, one of the reasons lay people were not usually expected to practice meditation very seriously is precisely because of overwhelming time demands thought to be unavoidable in their domestic and economic lives. Being a lay Buddhist meditator is unquestionable much demanding and time-intensive than being a lay member of most other religions. The model of lay Buddhist meditators being developed in both western and Asian forms of Buddhism seeks to find a middle path between the traditional choices of being either a monk with plenty of time for spiritual discipline or a layperson with very little time for it. The encouragement to become workaholic that is so pervasive in contemporary society is certainly a major negative factor against the development of this new model. To deal with this situation, one could imagine a new dimension to the guidance on "right livelihood" that is important in traditional Buddhism. Not only does

right livelihood involve having a job, rather than trying to con the system into providing some support, as one modern commentator has interpreted the discipline of right livelihood. One could also understand that right livelihood should include a sense of balance and proportion that integrates work into the rest of life and avoids workaholism.

For lay Buddhist meditators, it is also important to spread the concern for livelihood between the sexes, rather than to link gender with responsibility for livelihood. The positive dimensions of livelihood, its satisfactions and relevance, can be an important dimension of lay Buddhist practice. As such, female as well as male meditators need the opportunity for a positive relationship with livelihood. In so far as livelihood can become all-consuming and burdensome, it is even more important for the sexes to share livelihood responsibility. Job sharing, or at least sharing the task of earning sufficient income, is a reasonable solution to the need both to have a livelihood and to have major blocks of time away from it. Feminists often advocate such arrangements, which many employers try to avoid making available. For Buddhists, who want to be able to spend significant amounts of time in spiritual discipline, such an option should also be appealing. Otherwise, the person who takes responsibility for livelihood is likely to end up with insufficient time for self-development and spiritual discipline, while the stay-at-home partner will not be so burdened and, in many cases, finds it much easier to blend spiritual discipline into the daily routine.

The other major human occupation that has been assigned following gender lines and that has been thought to be too distracting and time-consuming to be combined with serious meditations practice is, of course, the round of domestic, nurturing, reproductive responsibilities. Since women have been so completely defined by and limited to their reproductive roles, and since an extreme level conflict between methods of securing livelihood and ability to give childcare has been achieved in the contemporary world, restructuring this occupation is an extremely high priority. To do so, it is helpful to survey both Buddhist and feminist perspectives on parenthood and motherhood. Then we will be in a better position to suggest some restructurings of domestic and parenting activities that avoid both mutual incompetence and the overburdening that makes serious lay Buddhist practice so difficult.

Buddhist attitudes toward mothers (who were almost solely responsible for childcare in the contexts in which the classic texts were written) are complex and differ with the context. The literal mother was not spiritually valued model; if anything she is regarded as someone whose

spiritual development is likely to be minimal. Motherhood is not idealized, as in some religious traditions. If anything, the sufferings attendant on motherhood are one of the things that makes female rebirth undesirable. Motherhood as a symbol, is more highly regarded. This ambiguity regarding motherhood is not untypical of androcentric evaluations of motherhood. On the other hand, at least Buddhists do not idealize the self-sacrificing, over-burdened mother as The Woman Who Is Fulfilling Her True Potential, a Paragon of Female Virtue, to be emulated by all women, the mother to whom every son and husband is entitled by rights of masculine privilege.

A widespread Buddhist assessment of motherhood is that motherhood inevitably bring attachment, which, of course, always brings grief quickly behind it, and which is the emotion that traps one in endless samsara. A mother cannot avoid attachment, but attachment is a negative, unproductive, pain-filled attitude to be replaced by detached joy and equanimity. In the Therigatha, mothers frequently became nuns after being grief-stricken by the death of children. In so doing, they make the transition from attachment to detachment, from motherhood to the spiritual life, from suffering to joy and equanimity.

The quality of attachment is the negative aspect of motherhood, not the care and concern for another, for such concern, when detached rather than attached, is highly prized, especially in Mahayana Buddhism. Diana Paul has very clearly delineated the difference: In similar ways the Bodhisattva strongly and intensely identifies with all living beings as a mother identifies with her child. Yet the Bodhisattva, unlike the mother, remains free and detached from living beings through the wisdom of Emptiness. The mother does not view the world as empty. She is in a never-ending cycle of attachment. The conflict between the mother's role and the spiritually free and detached individual is resolved by the Bodhisattva.²²

Mothers are models in classical Buddhism only when they are embodiments of the feminine principle of wisdom, which gives birth to Buddhahood. This valorization is double-edged. On the one hand, it recognizes the utter primacy of birth-giving and nurturing as the foundation of life. To have positive maternal symbols at some levels in a religious symbol system can help valorize parenthood and provide models for humans. A person can, for example, recognize that one does not have to be literal mother to mother both projects and people. And perhaps literal parents could model themselves more upon the principle of even-minded wisdom that gives birth to Buddhahood, and less upon the model of attached samsaric styles of

²² Paul, p. 66

parenthood. On the other hand, embodiments of feminine wisdom give birth to Buddhahood, not to screaming infants who try one's patience, disrupt one's meditation practice, and produce dirty diapers. Not much has yet been said about handling that result of birth-giving in the context of being a lay Buddhist meditator!

Feminist considerations of motherhood have been quite different and are highly varied, ranging from Shulamith Firestone's early call for artificial wombs to endorsements of maternity as the most noble human enterprise. Of these, the discussions by Nancy Codorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein of the dynamic that occurs when women are given sole responsibility for early childcare are most relevant for a reconstruction of androgynous parenthood for Lay Buddhist meditators. According to both of them, "much of what is wrong with men and women as individuals (and us as a society)... is traceable to the fact that women do all the mothering."²³ They both are convinced that "...the oppression of women originates in the female monopoly on mothering."²⁴ Both of them also see dual parenting as the way to end the oppression of women as well as to raise saner, more whole people who are not caught up in the dysfunctionalities of gender roles.

In post-patriarchal Buddhism, parenthood will need to be constructed quite differently than it has been in conventional society, Buddhist or non-Buddhist. Building parenthood on the foundation of serious lay meditation practice means that parenthood should be undertaken much more deliberately, mindfully, and seriously than has usually been the case previously. Then there may be some possibility for parents to become at least somewhat detached in their parenting. Dual parenting, in both literal and extended meanings, should be chosen for many reasons. And Buddhist meditation centers would routinely offer childcare in conjunction with meditation training.

When lay Buddhists take the accumulation of wisdom through meditation practice as a central expression of their Buddhist identity, then significant changes in how reproduction is structured are required. First, and most important, having children at all should become a mature choice, not a product of chance. For people whose foundation mental and spiritual discipline is the development of mindfulness and awareness to slide into reproduction mindlessly could easily be construed as a violation of the major precept to avoid sexual misconduct. Rather, being aware

²³ Tong, p. 149

²⁴ Tong, p. 156

of one's likely behaviours ahead of time and being prepared with birth control, should be routine practice for lay Buddhist meditators, a refreshing change from practices commonly advocated in some religious traditions.

Furthermore, introducing some real egolessness and detachment into the childrearing process would greatly improve the experience for both parents and children. The percentage of children conceived and raised primarily as an extension of their parents' egos and the emotional abuse inherent in such a situation are astounding. Egoless parents would not conceive children out of habitual responses to societal pressure and then regard the children as extensions of themselves whose purpose is to fulfill the parents' needs and expectations. Some ability to regard children as beings whose karmic potentialities bring them temporarily into close relationships with oneself, rather than as possessions or objects to be shaped into the desired result, would cut some of the painful attachment, leading to grief, that is usually associated with motherhood in classical Buddhist texts.

Thought this call for a more detached, egoless style of parenting applies to both men and women to some extent, I believe it would seriously and positively undercut one of the most unattractive aspects of femininity as constructed in patriarchy. This is the tendency, socialized into all women and believe by many, that they can always flee to maternity to find something to do with their lives. Because men do not have this easy biological out to the quest for meaning and relevance in life, deep resentments between the sexes are fostered. Women who find in maternity the meaning they cannot find in their own lives often fall into an extreme of attached parenting, living through their children.

The burdens place on children when they are extensions of parents' egos are immense and can require many years of spiritual discipline to overcome. That such burdens were inflicted and carried in classical Buddhist cultures, not just in non-Buddhist societies is demonstrated by the repeated theme in Buddhist biographical literature, of parents, especially parents of daughters, but also of sons to some extent, who objected strenuously to the child's desire not to marry and continue the family line, but to take up the religious life. But such Buddhist parents were undoubtedly not the lay Buddhist meditators being developed in contemporary forms of Buddhism—a further point in favor of developing a whole new model of lay Buddhism. Egoless and mindful decisions to take on parenthood should also have profoundly positive effects on several other issues. In the context of egolessness and the bodhisattva vow, the primary issue

surrounding children should become a concern for the quality of life available to the children that are reborn, rather than the mindless pro-natalism that fuels so many public policies and private prejudices. Adoption should be a widely favored option of egoless detached parents who have taken the bodhisattva vow, whether or not they can conceive their own children. Especially for those who do not readily conceive, adoption, rather than medical extremes, should be a routine option. There are already plenty of children in the world—too many for the safety of Earth, in all likelihood. Recognizing that, mindful and detached, egoless parents would also limit their reproduction. Recognizing the hazards of overpopulation, reproductive choices are not made solely on the basis of private ability to support another child or desires for one, limiting one's own reproduction to care, properly and fully, for children already born could well be considered part of the most basic precept of non-harming. Everyone loses from excessive reproduction, from the plant, to crowded, under-nourished, poverty-stricken people, to children who do not receive sufficient attention from their parents, to the parents who are too consumed with childcare to take care of themselves emotionally and spiritually.

Parents who are Buddhist lay meditators need to structure their parenting in a manner that is not in conflict with their own disciplines of meditation and study. This means that dual parenting, extended parenting, and communal care networks are essential. Formal institutions of the Buddhist world must be involved in this extended childcare. First generation Western Buddhists are struggling with questions of how to educate their children about Buddhism and how to raise Buddhist children in a non-Buddhist environment. This is not an issue that can be dealt with family by family. As “monasteries,” i.e. places dedicated to spiritual discipline, become at least in part meditation centers frequented by lay Buddhists, childcare and children's education become concerns of Buddhist centers in a way that has probably not happened previously. Buddhist lay mediator parents usually do not want to break their spiritual discipline entirely during the years that they have young children. The old solution of having women deal with the children until they are old enough to be able to manage at Buddhist ceremonies and meditation sessions is not appropriate in feminist perspective, which insists that women be accorded the privileges and responsibilities that go with the “previous human birth” rather than being treated as a servant class. Therefore, in Western Buddhist institutions currently there is considerable experimentation in how best to meet the needs of lay Buddhist meditators with children.

Concerning routine, daily childcare, arguments for extended networks including significant primary involvement from fathers, can be made on two levels. First, one should recognize considerations of fairness and of promoting human wholeness beyond mutual incompleteness [sp?]. Childcare is rather time-intensive and absorbing. Parents routinely complain of the difficulty of getting anything else done that involves concentration and withdrawal for a period of time, such as meditation practice or study. Mothers who are lay Buddhist meditators need and deserve time for their own spiritual discipline. And in situation in which mothers commonly have employment outside the home, fairness would dictate that they receive significant help from their partners in parenting, the stereotypical female specialization, just as they are providing help with the stereotypical male specialization, providing economic support. Such arrangements would ease one of the greatest sources of frustration among contemporary women. From the other side, those who argue that childcare is so rewarding and satisfying that women are foolish to want to do anything else cannot, in good conscience, make it difficult for men to participate in such a rewarding and renewing experience. That would be another form of gender privilege, something that is consistently undermined by Buddhist doctrine and humane social arrangements. Additionally, the post-Freudian feminist psychoanalytic analysis of Dorothy Dinnerstein has great relevance in the Buddhist context. As she, and many others reconstruct it, infancy and early childhood are not especially easy experiences for the infant. It is a time of discovering limits and frustrations and experiences the beginning of long-lasting resentment against those conditions. In Buddhist terms, the infant or young child is discovering and being introduced to the inevitably samsaric character of human existence. Nothing a parent does, no quality of care, no matter how appropriate and loving, can alter or change this basic fact, which is very disturbing to both parent and child. Some parents, like Siddhartha Gautama's father, struggle to keep their children from experiencing samsara, seeming to believe that if they are loving and available enough, unlike their own parents, their children will avoid finitude and limitation. Some grown children have a hard time disentangling what their parents did to them that may have been abusive from inevitable childhood introduction to limitation and finitude, frustration and dissatisfaction.

In this drama of blame and guilt, mothers often come in for more resentment than fathers. I believe Dinnerstein is right when she postulates that this is because, in a culture that places women alone in primary responsibility for childcare, women preside over all the incidents of

frustration and limitation that initiate us into the human condition. Women are, therefore, blamed for those inevitabilities subconsciously. Succinctly, in Buddhist terms, she is arguing that in conventional patriarchal culture, women, more than men, introduce us to samsara, and are, on some level, blamed for it in a way that men are not, even if the child later learns that such suffering is inevitable and results from karma accrued in past lives.

