

Concerning the Lineage of Bhikshuni Ordination

Proceedings of the
Seminar of Mulasarvastivada, Theravada
and Dharmagupta Vinaya Holders



3rd–5th August 1998
at the Norbulingka Institute, Dharamsala

Supported by
Department of Religion and Culture, CTA

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PREFACE

The far reaching developmental changes that took place worldwide in the twentieth century and the social and political upheavals that often accompanied them presented a great challenge to many Buddhist nations. Ways of life that had been followed and preserved for centuries were suddenly disturbed and uprooted. Certainly in Tibet over the last forty years and more there has been severe disruption of age-old religious traditions, while those of us Tibetans living in exile from our homeland have worked hard to preserve the essence of our Buddhist practices and customs.

On the other hand, one of the benefits of the improvements in communications and travel facilities that also took place in the twentieth century is that Buddhist communities in their various native lands have become increasingly aware of each other's traditions and practices to a degree not seen before. An important and specific instance of this relates to the Buddhist ordination of women. In some places women have been accorded almost no status of religious ordination, while in others they have received full ordination as Bhikshunis.

In Tibet, many women chose to live as nuns. They shaved their heads and donned religious robes and often lived together in nunneries. However, in general, although such women eagerly pursued a religious life, the ordination they received was only that of novice nuns or sramanerikas, not that of bhikshunis because the latter tradition never flourished in the Land of Snow. On becoming aware that traditions of bestowing bhikshuni ordination exist in certain countries there are those amongst Tibetans and elsewhere who have expressed interest in introducing such a practice amongst the Tibetan monastic community and others. All the same, doubts have also been expressed about the status of the tradition of granting such ordinations, the authenticity of its lineage of transmission, the procedures to be followed and not least how such practices can be introduced where they have not existed before.

Should all these doubts be allayed and it were to become feasible to formally introduce or re-introduce the practice of granting bhikshuni ordination in Tibet and other Buddhist lands two significant advantages would ensue. Women individually and in communities would enjoy the full opportunities of pursuing a Buddhist monastic way of life. In addition, in those places where a sangha or Buddhist spiritual community of bhikshus of fully ordained monks, upasakas and upasikas or lay ordinands already

flourished would be enhanced by the addition of communities of bhikshunis or fully ordained nuns and could be properly regarded as “central lands” in the Buddhist definition.

With these considerations in mind and with the active encouragement of our inspiration and mentor, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Department of Religion and Culture of the Central Tibetan Administration has for several years undertaken, encouraged and supported research into questions concerning the Bhikshuni ordination and its lineage. Among these activities, in 1998, we organised a Seminar on the Lineage of the Bhikshuni Vow in the Three Vinaya Schools that was held at the Norbulingka Institute, Sidhpur near Dharamsala. A clear agenda and points for discussion were prepared and distributed to invited participants from the three principle existing schools of Vinaya or Buddhist monastic discipline. In response participants offered their opinions, research findings and interpretations. This book contains several representative presentations from that Seminar, which it is hoped will be of benefit to interested readers. We hope too that it will serve as a source of encouragement to others to continue and deepen research and discussion of this topic with a view to significant decisions being made by appropriate and concerned authorities. Questions of Vinaya have always been resolved by community decisions taken on the advice of qualified and respected scholars and practitioners. Single individuals have never decided them. Therefore, we feel it is important periodically to share and disseminate our findings in order that other concerned communities and individual scholars and Vinaya masters may take them into consideration.

We Tibetans are presently living as refugees outside our own land and consequently are limited in the resources we have at our disposal. We have been fortunate to have received generous support for our work from various sources and on this occasion we are particularly grateful to the Heinrich Böll Foundation for making it possible for us to bring this book to publication. The book is to be published in commemoration of the 360th anniversary of the Ganden Phodrang government of Tibet that is to be observed on 10th March 2003.

It is our sincere wish that this small work may contribute to the flourishing of the Buddha’s doctrine, which in turn will serve the cause of peace in the world and happiness among all sentient beings.

