

**The Revival
of
Bhikkhuni Sasana
In today's
Theravada Buddhism**



**Bhikkhuni Pajapati Gotami Theri
The Historical Facts on Bhikkhuni Sasana
In
Theravada Buddhism**

**Compiled for the Serene Joy and Emotion of the Pious
A Gift of Dhamma**

PREFACE

The Lord Buddha said,

"Na so sabbesu thanesu Puriso hoti pandito ethipi pandita hoti tatha tatha wicakkhana."

"Men are not wise in every situation, women are wise also, and women are equally capable."

According to a reference in the *Cullavagga* there was ordination of women into the Order as Bhikkhuni during the *5th year after the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment*. The Buddha granted this right of ordination at the request of his stepmother *Mahapajapati Gotami* and at the urging of his chief attendant Ananda. The *Cullavagga*, Vol. V of the *Vinaya Pitaka* 2. 1-3 records the following:

Anujanami bhikkhave bhikkhuhi bhikkhuniyo upasampadetum
["I allow, monks, nuns to be ordained by monks."].

I have read the *Mahaparinibbana sutta* and understand thoroughly what we have inherited from our greatest sage, the Lord Buddha, the four-division of Buddha's disciples, which constitutes a complete Buddha sasana:

Bhikkhu – Monks

Bhikkhuni – Nun – female Bhikkhu

Upasaka – male lay follower

Upasiaka – female lay followers

As Buddha said, in the *Kalama sutta*, we Buddhist must follow the truth through intellectual analysis of the doctrine, and follow the path to liberation; and for women folks, only with the full ordination as Bhikkhuni Sangha, could they attain the arahatship in this very life.

Now that we have found the well preserved Bhikkhuni lineage available in Mahayana sect, we should be brave enough to fulfill our aspiration to revive the Bhikkhuni Sasana in our motherland and elsewhere. *The courage and their faith in the Buddha's doctrine is beyond one's imagination.*

I dedicate this book to *Bhikkhuni Gunasari* and *Bhikkhuni Seccavadi*, the first to cross the against the current of opposition, both of Myanmar heritage, and wish them a smooth path to their liberation along the *Noble Eightfold Path*.

**May they both overcome the sea of Samsara
To the other blissful shore of Nibbana**

*Maung Paw,
California, 2005*

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“*Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhassa*”

Chapter I

Complete and True Theravada Tradition

1.1 Introduction: I firmly believe that it is our duty as Buddhist lay followers of the present age, when the sasana is undergoing worldwide revival and is spreading across the globe where it was not known before, to try our level best to make the sasana bright, shining, and complete as left by our Lord Buddha given in *Mahaparinibbana sutta*...

It has been the tradition of the Buddha's that in each and every Buddha's dispensation there arose in the past, the four groups of Buddha's disciples. The Buddha dispensation is considered complete only with the existence of these four groups of disciples. The sasana is incomplete if higher ordination of female into religious orders is not available to women, since this opportunity was originally granted by Lord Buddha. Buddha himself said to *Mara* that his teaching is well-establish only if all the four groups of disciples are complete:

- a. *Bhikkhu* Sanghas
- b. *Bhikkhuni*'s Sangha
- c. *Upasaka* – lay male follower's
- d. *Upasika* – lay female followers

These four groups of disciples came to be established soon after our Lord Buddha attained the enlightenment.

1.2. Bhikkhu's Sangha Order

In the Gotama dispensation, the order of Sangha was first established soon after our Lord Buddha delivered the first Sermon – at Sarnath (the Migadawun Deer park) where the Buddha gave his First Sermon *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta'* commonly known as "The Great Discourse on the Wheel of Dhamma" to panca vaggi - **Ven. Annasi Kondanna Ven. Vappa Ven. Bhaddiya, Ven. Mahānāma and Ven. Assaji** following the delivery "Turning the wheel of Dhamma" *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta'*, the first Sangha order with a total of five Sanghas, was established.

The order of Sangha was established by the supernatural power of the Buddha by calling on his five disciples - Ven. Annasi Kondanna Ven. Vappa Ven. Bhaddiya, Ven. Mahānāma and Ven. Assaji – “Ehi’ Bhikkhu”. By calling on them with this word, all the five disciples were instantly and fully equipped with the requisites – robes, alms bowl, etc.

1.3. Foremost Lay Disciples – Upasaka

After taken the milk rice porridge from lady *Sujata*, Siddhatta went into forty nine days of deep absorption (jhanas) meditation with full determination to reach for his enlightenment. On the forty ninth day, he attained the Buddhahood. Right at that moment, the two merchant brothers, *Tapussa* and *Bhallika*, the two brothers from *Okkala dipa*, under the guidance of their former mother (a *Devi*), came to offer the Buddha the first alms. Here the first lay-disciples, *Upasaka* was established.

1.4. Foremost Upasika – Lay Female Disciple

After the ordination of the five ascetics, the Buddha was temporarily residing at *Isipatana*. At that time, *Yasa*, a millionaire son, disgusted of the worldly misery left his home and came to wandering by in the *Isipatana* forest. Buddha by his supernatural power saw *Yasa* and met the Buddha. Buddha then expounded the dhamma where by he attained the Sotapanna fruition.

Yasa's mother was the first to notice the absence of her son and she reported the matter to her husband. The millionaire immediately dispatched horsemen in four directions and he himself went towards *Isipatana*, following the imprint of the golden slippers. The Buddha saw them coming from afar and, by His psychic powers, willed that he should not be able to see his son.

The millionaire approached the Buddha and respectfully inquired whether He had seen his son *Yasa*. "Well, then, sit down here please. You would be able to see your son," said the Buddha. Pleased with the happy news, he sat down. The Buddha delivered a discourse to him, and she was so delighted that she, with her husband, exclaimed:

"Excellent, O Lord, excellent!"

"I, Lord, take refuge in the Buddha, the Doctrine and the Order. May the Lord receive me as a follower, who has taken refuge from this very day to life's end!". *The Yasa mother was the first to become the lay female disciple of Bhuddha as Upasika.*

1.5. Bhikkhuni Sangha Order

Pajapati Gotami was the younger sister of *Queen Maha Maya* and the second consort of *King Suddhodana*. She was called Maha (great) Pajapati as sages had predicted that she would be the leader of a large following. When her beloved sister passed away seven days after giving birth to *Prince Siddhattha*, she was desolated. They had been very close as sisters. She decided that she would bring up her sister's baby as her own.

When the Buddha visited *Kapilavatthu* and dispensed the *Dhammapala Jataka* to King *Suddhodana*, Maha Pajapati attained the first stage of sainthood, *Sotapanna*. After King *Suddhodana* passed away, Maha Pajapati decided that she too would enter the Noble Order and lead the holy life under the Buddha. Her son, *Nanda*, and grandson, little *Rahula*, had entered the Order under the great sage. Pajapati no longer had any desire for worldly pleasures.

The Buddha was visiting *Kapilavatthu* to settle a dispute that had arisen between the *Sakyans* and the *Koliyas* regarding the waters of the *Rohini River* when Maha Pajapati first approached Him with the request to permit women to enter the Noble Order. Without stating the reason the Buddha refused, saying,

"O Gotami, let it not please you that women should be allowed to do so". Maha Pajapati, however, did not give up. A second and a third time she requested ordination for women. In each instance the Buddha gave the same reply.

The Buddha then proceeded to *Vesali* to reside at the Mahavana in the Kutagara Hall. The determined Maha Pajapati was not discouraged. Cutting off her hair, she donned the yellow robes of a monk, and with a large retinue of Sakyan ladies, walked the 150 miles to *Vesali*. Covered in dust, her feet swollen and bleeding, she stood outside the hall, weeping. When Ananda, the Buddha's personal attendant, saw her and heard the cause of her grief, he decided to approach the Buddha on her behalf.

The compassionate Ananda pleaded on behalf of the ladies. When the Buddha refused, Ananda asked Him if He felt that *women were incapable of reaching spiritual heights and Arahantship* (*Sotapanna, Sekadagami, Anagami, Arahantship*). The Buddha replied that "women were as capable as men of attaining spiritual development". He then looked back into Maha Pajapati's past lives. Seeing that Maha Pajapati had made an aspiration many aeons ago to initiate the order of the nuns, the fulfillment of which was to occur during His dispensation, the Buddha relented, granted Ananda's request, and *formed the order of the nuns by Buddha calling "Ehi Bhikkhuni"*.

The Buddha did not give the reason for His initial refusal to Maha Pajapati. *All the Buddhas of the past had had the order of the nuns.* The Gotama Buddha would have

seen this and *realized that the female order was a part of every Buddhas retinue*. The Buddha dispensed eight extra disciplinary (Vinaya) rules for the nuns, mostly regarding the manner in which they would have to respect and honor the monks who through necessity, would have to protect them. *He also prophesied that ordination of nuns would result in the shortening of the time span in which His teachings would remain on Earth (this was not the true Buddha's prophecy; was inserted in the first Buddhist council)*.

1.6. The Eight Monastic Regulations applicable to women are:

1.6.1. A Bhikkhuni (nun) should always respect a Bhikkhu (monk) even if the monk were junior to her in the order. Among the Bhikkhus the junior monks in the order respected the senior monks just as the junior nuns respected the senior nuns.

1.6.2.. A Bhikkhuni shall not spend the rainy season in a place where there are no monks. (The attitude prevalent in India towards women at the time of the Buddha necessitated this precaution for the safety of the nuns).

1.6.3. Twice a month the Bhikkhuni shall ask the Bhikkhus the time when the monastic discipline (Uposatha) is recited and request for a monk to come to advise and admonish the Bhikkhuni's (who have deviated from monastic rules).

1.6.4. At the termination of the rainy season retreat, the final ceremony shall be held in an assembly of both monks and nuns.

1.6.5. Certain offences committed by Bhikkhuni's should be dealt with by assemblies of both Bhikkhus and Bhikkhuni's. The assembly of Bhikkhuni's deals with only minor transgressions and some of a personal nature to women.

1.6.6. A novice Bhikkhuni shall receive higher ordination after a training period of two years. There are instances when monks were given higher ordination immediately after ordination.

1.6.7. A Bhikkhuni should not rebuke a Bhikkhu under any circumstances.

1.6.8. Even though Bhikkhuni's cannot admonish Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu can admonish a Bhikkhuni who has transgressed the monastic discipline.

Maha Pajapati and her retinue of Sakyan ladies accepted the eight extra discipline rules and received ordination from the Buddha. The Buddha was the first religious teacher to form the order of the Bhikkhuni's (nuns). The nuns were then guided under similar monastic rules as the monks.

Anujanami bhikkhave bhikkhuhi bhikkhuniyo upasampadetum
["I allow, monks, nuns to be ordained by monks."].

The Buddha appointed two chief female disciples (as he had appointed two chief male disciples) to help with His growing congregation of nuns. Subsequent to this, new rules were added to the discipline as and when required by circumstance. For example, Bhikkhuni's were not allowed to meditate and reside on in forests after an incident that occurred regarding the *Bhikkhuni Uppalavanna*.

The Buddha's monastic discipline (five books) for Bhikkhus and Bhikkhuni's is an exemplary democratic system from which we can still learn. The exceptionally high moral standards of the Sangha and the unsurpassed administrative system the Buddha instituted were well thought out and futuristic. Lord Zetland, a former viceroy of India, writes, "And it may come as a surprise to many to learn that in the assemblies of the Buddhists in India, two thousand years and more ago, are to be found the rudiments of our own parliamentary practice of the present day."

Before long, Maha Pajapati attained Arahantship, as well as intuitive and analytical knowledge. Her retinue of Sakyan ladies too attained Arahantship. Maha Pajapati was assigned the foremost place in seniority and experience.

1.7. The Life span of Buddha Sasana (Dispensation)

After establishing the Bhikkhuni Sangha order, Buddha made this remarks:

Under normal circumstances, my teaching will last for a thousand years; but with the establishment of the Bhikkhuni Sanghas, the life span of my teaching on earth will be shortened by half, 500 years. (This must have been inserted after the first Buddhist Council)

Ananda, to illustrate why this was so: at a house with little male members, even small thief could break in easily and in the same manner the order of Sangha with female members will not last just as long as it should.

Ananda, another example will be just like a paddy field infected with insects will not last for long; in just the same way, my dispensation will not last just as long as it should.