For Buddhism, unlike Dinnerstein, the introduction to samsara is not the only message there is. Only the first two of the Four Noble Truths talk about samsara. The last two talk about religious teachers who introduce us to those disciplines and to the possibility of nirvana are almost always men. This male monopoly on spiritual teaching is as damaging as is the female monopoly on childrearing. Furthermore, there may be links between these two monopolies. Because women are informally, but rather systemically excluded from religious leadership and from teaching roles in Buddhism, they are left with the task of introducing their children to samsara, while men are freed both to pursue nirvana for themselves and to teach the methods promoting freedom to others. Perhaps, subconsciously, women have been excluded from teaching roles because of their conventional associations with our initiation into limited and frustrating samsaric human existence. Rather an unpleasant and vicious circle!

For Buddhism a great deal is at stake in breaking this vicious circle. Probably the point at which the links can be severed is with large-scale serious involvement of lay women in Buddhist meditation and with massive reforms in the monastic institutions regarding education and meditation training of nuns. From that point, reconstruction can occur in two directions. Such women will take on teaching roles in Buddhism, whether inside or outside the recognized structures of authority, thereby breaking the male near-monopoly on the introduction of spiritual discipline and nirvana. And some men will, for various reasons, take on their share on childcare, thus breaking the female monopoly on the introduction of the next generation to samsara. Breaking these two monopolies, which make women primary childcare givers and men primary Buddhist teachers, will begin to undo all the extra and unnecessary negativity and pain brought to samsara by those monopolies.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN THERAVADIN BUDDHISM:
THE SHOWER OF THE WAY
Ven. Bhikkhuni Ayya Khema

The easiest way to understand the role of the teacher in Theravada Buddhism would be to relate some occasions when the Buddha spoke about himself and his function.

An often recited story is about “the man from Rajagaha.” One day a man came to the Buddha and said that he had been listening to the Buddha’s discourses for a number of years and had met quite a lot of monks and nuns during that time, who were also present at the same discourses. Knowing them personally, he found that some of them had changed enormously for the better over the years, some had remained exactly as they had always been, and some had deteriorated in their mental/emotional make-up. Yet they had all been listening to the same discourses. He now wanted to know how these differences came to be.

The Buddha said to him: “Where is your hometown?” The man answered: “I am from Rajagaha.” The Buddha asked: “Do you sometimes go back to your hometown?” The man replied: “I go frequently; I have family and business connections in Rajagaha.” The Buddha inquired: “Do you know the way to Rajagaha?” The man said: “If you know anyone who needs directions how to get there, please send him to me. I can’t imagine that anyone knows the way better than I do. I know all the crossroads and all the signposts. I have been up and down that road many times, in daylight and also at night.”

The Buddha replied: “I believe you. But if you were to give the best possible directions to someone who would not start on his journey, would it be your fault that he wouldn’t get to Rajagaha?” “No,” the man said, “It wouldn’t be my fault. I’m only the shower of the way.” The Buddha said: “That’s exactly who I am. I am only the shower of the way.”

This is a well-known saying by the Buddha, which quite clearly shows his abhorrence of the dependency on a teacher or guru. It is not the role of the teacher in the Buddha’s dispensation to import any kind of grace or blessing to the student, but it is the teacher’s duty to show the spiritual path in all its facets, difficulties as well as beauty. The Buddha took enormous pains to describe each step of the way in the greatest of detail.

There is a story about a monk who was so infatuated with the person of the Buddha he followed him around like a puppy dog. He didn’t actually listen well to what the Buddha said, but just admired the Buddha’s compassion, his intelligence, his way of interacting with his following.

One day this monk became sick and had to take his bed. His sickness wasn't very serious, yet he was moaning and groaning. His fellow monks came to see him and asked him: "Why are you moaning and groaning? You'll be well in a few days. It's not that serious." The sick monk told them: "I am not moaning because of my sickness, but because I'm confined to my bed and can't see the Buddha." The other monks reassured him: "That's not such a great tragedy. We'll tell the Buddha about it and surely he'll come and visit you."

The Buddha came to visit the next day and inquired about the monk's health and then said: "Whoever sees me-(the Buddha)-sees nothing other than the Dhamma in action, which is the law, the law of nature, the absolute truth of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, carelessness. "Buddha" means the "enlightened one" and it is not the mortal person which is all-important, but enlightenment as an expression of the highest ideal, momentarily embodied in a certain person. "Whoever sees the Dhamma sees me." If we "see" the Dhamma within ourselves as an integral part of our own nature, we realize impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and substancelessness in ourselves, and then we may see enlightenment, which is Buddha-Nature. "Inward seeing" changes our inner reality and does not come about without the work of purification and meditation.

Another story is about Channa the Buddha's charioteer, who was already devoted to him when he was still an unenlightened Bodhisattva, named Prince Siddhartha Gotama. Later Channa joined the order of monks, but still thought of the Buddha as part of his own family because he had known him since he was a young man. He would express this feeling by saying: "My Buddha told me ..." or "When my Buddha was still at the palace I used to look after him." "He would not allow other monks to serve the Buddha but would say: "No, no. That's my Buddha. I'm going to do that." This behavior caused great aggravation to the Sangha. The Buddha imposed the severe penalty of not being spoken to by other monks, which so shocked Channa that he attained enlightenment. This story shows us that "owning" a teacher, even the best, and trying to propagate this "ownership" is contrary to the Buddha's teachings.

Ananda, the Buddha's cousin and his attendant for 25 years, once said to the Buddha, "Sir, a good friend is half of the holy life." The Buddha replied, "Do not say so Ananda. A good friend is the whole of the holy life." In Pali, a good friend is a "kalyanamitta," which also means the meditation teacher, who is our very best friend when he or she shows us the way to freedom. A good and noble friend is a wise and mature person who knows how to help us to combat our

hindrances and obstacles. The Buddha declared our association with such a person as one of the great blessings in life. But we also have to reciprocate with wholehearted devotion, to make the relationship work.

Faith and confidence in the teaching and the teacher are required, coupled with wisdom. We need enough discrimination and intelligence to know when the truth is being spoken. When that happens, faith and confidence arouse joy in the heart, which is a prerequisite for meditation. Those, who then follow the teacher's instructions exactly, can expect the best results. Those who have their own ideas will not achieve calm or insight. Then there are those who don't listen at all and those who forget all they have heard. The Buddha compared people to 4 kinds of water-pots. One with big holes in the bottom, one with cracks, one full to the top and one empty and unblemished. It is easy to understand which one is truly useful.

We need our mind with its intellectual capacity to understand the instructions. But the heart with its feeling potential is also needed to love the practice. When those two come together—the heart and mind working in conjunction, and both being totally engaged—the results are exactly as the Buddha predicted. Only such as whole-hearted engagement can bring wholehearted results. When heart and mind are in unison, then the mind directs the steps on the path and the heart is devoted to them. Devotion, faith, and confidence should not be confused with the expectation of a magic result through the intervention of the teacher. Our devotion is our heart magic, which opens the door to our own manifold potentials. We need to give ourselves, without wanting to get something in return. Eventually we will have to give ourselves up entirely in any case, so that those who are willing to give their hearts to the teacher and the teaching now, gain the greatest advantage and benefits.

In the Mahaparinibbana Sutta* (the last days of the Buddha), his words about teaching and teachers are preserved. Ananda, grieving about the Buddha's imminent passing away, asked what will happen now that the teacher is dying. The Buddha replied: "Ananda, it may be that you will think the teacher's instructions have ceased. Now we have no teacher. It should not be seen like this, for what I have explained to you as Dhamma, and Discipline will at my passing be your teacher. Therefore, Ananda, you should live as islands unto yourselves, being your own refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as your refuge, with no other refuge." The last words of the Buddha before his passing into Parinibbana were: "Now monks, I declare to you, all conditioned things are of the nature to decay. Strive on untiringly." These may

possibly be the most famous words, of the Buddha, and they tell us the same story again; do it yourself, don't delay. Everything is conditioned and therefore decaying and so we need to strive untiringly to find release.

Ideas about the teacher's personality, behavior, and accomplishments have always been detrimental to the practice. Brahmins, who were usually the Buddha's antagonists, often came to inquire whether he had certain super-natural powers. He usually refuted that by saying, "none of these things you are mentioning are important. You are speaking about minor matters. The greatest accomplishment is to get rid of all craving." Many times, he was able to convince his questioners, but then as now, not everyone is ready to work on his own defilements.

The traditional role of the teacher has been preserved according to the Buddha's instructions, namely, to go out into the world and preach the true Dhamma to those who want to hear. Never to use any coercion to convert anyone, only to show by gentle and reasonable discourse the way to goodness. After his enlightenment the Buddha decided to teach out of compassion for suffering humanity and the same is true today. Then as now, there are those who have "little dust in their eyes" and will be able to discover Nibbāna in their own hearts, when they have been shown the way.

UNDERSTANDING BUDDHIST TEXTS FROM FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

Chatsumarn Kabilsingh

Buddhist women have shown interest in practicing and following the path to spiritual salvation as early as the Buddha's time some 2,600 years ago. They proved their interest and sincerity by committing their lives to join the Order and became bhikkhunis, fully ordained nuns. In the history of many Buddhist countries, there are records and evidence of how these women have expressed their need in various ways, leading to the establishment of the bhikkhuni order in some countries, e.g. Sri Lanka and China.

In spite of the fact that Buddhism is very free in spirit and promotes spiritual attainment of all sentient beings we can still see that within the Buddhist structure itself women have often been obstructed to express their genuine commitment to the path of practicing and leading religious lives.

It is, therefore, of urgent need for us to examine these obstacles. One of the methodologies is to study the original texts and make a critical study and analytical observation to bring out the true picture of Buddhist women as to whether they are being supported or suppressed by Buddhist structure.

This task is not the province of Buddhist scholars only but it is the task common among feminist scholars of other religions as well. Interfaith dialogue among these scholars has proven to be of great benefit for them.

I. Nature of Buddhist Texts.

From the given title, one should realize also the nature of the Buddhist texts in order to be able to make critical value judgement. In this present context, Buddhist texts mean canonical Buddhist texts known as the Tripitaka—literally the three baskets or three categories in which Buddhist teachings have been preserved. In the first Council which was held three months after the Buddha's parinivāna (passing away), 500 enlightened monks were invited. Mahā Kasapa presided over the council with Upālī Thera reciting the Vinaya (monastic rules) and Ananda Thera reciting the Sutta (collections of the teaching of the Buddha). The actual Tipitaka was not yet formed as the Abhidhamma which is the third section of the pitaka was not yet included in this council. The teachings agreed upon in the first council were handed down verbally as was the common practice of the time.

There are two points which need attention. The first is the fact that although there were bhikkhunis who were highly praised by the Buddha for being foremost in Vinaya, in wisdom, in performing miracles, in giving, dharma talk, etc. <1> None of them were invited to attend the council. What could be the reason for this imbalance in participation but the prejudice as shown by the bhikkhu Sangha. A Sri Lankan monk pointed out that it is unfair for the monks to recite bhikkhunī pātimokkha without the presence of the bhikkhunis. <2> Consequently Ananda was blamed by the council members for having committed an offence of wrongdoing by being responsible for admitting women to the order. <3> This is how Ananda replied:

“But I, honoured sirs, made in effort for the going forth of women in the Dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder, -thinking: this Gotamī Pajāpatī, the great, is the Lord's aunt, foster-mother, nurse, giver of milk for when the Lord's mother passed way, she suckled him. I do not see that as an offence of wrongdoing.” <4>

Even though he made it clear that he did not think he had committed wrongdoing, he confessed the offence to save the sangha from further disagreement which could lead to schism among the Sangha members. This clearly shows that among these 500 Arahants, some of them were not in favour of the establishment of the Bhikkhunī Sangha but could not raise their voice against the Buddha's decision when he was alive. They however still held the grudge against the issue, and brought it to the public right after the Buddha's Parinirvāna.

The Buddhist texts as we now have them were first written down as late as 450 B.C. and it was believed to be preserved in Pali. It is still questionable whether Pali has ever been a spoken language. The Buddha did not speak Pali but Artha-Maghadhī. Again, the texts were written in Sri Lanka, many hundreds of miles from the area where the Buddha and his early Buddhist community lived. Therefore, its authenticity cannot be taken to full account considering the differences in time, language and location.

Again, it must be remembered that the Buddhist texts as they stand were recorded by monks. The method of recording is completely subjective. They were not known as being enlightened, and even among the so-called enlightened Sangha of the first council, we can still witness prejudices against women as shown earlier. The recorders chose to record the important messages according to their own standard of “important”, and very much from male interests and

a male standpoint. The monks, whether in the Buddha's time or later were but men drawn from an Indian social and cultural background. It is inevitable that they carried with them consciously or unconsciously social values of that culture. As we all know, Indian social values have always suppressed women.

The caste system in its own structure is oppressive to mankind. Women born into such a caste system are further suppressed within its own structure. The Brahmins or the priestly caste often were responsible for setting down rules and regulations for society. One Brahmin by the name Manu, who wrote a Sāstra which became the ethical code for later Hindu society, has successfully done a great harm in suppressing women not only in India but also in neighboring countries influenced by Indian culture. The Buddhist texts were recorded by men from such a social structure and with such values.