SEMINAR OF MULASARVASTIVADA, THERAVADA AND DHARMAGUPTA VINAYA HOLDERS CONCERNING THE LINEAGE OF BHIKSHUNI ORDINATION, HELD 3rd-5th AUG. 1998 AT THE NORBULINGKA INSTITUTE, DHARAMSALA

INTRODUCTION

History of the Bhiksuni Ordination

In ancient times in India, Buddha Shakyamuni gave bhikshu ordination to his five original disciples, which marked the origin of the formation of the bhikshu sangha. Then came the bhikshuni sangha, which was formed by giving ordination to 500 Shakyan women including Mahaprajapati. In this way, a four-fold assembly of disciples came into being: fully ordained men and women, and male and female holders of the upasaka ordination.

In the Dharma King Ashoka's time, his son Mahindra and his daughter Sanghamitra travelled successively to Sri Lanka and introduced there the orders of bhikshus and bhikshunis respectively. The latter lineage continued up until the 11th century, after which it lapsed.

In the fourth century CE, a very devout Chinese Buddhist woman named Ching-chien received bhikshuni ordination from a sangha consisting only of bhikshus and received the vows and precepts of a bhikshuni. There are clear accounts referring to her as the first Chinese bhikshuni. This tradition of receiving bhikshuni ordination from a sangha consisting only of bhikshus is a living tradition in several Buddhist countries.

In the fifth century CE, the Kashmiri scholar Sanghavarma and a group of Sri Lankan bhikshunis led by Bhikshuni Devasara travelled to China and introduced a tradition of imparting bhikshuni ordination involving a sangha of both bhikshus and bhikshunis. Thus, a lineage of bhikshuni vows arose there.

In the fifteenth century CE within the Mula-sarvastivadin system at Gyama in central Tibet, there is an account of women who were especially devout being given full ordination by a sangha consisting of ten monks, including an upadhyaya and an acharya. However, this practice seems to have prompted criticism that it was an invalid way of imparting bhikshuni ordination. In any case, there was never an actual lineage of bhikshuni ordination in Tibet.

The bhikshuni ordination that came from China is asserted to be a living tradition in such places as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam and Korea, where it was received many centuries ago. Thriving nunneries can be seen in those countries, which maintain a well-preserved tradition of imparting the ordination. Many nuns from different parts of the world have received the bhikshuni vows and precepts of ordination in those countries. Several Tibetan nuns residing in the exiled community have been invited to go to those countries to receive the ordination, but even though patrons have offered financial support, only a few have chosen to go and receive the ordination.

In response to requests made by nuns from eastern as well as western countries concerning the restoration of this lineage, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has taken great interest in the matter and has repeatedly said:

“If we could restore the lineage of the bhikshuni vow in Tibet, it would not only enable us to make Tibet a country possessing the “fourfold” assembly of Buddha’s followers, but also a “central” land of the Dharma. However, such important matters related to the Vinaya should be discussed and decided collectively by sangha members and not by individual high-ranking buddhist lamas or leaders. A meeting of Tibetan sangha, scholars and Vinaya masters should be convened to discuss the matter thoroughly.”

To begin with, we have invited several Tibetan scholars and Vinaya masters to give their opinions and we have received a variety of responses. The first meeting will take place under the auspices of the Department of Religion & Culture of the Central Tibetan Administration to discuss the lineage of the bhikshuni vow in connection with the Vinaya of the three schools: Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta.

Topics for Discussion

Discussions will mainly focus on topics related to the lineage of the bhikshuni vow that spread in China, and the bhikshunis who existed in Tibet.

A. Discussion of Bhikshuni Ordination Received from a Sangha of Both Bhikshus and Bhikshunis

(All the discussions should be based on source materials derived from the Vinaya adhered to by the three schools, i.e Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta)