Ananda, as another example, just as a sugar cane field infected by red color insects will destroy the entire sugar cane field, so my dispensation will not last just as long as it should.

Ananda, just like we will reinforce the barrier of the earth filled dam, I have put forth the additional eight disciplines, in addition to the rules imposed on the Sanghas to protect my dispensation. For this added disciplines, my dispensation will last the normal life span of 1,000 years.

After Maha Pajapati Gotami was ordained as *Bhikkhuni Sanghas, at the assembly of Sanghas, all the five hundred females were allowed to received full ordination to enter the order of Sanghas.*

1.8. Ordination of Five Hundred Royal Ladies

Maha Pajapati Gotami received her ordination direct from the Lord Buddha, through the power of the Buddha, come '*Ehi Bhikkhuni*'. This kind of ordination does not require to comply with the Vinaya rules; however, when it comes to the ordination of the remaining five hundred royal ladies, the first Bhikkhuni, Maha Pajapati Bhikkhuni will act as preceptor and at the assembly of Bhikkhuni's all five hundred royal ladies were officially fully ordained.

Anujanami bhikkhave bhikkhuhi bhikkhuniyo upasampadatum
["I allow, monks, nuns to be ordained by monks."].

Any controversy that arose in the community of Bhikkhuni's that Maha Pajapati has not received the ordination by the given Vinaya rules; Buddha made it clear to all that Maha Pajapati has been fully ordained by me since at the instant of her acceptance of the added discipline rules.

1.9. Maha Pajapati request to receive equal opportunity

It is the traditional relationship in the community of Sanghas for a junior to pay obeisance to the senior Bhikkhu's; and lay disciples to pay obeisance to any Sanghas. Maha Pajapati request Buddha to allow the same application to the order of Bhikkhuni. Hearing the request, Buddha then said that any Bhikkhuni who pays obeisance to any Bhikkhuni because of her seniority, will be a break in the Vinaya rules.

1.10. Finally, the additional eight disciplinary rules were added over and above the Bhikkhu's rules.:

1.10.1. A Bhikkhuni (nun) should always respect a Bhikkhu (monk) even if the monk were junior to her in the order. Among the Bhikkhus the junior monks in the order respected the senior monks just as the junior nuns respected the senior nuns.

1.10.2. A Bhikkhuni shall not spend the rainy season in a place where there are no monks. (The attitude prevalent in India towards women at the time of the Buddha necessitated this precaution for the safety of the nuns).

1.10.3. Twice a month the Bhikkhuni shall ask the Bhikkhus the time when the monastic discipline (Uposatha) is recited and request for a monk to come to advise and admonish the Bhikkhuni's (who have deviated from monastic rules).

1.10.4. At the termination of the rainy season retreat, the final ceremony shall be held in an assembly of both monks and nuns.

1.10.5. Certain offences committed by Bhikkhuni's should be dealt with by assemblies of both Bhikkhus and Bhikkhuni's. The assembly of Bhikkhuni's deals with only minor transgressions and some of a personal nature to women.

1.10.6. A novice Bhikkhuni shall receive higher ordination after a training period of two years. There are instances when monks were given higher ordination immediately after ordination.

1.10.7. A Bhikkhuni should not rebuke a Bhikkhu under any circumstances.

1.10.8. Even though Bhikkhuni's cannot admonish Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu can admonish a Bhikkhuni who has transgressed the monastic discipline.

1.11. Two Kinds of Bhikkhuni's

Following the establishment of Bhikkhuni's Sanghas, since that time, we have two kinds of Bhikkhuni's Sanghas:

- a. One who received ordination direct from the Buddha
- b. One who received ordination from the Bhikkhu' Sanghas.

1.12. Bhikkhuni Sasana

Since the establishment of Bhikkhuni Sanghas order beginning with Maha Pajapati Gotami and her five hundred royal companion ladies, the Bhikkhuni Sasana flourished across the land with many entering the Bhikkhuni's Sangha orders and some famous among them were:

The two famous chief female disciples: *Bhikkhuni Khema Theri* and *Bhikkhuni Uppalavanna Theri*. *Maha Pajapti Gotami Theri, Bhikkhuni Dhammadinna Theri, Bhikkhuni Patacara Theri, Yasodaya Theri*

1. *Mahapajapati Gotami Theri* - being senior-most Bhikkhuni
2. *Khema Theri* - possessing great wisdom (*Buddha's chief female Disciple*)
3. *Uppalavanna Theri* - possessing great supernormal power (*second chief disciple*)
4. *Patacara Theri* - bearing the Vinaya discipline
5. *Dhammadinna Theri* - giving sermons as a preacher
6. *Nanda Theri* - being energetic
7. *Sona Theri or Bahuputtika* - being absorbed in the Jhana
8. *Sakula Theri* - possessing the Divine Eye
9. *Kundhala kesa Theri* - possessing quick penetrative knowledge
10. *Bhaddaka pilani Theri* - possessing the power to recollect the past existence
11. *Bhadda kaccana Theri* (aka) *Yasodara* - possessing great wisdom and supernormal power
12. *Kisa gotami Theri* - wearing robes made from rag
13. *Singalaka matu Theri* - having highest confidence in the triple gem

Chapter II

The Introduction of Theravada Bhikkhuni Sasana

2.1. The Era when Bhikkhuni Sasana at its peak

Following the Buddha's parinibbana and through the first and second Buddhist Councils, there was very little documentation written in regard to the Bhikkhuni sasana. Prior to the third Buddhist Council, very little was known about the Bhikkhuni Sasana.

According to the Mahavamsa and until **235 BE** at the *third Buddhist Council*, at the time of the great *king Asoka*, the Buddhist religion was at its peak. Following the third Buddhist council, missionary led by *Sona Thera* and *Uttara Thera* was sent to *Suvannabhumi* in the current Thaton region where the Buddhism was reestablished, the Bhikkhuni sasana was also re-established and many royal females had entered the Bhikkhuni's Sangha order, the the Goldenland of Myanmar.

In regard to Bhikkhuni sasana in other regions, *Sanghamitta Theri* was sent to Sri Lanka to establish the Bhikkhuni Sasana. It received great respect and acceptance by the community and its fame spread across the ocean to China. A mission led by Chinese Buddhist monk named *Fa-hien* had arrived in Sri Lanka in the year **425 AD to study the Bhikkhuni sasana**. In the year **429 AD eight Bhikkhuni led by Arahant Deva Sara Theri** went to China to establish the Bhikkhuni sasana, which later spread across the greater Asia – Korea, Japan and Taiwan. That Bhikkhuni lineage was well preserved to this day currently known as Mahayana Bhikkhuni

2.2. Bhikkhuni Sasana at the time of King Asoka

At the time of King Asoka when the third Buddhist Council was convened, that was the time when Buddhism was re-emerged at its peak again, *Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa* dispatched missionaries in nine direction to re-energize the Buddha sasana led mostly by the arahat. At the time, in the region of Myanmar and Sri Lanka the Bhikkhuni's Sasana were re-established. The regions known to have had that opportunity were:

- a. **Aparantaka** – in the northern region of Myanmar – led by *thera Dhammarakkhita the Yona*
- b. **Suvannabhumi** – the Thaton region of Myanmar led by *Sona Thera* and *Uttara Thera* – gave pabbajja to 1,000 royal maidens.
- c. **Sri Lanka** – led by *Bhikkhuni Samghamitta gave* pabbajja to 500 royal maidens.

2.2.1. Bhikkhuni Sasana at Aparantaka Region (Northern Myanmar)

In the year 235 BE, a missionary team led by the *thera Dhammarakkhita the Yona*, being gone to Aparantaka' and having preached in the midst of the people the *Aggikkhandhopama-sutta* gave to drink of the nectar of truth to thirty-seven thousand

living beings who had come together there, lie who perfectly understood truth and untruth. A thousand men and over 6,000 women went forth from noble families and received the pabbajja. There was no documentation as to how the Bhikkhuni survived until today. There was no traces of Bhikkhuni lineage given in the literature.

2.2.2. Bhikkhuni Sasana in Suvannabhumi.

Together with the *thera Uttara* the *thera Sona* of wondrous might went to *Suvannabhumi*. Now at this time, whenever a boy was born in the king's palace, a fearsome female demon who came forth out of the sea, was wont to devour (the child) and vanish again. And at that very moment a prince was born in the king's palace. When the people saw the theras they thought: 'These are companions of the demons,' and they came armed to kill them. And the theras asked: 'What does this mean?' and said to them:

'We are pious ascetics, in no wise companions of the demon.'

Then the demon came forth from the ocean with her following, and when the people saw them they raised a great outcry. But the theras created twice as many terrifying demons and therewith surrounded the demon and her following on every side. She thought: 'This (country) is come into possession of these (people),' and, panic-stricken, she took to flight.

When the theras had made a bulwark round the country he pronounced in the assembly the *Brahmajala (suttanta)*. Many were the people who came unto the (three) refuges and the precepts of duty; sixty thousand were converted to the true faith.

- ❖ *Three thousand five hundred sons of noble families received the pabbajja and*
- ❖ *One thousand five hundred daughters of noble families received it likewise.*

Thenceforth when a prince was born in the royal palace the kings gave to such the name Sonuttara.

Since they did even forbear to enter into the bliss already won (such was) also the renunciation of the all-compassionate Conqueror they bestowed blessing on the world,' (going) here and there. Who should grow weary in (striving for) the salvation of the world?

2.2.3. Bhikkhuni Sasana in Linga Dipa (Sri Lanka)

Five hundred Maidens waiting for ordination. The queen *Anulä*, who, with five hundred maidens and five hundred women of the royal harem had accepted the ten precepts, did (meanwhile) pious as she was, (wearing) the yellow robe, waiting for the pabbajja, in discipline, looking for the coming of the theri, take up her abode, leading a holy life, in the pleasant nunnery built by the king in a certain part of the city. Since the nunnery was inhabited by these lay sisters it became known in Lañkā by the name *Upasikavihara*.

When the nephew Maharittha had delivered the king's message to the king Dhammasoka he gave him (also) the Thera's message: 'The spouse of the brother of thy friend, of the king (Devanampiya), O thou elephant among kings, lives, longing for the pabbajja, constantly in stern discipline.

To bestow on her the pabbajja do thou send the Bhikkhuni Samghamitta and with her the south branch of the great Bodhi-tree.'

And the same matter, even as the thera had charged him, he told the theri; the theri went to her father (Asoka) and told him the Thera's purpose.

The king said: 'How shall I, when I no longer behold thee, dear one, master the grief aroused by the parting with son and grandson?'

She answered: 'Weighty is the word of my brother, O great king; many are they that must receive the pabbajja, therefore must I depart thither.'

'The great Bodhi-trees must not be injured with a knife, how then can I have a branch!' mused the king. Then when he, following the counsel of his minister Mahādeva, had invited the community of Bhikkhu's and had shown them hospitality the monarch asked: 'Shall the great Bodhi-tree be sent to Lañka, sirs?'

The thera Moggaliputta answered: 'It shall be sent thither,' and he related to the king the five great resolutions that the (Buddha) gifted with the five eyes had formed.

According to the documents, Mahavamsa, the Bhikkhuni Sasana prospered greatly at Līnga Dīpa (Sri Lanka).at the time of Indian King Asoka. The documents named a few famous Bhikkhuni 's. We shall look at how the Bhikkhuni sasana was introduced by the Sri Lankan Bhikkhuni's in Nan King, China where it later spread all over throughout south east Asia, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Formosa (Taiwan). The Bhikkhuni sasana lineage was not lost completely. The Bhikkhuni lineage was well established in China by a group of Sri Lankan Bhikkhuni at the invitation the King of China at that time. The Bhikkhuni sasana slowly come to an end due to destruction of war fought between the invaders and the Sri Lankan people. For over a thousand years Bhikkhuni sasana of Theravada tradition was well and alive in China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan. It continued to prosper as Mahayana Bhikkhuni lineage. Unfortunately, the Bhikkhuni sasana in Sri Lanka, mean while has come to an end, until it was revived today.