As this paper intends to present a study from a feminist perspective, it will pay particular attention to passages in the texts which have had direct result in supporting or suppressing women.

It has often been asked, more frequently in the West, whether Buddhism is uplifting or suppressing women? It is important and necessary for any Buddhist scholars interested in the women's issue to make a distinction of the whole teaching in two major categories. First is the core teaching which deals directly with the spiritual path. This kind of teaching is free from contextual and gender constraint in its nature. In this category one cannot say whether Buddhism is supportive of women or not as it has transcended the gender difference. The highest goal of Buddhism is enlightenment, the path of which is made available to all sentient beings, men and women alike.

The second category of teaching deals with the more mundane level and its truth depends on the social context. In this level of teaching, one finds rich evidence to support both sides of arguments. Before going in further detail to give a critical study of this evidence, it will be beneficial to understand the basic teaching of Buddhism. In very simple words, Buddhism explains that everyone is born to go through the process of birth, decay, and death. Suffering is a common experience for everyone. The Buddha professed that one can overcome this fateful existence through spiritual attainment, in Buddhism, it is known as Nirvana. Everyone has potential to overcome suffering but it is entirely up to each one of us to pursue the goal. From this basic teaching one finds no place for gender bias. We can, then, be sure that when gender

bias manifests itself in the text, one needs to examine carefully both the passage and the context of that passage.

In this second category of Buddhist teachings, one will have to understand that in spite of the fact that the Buddha denied many existing social and religious values of the time, he was still very much bound within the Indian social context. There is evidence which shows how he made his decisions according to existing values. When Ananda asked whether monks should pay homage to nuns, according to seniority, he disagreed and cited that even the Tithiyas who propound imperfect doctrines sanction such homage of men towards women. How could he do so.

The Buddha was criticized by Kornvibha Boonsue in her study of women and Buddhism from the Jātakas, <5> for being enlightened yet not free from socially conditioned values. It is true that the Buddha was fully enlightened but we have to understand that because he was a historical person born into a certain social, historical and cultural context, the contextual influence would have effect upon him to some extent. He retained some social values which may appear to be strongly biased and prejudiced judging from modern standards and a mentality which is at least 2600 years removed from his time. These differences need to be pointed out and kept in mind throughout our study.

II. Passages Conveying Negative Influences Towards Women.

The paper now takes up the study of some passages in the texts which appear to be negative towards women.

II.1 “Woman is a stain on celibacy”.

In the teaching which the Buddha gave to the monks, he reminded them that “Woman is a stain on celibacy.” <6> The passage is often taken one-sidedly. In Thailand, the monks will not come in direct contact with women. Women generally have a very low self-esteem and in extreme cases deny themselves of any value. They are being looked down and treated as hindrance to spiritual development of the monks have to understand that this is one example to show that Buddhist texts are primarily androcentric – male centered. It was recorded by monks with the interest of monks and for monks. Newly ordained monks who have not had any practice are still very weak in their mental constitution. They are easily swayed by their sensual

inclinations of which women are the major attraction. It is not women's fault but rather the weakness on the part of the monks. Without women's presence, some monks still have enough problems with the image of women they create in their imagination. No woman can be responsible for the sexual behavior of the monks, but it is the monks themselves who have to cope with their own desire. For enlightened ones, they are well fortified and are able to transcend gender differences. The Buddha himself never had to avoid women because women no longer appeared to him as sex objects. He was well balanced and had complete self-control.

In a conversation with Ananda, the Buddha was recorded to have given advice for the monks on coming in contact with women that they are not to look at them and not to spend time talking to them. <7> Related to the above passages, the Buddha was recorded to have said:

“Nothing binds men as strongly as women.” <8> Here the teaching for women is the opposite, “nothing binds women as strongly as men” but seldom heard because the monks are the only ones who preach, so again, the teaching is presented one-sidedly. Women are one-sidedly made to appear and feel as hindrance to spiritual growth. Some may even harbor on the feeling of being a source of impurity.

II.2 “Woman is the supreme commodity”

Passages which have carried Indian social values into Buddhist texts state that “woman is the supreme commodity.” <9> This concept of women clearly reflects the value as expressed in Manudharmasāstra which sees women as completely dependent and a commodity to be handed down from parents to husbands and to sons, as they are not considered to be capable of making any judgement of their own. In contrast to Buddhist basic teaching, this passage cannot find its place at all, as Buddhism is a way of life which makes spiritual freedom available to every sentient being.

II.3 “Women are subjected to five woes.”

Further, women are subjected to five woes which are again often explained as shortcomings of women, but as we take a close look at them, we find that as they are seen within Indian context 2,600 years ago. Some of them are irrelevant to women of the present century. For example, the first one mentions the fact that after marriage a woman has to part from her

family. Because of the separation it is considered a suffering. This is true in the Indian context, but in Thailand the social structure is different. It is common custom for the groom to go to the bride's family after marriage, hence this specific suffering as mentioned in the canon is not relevant to Thai society and not applicable to Thai women. Other sufferings deal with pregnancy, menstruation, childbirth and taking care of a husband. <10> Three of them are physical sufferings which are designed by nature itself. They are suffering but should not be interpreted as shortcomings. Women have to experience various degrees of physical pain but there is compensation for it—the joy of giving birth, the exclusive capability of bringing forth life and the potentiality of creation actualized. All these are also joy and happiness exclusive to women that men could never experience. Why should a natural occurrence be interpreted only as negatively while there are also positive aspects to it? This reflects clearly the one-sided mentality of the male recorder of the texts. By emphasizing only the negative aspect, this attitude actually molded women into thinking negatively about themselves. But it is understandable when the interpreters in the past have only been men. It is therefore high time to take a fresh look at those sensitive quotations concerning women. Women's experiences as regard to pregnancy, childbirth can best be explained by women, the age-old interpretations given by men need critical reappraisal.

Within the Indian social context 'taking care of a husband' could be a suffering as listed in the text as the fifth suffering that women have to endure. Most marriages in India are arranged, 'taking care of a husband' is more of a duty than willingness from a loving heart. Besides, the social values which put man close to the status of a god on earth could make this duty a real woe and suffering. In modern society, marriage requires a commitment from both parties. Taking care of one's spouse should be enjoyable and thus positive rather than negative.

Next is the problem of an answer which the Buddha gave to Ananda with regard to women being selfish and poor in wisdom so they cannot assume the seat in an assembly, they cannot work, and they cannot travel to faraway countries. In brief, women are not fit for responsible official work. This, indeed, is not applicable only to women but also to men. Women who are not subjected to the above shortcoming can fully participate in such activities and in the present-day women have proved themselves to have been successful in holding important positions e.g., prime ministers, doctors, lawyers, etc. Such passage could only be of the recorders understanding limited by social and historical context and if it was truly the Buddha's word, it is

the type of teaching which is bound by the societal values of the time which does not hold true anymore with the change of time.

II.4 “A women cannot become a Buddha”.

There had been a prevalent belief that “a woman cannot become a Buddha”. This dictum has been taken up for critical study by Kajiyama Yuichi. <12> In his paper Yuichi successfully shows that such belief appeared later in the first century B.C. In his concluding remark he distinguished five historical stages regarding the Buddhist attitude toward the problem of women and enlightenment which needs to be quoted in full for proper understanding.

- “1. Primitive Buddhism under Gautama and his direct disciplines made no distinction between men and women with regard to capability of emancipation, despite the prevalence of social discrimination against women in ancient India.
2. The dictum that a woman is incapable of becoming a Buddha arose probably in the first century B.C.
3. Just before the beginning of the Christian Era a new movement developed: present Buddhas, especially Aksebhya and Amitabha, sympathizing with the physical ills and social predicament of women, vowed to save them. Aksobhya removing all difficulties of women in his Buddha land, and Amitabha transforming women into men on their birth in his paradise.
4. Early Mahayana Sutras, such as The Perfection of wisdom in 8,000 lines, the Lotus Sutra, and the Pureland Sutra, developed the idea that a women can be enlightened by transformation of herslef into a male.
5. The mature philosophy of emptiness and Buddha nature in all sentient beings represented in the Vamalakirtinirdesa, Srimaladevi, and other sutras, declares a women can be enlightened remaining just as she is, a woman.” <13>

Yuichi also quoted Prof. E. Ocho, one of the greatest scholars of Chinese Buddhism who pointed out that the Buddha was supposed to possess the 32 important marks of a great man (Mahāpurisalaksana). He infers that the idea of a woman’s incapability to become a Buddha must have been derived from the tenth mark possessed by a Buddha, a concealed genital. This mark necessitates that a Buddha must be a man. Indian Buddhists of the first century B.C. may have overlooked the point that furnishing a Buddha with the 32 marks of a universal monarch would lead to the serious consequences of excluding women from becoming Buddhas. <14> And

yet they have missed the message totally. The true message of the concealed genital is that the Buddha was no more sexually aroused, he was in complete control of and he had overcome his sexual drive. The message has been misunderstood and wrongly implied that a Buddha must have a genital, hence such dictum found its way solidly into the belief of later Buddhists and has greatly influenced the social values in suppressing women's spiritual potentiality.

Yuichi discussed also the belief that a woman cannot become Brahma, Indra, Mara and Universal monarch. He pointed out that in the world of Brahma there are no women. <15> It must be added that in the higher level of the Brahma world the distinction of gender is transcended, as there is really neither man nor women. Indra and a Universal monarch, both being valiant and gigantic warriors, are usually imagined as men rather than women. This imagination is subjected again to difference associations and different time. Mara or the Evil One, was often surrounded by female attendants at his beck and call, he is more likely to be a man.

II.5 “The Buddha never wanted women in the sangha”.

An important point which needs mentioning in this connection is the incident related to the admission of women to the Sangha. The Buddha repeatedly refused Mahā Pajāpatī Gotami, his aunt and stepmother, who approached and requested his admission to the sangha. This has often been misunderstood and narrowly interpreted that the Buddha was against the idea of women leading religious lives. It must be taken into consideration that Mahā Pajāpatī was a queen and she did not come to the Buddha alone, but was followed by a great many royal women, recorded as many as 500 princesses. <16> For women who had led comfortable lives in the palace to adopt the lives of recluses was not at all easy. With his compassion and concern for Mahā Pajāpatī, he refused her. But after she had shown her sincere interest and conviction by following him from one village to another, he was convinced of her sincerity.

There were other factors that had occupied the Buddha's mind e.g., the problem of the residence and teachers. For the bhikkhunis to live in the forest could be problematic as expressed in one of the Gurudharmas that bhikkhunis have to follow. (e.g., a bhikkhuni must not live in a place where there is no monk.) There was an actual case of a bhikkhuni being raped by a boat man. <17> Also it was not easy to find qualified monks to impart knowledge to the bhikkhunis. It was later evident in the monks' Vinaya that not just any monk could teach the bhikkhunis but

must be qualified and appointed by the Sangha. So the bhikkhuni, before asking the monk any questions, must first ask if he is ready. <18>

After having admitted them to the Sangha, they were to take the Eight Important Rules (Gurudharmas) to be quoted in full:

1. A nun who has been ordained (even) for a century must greet respectfully, rise up from her seat, salute with joined palms, do proper homage to a monk ordained but that day.
2. A monk must not spend the rains in a residence where there is no monk.
3. Every half month a nun should desire two things from the Order of monks: the asking (as to the date) of the Observance day, and the coming for the exhortation.
4. After the rains a nun must 'invite' before both the Orders in respect of three matters: what was seen, what was heard, and what was suspected.
5. A nun, offending against an important rule, must undergo manatta (discipline) for half a month before both the Orders.
6. When, as a young probationer, she has been trained in the six rules for two years, she should seek ordination from both the Orders.
7. A monk must not be abused or reviled in any way by a nun.
8. From today admonition of monks by nuns is forbidden, admonition of nuns by monks is not forbidden. <19>

These Eight Important Rules have often been seen by western scholars as obvious evidence of a male-oriented tendency in Buddhism. It needs critical study in order to appreciate the value of these rules as they were intended.

First of all, it must be remembered that the bhikkhu Sangha came into being before the women joined the Order. Accepting women to the Sangha meant that the existing male Sangha had to undergo certain adjustments and changes which were not always willingly accepted as seen from later evidence. In order to make this new Sangha acceptable, the Buddha must be able to give assurance to the bhikkhu Sangha that they have nothing to lose but only gain. Therefore it is only inevitable that the bhikkhuni Sangha was made subordinate to the bhikkhu sangha.

This subordination was for a functional purpose, on the model of younger sisters to elder brothers, and both the Sanghas were still sharing the same status as children of the Buddha. It was never the intention of the Buddha to make the bhikkhunī Sangha so subordinate as to serve the bhikkhus as practiced later on. When the bhikkhunis had to spend time washing rugs and

robes for the monks so much so that they were denied their time for them to pursue their spiritual development, the Buddha set down rules forbidding the monks from taking advantage of the bhikkhunis. <20> This androcentric nature of the bhikkhu sangha manifested again and again but was always closely checked by the Buddha.