1. Does a lineage of the bhikshuni vow introduced into China by Sri Lankan bhikshunis in the fifth century exist unbroken to the present day?
2. Does the complete and flawless ordination of women require the existence of an unbroken lineage of bhikshuni vows or not? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?
3. During a period in which the lineage of bhikshuni ordination was absent for nearly twelve years, women were ordained as bhikshunis by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus. Following this, ordination of bhikshunis was conducted by a sangha consisting of bhikshus and bhikshunis. Does the bhikshuni ordination conducted by such a sangha result in uncorrupted and pure vows, or does it result in corrupted and impure vows? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three Vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?
4. Is it necessary for a woman to seek a sangha of both bhikshus and bhikshunis to receive bhikshuni ordination? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three Vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?
5. Is it appropriate for a woman to receive the vows of full ordination as a bhikshuni without having previously received the shikshamani probationary vow as a basis? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three Vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?
6. Is it permissible for a woman to receive the bhikshuni vows without having previously received the brahmacharya vows? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?
7. Is it permissible for a sangha consisting only of bhikshus to bestow the vows of shikshamani? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three Vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?
8. In the case of a woman receiving full ordination as a bhikshuni from a sangha of both bhikshus and bhikshunis, is it necessary that the

concerned bhikshus and bhikshunis be present together in one place at the same time? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three Vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

9. In order to train the mindstream of a shikshamani prior to receiving the bhikshuni vows, is receiving Brahmacharya vows a necessary preliminary prerequisite? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three Vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?
10. Is it permissible for a sangha consisting only of bhikshus to bestow the vow of a novice nun?

B. Discussion of Ordination of Bhikshunis Imparted by a Sangha Consisting Only of Bhikshus.

(The discussion should be based on source materials derived from the Vinaya adhered to by the three schools, i.e., Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta).

1. Does a woman receive a pure uncontaminated bhikshuni vow if it is imparted by a sangha consisting of only bhikshus? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three Vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?
2. Does a bhikshuni ordination conducted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus result in corrupted and impure vows? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?
3. Is ordination of bhikshunis by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus deemed proper and permissible? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?
4. Is it necessary for a woman to receive brahmacharya vows before she is ordained as a bhikshuni by a bhikshu sangha? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?
5. The first Chinese bhikshuni, after receiving full ordination as a

bhikshuni from a sangha consisting only of bhikshus, was again ordained by a sangha consisting of both bhikshus and bhikshunis. Is there a clear source for this in the Chinese vinaya texts?

6. The practice of a sangha consisting only of bhikshus conducting bhikshuni ordination (involving) a large number of women is becoming widespread in some Buddhist countries. What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three Vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

C. Discussions of the Mulasarvastivadin Tradition of Bhikshu Sangha Imparting Bhikshuni Ordination in Tibet.

(All discussions should be based on source materials derived from the Vinaya adhered to by the three schools, i.e., Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta).

1. In the absence of the lineage of bhikshuni ordination, is it proper and permissible for a sangha consisting only of bhikshus to impart bhikshuni ordination? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?
2. According to some historical records, in fifteenth century Tibet women who were fully ordained as bhikshunis by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus had to receive brahmacharya vows, which were by definition to be bestowed by a sangha of bhikshunis. Since that could not take place, it is said that full ordination of women did not take place.

Are there sources for this in the scriptures of the three Vinaya systems which address the reasoning?

3. According to the rules of the Mulasarvastivadin school, is it permissible for a bhikshu sangha to give a woman brahmacharya vows? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the other two Vinaya systems, the Theravada and Dharmagupta?
4. Is the bhikshuni ordination imparted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus permissible according to the rules of Mulasarvastivadin school? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the other two vinaya systems, the Theravada and Dharmagupta?

5. Is there a source in the scriptures of the Mulasarvastivadin system that states that the bhikshuni ordination imparted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus results in a corrupted and impure vow? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the other two vinaya systems, the Theravada and Dharmagupta?
6. Is there a source in the scriptures of the Mulasarvastivadin school which states that a bhikshuni ordination conducted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus results in a pure and unadulterated vow? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the other two vinaya systems, the Theravada and Dharmagupta?
7. What sort of Vinaya sources support the claim that the ordination of bhikshunis by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus was practised in Tibet in the fifteenth century?
8. In the past in Tibet, the bhikshuni vow was granted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus. Is there a provision for reviving the bhikshuni vow according to the Mulasarvastivadin Vinaya? If there is such a provision, what are the sources and the procedures for reviving it mentioned in the Vinaya? If there is no such provision, please describe the sources in the Vinaya against granting such a vow?