2.2.4 The Month of the Bodhi tree and Sanghamitta (By Ven. Dhammajothi)



Bhikkhuni Sanghamitta on arrival in Sri Lanka

Generally the year ends for the Sri Lankan women with an event having a great significance. *This important event which falls on the full moon day of the month of December marks the introduction of the Order of Nuns in Sri Lanka.* Another memorable happening on this occasion was the planting of a sapling from the Sri Maha Bodhi, - the sacred tree whose serene shelter offered the calm environment for ascetic Gauthama to attain Enlightenment over two thousand years ago back in India - at the Mahamevna grove in the capital city of *Anuradhapura* in *North Central Sri Lanka*.

2.2.4.1. Introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka by Arahant Mahinda

The close camaraderie that existed between the *Emperor Dharmashoka* of India and King *Devanampiya Tissa* of Sri Lanka resulted in Buddhism being exported to Sri Lanka as a token of this great friendship. The missionary service inaugurated by the Emperor saw the arrival of *Arahant Mahinda*, his own son and his entourage in Sri Lanka leading to the propagation of Buddhism throughout the country. Sri Lankans found this new doctrine so impressive and appealing to their heart and mind that men took to robes in large numbers under the patronage of Arahant Mahinda. Greatly inspired by this, a highly motivated group of no less than five hundred women led by queen Anula the consort of Sub-King Mahanaga desired permission to follow suit.

2.2.4.2. Introduction of Bhikkhuni Sasana to Sri Lanka by Sanghamitta Theri

As it was thought not proper for him to undertake the ordaining of members of the opposite sex, Arahant Mahinda urged King Devanampiya Tissa to summon *Arahant Sanghamitta*, his sister from India for the purpose. The delay involved in the process did little to smother the enthusiasm of the group. Their eagerness to don robes and enter the Order was so irrepressible that the impatient group decided to take the ten precepts and stay in the nunnery constructed by the King at Anuradhapura until the arrival of Arahant Sanghamitta. Accordingly Arahant Sanghamitta arrived in Sri Lanka with the Sri Maha

Bodhi sapling accompanied by Bhikkhuni Uttara, Hema and Masaragalla and the Bhikkhuni Order was thus launched in Sri Lanka with Queen Anula and her retinue entering the brand new Bhikkhuni Order. It was during this time that King Devanampiya Tissa constructed buildings Choolangana, Mahangana, Sri Waddha and the Mahapali dining hall for the use of monks and nuns.

2.2.4.3. Bhikkhuni Sasana received Royal support in Sri Lanka

While staying in the Hatthalhaka nunnery, Arahant Sanghamitta had performed a phenomenal service to the progress of the Bhikkhuni Order. Thus within a short period, the Bhikkhuni Order made great strides both in its spiritual advancement and also in terms of increasing its numerical strength. According to the chronicles Mahawansa and Deepawansa, Bhikkhuni Uttara had undertaken tuition associated with all three sectors of the Buddhist scriptures viz. Discourses, Discipline and Advanced Dhamma. While Bhikkhuni Naramitta had acquired special skills and proficiency in the province of discipline, Bhikkhuni Uttara and Sata Kali are known to have been exponents of the Theravada version of Buddhism. Arahant Sanghamitta after having rendered a yeomen service to the Bhikkhuni Order passed away at the Hatthalhaka nunnery, in the ninth year of the reign of King Uttiya.

The Bhikkhuni Order had made great headway by the year **161 BC** thanks to the backing it received from the royalty coupled with the opportunities it afforded women from all strata of society to enter it. The chronicle also has it that ninety thousand Bhikkhuni had congregated at the ceremony held to mark the offering of Mirisavetiya stupa to the Maha Sangha, the community of Buddhist monks during the reign of King Dutugemunu between the years 161- 137 BC. The royal personages of *Vattagamini Abhaya*, *Lajjitissa* and *Maha Tissa* too have accorded due recognition to the Bhikkhuni Order by making special offerings and grants while King Makalantissa had built a nunnery and offered it for the use of his mother who had also taken to robes. The Bhikkhuni Order had also been engaged in helping both the clergy and the laity to gain knowledge not only in Buddhist history but also in social concerns such as nursing services, culinary affairs and economic matters.

2.2.4.4. The Spread of Bhikkhuni Sasana from Sri Lanka to Nan King (China)

A Chinese Buddhist monk named *Fa-hien* had arrived in Sri Lanka in the year **425 AD**. This was the golden era of the Bhikkhuni Order in Sri Lanka. Having learnt from bhikkhu *Fa-hien* about the Sri Lankan Bhikkhuni Order, an enthusiastic Chinese government had not wasted much time in deciding to introduce a Bhikkhuni Order in China too.

Accordingly in the year **429 AD** *eight Bhikkhuni led by Arahant Deva Sara* proceeded to *Nan king* to ordain *three hundred ladies and give them higher ordination too at the same time in establishing the Bhikkhuni Order in that country.*

2.2.4.5. Bhikkhuni's Sasana spreads to Korea, Japan and Taiwan.

While several Bhikkhuni who accompanied Theri Sanghamitta to Sri Lanka had later taught the doctrine and discipline at Anuradhapura, many women from all walks of life had gradually entered the Order and illuminated it with their intellectual prowess and spiritual insight. So much so that in the 4th century A.D., Bhikkhuni molded in the Order of Nuns founded by *Arahant Sanghamitta Theri*, established the Bhikkhuni Order in China. From there it spread to Korea, Japan and Taiwan later to be known as a *Bhikkhuni Order of the Mahayana Sect*.

This Bhikkhuni lineage was established by the missionary led by Asoka own daughter, Sanghamitta was the same Theravada lineage that spread the Theravada Buddhism for Sangha order lead by **Sona** and **Uttara Thera** in *Suvannabhumi* in the same period in history sponsored by the **King Asoka** after the **third Buddhist Council**.

2.2.4.5. In the year 1050 AD, comes the decline of Bhikkhuni Sasana.

While living at Hatthalhaka nunnery, Sri Lanka Theri Sanghamitta had passed away at the age of seventy nine. The Bhikkhuni Order founded by Theri Sanghamitta in Sri Lanka, however, suffered a fatal blow perhaps by the alarmingly low security situation in the country during the relevant period , occasioned by constant South Indian invasions and internal political turmoil. It gradually lost its ardor and all but disappeared from the face of the country some thousand two hundred and fifty odd years after its establishment.

Nevertheless, by being instrumental in bringing a Bodhi sapling from the sacred Bodhi tree at Buddha Gaya, India and planting it at the Anuradhapura site in Sri Lanka, thus affording the Sri Lankan Buddhist population an object of worship considered to be commensurate with a living Buddha, and by inaugurating the Order of Nuns for the emancipation of womankind, she has rendered to our country a magnificent service that for ever remains in the memory of a grateful people of Sri Lanka who in commemoration of which participate in religious services and processions carrying a statue of Bhikkhuni Sanghamitta on every full moon day of Unduwap (December), the day she disembarked in the island.

However, by the year 1050 AD the Bhikkhuni Order which had enjoyed a worldwide respect and reputation, was sadly watching its own decline and eventual collapse by the time King Vijayabahu came to power in 1099 AD. Ever since, it has not seen any efforts at re-organization worthy of mention perhaps due to lack of support from a source capable of giving it a new lease of life. It is therefore high time that this matter is taken care of by those in a position to help its much welcomed revival.

Source: http://www.newyorkbuddhist.org/what_buddha_taught/

2.3. The decline of Bhikkhuni Lineage in Majjhimadipa

With the lapse of the King Asoka, and due to greater influence of other religions outside of Buddhism, the Buddhism soon faded away in Majjhimadipa, in India. Some spread out

through the silk road in the North and some to Sri Lanka in the south and later spread out to Burma and Thailand. After enduring many good years of Bhikkhuni sasana in Sri Lanka, it again fades away due to many natural disasters and foreign invaders. According to the historical facts, even at the convening of the fourth Buddhist council, the Bhikkhuni sasana was still in good health at about 450 BE. However, there was no document to support the existence in the later part of the 500 BE.

Chapter III

The causes of Bhikkhuni Sasana decline

3.1 Introduction: It is not an easy task to describe why Bhikkhuni sasana decline in the history of Buddhism. However we can find out the causes and some of the salient causes:

- a. Majority of Bhikkhu elders opposed to Bhikkhuni sasana.
- b. Bhikkhu's are less willing to provide proper protection for Bhikkhuni to live in celibacy.
- c. Stricter rules are imposed on Bhikkhuni
- d. It is much easier for Bhikkhuni to break the Vinaya rules
- e. Bhikkhuni order receives less support from lay community
- f. The weakness in the Theravada sect of Buddhism following the emergent of Mahayana sect.
- g. Many Bhikkhu in power of authority have little or no desire to support Bhikkhuni sasana.

3.2. Vinaya Rules

To present the above in details we may look at the event following the convening of the first Buddhist Council.

- a. The Vinaya rules for Bhikkhuni was much unnaturally written for all practical purposes.
- b. Unnatural imposition of rules on Bhikkhuni
- c. The female followers were given the first chance to pay obeisance to the Buddha, parinibbana.
- d. In spite of Buddha hints on his passing away, no one plead with him for extension.
- e. Some elders blame on Shin Ananda for pleading on behalf of the female followers for the establishment of Bhikkhuni sasana. There were five counts of blames put upon Ananda and one of them was the "pleading on females' behalf for establishment of Bhikkhuni Sasana".

The staunch opposition from some Bhikkhu's for the establishment of Bhikkhuni's sasana may possibly be due to the statement that claimed to come from Buddha, was that his dispensation will be shortened by half, if they permit the establishment of Bhikkhuni sasana".

3.3. Procedural Restrictions imposed on Bhikkhuni Sasana

According to Vinaya rules, man are allowed to receive ordination to become Bhikkhu at the right age of twenty after going through the samanara initiation and higher ordination in one process.

However there are more rules imposed on female to receive higher ordination by first going through the initial preparatory requirements: :

- a. She must receive samaneri initiation
- b. She must plead to the Bhikkhu preceptors to become a candidate as samaneri
- c. The Bhikkhu preceptors will then initiate her and sanctify her through the prescribed procedure.
- d. She then be asked to observe – no killing, no lying, not taking what is not given, no sexual misconduct, not taking intoxicant.
- e. Live virtuously

She must have completed without fail the observation of these six precepts for a period of two years before she could apply for higher ordination. It is highly unlikely for one without the self motivation of – sadha (faith), diligence (Viriya) to comply with these strict precepts for a period of two years. Any break of the precepts will be considered as ineligible for higher ordination.

- f. Having completed the two years probation, she will then ask Bhikkhu preceptor to accept her for higher ordination.
- g. She will then have to go through the initiation and sanctification procedure.
- h. She again must go through the ordination procedure before the Bhikkhuni's for final ordination procedure. This will then complete her higher ordination as fully ordained Bhikkhuni Sangha.

Such hard rules imposed upon the female for higher ordination could be one of the many factors why the Bhikkhuni sasana come to its end in the history of Bhikkhuni sasana.

In the case of male counter part, there are no such restriction as to the number and the number of times that a men are allowed for higher ordination; unlike their male counter part, female Bhikkhuni are allow to ordain only one Bhikkhuni in alternate year. Here the Bhikkhuni community could only offer higher ordination once to a single female samaneri for higher ordination. This zero growth policy could be the cause for low Bhikkhuni population and its weakness to survive in the community of Sangha.

3.4. Bhikkhuni are given more rules to observe

Bhikkhuni are given **311 rules** to observe as opposed to **227 rules** for Bhikkhu. As an illustration, by nature, women are more prone to sexually arouse than men; as such, if any touching in the erotic area that causes sexual arousal will amount to sin by the Vinaya rule. This stricter restriction imposed on Bhikkhuni could be the cause for the degradation of Bhikkhuni sasana.

3.5. Bhikkhu can be disrobed at anytime

According to the Vinaya rules, Bhikkhu's are permitted to leave the Sanghas order any time he pleases; all he has to do is to request for release from his preceptor and disrobed

and wear the lay clothing. He is allowed to re-enter the order easily by going through the ordination procedure.

In the case of Bhikkhuni, she could just disrobe and wear the lay woman clothing to be released from the Bhikkhuni's order. However, she will never be allowed to re-enter the Bhikkhuni's order, again. No special rules are to be observed if she elect to exist from the Bhikkhuni's order. The ease in which Bhikkhuni are allowed to exist and change herself to lay female could be the cause for the fast degradation of the Bhikkhuni sasana.