Even the first Gurudharma “a bhikkhunī must bow to a bhikkhu” is not to be followed blindly. There was a case when a group of monks behaved in an unseemingly manner towards the bhikkhunis, the Buddha instructed the bhikkhunis not to pay respect to them. This may be seen as an exemption of the first Gurudharma itself. Buddhist law is by its nature not static, and we must not take it so, or the spirit of Buddhism will be lost.

According to the 8th Gurudharma a bhikkhunī cannot admonish a bhikkhu, however a laywoman can do it. This is so because laypeople are the main source of support for the Sangha. The relationship between the Sangha and the lay community has been a cordial one. While the lay community support the Sangha materially, the Sangha is expected to lend support to them spiritually. This was how the Sangha was first established. So in this respect, certain things cannot be done by a woman within the Sangha, but it does not necessarily mean that a woman cannot do it at all.

Shifting the Gurudharmas.

These Gurudharmas are recorded as given to Mahā Pajāpati at the very formation of the bhikkhunī Sangha. It has been taken as tradition until recently scholars have started to question the date of setting down these Gurudharmas. Ven. Khantipale, an English monk ordained in the Thai tradition <21> argued that Mahā Pajāpati herself did not have to go through a 2-year probation as a Sikhamānā, the practice of probationer was introduced later, after the Order of bhikkhuni had existed for some time. If this is the case of the Gurudharmas (6) which deals with sikhamānās would be meaningless to them. Khantipalo concluded that “the Gurudharmas have been backdated to Mahā Pajāpati’s ordination by some bhikkhus who were in charge of reciting the Vinaya.” The reason for doing this could only be explained as a way to emphasize the subordination of women.

II.6 “By accepting women to the Sangha, Buddhism will be shortened by 500 years.”

After accepting women to the Sangha, the Buddha was recorded to have made a prophesy that by accepting women into the Sangha, Buddhism will be shortened.

Luckily we are now living in B.E.2533, thousands of years away from the recorded period and we are in a clear position to make a judgement that such a statement expressed total bias against women. It was expressed with ill-intention and in completed disagreement with the spirit of Buddhism.

We have seen through history that both the Sanghas in India prospered side by side. During King Asoka's period B.E. 254, Sanghamitta Therī and a group of learned bhikkhunīs went to Sri Lanka to establish bhikkhunī Sangha which was to continue for more than a thousand years.

In India itself, historical and archaeological findings stand as valid proof for the continuity of a bhikkhunī Sangha up to B.E. 1500-1600. To give some examples: an inscription found at Bodh Gaya mentioned Kuranji bhikkhunī, former queen of King Indra mitra became enlightened. In Kushan, another inscription mentioned Buddhamittā bhikkhunī, disciple of Bala bhikkhu who was honored with the title of Tripitaka, meaning one who is learned in the Tripitaka, etc. <22> It is sufficient to claim that both the Sanghas of bhikkhuni and bhikkhu together disappeared from the Indian scene at the hands of the Muslim invasion.

Sri Lanka accepted Buddhism and the bhikkhuni ordination lineage from India during the time of King Asoka (B.E. 245). Princess Anulā, sister-in-law of king Devanampiyatissa of Sri Lanka and her female followers become the first group of Sri Lankan women to become bhikkhunis. The Bhikkhuni Sangha in Sri Lanka continued to prosper under the royal support of various kings and queens. An inscription from B.E. 1600 at Kukurumahanthamana mentions Mahindārām hospital in front of an ārāma run by bhikkhunis in Anurādhapura. <23> Bhikkhunis of that time seemed to be actively involved in social work. Both the Mahāvamsa and Dīpavamsa chronicles in Sri Lanka mentioned the existence and activities of the bhikkhuni Sangha. After A.D. 1057 at the invasion by the South Indian King, both Sanghas disappeared together. The bhikkhu sangha was later revived by receiving ordination lineage from the bhikkhu Sangha from Thailand, but the bhikkhuni Sangha was not as fortunate and was never revived.

During the existence of the bhikkhuni Sangha in Sri Lanka, they went to China on invitation to give ordination to Chinese women in 433 A.D. The Chinese bhikkhuni lineage has survived to present day and also spread to neighboring countries e.g. Korea, Japan.

There are two points for our interest in this connection. First, it is now B.E. 2533 and Buddhism still prospers not only in the East but has also gone to the Western world. Second, the

disappearance of the bhikkhuni Sangha as seen in India and Sri Lanka occurred together with the disappearance of the bhikkhu Sangha. This evidence proves that such a prophecy could have been made only by recorders who were prejudiced against women, and seeking authority by putting it in the mouth of the Buddha.

2.2 Local beliefs creating negative social values against women.

In Thailand we have witnessed certain beliefs and prevalent social values against women often sanctioned and authorized by seemingly Buddhist teachings or Buddhist attitudes. Some of the beliefs and practices will be discussed here.

2.2.1. "Women were born from their bad karma."

This belief has often been generated even among the Sangha members resulting in denial of self-image on women's part and further creating obstacles in development, spiritually and socially, among women.

According to Buddhist teaching, those who are born, are born from both bad and good karma. With only bad karma a person will be born in hell, and with only good karma, s/he will be born in heaven. A person who has transcended karma becomes enlightened. Such a belief therefore does not hold any meaning in a Buddhist sense. Yet some monks who are mainly supported by women entertain this idea. Women, on the other hand, being convinced of their bad karma need to make more merit to make up for their unknown past. Monks, again being a 'field of merit' become total benefactors to this vicious conviction.

It should be noted also that some bodhisattvas made special vows and chose to be born women as in this gender they could be of much benefit to society. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that, in the Far-East, Kwan-In, Goddess of Mercy, is more popular than Avalokitesvara, the male manifestation of compassion.

2.2.2 "Women are of lower birth" (hīnajāti)

As regarded to birth, the teaching of the Buddha is free from social structure and social prejudices of the time. The Buddha explained more often than once that whether a person considered Brahmin or not does not depend on his birth but on his action. Therefore such belief does not hold true according to Buddhist teaching. Some Buddhist monks who still claim such as

belief must be aware that they are propagating Buddhist value but rather being influenced by non-Buddhist values actually denied and refused by the Buddha.

2.2.3 “*Women are religiously unclean*”

Many Buddhist temples in Thailand, especially more prevalent in the north, do not allow women to circumambulate the stupa or enter the Uposatha hall. The local monks explained that the relics of the Buddha are usually stored in the center of the stupa at the time of construction. If women are allowed to circumambulate it would mean that they would be walking at higher level than the relics. As women are unclean the relics would actually be disempowered.

The concept that women are unclean is not a novelty in the Indian context, but holds true elsewhere, mostly among primitive and tribal beliefs. This uncleanliness results from menstruation. The practice of the Vedas, particularly of the Arthavaveda is full of the use of mantras, incantations of sacred words for both positive and negative effects. Menstruation, the natural power of women, is somehow a taboo to the whole practice resulting from the Vedas. If the blessed or sacralized objects come in direct contact with menstruation, they will lose their magical power. It is important for them to create a taboo to protect and preserve themselves. As it is awkward to know which women are menstruating or not, they make a general rule for all women to observe.

I have shown elsewhere how the Buddhist monks of the Ayudhya period involved themselves greatly with the study of the Vedas at the expense of Buddhist study. Many of them followed Vedic practices and had to keep the taboo against women in order to keep their power intact. This resulted in separating women further away from Buddhist places on the one hand and polluting Buddhist practice and teaching with Vedic practices under the name of Buddhism.

It is sufficient to mention here that beliefs and practices expressed by some Buddhist monks are not necessarily Buddhist. Here Buddhists themselves must be aware, and at least among the educated class, should be able to make a distinction and selection to guide their practice.

We have seen in the above quoted passages that both Buddhist texts and local beliefs are responsible for generating social values against women. To be able to reconcile these social values, only law or outward control are not effective. One has to really go back to the Buddhist

texts which hold or do not hold authority to it. Hence studying Buddhist texts with a new insightful clarity is necessary as the foundation to reconstruct social values supportive of women.

2.3 Passages conveying positive influence towards women.

To be fair to the texts, passages conveying positive influence towards women can be found also in abundance. But as education was denied to women, women had no place in the temple, Buddhist education became only available to the elite group of educated monks. Buddhist texts were previously preserved in Khom script knowledgeable only among a few learned monks. Tripitaka was made available in Thai script and published for public use only as recent as 1957 A.D. This will explain why the society at large do not have access to the texts. Men got exposure to Buddhist study at least briefly during their traditional 3-month ordination during the rain retreat. Women do not enjoy such privilege and have no access to Buddhist study at all. Whatever little they know of are usually in the form of sermons from the monks by which the message delivered had already been subjectively selected and interpreted.

In the present era where education is made available to the public, Buddhist texts are available in both Thai and English. Thai people can study Buddhism directly from the texts both at their pleasure and leisure. Moreover the lengthy and laborious 45 volumes of the Tripitaka is now available in one condensed volume Tripitaka for the People <24>, one can begin to have a general picture of the texts before devoting oneself in any particularly interesting topic.

It is high time to examine some of the passages in the texts. The most enlightening passage was when the Buddha accepted that women as well as men do have the same spiritual potentiality as mentioned earlier. This acceptance was an opening to a completely new age for women. Women became strengthened to go forth into homeless lives to achieve spiritual enlightenment. Her spiritual salvation no longer has to depend on either her husband or her son as believed and practiced in Brahmanism.

Religious and social values which gave preference to baby boys were also uplifted when King Kasendi approached the Buddha in grief on hearing the news of the birth of a baby girl. The Buddha consoled him by saying:

Do not be perturbed O King
A female child may prove
Even better offspring than a male

For she may grow up wise and virtuous,
Her husband's other, reverencing and a faithful wife.
The boy that she may bear may do great deeds,
And rule great realms, yea, such a son
Of noble wife becomes his country's guide. <25>

In a true Buddhist society a birth of a girl or a boy should really make no difference. In Thai society there is a common practice (though not compulsory) at the time of marriage that the groom often moves in to live with the bride's parents or in a separate house but in the same compound. The bride's parents do not suffer the sense of losing their daughter but on the contrary gain a son-in-law.

While recommending Ananda to avoid coming in contact with women <26> the Buddha also recommended his disciples to look upon others as if they were one's own mother or <27> sisters. For laymen, he instructed them "to respect one's mother and one's wife is to be blessed." <28>

In the previous page we have considered women's suffering with their 5 woes but the texts also recorded women with their 5 powers. <29> These 5 powers are form, wealth, relatives, sons and morality. These powers may be seen as positive social values by the Indian standard.

With these positive attitudes shown towards women, it was only understandable that a great number of women were drawn to the Sangha. It was recorded that thousands of lay women and bhikkhunis attained different stages of spiritual development. Among the bhikkhunis there were at least 13 names singled out and praised by the Buddha for being foremost in various fields e.g., Mahā Pajāpatī was foremost in long standing as she was the first bhikkhuni. Patācarā was foremost in Vinaya, Dhammadinna was foremost in giving dharma discussion, Bhattha Kapilānī was foremost in remembering past lives, etc. <30> Among laywomen, at least 10 names were singled out and praised by the Buddha e.g. Visākhā was foremost in giving, Sāmāvatī was foremost in compassion, Katiyānī was foremost in unshakable faith, etc.

The success of the women in both groups, ordained and lay, brought about the completion of the four groups of Buddhists as instituted by the Buddha. The growth or downfall of Buddhism depends totally on these four groups. With the note we can conclude then, that women should be given full support to bring forth their strength in Buddhism. Women should be encouraged, if they so wished, to join the Sangha. The success among the bhikkhunis is compared to the light of the Sangha. <31>

From the above study it is clear that concerned Buddhists need to study closely and reexamine the texts in order to really understand the true message otherwise clouded by cultural values. The seemingly negative passages must be dealt with properly and do not let them become barriers to spiritual and physical development of Buddhist women. On the other hand, the positive passages should be brought out to light, and publicized to give strength and confirmation to Buddhist women of the present day.

It must be reminded again that Buddhism cannot really blossom if half of the population, namely women, are not given the full right to their religious responsibility and are not allowed to express their religious commitment. Suppression within any religion reflects distortion and mental immaturity on the part of the oppressors.