We would be honoured if you could submit an article on any of the above-mentioned topics. Your submission should reach our office by 1st July 1998 at the latest.

Summary

1. There was a tradition of the bhikshuni vow from Sri Lanka prevalent in China during the fifth century. Today can we find an unbroken transmission of this tradition?
2. In fourth century China, there was a system in which the imparting of the bhikshuni vow and the preceding preliminary acceptance [into a monastery] were conducted only by a community of bhikshus. This was prevalent in the past in China, and the practice persists today. Sometimes there is a practice of taking the full vows and the preceding preliminary [actions or novice vows] from a sangha consisting of both bhikshus and bhikshunis

Agenda

Are there reliable sources for these points? Are they reasonable according to the Dharmagupta Vinaya tradition and reliable commentaries belonging to this tradition? What have the great masters of vinaya of the past had to say on these points?

It is said that in fifteenth century Tibet, very devout women received full ordination from a sangha consisting of ten bhikshus, including an upadhyaya and acharya. Is there a text that clarifies this history and is there any way of reviving this tradition according to the Dharmagupta Vinaya, or are there ways to reintroduce it?

The two main points for the discussion are

1. Are there proper sources in the three specific vinaya traditions such that the complete and pure bhikshuni vow can be generated if the vow is bestowed by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus? or, what are the sources in the three vinaya traditions which say it is acceptable or unacceptable for the bhikshuni vow to be bestowed by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus?
2. A bhikshuni sangha from Sri Lanka went to China in the fifth century and established a new tradition of the bhikshuni vow there. Is there, or is there not, a way of ascertaining whether or not an unbroken lineage of this vow exists?

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA'S ADDRESS TO THE VINAYA MASTERS, WHO WERE INVITED PARTICIPANTS FROM THE THREE VINAYA SCHOOLS TO THE CONFERENCE ON THE BHIKKSHUNI LINEAGE ORGANISED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION AND CULTURE AT NORBULINGKA INSTITUTE, SIDHPUR, 3rd-5th AUGUST 1998.

Translated by Ven. Lhakdor

Today, I have nothing to say in the name of the Dalai Lama, but will speak only as a very dull and lazy bhikshu and as a follower of the kind liberator Buddha Shakyamuni. For many years it has been my view that with regard to the lineage of the bhikshuni vow and other topics such as the practice of the Vinaya, it is important that those of us who follow the same kind teacher, but who live in different places and countries maintaining different lineages of the teaching, should develop a friendly appreciation of each other's circumstances and come to an understanding. This gathering here today includes a good number of senior followers of the three schools: Dharmagupta, Mulasarvastivadin and Theravadin. This opportunity to discuss Vinaya practices together, primarily focusing on the bhikshuni lineage is perhaps the first occasion of its kind and I feel it is very auspicious. I am very happy that the Religious Department has managed to bring this meeting about.

In the tradition of the kind Buddha, the monastic establishment is extremely important. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all of us to make these existing monastic establishments perfect in all respects and to stabilize the bases on which they are founded. In the case of the Land of the Snow, secret Tantric practice is widespread. From the point of view of that tradition, during the time of the religious kings in the 7th and 8th centuries there were two sections of practitioners: those who wore white robes and wore their hair long, and those who belonged to the saffron robed ordained Sangha. However, in order to be regarded as a fully qualified tantric practitioner among those with white robes and long hair, even those tantric practitioners who were house-holders maintained basically the same practice as the monks, except the signs of ordination and the rituals of the Vinaya as is said:

A house-holding tantric practitioner should avoid signs and rituals. But the rest should be practised.

Nevertheless, even though there were two sections, the white robed and the

saffron robed, in Tibet, it is the saffron robed Sangha who are regarded as the fundamental upholders of the Buddha's teaching.