3.6. Lack of community support to Bhikkhuni

There are so many stories given the Jataka and sutta pitaka Dhamapada stories that described from one to a thousand Bhikkhu's invited by generous donors for alms and offering of four requisites. However, we could hardly see a single story that describe the same massive community support given to the Bhikkhuni's order.

There was a story about *Upalavanna Theri* who lived on five robes. One day, she prepared a meat curry to offer alms to the Buddha and came to the Jetavana **monastery** by **Anathapindika** by her supernatural power. On arrival at the Monastery, Buddha was out for an alms round and she left the curry with Udari. Udari then asked her to donate her inner robes to him. *Upalavanna Theri* then replied to Udari saying, we Bhikkhuni are living on frugality and that she was wearing her last robes out of the five robes she originally had. She therefore had to refuse to donate her inner robe to Udari. This story shows that Bhikkhuni, unlike the Bhikkhu, did not receive much support from the community even for the four necessary requisites.

.Even at the time of Buddha, Bhikkhuni are not very supported by the community to receive offerings from the community at large. Without the community support, without the community support, the Bhikkhuni sasana has to come to an end in the later part of the Buddha dispensation..

3.7. The Second Buddhist Council

At the second Buddhist council, the elder group led by the elder Thera like to form the dhamma strictly to cater for the Monks to attain arahatship. However, many of the younger Monks will like to the doctrine to be evenly spread that will cater to the lay disciples. Many groups up to eighteen groups were formed with different aims and object based on the elder's doctrine. The elder's doctrine is too difficult for lay disciple to practice and gain enlightenment and thus is good only for the Monks and not for the lay disciples. All the eighteen sects later become one major group known as Mahayana. Their doctrine will accommodate both to the monks and the lay disciples principally based on Bodhisatta doctrine. Thus we have two sects of Buddhism:

Theravada – (Saying of the elders) or restricted small vehicle as – Arahat ideal
Mahayana – (Larger vehicle)- Bodhisatta ideal.

Following the second Buddhist council, due to greater influences of the Mahayana sect, the Buddhism has come to a decline in India, until the time of Indian King Asoka who after embracing the Buddhism, recognize the broken religion to a strong religion by holding the third Buddhist Council.

3.8.The Third Buddhist Council

According to Mahavamsa, Buddhism was at its peak, again in India. Buddhist missionary group led by great arahats were sent in nine different directions to spread Buddhism outside of India. Buddhism was reintroduced by the missionary led by the great son of King Asoka, *Mahida Thera* and her daughter *Sanghamitta Theri* who established the Bhikkhuni sasana in Sri Lanka.

However, by the year **1050 AD** the Bhikkhuni Order which had enjoyed a worldwide respect and reputation was sadly watching its own decline and eventual collapse by the time King Vijayabahu came to power in 1099 AD.

Chapter IV

Should Bhikkhuni Sasana be Revived in Theravada Tradition

4.1. Buddha tradition

It is important to make critical assessment of the Theravada tradition based on “*Buddha’s Last Exhortation – the Mahaparinibbana sutta*” It stated that the original Buddha tradition should consist of four divisions of disciples; namely:

- **Bhikkhu – Sangha** – Male Monk
- **Bhikkhuni Sangha** – Female Monks
- **Upasaka** – male lay followers
- **Upasika** – female followers

Without all the four divisions, the four pillars to prop up the sasana in its original form, the decline of the Theravada is certain. In looking back at all the past Buddha’s tradition, each and every Buddha must traditionally have two male disciples (*Bhikkhu Sangha*) and two female disciples (*Bhikkhuni Sangha*). Going back to all the twenty eight Buddhas of the past, no one can deny the facts that the four pillars should be there in order for the Buddha dispensation to live its natural life span, which is 5,000 years life span.

In reviewing the past twenty eight Buddha’s, starting from *Dipankara Buddha* to *Gotama Buddha*, each and every Buddha has complete – male and female disciples – *Bhikkhu* and *Bhikkhuni*.

Name of Buddha	Male Chief Disciples Bhikkhu	Female Chief Disciple Bhikkhuni
Dipankara Buddha	Sumangala & Tissa Thera	Nandá & Sunandá Theri
Kakusandha Buddha	Vidhura & Sañjiva Thera	Sama & Campá Theri
Vipassi Buddha	Khanda & Tissa Thera	Candá & Candamittá Theri
Konagama Buddha	Bhíyya and Uttara Thera	Samuddá & Uttará Theri
Kassapa Buddha	Tissa & Bháradvája Thera	Anulá & Uruvelá Theri
Gotama Buddha	Mahakassapa & Moggalana Thera	Khema & Upalavanna Theri

4.2. Comparing Theravada and Mahayana

In the current set up of the two sects, if we look at the completeness of the Buddha sasana, we will see that Mahayana has all four divisions of followers:

Description	Remarks
Theravada	Bhikkhu, Upasaka & Upasika
Mahayana	Bhikkhu, Bhikkhuni, Upasaka & Upasika
<p>Note: The original Bhikkhuni lineage, brought over to Sri Lanka by Sanghamitta was again brought over to China by Sri Lankan Bhikkhuni and Bhikkhuni sasana was established in China. In 429 AD <i>eight Bhikkhuni led by Arahant Deva Sara</i> proceeded to <i>Nan king</i> to ordain <i>three hundred ladies and give them higher ordination too at the same time in establishing the Bhikkhuni Order in that country. This Bhikkhuni lineage was preserved to this day in Mahayana Sect. Hence, the Bhikkhuni lineage was well and healthy for any one to revive the Bhikkhuni sasana in any country through the Bhikkhuni in Mahayana countries</i> –</p>	

China, Japan, Taiwan, etc.. Sri Lanka Theravada country has revived its Bhikkhuni sasana by bringing in the Bhikkhuni lineage from China and Taiwan.

4.3. Bhikkhuni Lineage

Bhikkhuni Lineage	Assessment
Buddha's time	Maha Pajapati Gotami – first established Bhikkhuni sasana.
First Buddhist Council	Vinaya rules put in writing. Bhikkhuni sasana did not received favors from the elders
Second Buddhist Council	Emergence of Mahayana Sect separated from the Theravada. Bhikkhuni sasana very little attention was paid Bhikkhuni sasana
Third Buddhist Council (King Asoka time)	<p>Sona Thera and Uttara Thera were sent to Suvannabhumi to establish Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni sasana.</p> <p><i>Mahinda Thera and Sanghamitta Theri were sent to Sri Lanka to establish Buddha sasana. Bhikkhuni sasana prospered until 1, 050 AD. The Sri Lanka Bhikkhuni were sent to Nan King, China in 429 AD eight Bhikkhuni led by Arahant Deva Sara Theri to establish Bhikkhuni sasana in China.</i></p> <p><i>That lineage was well preserved until today in Mahayana sect and is known as Mahayana Bhikkhuni sasana, which in fact was originated from Sri Lanka Theravada sect.</i></p>
Bhikkhuni lineage today	<p>Tracking down on the original Bhikkhuni lineage we must do s research from documents available within and outside the country, as the Bhikkhuni lineage that was brought over to Myanmar by Sona and Uttara Theras came to an end in post Hanthawaddy king <i>Dhammazedī Min Gaung</i>.</p> <p>That Bhikkhuni lineage originated by <i>Sanghamitta Theri</i> in Sri Lanka in 235 BE had been brought over to China in 429 AD by the Sri Lanka Bhikkhuni, Arahant Deva Sara Theri. That Theravada lineage has been all along preserved in the original form in China and Taiwan as Mahayana Bhikkhuni.</p> <p>That lineage could be used to revive the Theravada Bhikkhuni Sasana.</p>

4.4. How is it possible to perform Bhikkhuni Ordination in Theravada Tradition?

4.4.1. By Ehi Bhikkhuni!

In Buddha's life time, prior to putting all the Vinaya rules in writing, we have two methods of higher ordination for Bhikkhuni. The first was by Buddha himself by his supernatural power of calling on *Maha Pajapati Gotami*, after her acceptance of additional Vinaya rules, **Ehi Bhikkhuni**".

4,4,2, By the Sangha

The second method was to offer ordination by a group of Sanghas to perform higher ordination on the rest of the 500 royal ladies. That was permitted by the Buddha. Those

who opposed to the revival of Bhikkhuni said, that this method was allowed because at that time the Bhikkhuni Sasana was not establish to provide the number of Bhikkhuni required to perform the higher order ordination. This was the same lame excuse who are opposed to the revival of Bhikkhuni sasana.

If the elders are willing, with the consent of the majority of Bhikkhu elders, it is possible to offer higher order Bhikkhuni ordination. Since this method was applied when there was no Bhikkhuni Sangha to adequately support the proper procedure to form a quorum required to perform higher Bhikkhuni ordination.

The opponent of the revival group insists that this method should not be used, after the Vinaya was written in the first Buddhist Council.

4.4.3. To bring in the Bhikkhuni Lineage from Mahayana Sect.

As stated earlier in the history of Bhikkhuni sasana of Sri Lanka, the original Theravada Bhikkhuni lineage had been well preserved in the Mahayana sect, since 429 AD, until today. Using the Bhikkhuni lineage from them, many pious females could receive higher order ordination.

This method had been used in recent years, for the ordination of Bhikkhuni's in Sri Lanka and the community of Theravada Monks had received them and the Bhikkhuni lineage had been revived in the past few decades. The newly revived Bhikkhuni sasana had been well accepted and respected by the lay community of Sri Lanka, today.

4.5. Will the revival of Bhikkhuni sasana endanger Buddha Sasana?

To all Buddhist, be he a Sanghas or a lay disciple, the fact that all Buddha prophecies must come to pass. Let us examine the one prophecy that some claimed to be originated by Buddha himself.

“ Ananda, because I have permitted the establishment of Bhikkhuni Sasana, the natural life span of my dhamma may be shortened by half and the natural life span is 1,000 years.”

This prophecy, obviously had not come to pass, since we all are living in the 2548 BE era. In places where this statement appears in sutta Pitaka, many scholars will not accept it as the true Buddha prophecy. If it is not the true Buddha's prophecy, then who had injected all the misinformation with malicious intent to destroy the Bhikkhuni sasana?

The true Buddha prophecy that said, in *Anagatavamsa Desana*, that the Buddha dispensation will live for 5,000 years, should be taken as an absolute truth. No one could change this prophecy or use the excuse that the Buddha dispensation will be shorten by half. Obviously you cannot change the absolute truth.

4.6. Misinformation in Sutta Pitaka

As pointed out earlier, based on the Brahmanic tradition, women are to be treated not as equal to men. That attitude was reflected in many places in the written Vinaya rules imposed upon the female members of the Sanghas, Bhikkhuni.

- a. *The misinformation of the life span of Bhuddha sasana – to be reduced to half, if establishment of Bhikkhuni sasana is permitted.*
- b. *To discourage female members from entering the Bhikkhuni order*
- c. *Making it easy to release from the Bhikkhuni order, if one choose to exist.*
- d. *Discouraging female disciples by making it harder to go through the preparatory period of two years of training.*
- e. *Making it harder for receive higher ordination to go through two processes: one through the Sangha order and another through the Bhikkhuni's order.*
- f. *Requiring a senior Bhikkhuni to pay obeisance to the samanara, was to make females Sanghas subservient to the order of Bhikkhu.*

This misinformation was inserted in Tipitaka Vinaya rules, in the name of the Buddha, first to discourage females from entering the Bhikkhuni order and second to down grade the Bhikkhuni sasana and thus bring it to a natural decline.

4.7 The Emergent of Mahayana Sect

The review of the TiPitaka, Sutta Pitaka, Vinaya Pitaka and Abhidhamma Pitaka, tells us that there are in many area of the Tipitaka written in such a style to reflect the Brahmanic tradition of the time in the first Buddhist council



The First Buddhist Council

A review of the sentiment of the Bhikkhu will tell us the true sentiment of the Bhikkhu community.

About seven days after the Buddha had passed away, the Venerable Mahakassapa heard of His death, while he was resting on his way from Pava to Kusinara together with 500 Theras. All the junior Theras were plunged in deep grief and were weeping and lamenting. But a monk named *Subhadda*, who had entered the Order in his old age, was the only one that rejoiced over His death.