FOOTNOTES

1. Anguttara Nikaya, Suttanta Pitaka, Vol. XX, Thai version.
2. Ven. Gunaratna, N.I.B.W.A. no.24, July-Sept, 1990.
3. See my book, A Comparative Study of Bhikkhuni Patimokkha, Patimokkha, p. 32 ff.
4. S.B.B.XX., p.401.
5. “Buddhism and Gender Bias: An Analysis of a Jataka Tale”, unpublished M.A. thesis submitted to the Hague University, the Netherlands.
6. Samyutta Nikaya, I, 37.
7. Digha Nikaya, II, p. 141.
8. Ang. I.1.
9. Samy.I, 85.
10. Samyutta Nikaya, Thai Tipitaka, XVIII, p. 297.
11. Ang. II, 80.
12. “Women in Buddhism”, The Eastern Buddhists, Autumn, 1982.
13. Ibid.
14. N.I.B.W.A. #13, Oct. – Dec. 1987.
15. Ibid.
16. Cv.X.I.2; S.B.B. XVII.
17. Bhikkhuni Sanghadisesa no.3.
18. Bhikkhuni Pacittiya no.95.
19. Cv.X. S.B.E. XX., p. 354.
20. Bhikkhuni Nissaggiya Pacittiya nos. 4, 17, Mahavibhanga, Vinaya Pitaka, Thai Tripitaka for People, B.E.2522, p.156, #159.
21. Now abbot of Wat Buddharama, Australia, his full article is in N.I.B.W.A. 13.
22. B.M.Barua, Gaya and Bodh Gaya, Vol.II, p.67; Dr. B.M. Shastri, Outline of Early Buddhism, p.144.
23. Cullavamsa, 46.27.
24. Ed. Sujeeb Bunnanubarp, Bangkok, 1979.
25. Kindred Sayings, p.111.
26. Dighanikaya, Mahavagga, Suttanta Pitaka, TP. op.cit. p. 327.
27. Samy. IV.110.
28. Ang. III.77.
29. S. IV.245.
30. Ang. IV.347.
31. Ang. II.8.

Relevance of Vinaya in Modern Circumstances
By Ven. Bhiksuni Jampa Tsedroen

First I would like to pay my thanks to Thammasat University and the various committees that have made this conference possible. My special thanks go to Dr. Kabilsingh, without whose untiring efforts this gathering would not have taken place.

Please do not expect a lecture by a Buddhist scholar. I have not studied the Vinaya in detail and can therefore only share with you what I have learnt so far. Since 1980 I have been studying and working under the spiritual guidance of my honourable master, Geshe Thubten Ngawang, in the Tibetan Centre, Hamburg, Germany. In 1979 he was requested by his master, Ven. Geshe Rabten Rinpoche, as well as His Holiness the Dalai Lama to accept the invitation of the Tibetan Centre as their resident teacher and to give guidance to German Buddhists and those interested in Buddhism. I am therefore only passing on what my master has taught me. Whatever I have understood of Buddhism is all due to his kindness and wisdom.

As I have been studying mainly Tibetan Buddhism, I am relying for the most part on the sources of that tradition.

Buddha Śākyamuni, our teacher, taught us the Three Baskets or Collections of Scriptures (Tib. sDe snod gsum; Skt. Tripiṭaka) as the means to tame our body, speech and mind. They are the Collection of Discipline (Vinaya-Piṭaka), the Collection of Sūtras (Sūtra Piṭaka) and the Collection of Higher Knowledge (Abhidharma-Piṭaka).

All three Collections serve as antidotes to all deluded states of mind. In addition they can be roughly divided up as antidotes to the three poisons, the Collection of Discipline being taught mainly to counteract desire, the Collection of Sūtras to counteract hatred and the Collection of Higher Knowledge to counteract ignorance.

Let me start with a short description of the Vinaya in general for those of you who are not ordained or not so familiar with the topic.

The Vinaya Piṭaka (Tib. ‘Dul ba’i sde snod) has an important position within the Three Collections. Lord Buddha said: “When I have entered Nirvāṇa the Prātimokṣa (So-sor thar-pa) will be your teacher. Remembering those words you should, O communities of monks and nuns,¹ assemble together to recite it with reverence due to Buddha himself.² We find this statement in the introduction (Tib. gLeng-gzhi; Skt. Nidāna) of the Bhikṣu and the Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣa sūtras according to the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition. The Blessed One thus announced the Vinaya to be his representative or successor after his Nirvāṇa. In the introduction of the Prātimokṣa sūtra of the Chinese Dharmagupta Tradition it is said: “Just as if a man destroyed his feet, so that he could no longer walk, so it is to destroy these Precepts, without which can be no birth in Heaven.”³ And further: “As a king is supreme among men, as the ocean is chief of all flowing waters, as the moon is chief among the stars, as Buddha is pre-eminent among Sages, (this) Book of Precepts is the best.”

The Vinaya Piṭaka contains mainly instructions that regulate the daily life of monks and nuns. It is clearly and explicitly laid down which actions are forbidden (because harmful), which actions should be followed (because useful or beneficial) and which actions are harmless or neutral and are therefore neither forbidden nor specifically to be practiced. Thus there are three kinds of rules: prohibitions, prescripts and permissions.

Although many monastic rules have developed over the time, the rules that the Blessed One explicitly set down himself are not so many. They were collected in the Prātimokṣa sūtra, according to which in the Tibetan tradition the monks have 253 rules and the nuns 364, or if we add the Seven Dharmas by which offenses may be resolved (Skt. Adhikaraṇa-śamatha-dharma; Tib. rTsod pa’i zhi bar bya ba’i chos bdun) the monks have 262 and the nuns 371. In addition the monks have two rules, called the Undetermined Dharmas (Skt. Aniyata-dharmas Tib./ Ma nges pa’i chos gnyis). In the Sthaviravāda tradition, in Pāli called the Theravāda tradition, the monks have 227 and the nuns 311 rules; in the Dharmagupta tradition, as practiced nowadays mainly in Taiwan, Vietnam and Korea, the monks have 250 and the nuns 348 rules. There are only slight differences in the number of rules within the various traditions, which developed after the Nirvāṇa of the Buddha. As we can see from the Comparative Study of the Bhikkhunī

Pāṭimokkha by Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh the varying number of rules mainly come about because some rules contain several objects, which, in other traditions, are separate rules. As the Blessed One laid them down, he divided the rules into groups according to their degree of gravity. Within these groups the order in which they are set down sometimes varies in the different traditions.

If we consider the rules explicitly set down by Lord Buddha and the reasons behind them, we can conclude that if he made certain decisions in such and such a case, he would have regulated certain other matters in such and such a way, even if he did not explicitly say so. Thus we can see that extensions of rules are possible if we use logical reasoning and examine whether a certain action would be useful or harmful.

Before our Honored Teacher entered Nirvāṇa in Kuśinagara, he gave the following condensed instruction: “If (the teaching you intend to follow) is contained in the Sūtras, is to be found in the Vinaya and is not in conflict with the true state of things, you are to accept it as (my) Doctrine. If this is not the case, then (a teaching of some other kind) is not to be accepted.”⁴

This means that the prohibitions, prescripts and permissions explicitly laid down by Lord Buddha are to be followed; but if questions arise that were not regulated by him then the rule can be extended after carefully considering the harmfulness of not extending it and the benefit of extending it. In the Tibetan Vinaya the condensed instruction is to be found in the Vinaya kṣudraka vastu. From this viewpoint one can say that the words of the Buddha are infinite, because for all difficult situations in daily life a regulation in accord with the Buddha’s principles can be found, thanks to the condensed instruction. For example, apart from the 348 rules of a nun there are many things a nun is or is not allowed to do and in order to know what is and what is not allowed, it is important to know the condensed instruction and how to apply it. The Vinaya regulates the whole lifestyle of monks and nuns and is thus very comprehensive and important. For this reason it is said to represent the Buddha.

Furthermore in the Vinaya it is said that a spiritual master should have certain qualifications. He or she should have three qualities at least: being worthy of respect, stable and learned. Being

worthy of respect means that one keeps one's bhikṣu or bhikṣuṇī vow purely; stable means that one has spent ten years or at least five years near one's teacher; being learned means that one has gained profound knowledge of the Three Collections of Scriptures during this time.

In the Vinaya stotra ('Dul-ba la bstod-pa) by Dharmasreṣṭhin (Chos kyi tshong-dpon) it is said that the Vinaya is to be regarded both as the teaching and as the teacher, as opposed to the Sūtra and Abhidharma Piṭaka, which are only to be regarded as the teaching. Therefore, says Dharmasreṣṭhin, one should bow down to the Vinaya two times.⁵

Now I would like to come to the actual theme of my talk. Dr. Kabilsingh asked me to speak about the relevance of the Vinaya in modern circumstances, that means to me, whether it is important and at all possible for us to live in a modern society according to a discipline that was taught more than two and a half thousand years ago?

People have always had particular dispositions and wishes, but now in the 20th century—almost the 21st—and in a world that is becoming smaller and smaller as modern means of transport make it easier for people to meet, we hear and see much more than before. By seeing so many different possibilities of ways of living, people's wishes are rapidly growing. In general material wishes are overwhelmingly prevalent and not only accepted by society as being normal but supported by politicians and the business world who look at them as being necessary for material progress. The preachers of materialism still seem to be convinced that material wealth leads to happiness, that one only has one life and not much time to get one's share of happiness.

Religious people think in a different way and especially those following the teachings of the Blessed One know or learn that the nature of everlasting happiness cannot be secured by material means and during this lifetime. They know that the obstacles to everlasting happiness are to be found in our mind and that this has not changed since the Buddha taught the rules of the discipline as an effective tool to tame our wishful thinking.

To many it may appear difficult to live according to the rules of the Vinaya, because we have to manage with few material things and work on decreasing our desires. I think that whether we can

do so depends largely on the individual's wishes. On the one hand there are many rules that limit us but on the other hand we should also remember that the many wishes we have can never be fulfilled, whether we live with or without restrictions.

In my opinion, therefore, the question of whether one can live by the Vinaya today or not is a personal one, depending on one's own attitude. When we see that what Lord Buddha prohibited is not really so important, that is, we see that we can manage without the objects of prohibition, then it is possible to live by the Vinaya. I see no reason why this should not be the case.

Over and above living as an ordained monk or nun, as explained in the Śrāvakayāna, one can live according to the Bodhisattva Piṭaka, thus combining both paths in one life.

Here also one's personal attitude is important. Whether one can generate an altruistic attitude, loving kindness and compassion as Lord Buddha taught, depends on oneself. When a person has developed a loving attitude and, motivated by this, tries to act for the common good, then light transgressions against the minor rules are relatively small and permissions can be given, as for example in case of the prohibition to eat again and again, except at the right time or in the case of the prohibition to destroy or to cause to destroy an accumulation of seeds and residence of living beings, e.g. by cutting grass or cooking grain.

In the Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra, A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, by the Indian Pandit Śāntideva (7th century) we read:

Those who strive by all means for concentration
Should not wander off even a moment;
By thinking, "How is my mind behaving?"—
They should closely analyze their mind.

But if I am unable to do this
When afraid or involved in celebrations,
then I should relax.

Likewise it has been taught that at times of giving
One may be indifferent to (certain aspects of) moral discipline.⁶

However permission cannot be granted for actions that are by nature wrong or sinful. But for actions that are only wrong because they go against the rules of discipline, such as cutting grass, cooking or heating grain, it is different. They are not wrong by nature as, for example, killing is.

Monks and nuns have to eat, so rice and vegetables have to be cooked. In the West we do not have the custom of collecting alms and it would be too expensive to eat in a restaurant every day. Therefore we have no choice but to buy food in a supermarket and to cook it ourselves. When such social conditions prevail or the common good demands it, I think that permission should be granted. If one incorporates the Bodhisattva Piṭaka into one's life in this way, it is not so difficult to lead the life of an ordained monk or nun.

Furthermore it is said that the teachings of Lord Buddha will last for ten 500-year periods.⁷ After 5,000 years the duration of the teachings will cease. Although in general the Buddhadharma is in the process of degenerating, it is said that an individual's personal practice will be increasingly beneficial to society. The more the Buddhadharma degenerates, the more benefit individual practice will bring. This is stated many times in the Bodhisattva Piṭaka.

It is similar to a material object. The older it gets, the rarer and more precious it becomes. Therefore it is especially beneficial in our present period (the 6th period, that of ethics), to lead the pure life, that is, the life of a celibate.

In the sūtra *The King of Meditative Concentration* (Ting nge 'dzin gyi rgyal po'i mdo) it is said: "A person with a pure mind may pay homage to infinite Buddhas for ten million eras by offering foodstuffs and drinks, umbrellas, banners, lights and garlands as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges—yet if, at a time when the holy Dharma is degenerating and the teachings of the Sugata are coming to an end, someone does a single practice day and night, that person's merits are far higher."⁸

In the Vinaya commentary *The Ocean of Scripture and Logic*⁹ by Kun-mkhyen mTsho-na-pa Shes-rab bZang-po (12th-13th century) there is a statement about the “condensed instruction” on the Vinaya:

From the Vinaya *kṣudraka vastu*: Lord Buddha went to Kuśinagara and there, in the neighborhood of the dwellings of the Mallas, he dwelt in a grove of Śāla trees. Then at the time when he was about to pass away into Nirvāṇa he spoke to the bhikṣus: ‘Bhikṣus, I have taught the Vinaya in detail, but not in brief. This I will now do. Listen well and precisely and keep these words in mind. If (an action) that I previously neither (explicitly) allowed nor forbade was taught as being inappropriate and does not conform to what is appropriate, then you should not carry it out, as it is not appropriate (extension of prohibitions); however, if it was taught as appropriate and does not conform to what is inappropriate, you should perform it, as it is appropriate (extension of prescripts). You do not need to regret this.’