Sometimes we face difficulties making contact with each other under the names Mahayana and Hinayana. Leaving aside practices related to the six perfections, emptiness and dependent arising and likewise the deity yoga practices of secret Tantra, all of us, whether we follow the Mahayana or Hinayana, are the same in taking observance of the three precepts as the common basis of our practice. From the fundamental presentation of the Four Noble Truths, when we begin to discipline the mind, we proceed by observing the three precepts. From that point of view we are all same. Among our ethical precepts the most supreme are the precepts of an ordained person and this is fundamental to our common practice.

Bhikshus and bhikshunis are included among the four sets of the Buddha's followers. In terms of the basic rights of bhikshuni, the compassionate teacher has given equal rights to men and women. This is important. However, there are various opinions prevailing among Vinaya holders in general, such as the suggestion that the bhikshuni lineage in the Chinese tradition does not have an authentic source, or that it would be good if the bhikshuni lineage were promoted. These are just opinions and detailed research upon which action could be taken has not been completed. Nothing should be decided simply on the basis of the mere statement that the bhikshuni lineage does not have an authentic source. We should explore the source, undertake detailed research and find out what are the reliable sources, what are the practices. It is important that the situation be made clear after having undertaken proper and thorough research.

Recently, during a conference in Japan I raised this question regarding the bhikshuni lineage. Another participant, who was a member of the Mahabodhi Society, said that at one time in Nepal he had had an opportunity to discuss the bhikshuni lineage with some Nepalese bhikshus. At that time, some of these bhikshus said that if the bhikshuni lineage were promoted there they would leave Nepal. And yet, except for certain rituals, basically the practices are uniform. Still, we face such problems due to there not having been clear discussion of the issues, instead of which people dwell on rumour and innuendo.

So, even though this meeting here is small, since there are representatives from the three schools it is highly significant. It is not sufficient that this matter is clearly understood by those of you who have come here. I feel that as a result of our experience here we will need to follow up with many

more meetings like this in the future. If a clearer understanding of the issues regarding the bhikshuni lineage can be developed among the world's Vinaya masters, it is possible that the bhikshuni lineage that is found in the Chinese tradition could also be made available in other places and countries. For example, presently there are some Tibetans who have received ordination according to the bhikshuni lineage, however it is not yet something that is widely accepted and without doubt. If it can be clarified it will be easier for everyone to act accordingly.

I believe there are also some among the upasakis in Sri Lanka and Thailand who aspire to become bhikshunis. However, since no one is specifically undertaking research on these matters, things continue to remain as they are. Now here we will have presentations from all the three schools from the perspective of their own traditions. However, we do not need only what is found among these schools, we also need to go further and find out what is being said in other sutras and treatises by the authentic Vinaya masters of other schools. The presentation that was given just now was impressive because the approach of the research was based on the evolution of time. However it will be better and more decisive if quotations are taken from the Buddha's own words. It would be best if there were clear and unambiguous quotations from the Buddha's own words and if that cannot be done we need to discover the various instructions of the reliable Vinaya masters of different schools who are the followers of the Buddha. So, I feel we need to continue and extend the scope of our research.

It has long been my hope that we would eventually be able to organize International Buddhist Conferences on the Vinaya in which the Vinaya masters of the world's Buddhist countries would participate. In the course of such conferences detailed discussions could take place and decisions could be taken. However, it may continue to be difficult to bring this about in the near future. Today, since we have here Vinaya masters representing the three schools as well as bhikshunis, it is what you think that takes priority and I have nothing special to say. Still, I suggest that from among you the Sri Lankan and Chinese bhikshus should take prime responsibility. If three or four of you could take special responsibility to visit countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, approaching the Vinaya masters and scholars there in an unrushed and leisurely way, you could explain to them how the bhikshuni lineage arose in the Chinese tradition and discuss the crucial points about it with them. This is what needs to be done, whether or not it is done in a formal meeting or not. First you need to meet these people personally and discuss things thoroughly with them. Once you have done some research like

this, there will be many other areas for discussion. Those people may not be ready for this yet, but you can explain the reasons for our discussions and the results of our research to them, and then you can also listen to what they think.