"Grieve not, brothers," said he, "weep not, we are now delivered of that Great Ascetic. He constantly worried us, saying ' This is proper, this is not proper'. Now we are free to do what we like.

These unexpected words that fell from the lips of a disciple alarmed the Venerable *Mahakassapa* who became very concerned about the future of the Buddha's religious system, but kept quiet. When the Buddha's relics had been distributed, the Venerable *Mahakassapa* consulted the other Theras and suggested to them to hold a ***Council of leading Arahants*** to collect, classify and rehearse the teachings of the Buddha in order to protect and fortify the Sasana against such attacks as might be expected from monks of the type of Subhadda. They all welcomed the suggestion. King Ajatasattu was informed of the intention of the Samgha, and with his help the First Buddhist council was held at Rajagaha with 500 Arahants.

This prevailing sentiment of the Bhikkhu community tells us that the misinformation inserted subtly in many places to reflect the general Brahmanic tradition into the Buddha doctrine; such things like to subjugate the female members.

For that reason and many others, new group separate from the original Theravada was formed and now known as Mahayana Buddhist sect.

4.8 The main objection to the Revival of Bhikkhuni Sasana

The opponent of the revival will use every means and ways to obstruct the revival of Bhikkhuni Sanghas. They will use such things like:

- a. We cannot break the Vinaya rules to offer higher ordination
- b. No supervisions are available to monitor the observance of the six precepts for samaneri
- c. Bhikkhuni order has been extinct and no lineage of the original could be found today.

These are all convenient excuses they will present to oppose the revival of Bhikkhuni sasana.

The Myanmar researchers were embedded in their own Pali Books available within the country and never take a glance at the outside world. They simply have done very little research on the Theravada Bhikkhuni lineage outside of Myanmar. They have used every convenient excuse to oppose the revival.

4.9. The Revival of Bhikkhuni Sasana in Sri Lanka

4.9.1. The revival of Bhikkhu Order

It is well known that the Bhikkhuni (nuns) order was introduced to Sri Lanka during the reign of *King Devanampiyatissa*. (BC 250 - 210) Since then this order flourished at Anuradhapura for about **1200 years**. With the fall of Anuradhapura to the Cholian invaders in AD 1017 and the annexation of the Anuradhapura Kingdom to the Cholian empire the Bhikkhuni order disappeared and became defunct. *The Order of Monks (Bhikkhus) also met the same fate. But was later revived after King Vijayabahu drove away the Cholian invaders.* For this revival the King had to get down monks from Burma.

But there were no nuns in Burma, Siam, Cambodia or Laos the other four Theravada countries. Hence the monks maintained that the Bhikkhuni order should be considered defunct and not restorable. During the time the Bhikkhuni order existed in Sri Lanka it proved to be an asset to the religion and rendered yeoman service to the Sasana. Details can be found in the Dipavansa on which was modeled the Mahavamsa - the great chronicle in Sinhala history.

After 50 years of Cholian rule, King Vijayabahu coming up from Ruhuna expelled the invaders and assumed ruler ship over the whole island. He shifted his capital to Polonnaruwa. During the Polonnaruwa period which followed Sinhalese Buddhism came more and more under Tamil, Hindu influence. The Tamil caste system of South India was adopted and the monks took the names of their villages as a prefix to their Pali names given at ordination. The Sangha became the preserve of one caste monopolizing the temporalities in imitation of Hindu priesthood. The study of Sanskrit and secular sciences associated with it came into vogue. Anti-feminism and casteism were features entrenched in the Manu laws of Hinduism.

4.9.2. Anathema

These features found their way to Sinhalese society and its religion. Therefore, in this milieu the revival of the defunct Bhikkhuni order became anathema to Sinhalese Buddhism. **There is permission in the Vinaya Chullavagga for monks to ordain nuns. This permission could easily have been made use of if the monks were willing to restore the Bhikkhuni order.** But since their wishes were otherwise and they were more interested in maintaining their monopolies, it suited them to take the casteist and anti feminist line. They enabled them to avert rivalry from low caste men in the Sangha and women in to Bhikkhuni order.

Therefore, from the Polonnaruwa period right up to the British conquest of the island in 1815 no one took up the issue of admitting 'low caste' men to the Sangha and women to the Bhikkhuni order. Priest craft saw to it that the Buddhist Sangha was the preserve of the high-caste and that women were debarred from leading the holy life of a Bhikkhuni as advocated by the Buddha. The majority of people were ignorant and illiterate. They took

their Buddhism from the priest craft of the Sangha and the Kings who took their advice in matters of religion from the Sangha hierarchy.

Thus, a tradition to the effect that the Bhikkhuni order is defunct and cannot be restored until the appearance of Metteyya Buddha in a future aeon, became accepted. Thereby the teachings of the Buddha on appamada (diligence), samanattama (egalitarianism), Karuna, Metta, Artachariya etc were lost sight of. An anti-feminist dogma prevented women from taking to holy orders in Buddhism. This was the situation from the Polonnaruwa period right up to the time the Sangha - King combine lost their control of the nation in 1815 with the betrayal of the last King to the British.

During the colonial period, under British rule, it was *Anagarika Dharmapala* who was the pioneer of the Buddhist revival. He opened the first nunnery in modern Ceylon at Darley Lane, Colombo. It was not a success. He was followed by Miss Catherine de Alwis who went to Burma and got ordained there as a Junior Nun without Higher Ordination. She came back to Sri Lanka in 1903 and founded the *Dasa Sil Mata* order of Buddhist nuns. Thus from 1903 onwards these D.S.M nuns were the vestige and the representatives of the Bhikkhuni Sangha of old. They seemed to believe in the theory that half a loaf is better than no bread. Therefore they had to be satisfied with observing the ten precepts of Junior Nuns or Samaneri.

Many Buddhist leaders among the clergy and the laity realized that the DSM status for nuns was really incongruous and incompatible with the Buddha's concept of a four-fold division among his disciples and devotees.

He recognized only Bhikkhus, Bhikkhuni, male lay devotees and female lay devotees. There is no room for a half way house between lay women devotee and Bhikkhuni such as a Dasa Sil Matas. The later term is an invention by apostates in the Sasana who wish to keep down women renunciates from their proper place as Bhikkhuni.

Among the advocates for the revival of the Bhikkhuni order was *Ven. Pandit Narawala Dhammaratana Thero*.

He had led a delegation to a peace conference in Peking, China. He studied the Bhikkhuni order in China and found that it had been established on a firm Vinaya footing by Sinhalese nuns from Anuradhapura in AD 429.

4.9.3. Chinese nuns

Therefore, in his writings and teachings he advocated the revival of the Bhikkhuni Order with assistance from Chinese Nuns. Other advocates of the revival among our Maha Theras were *Ven. Pandit Hedipannala Pannaloka of the Vijalankara Pirivena*, *Ven. Pandit Henpitagedera Gnanaseeha*, *Ven. Banbarende Seevali* and several other progressives. Among lay Buddhist leaders, Anagarika Dharmapala, Sir D.B. Jayatillaka, H. Sri Nissanka, Dr. G.P. Malalasekera, J.R. Jayewardene and many others encouraged the movement and spoke for it. Among the living sympathizers and advocates were Ven.

Mapalagama Vipulasara. Principal, Paramadhamma Chetiya Pirivena, Ven. Pandit Inamaluwe Sumangala of the Dambulla Raja Maha Viharaya, Ven. Talalle Dhammaloka, Anunayaka Thero of the Amarapura Sect, Ven Dr. Kirinde Dhammananda, Ven. Pandit Pathegama Gnanarama retired Principal Sudharmakara Pirivena, Panadura, Ven. Porawagama Soma, Ven. Deegala Mahinda, Tembilyane Ariyadhamma etc.

While the progressive monks called for and advocated the revival there were reactionaries, conservatives and obscurantist who took the traditional stand in Sinhalese Buddhism as a dogma, equating it with 'pure Theravada Buddhism'. Thus there was division of opinion in the two camps, the conservatives sticking to traditional anti-feminism and the progressives calling for a revision of the traditional stand and a restoration of the Bhikkhuni Order.

As a sequel to the public interest created on this question Ven. M. Vipulasara, Principal, Parama Dhamma Chetiya Pirivena and President Mahabodhi Society came forward with the assistance of the World Sangha Council and Sakyadhita International Organisation of Buddhist Women and held an ordination ceremony on 8.12.96 at Saranath Temple, India. This was a grand and historic ceremony - a red letter day in the annals of Theravada Buddhism. At this ceremony 11 selected Sinhalese DSM nuns were ordained fully as Bhikkhuni by a team of Theravada monks in concert with a quorum of Korean Nuns. Thus for the first time after 980 odd years the Theravada Bhikkhuni Order was revived in India.

4.9.4. Sasanodaya Society

For the first time since the disappearance, the Bhikkhuni Order was restored at Saranath India on 8.12.96. The Sinhalese Nuns who received their Bhikkhuni Ordination there came back to Sri Lanka after one year and two months at the invitation of the Bhikkhuni Sasanodaya Society, Dambulla. On Medin Poya Day (12/3/98) they ordained 23 selected Sinhalese DSM Nuns into the Bhikkhuni Sangha.

This ordination was confirmed and ratified by a quorum of the Theravada Sangha as required in the Vinaya. Ven. Inamaluwe was the director of the function and the master of ceremonies. He was assisted by Ven. Mapalagama Vipulasara, Galkadawela Punnasara, Pandit Tallalle Dhammananda Anu Nayakam, Ven. Prof. K. Vajira and Porwagama Soma and a few others.

Thus for the first time since the Anuradhapura days the Bhikkhuni Sasana has been revived in Sri Lanka According to full Theravada ceremonial. Sinhalese DSM nuns, Buddhist women feminists and other advocates of the restoration of the Bhikkhuni Sasana will have the satisfaction that one of their cherished dreams for the Buddha Sasana has been realized.

Sri Lanka became the caretaker and headquarters of Theravada Buddhism since it was expelled from India. Other Theravada countries such as Siam, Burma, Laos, and Cambodia has never had a Bhikkhuni Order. There are movements in these countries for

the admission of women to the Bhikkhuni Sangha in the Theravada tradition to which they belong. These countries border China and they see that in China Bhikkhuni have been in existence from the earliest days of the introduction of Buddhism to that land.

Hence, their aspiration for entry to the Bhikkhuni Sangha will receive a fillip on hearing and seeing that the Theravada Bhikkhuni Order has been established in Sri Lanka. Though the Bhikkhuni Order had never been introduced to any country except Sri Lanka, Burma is an unusual exception. It had originally been a Mahayana country. Therefore during the Mahayana days there were Bhikkhuni in Burma. But once it was converted to Theravada Buddhism the Bhikkhuni Order there became unrecognized. Hence there continued to be the nuns with only Samaneri Ordination under the Ten Precepts. Even today the position is the same. It is from these Samaneri nuns (called Mae-Theelas) that Sri Lanka received its DSM order of nuns.

Now that the Theravada Bhikkhuni Order has been established in Sri Lanka it should be a matter of time for women renunciates in these countries to come to Sri Lanka, or get down Sri Lankan nuns to their countries and establish the Bhikkhuni Order in their lands. Admittance to the Bhikkhuni Order to women was granted by the Buddha himself. Women's rights are a part of human rights in the modern world.

Therefore, the Bhikkhuni Order in Sri Lanka should be the spearhead for the movement to establish the Theravada Bhikkhuni Order in these lands. The Bhikkhuni Order cannot function properly in poor and backward cultures which do not recognize women's rights. That is why even in some backward Mahayana countries such as Mongolia, Kirghizia and Tibet there never has been a Bhikkhuni Order. Now that Sri Lanka is emerging from a backward Third World country with a poor record of human rights to a modern democracy which recognizes women's rights the prospects of the Bhikkhuni Order gaining its rightful place as in the Anuradhapura period are bright and full of promise.