In the Vinaya sūtra this is expressed as follows: “Whatever is in accord with inappropriate (behavior) and conflicts with appropriate (behavior) belongs to the category of inappropriate (behavior). Whatever is in accord with the latter and conflicts with the former is appropriate.”¹⁰

Thus, for example, Lord Buddha forbade monks and nuns to dig the earth when it is firm and damp and there are likely to be small animals in it, which would then be killed. This is one of the rules regarding Sins which Require Expiation (Skt. *Prāyaścittiya dharmā*; Tib. *lTung-byed kyi chos*). But the Buddha did not expressly forbid digging sand. Sand is not earth, but fine stone. However, there may be small animals in firm and damp sand too. So if we apply the condensed instruction of the Buddha to this case, we will realize that it is also forbidden to dig sand if it contains small animals, even though not explicitly forbidden in the *Prātimokṣa sūtra*.

A further example is the prescript he gave fully ordained monks and nuns for the upkeep and purification of their vows (Skt. *Poṣadha*; Tib. *Sgo sbyong*), which they are to do every 14 or 15 days. The purpose of this ceremony is to purify or rectify any faults made in the practice of ethical discipline and in the practice of the Dharma. Practicing ethics here means for example keeping one’s vows, and practicing meditative concentration and wisdom, which is based on the

practice of ethical discipline, is probably what is meant by Dharma here. The ceremony for the upkeep and purification is one means of purifying these faults.

In the case of novice monks (Tib. dGe tshul; Skt. śrāmaṇera) and novice nuns (Tib. dGe tshul ma; Skt. śrāmaṇerikā) there is no rule in this respect so we have to apply reasoning as in the case of digging the sand. Lord Buddha did not expressly say that novices have to do a ceremony for the upkeep and purification of their novice vows. I do not know how this is dealt with in other traditions, but in the Tibetan tradition it is customary for novices to do this ceremony, because not only fully ordained monks and nuns but also novices commit faults in their practice of ethical discipline and the Dharma and therefore need to purify them. This is an example of an extended prescript.

In practice this ceremony takes place as follows: the fully ordained monks first perform a confession ceremony—this is to prepare them for the recitation of the Prātimokṣa sūtra. Then the novice monks enter and recite verses of confession, up to three novices in front of one bhikṣu. After that some verses are recited by all the bhikṣus and novices together. The novices recite the actual Poṣadha Rite for Novices and then leave the assembly of monks. Now follows the actual Poṣadha Rite for Bhikṣus, during which the eldest bhikṣu recites the Bhikṣu Prātimokṣa sūtra whilst the others listen. Only fully ordained monks can attend this ceremony. If the eldest bhikṣu cannot recite the Prātimokṣa sūtra by heart, another bhikṣu can do it instead of him. According to the Tibetan Vinaya bhikṣuṇīs and novice nuns should perform a similar ritual separately from the bhikṣus, but instead of the Bhikṣu Prātimokṣa sūtra the Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣa sūtra is to be recited.

Thus we see that there are extended prohibitions and extended prescripts and now we come to the extended permissions. I mention these three categories to show the far-reaching significance of Lord Buddha's condensed instruction.

Permission can be given in situations when the object of the action is neither harmful nor beneficial, that is, it is free of faults or neutral. For example, one could ask whether the ordained are allowed to use plastic containers. In Tibetan or Western monasteries and nunneries they are

allowed. There is neither a special reason for eating out of them nor for not eating out of them. Actually one should eat out of one's alms-bowl, but in Tibet they were also allowed to eat out of simple clay or wooden bowls. What reason, therefore, is there for eating or not eating out of plastic bowls? Nowadays plastic is very common and used by everybody. On the other hand there are many problems resulting in the use of too much plastic. The environment and the sentient beings living in it are harmed. So we have to be flexible. If scientists find a way to use plastic without any harmful effects it can be used, but if they come to the conclusion that it is better to stop using plastic completely then we should also stop using it.

In the Ocean of Scripture and Logic there is a quotation from the original text by Śākya-od: "That which is neither permitted nor prohibited is to be added to the rules that have been taught, if it is in accord with them."¹¹ By weighing up the benefit or harm of an action and seeing whether it is in accord with what was explicitly taught, the rules must be extended or completed in order to be able to really live one's life according to the Vinaya.

In general the whole meaning of the Vinaya Piṭaka can be summarized under three headings: First, how the Prātimokṣa vow arises where it has not yet arisen. This is concerned mainly with ordination rituals. Each of the three Vinaya traditions that have survived until today—the Sthaviravāda, the Dharmagupta and the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition—has its own complete set of rituals and explanations as found in the first chapter of the Vinaya vastu, the so-called Ordination vastu. Until now, however, there has been little exchange between the traditions about what they have in common and where they differ. Happily this is gradually changing.

The second heading is how to protect the vow from degenerating, once it has arisen and the third how to remedy degenerated vows. The first phase, the actual Ordination, is quickly over. The other two phases are more important as they last for the rest of our lives as monks or nuns.

In order to protect the vow from degenerating, in other words how to keep one's vow, five factors (sDom pa bsrung thabs lnga) are necessary:

First: how to keep the vow by relying on the spiritual master—this is the outer condition. As mentioned earlier, the qualifications of such a master are explained in the Vinaya. He or she must have kept the bhikṣu or bhikṣuṇī vow purely, have lived near the master for ten years and have attained profound knowledge of the Three Collections of Scriptures during this time as well as be able to explain them to others. In addition the disciple has to fulfill certain conditions. This is all explained in the above-mentioned Ordination vastu.

Second: how to keep the vow by relying on the correct attitude of mind—this is the inner condition.

Third: having found a spiritual master, monks and nuns can learn how to keep the vow by knowing what is not in accord with it as explained in the Vinaya vibhaṅga, a kind of commentary on the infractions of the prohibitions set down by the Buddha in the Prātimokṣa sūtra.

Fourth: how to keep the vow by relying on conditions for fortunate dwelling. Here it is taught which conditions are suitable for proper practice. Such things as eating, sleeping, clothes etc are meant, as found in the vastus on Hides and skins, Medicine, Garments, Kaṭhina and House and bed.

Fifth: how to keep one's vow by keeping the discipline absolutely pure. This refers to the Ceremony for the upkeep and purification of one's vow, the Summer retreat (Skt. Varṣa, Tib. dbYar gnas), which lasts for three months, and the Conclusion of the summer retreat (Skt. Pravāraṇā; Tib. dGag dbye).

These are the five necessary factors that are needed in order to protect the vow from degenerating, once it has arisen. The third heading, how to remedy degenerated vows, refers to the rest of the 17 chapters of the Vinaya vastu (or 20 chapters according to the Sthaviravāda tradition), with the exception of the Karma vastu. These are for example the vastus on Disputes, on Splitting the Saṃgha, on Changing location and on the Exclusion from the Poṣadha ceremony.

Now I will come back to the fourth factor, how to keep the vow by relying on conditions for fortunate dwelling. According to the Vinaya one is allowed to find a sponsor for one's livelihood, as one cannot live the life of an ascetic simply by becoming a Buddhist monk or nun. One still needs to eat and have a place to sleep. That is why we find the following thought in the Dhammapada in Pāli as well as in its Sanskrit-equivalent, the Udānavarga, which has been translated into Tibetan and is part of the Kangyur:

Just as the bee extracts the flower's nectar and quickly passes on without disturbing the flower's color or scent, so the Sage moves through the town.¹²

It is one's own personal choice whether one becomes a Buddhist or not and joins the order or not. However, if one takes this step, one is convinced that the teachings of Lord Buddha are 100% true. He taught that just as a bee drinks the nectar of a flower without disturbing its petals or colour, so monks and nuns should not cause any discomfort to the families from whom they receive alms. They should simply eat their meal and then quickly continue on their way. This means they should not crave other things whilst there and only eat as much as they need for one day, then go.

In order to gain realizations of Buddha's teachings it is essential to develop compassion and loving kindness. The Tibetan word for alms is "bSod-snyom," which means "equal merit." The sponsors collect good imprints on their mindstream, or so-called merit, by giving a meal, as the one receiving the meal is then in a better position to practice the Buddhadharma intensively. If the monks and nuns take their meals in the way prescribed by Lord Buddha, they also collect merit. Thus there is a beneficial relationship on both sides. Both collect merit, which serves to bring them closer to liberation from the wheel of existence. Since everybody needs merit, it is important that monks and nuns do not just go to the houses where the best alms are served, but see to it that all the families have an equal chance to collect merit. This is achieved by going to a different family each day and being satisfied with what they are given.

We need food so that we are in a position to practice the Dharma, to keep our vows, to practice concentration, to meditate on the Four Noble Truths and so on. No matter whether we live in the 20th century or not, every being that has attained a human body has at his or her disposal a special kind of physical and mental energy. This differentiates us from sentient beings in other realms. How we use this energy is up to each of us. We can use it to achieve liberation or not. In any case human beings can reduce their daily needs to a minimum and use the rest of the time to work for enlightenment. All three vehicles, the Śrāvakayāna, Mahāyāna and Tantrayāna, agree on this and teach an appropriate and complete path. Our mind should be directed towards this one goal and not towards the many wishes that continually surface. It is a question of leading a simple life without too many distractions.

If we give our mind too much free rein and permanently try to obtain everything we want, we will never be satisfied. Even on the last day of our life our wishes will be unfulfilled. In reality our life is very short and therefore it is more meaningful to concentrate completely on the goal of liberation. We should put our temporal wishes aside in favor of this great and worthwhile goal, otherwise there is not much time left to keep our vows, contemplate and meditate. We have the chance to practice now. What a pity it would be to waste such a good opportunity.

For this reason it is understandable that in those countries where the bhikṣuṇī order has died out or never arisen, women are sad that they cannot spend their precious human rebirth as nuns, even though Lord Buddha had made this possible. Shortly after his enlightenment under the Bodhi tree and before his first sermon he had already decided to establish an order of nuns. This was also before the establishment of the bhikṣu order and years before Buddha's stepmother Mahāprajāpatī (sKye dgu'i bdag mo chen mo) and his monk-attendant Ānanda (Kun dga' bo) officially requested him to start an order of nuns. It was at the time that Lord Buddha was sick and Māra wanted to persuade him to pass away, when he said: "Blessed One (Bhagavat), the time to die has come!"

But the Blessed One answered him: "Māra, as long as my disciples have not become wise and of quick understanding, as long as the bhikṣus, the bhikṣuṇīs, and the lay disciples of either sex are

not able to refute their adversaries according to the Dharma, as long as my moral teaching has not been spread far and wide among gods and men, so long will I not pass away.”¹³

The establishment of the order of nuns is described in the Vinaya kṣudraka vastu in the Tibetan canon. Five years after Buddha’s enlightenment Mahāprajāpatī requests him at Kapilavastu (Ser skya) to establish an order of nuns. “When the Blessed One had finished preaching to the five hundred Śākya women in the hollow of a Nyagrodha tree, Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī said to the Buddha, ‘If women could have the four fruits of the Śramana, they would enter the order and strive for perfection. I beseech the Blessed One to let women become bhikṣuṇīs, and to live in purity near the Blessed One.’ But he answered her, ‘Gautamī, wear the pure white dress of lay-women; seek to attain perfection; be pure, chaste, and live virtuously, and you will find a lasting reward, blessings, and happiness.’ A second and yet a third time she renewed her request in the same terms, but she only elicited the same answer; so bowing down, she left his presence.”

“Once when the Blessed One went to the Nadika country in Vṛji and stopped at a place called Nadikaikujika, Gautamī having heard this, she and five hundred Śākya women shaved their heads, put on bhikṣuṇīs’ clothing, and followed after him and came to where he was, wearied, ragged, wayworn, and covered with dust. When the Buddha had finished preaching to her and her companions, she renewed her request to be admitted into the order, but she received the same answer as previously. So she went and sat down outside the entrance of the house and wept, and there Ānanda saw her and asked her what was the matter. She told him, and Ānanda went to where the Buddha was and renewed Gautamī’s request. ‘Ānanda’, replied the Buddha, ‘ask not that women be admitted into the order, that they be ordained and become bhikṣuṇīs, for if women enter the order the rules of the order will not last long. Ānanda, if in a house there are many women and but few men, thieves and robbers may break in and steal; so will it be, Ānanda, if women enter the order, the rules of the order will not long be safe. Or yet again, Ānanda, if a field of sugar-cane is blighted, it is worthless, good for nothing; so will it be, Ānanda, if women enter the order, the rules of the order will not last long. However, Ānanda, if Gautamī accepts the eight following rules (Skt. Gurudharma; Tib. bLa ma’i chos brgyad / lCi chos brgyad¹⁴; Pāli: Garudhammā¹⁵), she may enter the order.’ Gautamī accepted all these rules, and so she and the other women were received into the order.”¹⁶

The relevant passage in the Pāli canon, which differs somewhat from the explanation in the Tibetan Vinaya, can be found in the Bhikkhuṇīkkhandhaka of the Cullavagga. In the Chinese Vinaya of the Dharmagupta tradition we find it (according to Frauwallner) in the 17th. Skandhaka (Pi-chíu-ni chien tu).

As far as I know the establishment of the order of nuns was criticized by the monks only after the Buddha's Nirvāṇa. Ānanda is severely reproached by Kāśyapa ('Od srung) for his conduct on this occasion. He said: "Thou hast summoned women to embrace the religious life, heedless of the Teacher's having said to thee: 'Ānanda, do not cause women to embrace the religious life and do not tell them that they ought to take orders and become nuns. Why that? Because, if women take orders according to the discipline of this Doctrine, the latter will have no long duration. As, for instance, if hail descends on a field full of wild rice, the latter will be destroyed, similarly if women take orders, the Discipline of this Doctrine is not to abide for long.' Has he not said that?" Ānanda replied: "I cannot be accused of want of shame and the like. But (mind thou this): Mahāprajāpatī was the foster-mother who fed the Teacher with her breast. It would be suitable (to admit women to take orders) out of mere gratitude toward her, and in order that (the Buddha) should become possessed of the 4 kinds of adherents (including the nuns) as the fully awakened Buddhas in former times had." "Thy gratitude," said Kāśyapa, "has caused harm to the spiritual Body of the Buddha. The hail has fallen on the abundant field of Buddhaic activity; therefore remains only the short period of 1000 years (for the Doctrine) to abide. In former times, when the wishes, faults, desires, hatred and delusions of the living beings were fewer, the Congregation of four kinds was suitable, but at present it was not the wish of the Teacher that this should be. It is thou who hast prayed him (to allow women to take orders), and this is thy first transgression."¹⁷

Let us summarize the event according to the Tibetan Vinaya: First the Blessed One attained enlightenment and along with it omniscience. Then Lord Buddha decided not to pass away until his four kinds of disciples, including bhikṣuṇīs, had understood his teachings well. Five years later, he at first rejected Mahāprajāpatī's request to be ordained and advised her to lead the life of a lay-woman. Yet after Ānanda's third attempt and after some hesitation, he agreed.

Why did he hesitate, when after his enlightenment he knew that he would not die until nuns were also amongst his disciples? Does someone who is omniscient have to change his mind after five years, even though he can foresee all developments? We also have the problem that Lord Buddha said the teachings would not last so long, if he allowed women to enter the order. And yet through Ānanda's help he gave them permission, under the condition that Mahāprajāpatī accepted the eight Gurudharmas. Why did he agree, if he knew that it would harm the duration of the teachings? Did he not care whether the teachings lasted long or not? Or were these consequences avoided through Mahāprajāpatī accepting the eight Gurudharmas?

Unfortunately we have no answer to these questions. Or did the Blessed One and Mahākāśyapa answer indirectly? For Mahākāśyapa did say that the wishes, faults, desires, hatred and delusions of living beings were stronger than during the times of earlier Buddhas. Therefore Lord Buddha may have seen potential danger in establishing an order of nuns alongside an order of monks. It meant men and women—whose passions had never been stronger than at that time—living near each other. It could endanger their ethical discipline and the duration of the order and the teachings. To me this reason seems very plausible.

In many publications in the West these events are interpreted as proving that the Buddha looked down on women. But I cannot agree with this view. We know that the Buddha was against the caste system, so how could he establish two new castes: that of men and women?

Supposing that the Buddha, on account of being omniscient, knew that he would establish an order of nuns, but hesitated when he was officially requested to do so, because he wanted to show there was a potential danger. He did not really hesitate, but he simply wanted to point out that the passions of sentient beings were very strong at that time and therefore it was dangerous to have two orders of different sexes living close to each other. In this case one could even logically conclude that under different social conditions things could have happened exactly the other way round: If Buddha had lived at a time when women enjoyed the best social standing and had important positions in society, Buddha may have established the order of nuns first. Then Buddha's father may have come and requested him to establish an order of monks. Maybe

the Blessed One would have rejected this request for fear of placing nuns and monks under too great a temptation by having them so close to each other. This is just a hypothesis—I do not know.

Other theories are possible. Perhaps there were social reasons that caused Buddha to hesitate. Maybe he was afraid that people would not take Buddhism seriously if women were given an equal status.

Or maybe he was worried that more women than men would choose the homeless life and thus make the order vulnerable. For the Blessed One gave the example that “if women enter the order, the rules of the order will not last long, because, if in a house there are many women and but few men, thieves and robbers may break in and steal.”

A completely different version of how the order was established recently came to my attention. Jens Peter Laut from the German University of Marburg translated an Old Turkish text about the establishment of the order of nuns:

“Near the monastery Nyagrodhārāma, Paṭṭiṇī, one of Gautamī’s maidservants, is telling one of Buddha’s female layfollowers (Skt. Upāsikā; Tib. dGe bsnyen ma) that Gautamī wants to present the Blessed One with a home-made robe. This is out of gratitude for establishing an order of nuns. Paṭṭiṇī then goes on to tell how the order was established. This is quite unusual, as it is a report from the female side. According to her, some time ago Lord Buddha wanted to preach the Dharma to women. But at that time the Śākya princes passed a law forbidding women to attend the Dharma sermon. The angry women met and asked Gautamī to go to her husband Śuddhodana, Buddha’s father, and intervene on their behalf. He finally gives them permission to attend and Gautamī and ten thousand women go to the monastery Nyagrodhārāma. On the way they are stopped by Śākya youths, who, as expressly stated, ‘have not yet attained the state of holiness and are dominated by kleṣas’. They tell them that they are not allowed to attend Dharma teachings. In addition, they argue, ‘our (caste) brother, Siddhārta, speaks of your hundred-fold sins!’ When asked which sins these are, the monks mention ‘five sins of women’. ‘Each woman has five sins: 1. (Women) are hot-tempered and (at the same time) anxious, 2. they

are jealous, 3. they are unreliable, 4. they are ungrateful and 5. they are possessed of a strong sexuality.’ The women defend themselves with considerable arguments: ‘It was a woman who carried Siddhārta in her womb for 9 months and 10 days! Likewise it was a woman who bore him with great pains! It was a woman who took great pains to bring him up!’ Finally the women managed to get to the monastery, where Buddha gave them and the monks a teaching on the ‘five virtues of women’: ‘The virtues of women, O monks, are fivefold: 1. They neglect neither (simple) houses nor palaces, 2. they are steadfast in keeping together earned wealth (?), 3. in the case of sickness they take care of both their master (i.e. husband) (?) and an unrelated person (?), 4. they can enjoy pleasures together with men and 5. Buddhas, Pratyekabuddhas, Arhats and the lucky beings—all are born of women!’

As mentioned, the women then accuse the youths of misrepresenting Buddha in his attitude towards women. At the end of the episode Buddha gives a discourse to the women, whereupon all 180,000 Śākya women attain the state of a Śrotāpanna (Stream Enterer), that is, they gain the first stage in the Buddhist monastic path to salvation. The order of nuns is established.”

What I find so interesting in this account, is that a worldly power—the Śākya princes— forbade women to listen to the Dharma. In the light of social conditions in India at that time this version makes sense and it also gives a reason why the Buddha possibly hesitated. It would have meant contravening the laws of the land.

But on the other hand this version is not satisfactory in all aspects. A Western woman today is less likely to admire the five virtues of women as mentioned above. These surely do not correspond to the ideal of women today. Women in the Vedic-Brahman society seemed to have had a very low social status. Therefore they possibly felt encouraged and more confident when they heard of these virtues.

Whatever the case may be, Lord Buddha decided to establish an order of nuns, despite his doubts and in full knowledge of any possible disadvantages that might ensue. Who could have foreseen all the consequences of such a step, if not the Buddha? If the Blessed One had preferred not to establish an order of nuns, he could easily, as the founder, have thought of a skilful way of

avoiding it. And even if he had established the order only because—out of compassion—he gave in to Ānanda’s urging, it would not be correct that we, as his disciples 2500 years later, question his decision and decide not to have an order of nuns. But I find this difficult to accept, for a Buddha’s compassion always goes hand in hand with wisdom. And I cannot imagine a wise man giving in to something that he considers unwise. Surely a Buddha cannot act against his own better judgement or even do something that would harm living beings only because one of his disciples in his ignorance urged him to it?

In the first conference of Buddhist nuns in Bodhgaya 1987 Dr. Kabilsingh pointed out another occasion when the Buddha hesitated. This was after his enlightenment when he doubted whether he should preach or not. She reasoned that even though he hesitated to preach, we never question that the Dharma he preached was faulty. Just as we cannot use the fact that the Buddha hesitated to preach as a reason to invalidate the teachings, we cannot use the fact that he hesitated to admit women into the order as a reason to reject the order of bhikṣuṇīs.

Now I would like to come to the last point of my talk. In I.B. Horner’s translation of the Vinaya of the Sthaviravāda tradition, the establishment of the order of nuns is described somewhat differently from the Tibetan version. In the English translation of the Pāli version it is said that Mahāprajāpatī approached the Lord and asked him, what line of conduct she should follow in regard to the five hundred Śākyan women. The Lord gave her a talk on the Dharma and after she had departed he addressed the monks saying: “I allow, monks, nuns to be ordained by monks.”¹⁸

At the beginning of my talk I mentioned three categories of rules: prohibitions, prescripts and permissions. If I.B. Horner’s translation is correct this seems to be the case of a permission.

A little later another permission was granted. It seems that the Śākyan women were ordained by the monks and that during this ordination some problems arose. The reason for this was as follows: in order to check whether all the necessary preconditions for an ordination were present, the nuns-to-be had to be asked certain questions—the so-called things which are stumbling blocks, eg. whether they have certain diseases, whether they are definitely of the female sex etc. When the monks questioned them on these points, “those wishing for ordination were at a loss,

they were abashed, they were unable to answer. They told this matter to the Lord. he said: ‘I allow, monks, ordination in the Order of monks after she has been ordained on the one side, and has cleared herself in the Order of nuns.’”¹⁹

The nuns still could not answer, so the Buddha said: “I allow them, monks, having been instructed first, afterwards to ask about the things which are stumbling blocks.”²⁰

They were instructed just there in the midst of the order and again they were unable to answer. Then the Lord said: “I allow them monks, having been instructed aside, to ask about the things which are stumbling blocks in the midst of the Order. And thus, monks should she be instructed: First she should be invited to choose a woman preceptor; having invited her to choose a woman preceptor, a bowl and robes should be pointed out to her (with the words): ‘This is a bowl for you, this is an outer cloak, this is an upper robe, this is an inner robe, this is a vest, this is a bathing cloth, go and stand in such and such a place.’”

Then a new problem arose: “Ignorant, inexperienced (nuns) instructed them.” And again those wishing for ordination were unable to answer. The Lord said: “Monks, they should not be instructed by ignorant, inexperienced (nuns). Whoever (such) should instruct them, there is an offense of wrong-doing. I allow them, monks to instruct by means of an experienced, competent (nun).”

Again some who were not agreed upon by the nuns’ community instructed them and the Lord said: “Monks, they should not be instructed by one who is not agreed upon.”

Finally the Blessed One explained how a competent nun should be agreed upon, how she should then approach the one who wishes for ordination, how the order should be informed by the competent nun, how the candidate should ask the order for ordination, and how the order has to carry out the formal act. After the candidate has been ordained by the order of nuns through the woman proposer she is immediately taken to the order of monks by her, where the candidate again has to ask for ordination. The order of monks should be informed by an experienced, competent monk and again a formal rite takes place. After the candidate has been ordained by

the order of monks through the woman proposer the shadow should be measured at once, the length of the season should be explained, the portion of the day should be explained, the formula should be explained, the nuns should be told: “Explain the three resources to her and the eight things which are not to be done.”

The ordination rituals for a laywoman, for a novice nun, for a probationer nun (Skt. Śikṣamāṇā; Tib. dGe slob ma) and for a fully ordained nun are explained in the Tibetan Vinaya in a very similar way to that in the Pāli. However, the explanation of the eight Gurudharmas and the ordination procedure of the five hundred Śākya women differ considerably:

Although both the Tibetan Vinaya and the Pāli Vinaya state that a fully ordained nun should take her vow in front of both Saṃghas—the bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī Saṃgha—this rule is not yet contained in the eight Gurudharmas as found in the Tibetan version. One of the Gurudharmas according to the Tibetan tradition states: “Women are expected to request ordination from the monks and after they have received full ordination, they should thoroughly understand the nature of being a bhikṣuṇī.”²¹ It makes sense that the dual ordination is not yet mentioned, because there was no order of nuns at the time when these rules were set up. Only after Mahāprajāpatī and the five hundred Śākya women have become bhikṣuṇīs by accepting the eight rules does the question arise of how candidates should receive their vow in future. After this first ordination the rule was made that the nuns’ community should play an important part in the ordination of nuns.

Even though the other seven Gurudharmas are almost the same in the Tibetan and Pāli version, differing mainly in the order in which they occur, we do come upon a big difference in this particular rule. In the English translation of the Pāli Vinaya we find the corresponding Gurudharma: “When, as a probationer, she has trained in the six rules for two years, she should seek ordination from both Orders.” This presentation is difficult to understand from the chronological point of view. The Buddha gave clear instructions in this 6th Garudhamma on how an ordination is to be carried out. Why then does it say, when the question arises as to how the five hundred Śākya women are to be ordained: “I allow, monks, nuns to be ordained by monks.” And why do problems arise during the ordination that have been clarified before and why do these need to be regulated anew?