D. Amarasiri Weeraratne.

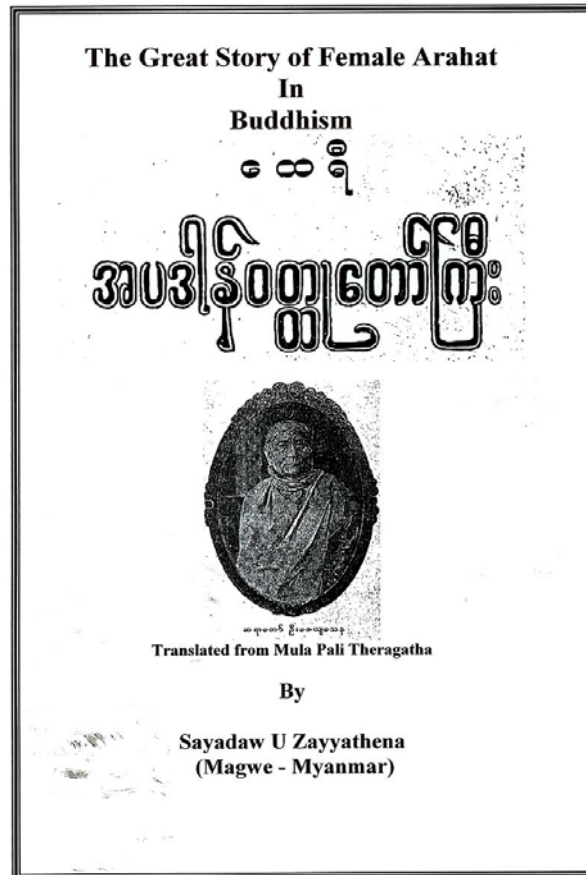
Source: Budhanet

<http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/history/nunorder.htm>

Chapter V

Other Research Findings

Women in Myanmar should be inspired to Attain Arahatsip
by
Sayadaw U Zayyathena (Myanmar)



Preface (Excerpt)

5. It is proper for women to be ordained as Bhikkhuni

In Myanmar according to the Theravada tradition, it is usually the case for man to enter temporarily as novices and later if the man chose to stay in the order, as ordained Bhikkhu, they work hard for the good of Buddha sasana. Unlike men, women in Myanmar never enter the order of Sangha to work for the good of Sasana like those of their sisters in the life time of Buddha. Bhikkhuni order was almost extinct in Myanmar because women are being screened from reading the related literatures describing the

work of women arahat (*Theri*) who had contributed to the welfare of the many for the good of Buddha sasana.

5.1. Many women are ignorant of Therigatha

Verses of the Elder Nuns

Ignorant of this fact, women in Myanmar have a strong inclination to think that;

- To enter the order of Sanghas is not appropriate for women;
- It is not proper to even touch the yellow saffron robes leave alone wearing them;
- Women are not allowed to step on the sacred ordination ground.
- Women of Myanmar today know only that women are unlike men should not enter the order of Sanghas.

They are totally ignorant of the fact that during the life time of Buddha, there were women Arahats who preach Dhamma to devotees and were as capable of performing the miraculous power as man-arahats. *Khema Theri* was one good example as described in Dhammapada Verse No. 403. She could do astral travel like any other man Arahats. If only women know of such feats, there would be women who will certainly wear the yellow saffron robes and work for the good of many and Buddha sasana. Given these facts, Women would certainly enter the order of Bhikkhu as Bhikkhuni and work towards the continuation of the Bhikkhuni lineage in Myanmar to avoid the Bhikkhuni lineage from extinction.

Given all these facts from the past, there will certainly be many women among the populace in Myanmar who have accrued enough perfection (*parami*) and have been inspired by women of the past such that they would work hard to attain arahatship after they enter the order of Bhikkhuni Sangha.

“Only if they knew that Bhikkhuni order is the prerequisite to attaining the arahatship in this very life, they would certainly enter the order of Sangha by all means.”

The modern women of Myanmar should read the stories of those two hundred and thirty two thousand women arahats of the past to get inspiration and follow their foot steps of attaining the arahatship in today settings.

The Bhikkhuni Sangha started in the life time of Buddha. Buddha fostered mother *Pajapati Gotami* along with five hundred women approached before the Buddha to request permission to establish the order of Bhikkhuni Order. *Pajapati Gotami* being the Buddha's foster mother who had nursed the Buddha as Prince Siddhatta, Buddha in grateful gratitude allowed *Pajapati Gotami* to establish the order of Sangha after seeing the past Buddhas' tradition of having Bhikkhuni Sangha as part of every Buddha's sasana. The Buddha said :

“Ananda that women are as capable as men in their spiritual development and that they could attain the highest fruit of holiness as men do”.

Thus saying, Mahapajapati Gotami and her five hundred women, including *Yasodhara* (Buddha wife), shaved their head and were ordained as Bhikkhuni in the communion of the order of Sanghas. May there be the dawn of Bhikkhuni Sangha rising in the horizon, like the morning sun getting ever brighter and brighter in the Glory of Buddha sasana.

3rd Printing
U Tin – Daw Nu Yin
Thiriyatana – Pitaka Book Store

The Chronicle of King's Proclamation

By

Dr. Than Tun

(Translated from the Myanmar Version)

(excerpt from Ideas and Views)

Published August, 2001

5.2. Bhikkhuni Lineage in Myanmar

Introduction: This is an English version of Dr. Than Tun research paper titled "*The Chronicle of the King's Proclamation*" The chronicle shows that many things that had become law until today are part of earlier king's proclamations. He has pieced together by date when the king made such proclamations or decrees. In this chronicle of king decrees, it is noted that the Myanmar King did allowed the female to be ordained as Bhikkhuni as late as 1800 AD (some 200 years ago)...

5.2.1. Building stupas in the country

In December 26, 1787, the king made a special decree declaring what his subject must avoid in building stupas in the country. The subject could carry out building stupas freely as long as the donor has two appropriate architects, artisan, carpenters and bricklayers. However, in the case of building a sanctified place for ordination, the donor shall submit his application stating he is building the sanctified place for ordination in the king's behalf. It is up to the king to grant permission to build such places. The subject cannot build freely thinking that the land belongs to me and I can do what I please. The king stated in his decrees, Religious Affaire that a land owner only own the permission for use of the land and in the case of building sanctified ordination place, he must be granted permission to build such a place. On June 18, 1835, October 22, 1858, February 5, 1859September 14, 1865 and May 28, 1867 these proclamation were made.

5.2.2. Religious Affair

The king appointed a minister in charge of the religious affair as documented in **September 1975, 60**). There were many places by the king's decree stating such a such a land and place are solely dedicated for use as religious use .Revenues collected from such religious use land, the minister will use such taxes collected to do repair or renovation works on stupas and monasteries. Some said, tax collected is unwholesome and is questionable whether the use of such revenues on wholesome deeds?

There was a proclamation stating that his subject shall refrain from eating larger land and sea animals as food; yet the king will provide arms and dried beef meat ration to his army. In January 20, 1811, the king granted license to Chinese traders to trade and transport liquor, yet the king had a proclamation on his subject a law that is punishable to those who used liquor. These were some contradictory laws proclaimed at that time.

5.2.3. Religious Festivals

In any religious festivals, without exception the king allowed the subject to include puja offerings to the deities Gods (*Balinat sar pwe*) The king's minister will look the other way of such deity's worship saying these offerings were based on the tradition sense and should be ignored.

Another example was festival of Buddha relics that held in front of the king's parliament building. In this instance too, the king's men conduct – recitation of *Missaka pabbata* Sutta to bring rain at proper time and prevent draught in the country,

Another instance was to prevent pestilence befall on the country Monks will recite the ordination sutta. To prevent fires and diseases in the country, the king made offering to the deity Gods of the mountain. (July 21, 1784, Jan 29, 1795, May 15, 1795)

At the end of the rainy season, the Buddhist lent period, the king held a religious festival called – *Sa Ye Tan festival* where every household must accept one monk pick at random by the king's men. (July 17, 1787, May 10, 1795, June 15, 1795). Then the subject will convey a wishing tree filled with the four requisites to monasteries with all the song and dance procession. Then the subject will be asked to provide new set of robes at the end of the Buddhist lent to provide monks who were restricted to within the monastery to allow the monk a chance to wear new set of robes. This religious festival is called Kathinna festival for offering new set of robes to the monk. In October 21, 1806, another festival of offering of ration food to the monks called "*Soon Gyi Laung*" festival was held.

Then, in October 5, 1806, the dry twigs from the Bodhi tree smashed and grind into powder mixed with glue molded into Buddha image – known as – *Datkhunatakhar* Image, a tradition done in Sri Lanka and adopted by the Myanmar king. Since the day of the king's proclamation, the tradition spread all across the country with in a short time of twenty-five years.

5.2.4. Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Ordination

In January 21, 1788, the kings made another proclamation stating that: any male or female who are of age 19 and who are:

- free of any incurable disease
- free from any criminal offences or fugitive from law

- free from financial indebtedness – not bankrupt person

Those free of the above could be permitted to be ordained as Bhikkhu for male and Bhikkhuni for female. There is another proclamation forbidding any king's slave from taking ordination as Bhikkhu or Bhikkhuni. Who ever so monk ordained the kings slave will be harshly punishable by law. (March 30, 1810).

In the same month, the king made another proclamation stating that all legally ordained Bhikkhu or Bhikkhuni be monitored by the king's men to check on the legal status of their Sanghas life and their orderly observation of the rules of the Monks. In July 13, 1801, those illegal monks found deviating from the rules, were asked to disrobe and the list of illegal monks were published in the king's announcement.

5.2.5. Tipitaka Translation to Myanmar

The conventional tradition was to memorize Tipitaka by heart as was done in the past, since the time of Buddha. Then with the passing of time, the Tipitaka written in pali brought over from Sri Lanka need to be translated .**In November 8, 1807**, the kings decreed that in the *Tipitaka should be revised and corrected that eventually caused deviation from the original*. Because of this diluted version, the king decreed the minister to bring the original version from *Magadha region in July 10, 1810*. in addition, gave the following reasons for revising the Tipitaka:

- *The current Tipitaka – possibly have some deficiencies*
- *There are possible translation errors committed by some Sayadaws*
- *The Lord Buddha attained enlightenment on his own. based on this premise, Tipitaka can be revised by committee.*
- *In observation of the five precepts, we can observe the precept on our own cognizance decision. (May 23, 1818). The king requested the Sangha order to examine his proclamation and analyze them carefully.*

In June 20, 1812, the Sri Lanka Government requested the Myanmar to help reestablishing their Buddha sasana. The king replied to the Sri lanka Government that Myanmar was unable to send Sangha at this time.

In Aug. 28, 1812, the king said that most of his subject will preferred to adhere to the traditional concept rather than change the tradition. Hence, the king let the Tipitaka at status quo and no changes were made.

In November 3, 1807 – the king declared that he saw in some monasteries, people were conducting deity festivities and such unacceptable behavior by Monks. The king tried to make changes of such unacceptable behavior, but later gave up on the issues. Because of the complex nature of the mix between the tradition and the religious purity, the king finally declared to his subject:

The subject will be free to follow the tradition like ordination of samanara, or Bhikkhu, religious examination to be conducted as usual, carry out the religious festivities as normally done in the past, to allow taking Sabbath only in Monastery to observe precepts. This was declared as the king's proclamation throughout the country in June 29, 1816.

5.2.6.Conclusion:

5.2.6.1. Bhikkhuni Sasana was alive and well in 1810.

Based on U Than Tun research, it is obvious that even up to the time in **March 30, 1810**, in Myanmar Bhikkhuni ordination was performed and this King's proclamation decree indicates that Bhikkhuni sasana was alive and well to that date. It was not extinct as most people said that Bhikkhuni sasana had long since been extinct and defunct in Myanmar.

5.2.6.2. The Pali Tipitaka was diluted and required to be revised

Again, by another king's proclamation, on the proposal to revise the Tipitaka that was brought from Sri Lanka, the kings was aware of the fact that the version was diluted with many personal adherences and preferences and that the king should take a lead in revising the Tipitaka by comparing the Tipitaka brought from Magadha source, India.

Chapter VI

Final conclusion

6.1 Government of Myanmar, the Ministry of Religious Affairs

These are some of the excuses raised by the opponent to the revival of Bhikkhuni Sangha forwarded their decision on the issue of the Revival of Bhikkhuni Sasana, in Theravada tradition in Myanmar per publication No. 2547 (2004) Published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs: :

- a. Ordination according to the eight Vinaya rule – only Buddha himself could execute the ordination by “Ehi Bhikkhuni”.*
- b. In the beginning on establishing the Bhikkhuni Sanghas, only one Bhikkhuni was available and for that reason exception was granted to allow Bhikkhu to offer ordination to the 500 Royal ladies to the Bhikkhuni order. It is applicable only in this special case.*
- c. This exception was only applicable in special case as permitted by Buddha*
- d. At this time no Bhikkhuni are available , in Theravada tradition, to execute the higher ordination for samaneri.*
- e. The non-availability of the Theravada Bhikkhuni at this time, it is not possible to revive the Bhikkhuni Sasana in the Theravada tradition.*
- f. Those who force the issue by bringing up the issue in order to bring schism to the Sanghas community will commit the sin of going to the Avici Hell.*

In short, the opponent of Bhikkhuni sasana said: No female could have the opportunity to receive higher Bhikkhuni ordination at this time, was decided by the Government of the people’s of Myanmar, Ministry of Religious Affairs, and publication No. 2547 in the year 2004.

6.2 The key to the Revival of Bhikkhuni Sasana

The primary qualm put forward by the opponent was that at this time no Theravada Bhikkhu’s , adequate in Number to satisfy the Vinaya rule, are un available at this time, For that very reason as the primary excuse, there can be no possible means to revive the Bhikkhuni sasana .

There are three possible ways that Bhikkhuni sasana could be revived under the following conditions:

- a. The first method = “*Ehi Bhikkhuni*” can only be employed by Buddha himself alone.

- b. The ordination by group of Bhikkhu Sangha, as permitted by Buddha to ordain the 500 royal ladies which many in Myanmar tried so hard to maintain that it was a special case permitted by Buddha, himself.
- c. To use the Bhikkhuni lineage available in Mahayana Bhikkhuni sasana, which was originally the Sri Lankan Theravada lineage transplanted by the Sri Lanka Bhikkhuni in the year **429 AD** to Nan King, China and was well preserved in *China, Taiwan* and *Japan* currently known as Mahayana Bhikkhuni sasana.

The Bhikkhu's who wrote the Myanmar Bhikkhuni Vinaya Theses, publication No. 2547 (2004) had no opportunity to dig deep into the literature research on literatures available outside of Myanmar, were totally unaware of the fact that the current Mahayana Bhikkhuni sasana available at this time in China and Taiwan was truly originated by the Theravada Sri Lankan Bhikkhuni's led by the *Sri Lanka Bhikkhuni, Arahat Deva Sara Theri., in 429 AD.*

It is proper and appropriate to use the current Mahayana Bhikkhuni lineage, uninterrupted Theravada Bhikkhuni lineage wholesomely preserved in China, to revive the Theravada Bhikkhuni Sasana today.

We have a saying in Myanmar:

A little frog inside a well will say: "Like a frog who lives inside a well, will never know what life was like outside the wall". So he will go on saying yes, it was night time to me all the time. .

They never will admit that, in Sri Lanka, they have found the Bhikkhuni lineage that was originated in Sri Lanka and transplanted in China by Sri Lanka Bhikkhuni led by *Arahat Deva Sara Theri., in 429 AD.* Conveniently, in a couple of decade ago, they made use of this Theravada lineage to revived the Sri Lanka Bhikkhuni sasana

Appendix – A

Samaneri Gunasari

The First Myanmar Samaneri in USA Woman folks in the great Golden land of Myanmar could never be ordained as Bhikkhuni or Samaneri in the Theravada Buddhist tradition. All of the Nuns are known by their lowly name as '*Thilaa Shin*', '*Sayalay*' or *Mae Thudaw* - (in Myanmar) – minor or smaller Dhamma teacher or one who observed the (ten) precepts.

This is the current Theravadin's tradition in Myanmar. Many woman folks are being discouraged to seek the status of Bhikkhuni, a fully ordained Samgha, even though they are well qualified. There were instances when some who dared go against the tradition were forced to disrobe. However, in the land of the Free, Woman folks of Myanmar heritage, Theravada Buddhist, could enjoy to their fullest, their freedom to choose as permitted by Buddha to become a Bhikkhuni – *Samaneri*.

On October 13, 2002, Dr. Khiin Swe Win, MD, elected to become a Buddhist Samaneri, was ordained – Samaneri named **Gunasari**, at **Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara, Los Angeles, California**. Her prescribed robe would be different from the pink color – as currently given to Myanmar *Thila shins*.

This is an unprecedented occasion for all women folks of Myanmar heritage living in USA, to be given this opportunity, to be ordained as a samaneri (preparatory status towards full ordination as Bhikkhuni. She has all the privileges of a Bhikkhuni or Samaneri under the code of ethics (Vinaya Pitaka) prescribed by Buddha.

Source- Buddhawellness.yahoo club. Date: Thu, 17 Oct 2002 06:39:16 -0500

From: "Deshappriya Jayasuriya" lion007@a...

Subject: **samaneri ordination**

Samaneri Ordination Dr. Khin Swe Win, M.D. on October 13, 2002

Talk given after ordination by **Ven. Walpola Piyananda**. During the time of the Buddha, 6th century B.C.E., Indian society was male-dominated. A woman was not regarded as a man's equal. The status of a woman according to Manusmurti was reflected in the following statement,

"A female child is under the control of her father until she is married, then she is under the control of her husband. If she outlives her husband, she is then under the control of her son. A woman must not have freedom at all."

Religion was especially the domain of the male. Women were not given the opportunity to become religious leaders or teachers. The Buddha was the only religious leader in the world to give equal status to men and women.

The Buddha said,

"Na so sabbesu thanesu Puriso hoti pandito ethipi pandita hoti tatha tatha wicakkhana."

Which means,

"Men are not wise in every situation, women are wise also, women are equally capable."

According to a reference in the *Cullavagga* there was ordination of women into the Order as Bhikkhuni during the 5th year after the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment. The Buddha granted this right of ordination at the request of his stepmother Mahapajapati Gotami and at the urging of his chief attendant Ananda. The Cullavaga, Vol. V of the Vinaya Pitaka 2. 1-3 records the following:

Anujanami bhikkhave bhikkhuhi bhikkhuniyo upasampadatum

["I allow, monks, nuns to be ordained by monks."].

According to historical records, the Order of Bhikkhus and Bhikkhuni was well established in India and was transplanted to Sri Lanka by Emperor Asoka who sent his son *Mahinda* and daughter *Sanghamitta* to establish the Order of Bhikkhus and Bhikkhuni which flourished.

During the 5th century C.E. Bhikkhuni Devasara, went from Sri Lanka with a group of Bhikkhuni to establish the Order of Bhikkhuni in China.

The stone pillar at Mihintale in Sri Lanka mentions that during the 1st century B.C.E., Buddhist nuns were the first to establish health clinics to help the sick and poor people.

The Dipavamsa, the first chronicle of Sri Lanka, states that during the reign of King Valagamba (88 B.C.E.) a group of nuns came from the southern province of Sri Lanka to help the monks with the written record of the Buddha's teaching called the Tripitaka. The Tripitaka is the oldest record of the Buddha's teaching in the world. Unfortunately, the Bhikkhuni Order disappeared from Sri Lanka in the 13th century. However, it continued in China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam. **These orders have maintained an unbroken lineage that can be traced back to Sri Lanka.**

We are here today to give the Samaneri ordination to Dr. Khin Swe Win. This is not the first time that a Samaneri Ordination is taking place in this temple. In fact, the first Theravada Samaneri was ordained here on May 23, 1988. We are deeply indebted to the late Ven. Dr. Hawanpola Ratanasara who was bold enough to encourage me to organize

and initiate a woman's ordination. Ven. Dr. Henepola Gunaratana, well-known meditation master and founder of the Bhavana Society in West Virginia also encouraged me, and in the following year had a Samaneri ordination and training at his center. Dharma Vijaya was partly instrumental in the first historical Theravada Mahayana Bhikkhuni Ordination held at Saranath in May of 1997. In 1998 at Buddhagaya there was a Theravada Mahayana Bhikkhuni Ordination ceremony under Ven. Shin yun's leadership.

We appreciate Ven. Shin yun for supporting the joint Theravada Mahayana Bhikkhuni Ordination. I recall my request in 1979 to Ven. Shin yun for this ordination. I am delighted that it has materialized. He has opened his doors to any qualified Theravada Samaneris to be ordained in his temple in *Fu Kuang Shan* in Taiwan. We are very happy to say that since *1998 the Dambulla Sangha Council has reestablished the Theravada Bhikkhuni Ordination in Sri Lanka*. I would like to introduce Dr. Khin Swe Win whom we named Samaneri Gunasari. She has been learning and practicing the Dhamma for most of her life. She has been a practitioner of meditation for almost 40 years. She continues her practice under the guidance of the well-known meditation master Ven. U. Silananda. I believe it is only fitting to fulfill her desire to become a nun, so that she may continue on her path to liberation. I have known her personally for over twenty years. She and her husband Dr. Shein Win have been generously helping our Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara. As a long time supporter in the reestablishment of the Bhikkhuni Order, I ask these pioneers to dedicate themselves to practicing the Buddha's teaching and thereby help people eradicate suffering. They join us in our endeavor to remove all desire, ill will, anger, and delusion. Then, we follow the correct path to attain Nibbana. I know, Samaneri Gunasari will be an example of a true follower of the Buddha's path. You have now taken the vows to propagate the greatest, compassionate message of Gautama Buddha, to eradicate all suffering, and to attain Nibbana. May you be successful in your mission. I thank you Dr. Shein Win and your children for giving her your moral support and permission to enter the Order. And finally, Ms. Kung I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the energy you expended to make this occasion a memorable one. I know you will be the benefactor of Samaneri Gunasari to provide her with all the basic necessities.

In conclusion I am grateful to all the Sangha members present here today. Thank you. Samaneri Gunasari was ordained in the presence of twenty monks of the Sri Lankan and Thai traditions. Ven. Weihene Pannaloka, Nayake Maha Thera is her preceptor and Ven. Walpola Piyananda, Nayake Maha Thera is her teacher. Her family and over a hundred well-wishers were in attendance at :

Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara, Los Angeles, California.

**BUDDHIST INTERNATIONAL--BUDDHISM WITHOUT BORDERS,
WITHOUT CASTE, WITHOUT GENDER.....**

Note - samanera (samaneri): Literally, a small samana; a novice monk (nun) who observes ten precepts and who is a candidate for admission to the order of Bhikkhu's (Bhikkhuni).

Appendix - B
Myanmar Bhikkhuni
Ordination
In Sri Lanka



Bhikkhuni Ordination in Sri Lanka

Introduction –

On February 28, 2003, in Sri Lanka, two of the Myanmar Samaneri were ordained as Bhikkhuni. Their demeanor said, their dress said it all - **we are no longer – minor irrelevant Thila Shin** - we are now fully ordained Bhikkhuni of the Order of Sangha , Theravada Tradition. Our robes are different than others' Thila Shins of Myanmar; we are titled as *Ven. Daw Gunasari* and *Ven. Daw Saccavadi* of Bhikkhuni Samgha. Many **Thila Shins** in Myanmar could never dream that they too could one day be fully ordained as Bhikkhuni following the path of *Pajapati Gotami Theri*. Pajapati was the first female to be ordained as Bhikkhuni in the early Buddhism at the time of Buddha.

Woman folks in the great Golden land of Myanmar could never receive ordination as Bhikkhuni or Samaneri in the Theravada Buddhist tradition. All of the Nuns are known by their lowly name as **Thila Shin, Sayalay – minor or smaller Dhamma teacher** or one who observed the precepts like Bhikkhu – Samgha, Monk.

This is the current Theravada tradition in Myanmar. Many woman folks are being discouraged to seek the status of Bhikkhuni, a fully ordained Samgha, even they are well qualified. ***There were instances when some who dared go against the tradition were forced to disrobe.*** However, in the land of the Free, Woman folks of Myanmar heritage,

Theravada Buddhist, could enjoy to their fullest, their personal and religious freedom to choose as permitted by Buddha to become a Bhikkhuni – [Samaneri](#) or [Bhikkhuni](#).

Without being ordained as Bhikkhuni, woman could never attain the [Arahatship \(Yahandar\)](#), and that would be a great loss to the Myanmar women Folks. The fruit of the highest Holiness will belongs exclusively only to the men, if woman cannot be ordained to the order of Samgha, in the Theravada tradition as practiced in Myanmar.. They can attain [Sotapanna](#), [Sedagami](#) or [Anagami phalanx](#), but never Arahatship. That is why we all should encourage women folks to be ordained as [Samaneri](#) and [Bhikkhuni](#) so they also can reap the fruit of Holiness (Arahatship) like [Yasodaya Theri](#) and [Pajapati Gotami Theri](#) who attained Arahatship at the time of Buddha. We have a Vihara in Los Angeles that could ordain woman to [Samaneri](#) in the Theravada tradition.