Whatever the answer may be, both the Tibetan and the Pāli Vinaya contain a statement of the Buddha at a time when there was no Bhikṣuṇī Saṃgha—comparable to the situation in some countries today—which says that nuns may be ordained by monks. What should be clarified is whether Buddha himself ever explicitly revoked this rule. Are there any statements that say something like: “From now on, monks, I forbid you at all times and in all countries of the world to ordain nuns.” I have not heard of such a rule so far and would be very interested in an exchange of views on this point and other questions, which I have unfortunately not had time to discuss today.

If the sentence “I allow, monks, nuns to be ordained by monks” is not a mistranslation of the Pāli Vinaya, it may be possible for the Theravāda Bhikkhu Saṃgha—as long as there are not ten fully ordained and competent nuns—to decide to perform the bhikṣuṇī ordination alone, without nuns. One should examine whether the benefit of such an action would outweigh the harm, if there is any. Surely it is in the interest of all practicing Buddhists that the rituals taught by our Teacher, Lord Buddha, be kept alive and not die out.

There is of course the possibility of taking the full ordination—as over thirty nuns in the Tibetan tradition have done—in the Dharmagupta tradition, which is still flourishing today. This tradition was taken to China in AD 433 by the Singhalese Bhikṣuṇī Devasara and her ordained sisters. According to the Tibetan tradition nuns must be ordained for at least twelve years, not ten, and possess other qualifications as well, for example, having good knowledge of the Vinaya and the ordination ritual. Thus after twelve years nuns in the Tibetan tradition could perform an ordination together with the Tibetan bhikṣus of the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition, if these are willing to do so.

With this I would like to show why I think it is so important for monks and nuns all over the world to attend seminars, to discuss these matters and other questions. The first seminar could last for one week, for instance. Monks, nuns and perhaps interested and learned lay disciples could discuss certain questions in separate groups and then come together for the last one or two days to compare their views or findings. Since the women of many countries have no access to

full ordination, I think it would be better to discuss this question on an international level and look for a solution that is satisfactory for all.

In today's times we cannot simply overlook this question. In the West it is said that a progressive society can be recognized by the status that women have in it. They play such an important role in the spiritual, political, economic, artistic and scientific life of the West, that one cannot imagine society without them. Despite this the aims of the women's movements for equal rights in politics, education, work and equal pay have not yet been fully realized. Assuming that the women's movement in the West began in 1789 during the French Revolution, when Olympe de Gouges led a group of women with a declaration of women's rights—as opposed to the declaration of human rights—it is not surprising that the women of Europe and America nowadays can study at any university, in any faculty. Not all professions, however, are open to them, for example, that of a priest. In the Protestant Church in Germany women have been allowed to study theology since 1919 and since 1967 they have been able to be ordained as pastors. In the Catholic Church they can also study theology at university, but they still cannot be priests.

If we look at Africa and Asia we find that women also play important roles in public life, although not to such a large extent as in the West. In some countries women play a very large part in the religious life. In Taiwan, for example, there are more nuns than monks and without them religious and social activity would come to a standstill.

Against this background it seems to me that 2,500 years ago Lord Buddha was ahead, not only of his times but even of modern times in his establishing the full ordination for women. Therefore we should take special care to keep this tradition alive and not let it die out.

But during this process there is one thing we as women should be very careful about. When we speak of the status of women, religious and worldly thinking can easily get mixed up. The word "status" in the sense of "which rights one has or does not have" does probably belong more to the world of politics and society than to that of religion. In a religious context we do not speak of a person's status as being a certain degree of liberation from the wheel of existence. Rather we

speak of someone's potential for liberation or for enlightenment and what is allowed or not allowed in order to reach this goal, according to the religious rules of conduct. Of course there is much more to be said about this.

Thank you for your attention.

¹ Here I translate “dGe slong” as “monks and nuns,” since it is used in both Sūtras and since according to my master Geshe Thubten Ngawang it is correct to do so in this case. He says (oral statement):

“bslab gzhi yongs rdzogs kyi so thar sdom ldan la dge slong zhes pa ‘am/ bsnyen par rdzogs pa zhes zer ba red/ bsnyen par rdzogs stangs la rten gyi cha nas/ pha bsnyen par rdzogs stangs dang/ ma bsnyen par rdzogs stangs mi ‘dra ba’i cho ga mi ‘dra ba zo zo nas yod/”

“If a person is called “dGe slong” and hst the full Prātimokṣa vow as the basis of training, then that person is understood to have taken full ordination (bsNyen par rdzogs pa; Upasampadā), according to gender: There are two kinds of full ordination, according to gender: the ritual for the full ordination of men and the ritual for the full ordination of women.”

² Lhasa Kangyur, volume ca, ‘dul ba, page 2b (Bhikṣu Prātimokṣa sūtra); volume ta, ‘dul ba, page 2b (Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣa sūtra): nga ni mya ngan ‘das gyur na/ ‘di ni khyed kyi ston pa zhes/ rang byung nyid kyi gus bcas par/ nan tan dge slong tshogs mdun bstod//

³ A Catena of Buddhist Scriptures from the Chinese by Samuel Beal, London 1871, page 207.

⁴ Dr. E. Obermiller: Translation of The History of Buddhism in India and Tibet by Bu-ston” page 57; Vin.-ksudr. Kg. ÇDUL. XI. 247a. 5-6.

Waldschmidt, Ernst: Die Legende des Buddha, page 237.

Rockhill, W. Woodville: The Life of the Buddha, page 135.

Panglung, Jampa Losang: Die Erzählstoffe des Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya, page 199.

⁵ Derge Tanyur, No. 4136, vol. su, page 133b,2: rgyal ba bston pa de yi bstan bcos dag/ mdo dang chos mngon yin gsungs ‘dul ba ni/ ston dang bstan bcos dngos yin de yi phyir/ gnyis gyur phyag byas sangs rgyas chos gcig bzhin//

⁶ Byang chub sems dpa’i spyod pa la ‘jug pa, page 51, Shesrig Parkhang 1978: ci nas ting ‘dzin brtsan pa ni/ skad chig gcig kyang mi ‘chor bar/ bdag gi yid ‘di gar spyod ces/ de ltar yid la so sor brtag//

‘jigs dang dga’ ston sogs ‘brel bar/ gal te mi nus ci bder bya/ ‘di ltar sbyin pa’i dus dag tu/ tshul khriims btang snyoms bzhag par gsungs//

A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life, translated into English by Stephen Batchelor, chapter 5, verses 41, 42, page 44.

⁷ dgra bcom pa’i le’u/ phyir mi ‘ong gi le’u/ rgyun du zhugs pa’i le’u/ shes rab kyi le’u/ ting nge ‘dzin gyi le’u/ tshul khriims kyi le’u/ mngon pa’i le’u/ mdo sde’i le’u/ ‘dul ba’i le’u/ rtags tsam ‘dzin pa’i le’u//

⁸ bskal ba bye bar gang ga’i bye snyed rdul/ dang ba’i sems kyi zas dang skom rnams dang/ gdugs dang ba dan mar me’i phreng ba yis/ sangs rgyas bye ba phrag khriims rim ‘gro byas/ gang gi dam chos rab tu ‘jig pa dang/ bde gshegs bstan pa ‘gag par ‘gyur ba’i tshe/ nyin mtshan du ni bslab pa gcig spyod pa/ bsod nams ‘di ni de bas bye khyad ‘phags/ zhes

⁹ ‘Dul ba mtsho ttik (myi ma’i od zer), ka, page 20, line 6: lung phran tshegs las/ sangs rgyas bcom ldan ‘das ku sha’i grong khyer na gyad kyi nye lkhor shing sa’ la zung gi tshal na bzhugs so/ de nas bcom ldan bdas yongs su mya ngan las ‘da’ ba’i dus kyi tshe na dge slong rnams la bka’ stsal pa/ dge slong dag ngas ‘dul ba bryas par bstan na/ mdor bsdus te ma bstan pas legs par rab tu nyon la yid la zungs shig dang ngas bshad do/ dge slong dag khyed kyi ngas sngon gnang ba yang med bkag pa yang med pa gang yin pa de/ gal te mi rung ba bstan cing rung ba dang mi mthun na/ rung ba ma yin pa’i phyir spyad par mi bya’o (bkag pa’i mdor bsdus)/ gal te rung ba bstan cing mi rung ba dang mi mthun na/ rung ba yin pa’i phyir spyad par bya ste (grub pa’i mdor bsdus) ‘di la ‘gyod par mi bya’o zhes gsungs so//

¹⁰ Yon tan od (Guṃṃa-prabha): ‘Dul ba’i mdo (rtsa ba) (Vinaya sutra), Derge Tangyur, ‘Dul ba, vol. wu, gNas mal gyi gzhi (Āyanāsana-vastu), page 100a, 3: mi rung ba dang mthün la rung ba dang ‘gal ba ni rung ba ma yin par bsdu’o/ phyi ma dang mthün la snga ma dang ‘gal ba ni rung bar bya’o//

¹¹ ‘Dul ba mtsho ttik (nyi ma’i od zer), page 22b, line 2: ‘od ldan rtsa ba las/ gang zhig gnang med de bzhin bkag med pa/ de ni gsungs pa’i rjes mthun brtags te sbyar//

¹² Ched du brjod pa’i tshoms: Lhasa Kangyur, No. 330, volume la, page 344b,7: chapter 18: verse 8: ji ltar bung ba me tog gi/ kha dog dri la mi gnod par// khu ba bzhibs nas ‘phur ba ltar// bde bzhin thub pa grong du rgyu/

¹³ W. Woodville Rockhill: The Life of the Buddha and the Early History of his Order, page 34.

¹⁴ The eight rules are: 1. Women are expected to request ordination from the monks and after having received full ordination they should thoroughly understand the nature of being a bhikṣuṇī; 2. a bhikṣuṇī should seek instruction by the bhikṣus every half-month; 3. a bhikṣuṇī should not pass the summer retreat in a place where there are no bhikṣus; 4. after the summer retreat a bhikṣuṇī should ‘invite’ before both orders in respect of three matters: what was seen, what was heard, what was suspected; 5. a nun is not allowed to teach or remind a monk about his morality, views, conduct or livelihood, but a monk is not forbidden to teach or remind a nun about her morality, views, conduct or livelihood; 6. a bhikṣuṇī should not say bad words to a bhikṣu, be angry with him or do anything sinful to him; 7. if a bhikṣuṇī transgresses (one of) the eight Gurudharmas she has to undergo mānatta up to half a month in front of both Saṃghas; 8. a bhikṣuṇī though she has been ordained for a hundred years, should always speak kindly to a bhikṣu, even if he be recently ordained, she shall honor him, rise before him, pay reverence to him and bow to him.”

¹⁵ Book of the Discipline. Translation from Pāli into English by I.B. Horner, vol. 5, page 354: “1st, A nun who has been ordained (even) for a century must greet respectfully, rise up from her seat, salute with joined palms, do proper homage to a monk ordained but that day. And this rule is to be honored, respected, revered, venerated, never to be transgressed during her life; 2nd, A nun must not spend the rains in a residence where there is no monk. This rule too is to be honored ... during her life; 3rd, Every half month a nun should desire two things from the Order of monks: the asking (as to the date) of the Observance day, and the coming for the exhortation. This rule is to be honored ... during her life; 4th, After the rains a nun must ‘invite’ before both orders in respect of three matters: what was seen, what was heard, what was suspected. This rule ...; 5th, A nun, offending against an important rule, must undergo mānatta (discipline) for half a month before both Orders. This rule ...; 6th, When, as a probationer, she has trained in the six rules for two years, she should seek ordination from both Orders. This rule ...; 7th, A monk must not be abused or reviled in any way by a nun. This rule ...; 8th, From to-day admonition of monks by nuns is forbidden, admonition of nuns by monks is not forbidden. This rule”

¹⁶ W. zoodville Rockhill: The Life of the Buddha and the Early History of his Order, page 60, 61.

Lhasa Kangyur, vol. da, bam po so drug pa, page 150b, 5.

Peking Kangyur, vol. ne, bam po so drug pa, page 97a, 7.

¹⁷ Lhasa Kangyur, ‘Dul ba, vol. da, page 468a,1 – 469b,1.

Bu-ston: The History of Buddhism in India and Tibet, translated from Tibetan by Dr. E. Obermiller, page 78.

¹⁸ The Book of Discipline, translated from Pāli into English by I.B. Horner, vol. 5, page 357.

¹⁹ The Book of Discipline, translated from Pāli into English by I.B. Horner, vol. 5, page 375.

²⁰ The Book of Discipline, translated from Pāli into English by I.B. Horner, vol. 5, page 376.

²¹ Lhasa Kangyur, bam po so drug pa, vol. da, page 154a,5: dge slong nams las bud med nams kyis rab tu ‘byung ba dang/ bsnyen par rdzogs nas/ dge slong ma’i dngos por ‘gyur ba rab tu rtogs par bya’o/