[Myanmar Bhikkhuni's](#)

On [February 28, 2003](#), two of Myanmar [Samanari's Daw Gunasari](#) and [Daw Saccavadi](#) were ordained in Sri Lanka to Bhikkhuni Sangha order.



[Daw Gunasari](#)

On October 13, 2002, Dr. Khiin Swe Win, MD, elected to become a Buddhist Samaneri was fully ordained – Samaneri named Gunasari. At [Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara, Los Angeles, California](#). Her prescribed robe would be different from the pink color – as currently given to Myanmar [Thila shin](#) On February 28, 2003, in Sri Lanka, Samaneri Daw Gunasari was ordained to Bhikkhuni Sangha order , along with another Myanmar Samaneri Daw Saccavadi. This is an unprecedented occasion for all women folks of Myanmar heritage living in USA, to be given this opportunity, being ordained as a fully ordained Bhikkhuni. She has all the privileges of a Bhikkhuni or Samaneri under the code of ethics ([Vinaya Pitaka](#)) prescribed by Buddha.

[Source- Buddhawellness.yahoo club](#). Date: Thu, 17 Oct 2002

From: "Deshappriya Jayasuriya

Subject: Samaneri ordination
Samaneri Ordination of Dr. Khin Swe Win, M.D. on October 13, 2002

Talk given after ordination by Ven. Walpola Piyananda During the time of the Buddha, 6th century B.C.E., Indian society was male-dominated. A woman was not regarded as a man's equal. The status of a woman according to Manusmurti was reflected in the following statement, "A female child is under the control of her father until she is married, then she is under the control of her husband. If she outlives her husband, she is then under the control of her son. A woman must not have freedom at all." Religion was especially the domain of the male. Women were not given the opportunity to become religious leaders or teachers. The Buddha was the only religious leader in the world to give equal status to men and women. The Buddha said,

"Na so sabbesu thanesu Puriso hoti pandito ethipi pandita hoti tatha tatha wicakkhana."
Which means,

"Men are not wise in every situation, women are wise also, women are equally capable."

According to a reference in the Cullavaga there was ordination of women into the Order as Bhikkhuni during the 5th year after the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment. The Buddha granted this right of ordination at the request of his stepmother Mahapajapati Gotami and at the urging of his chief attendant Ananda. The Cullavaga, Vol. V of the Vinaya Pitaka 2. 1-3 records the following:

Anujanami bhikkhave bhikkhuhi bhikkhuniyo upasampadetum ["I allow, monks, nuns to be ordained by monks."]. According to historical records, the Order of Bhikkhus and Bhikkhuni was well established in India and was transplanted to Sri Lanka by Emperor Asoka who sent his son Mahinda and daughter Sanghamitta to establish the Order of Bhikkhus and Bhikkhuni which flourished. During the 5th century C.E. Bhikkhuni Devasara, went from Sri Lanka with a group of Bhikkhuni to establish the Order of Bhikkhuni in China. The stone pillar at Mihintale in Sri Lanka mentions that during the 1st century B.C.E., Buddhist nuns were the first to establish health clinics to help the sick and poor people. The Dipavamsa, the first chronicle of Sri Lanka, states that during the reign of King Valagamba (88 B.C.E.) a group of nuns came from the southern province of Sri Lanka to help the monks with the written record of the Buddha's teaching called the Tripitaka. The Tripitaka is the oldest record of the Buddha's teaching in the world. Unfortunately, the Bhikkhuni Order disappeared from Sri Lanka in the 13th century. However, it continued in China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam. These orders have maintained an unbroken lineage that can be traced back to Sri Lanka. We are here today to give the Samaneri ordination to Dr. Khin Swe Win. This is not the first time that a Samaneri Ordination is taking place in this temple. In fact, the first Theravada Samaneri was ordained here on May 23, 1988. We are deeply indebted to the late Ven. Dr. Hawanpola Ratanasara who was bold enough to encourage me to organize and initiate a woman's ordination. Ven. Dr. Henepola Gunaratana, well-known mediation master and founder of the Bhavana Society in West Virginia also encouraged me, and in the following year had a Samaneri ordination and training at his center. Dharma Vijaya was partly instrumental in the first historical Theravada Mahayana Bhikkhuni Ordination held

at Saranath in May of 1997. In 1998 at Buddhagaya there was a Theravada Mahayana Bhikkhuni Ordination ceremony under Ven. Shin yun's leadership. We appreciate Ven. Shin yun for supporting the joint Theravada Mahayana Bhikkhuni Ordination. I recall my request in 1979 to Ven. Shin yun for this ordination. I am delighted that it has materialized. He has opened his doors to any qualified Theravada Samaneri to be ordained in his temple in Fu Kuang Shan in Taiwan. We are very happy to say that since 1998 the Dambulla Sangha Council has reestablished the Theravada Bhikkhuni Ordination in Sri Lanka. I would like to introduce Dr. Khin Swe Win whom we named Samaneri Gunasari. She has been learning and practicing the Dhamma for most of her life. She has been a practitioner of meditation for almost 40 years. She continues her practice under the guidance of the well-known meditation master Ven. U. Silananda. I believe it is only fitting to fulfill her desire to become a nun, so that she may continue on her path to liberation. I have known her personally for over twenty years. She and her husband Dr. Shein Win have been generously helping our Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara. As a long time supporter in the reestablishment of the Bhikkhuni Order, I ask these pioneers to dedicate themselves to practicing the Buddha's teaching and thereby help people eradicate suffering. They join us in our endeavor to remove all desire, ill will, anger, and delusion. Then, we follow the correct path to attain Nibbana. I know, Samaneri Gunasari will be an example of a true follower of the Buddha's path. You have now taken the vows to propagate the greatest, compassionate message of Gautama Buddha, to eradicate all suffering, and to attain Nibbana. May you be successful in your mission. I thank you Dr. Shein Win and your children for giving her your moral support and permission to enter the Order. And finally, Ms. Kung I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the energy you expended to make this occasion a memorable one. I know you will be the benefactor of Samaneri Gunasari to provide her with all the basic necessities. In conclusion I am grateful to all the Sangha members present here today. Thank you. Samaneri Gunasari was ordained in the presence of twenty monks of the Sri Lankan and Thai traditions. Ven. Weihene Pannaloka, Nayake Maha Thera is her preceptor and Ven. Walpola Piyananda, Nayake Maha Thera is her teacher. Her family and over a hundred well-wishers were in attendance at :

Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara, Los Angeles, California.
BUDDHIST INTERNATIONAL--BUDDHISM WITHOUT BORDERS,
WITHOUT CASTE, WITHOUT GENDER.....
Extracted from Buddha wellness Yahoo.com.

[Ven. Daw Saccavadi](#)

The heir that I inherited was realized after a long struggle, on the day I was ordained as a fully ordained Bhikkhuni in Sri Lanka. In Burmese, I called it [Saya Ahmwe](#) – the heir that I inherited from my mentor Ven. Pannajota Thera of Myanmar. My name in Myanmar Theravada tradition is [Saccavadi](#). It carries the meaning "truth-speaker". My mentor teacher [Ven. Pannajota Thera](#) gave it to me. My mentor is a highly regarded in the saga community in Myanmar for his strict morality and oratorical ability in preaching Buddha Dhamma.



Daw Saccavadi

I was born on 14th of May 1965 at Military Hospital in [Hmawbi](#) township of Yangon. My father is a retired medical officer from Myanmar Army medical Corp. My mother passed away in 1984 at the age of 47. I have 2 brothers and 3 sisters. I am the youngest in the sibling. I received my B.A. from Rangoon Arts and Science University (R.A.S.U) in Rangoon, Myanmar, in September of 1986. I have never envisioned of becoming a Buddhist nun (Thi-la-shin) in my tender age until I started practicing on Buddhist meditation and participated in meditation retreats for 10 days in April,1986. My interest has been on the Buddha first Sermon " *The Four Noble Truths*" and " *The law of impermanent (Anecca)*, the human suffering (Dukha) and non-self (Anatta)" in the human world. The Buddha teaching and the wisdom that I can derive from his Dhamma to lead us all on the path to the cessation of suffering, Nibbana makes me to believe with the deepest faith on his Dhamma.

Again, the Sangha community, which carries his message and his true teaching, would be a good career option for me to follow. With my faith so driven, I decided to join the community of Buddhist nun after final examination on 9th of November,1986. I passed the examinations of Pali canonical literature in the first position in the whole Myanmar conducted by the Myanmar government. Based on those achievements, I was awarded "*The Best Candidate*" at the Buddhist academic convocation ceremonies both in 1988 and 1991.

I became a [samaneri](#) (novice leading to a female Buddhist monk) on 25.02.2002 at [Sakyadhita Center](#) in Sri Lanka by the witness of both Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Sangha, that is [Bhikkhu Medananda Thero](#) and [Bhikkhuni Sudassana](#). I intend to get the Bhikkhuni-hood from the teacher Sri Lankan Bhikkhuni Khemacari who was first ordained as a Buddhist nun (Dasa-sila-mata) by Burmese nun Ven. Daw Vicari in 1958 in Sri Lanka. On February 28, 2003, my life long aspiration to be a fully Bhikkhuni was realized. I was finally ordained as Bhikkhuni.

To Honor Them
Dhammapada Verse 391
The Story of Thera Mahapajapati Gotami

While residing at the Jetavana monastery, the Buddha uttered Verse (391) of this book, with reference to **Theri Mahapajapati Gotami Mahapajapati Gotami** Theri was the stepmother of Gotama Buddha. On the death of Queen, seven days after the birth of **Prince Siddhattha, Mahapajapati Gotami** became the chief queen of King Suddhodana. At that time, her own son **Nanda** was only five days old. She let her own son be fed by a wet-nurse, and herself fed Prince Siddhattha, the future Buddha. **Thus, Mahapajapati Gotami was a great benefactor to Prince Siddhattha.**

When Prince Siddhattha returned to Kapilavatthu after the attainment of Buddhahood, Mahapajapati Gotami went to see the Buddha and requested that **women should also be allowed to enter the Buddhist Order as Bhikkhuni**; but the Buddha refused permission. Later, King Suddhodana died after attaining arahatship. Then, while the Buddha was sojourning at the Mahavana forest near Vesali, Mahapajapati, and Yasodaya accompanied by five hundred ladies, came on foot from Kapilavatthu to Vasali. They had already shaven their heads and had put on the dyed robes. There, for a second time, **Mahapajapati requested the Buddha to accept women in the Buddhist Order.** The Venerable Ananda also interceded on her behalf. So, the Buddha complied, with the proviso that Mahapajapati abides by eight special conditions (garudhammas). Mahapajapati undertook to observe the garudhammas as required, and the Buddha admitted her into the Order. Thus, Mahapajapati was the first to be admitted to the Order of the Bhikkhuni. The other women were admitted to the Order after her by the Bhikkhu's as instructed by the Buddha.

In course of time, it came to the minds of some Bhikkhuni that Mahapajapati Gotami had not been properly admitted as a Bhikkhuni because she did not have a preceptor; therefore. Mahapajapati Gotami was not a true Bhikkhuni. With this thought in their mind, they stopped doing sabbath (uposatha) ceremonies and vassa (pavarana) ceremonies with her. They went to the Buddha and posed the problem of Mahapajapati Gotami not having been properly admitted to the Order of Bhikkhuni as she had no preceptor. To them the Buddha replied,

"Why do you say so? I myself gave the eight garudhammas to Mahapajapati and she had learnt and practiced the garudhammas as required by me. I myself am her preceptor and it is quite wrong for you to say that she has no preceptor. You should harbor no doubt whatsoever about an arahat."

Then the Buddha spoke in verse as follows :

Verse 391. Him I call a Brahman a who does no evil in deed or word or thought, who is restrained in these three respects.
May they achieve their Aspiration on the route to

the highest Holiness.

**May the sisters
Who aspired to attain liberation from suffering
In this very life as Theri
May this be your final existence**

Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu

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