Next, we should seek an opportunity to meet with the religious heads in these countries and offer them our findings. This is how I think we need to conduct our research. In short this is a common responsibility, a responsibility that falls to all of us who are Vinaya holders. It is not an issue of interest to only one country. So, if we are able to explain the details of our research to those leaders who are Vinaya masters and they come to understand the issues, there will be a better response and we can gradually strengthen relations with them.

In due course we can organize an International Meeting of Vinaya Masters in Bodh Gaya or some other appropriate place in which invited representatives can participate and hold discussions. On the other hand, if we were to send out invitations in haste and other people showed no interest at all, or if they had no idea of its importance or they had no opportunity to look into it, they would lack enthusiasm. Then one year, ten years and so on will pass and things will become delayed.

It is difficult for us Tibetans to do much because we are living in exile, which is why I hope you Sri Lankan and the Chinese Vinaya masters will take greater responsibility. Since these important issues are related to practice of the Vinaya, they have to be settled by masters of the three *Pitakas* in general and by proper discussion among masters of the Vinaya in particular - this is not something that can be decided by any one individual alone.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY VEN KIRTI RINPOCHE, MINISTER
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION & CULTURE, CTA,
DHARAMSALA.

Venerable Sangha, scholars and friends. Tashi Delek. I extend my greetings and a heartfelt welcome to all of you Vinaya practitioners from the Vinaya traditions of China, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, the various traditions of Tibetan Buddhism and all other learned participants in this first-ever Seminar on the lineage of the bhikshuni vow in the three Vinaya schools. I am grateful to all of you for making the effort to be here for the sake of the Buddha's teachings, despite the hardships of the journey and the constraints on your time.

Today, we are on the threshold of the 21st century. Because of advancements in the fields of science and technology, we have made unbelievable material progress. But due to a lack of genuine practice of altruism, compassion, love and sincerity, which are the gist of the Buddha's teachings, we continue to suffer the unpleasant effects of a degenerate era. Disease, war and famine continue to cause various sufferings and mental peace is declining. At such a critical juncture, this gathering of the three different schools of Vinaya - the Sarvastivadin, the Sthaviravadin or Theravadin and the Dharmaguptika - to discuss the nature and limits of the Buddhist code of Vinaya is extremely important. Due to the time and other circumstantial factors it may even be more important than the contribution of Arhant Upali during the First Council that followed the Mahaparinirvana of the Buddha. I am sure this Seminar will play an important role in the service of Buddha's teaching in general and in the refinement of understanding of the Vinaya-pitaka in particular. It will also open a new chapter in the history of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. Therefore, it is a matter of great joy and pride.

For your information, I would like to place before the august gathering a very brief account of the advent of the Vinaya-vow lineage in Tibet, the Roof of the World. In the Tibetan year of the female Water-Bird, corresponding to 433 CE the first rays of the sun of the Buddhist doctrine shone over Tibet. Subsequently, in the year of the female Earth-Sheep (779 CE) a dozen bhikshus belonging to the Sarvastivadin school, were invited to Tibet from India. Seven intelligent youths were ordained on an experimental basis. That was the starting point of the spread of Vinaya-shasana in Tibet.

It is said that the King of Tibet was convinced that among the 18 schools

of tenets in India, the Vinaya traditions of the Sarvastivadin school were the most suitable for Tibet from a practical point of view. He was therefore convinced to issue a royal decree in this regard. This is said to be the reason why only the tradition of Sarvastivadin Vinaya flourished in Tibet. Following the disintegration of the Tibetan empire, harmful elements were brought to bear upon Buddhism throughout Tibet.

Eventually, Lha-bla-ma Jangchup Od could no longer sit quietly by and, undergoing tremendous difficulties, sent representatives to India to invite Dipankara-Shri-jnana of the Mahasanghika tradition to Tibet. This great Indian pandit made a great contribution to the restoration of the pure practice of Buddhism in Tibet at the invitation of the king. Since they were introduced to Tibet, despite several periods of serious ups and downs, the Vinaya vows have never vanished from the country. The tradition has been maintained until now by an unbroken lineage of Upadhyayas, whose lives are well documented.

As far as literature is concerned, we have huge volumes of the Buddha's words that form the Kangyur (*bka' gyur*) collection, and many volumes of later works by Indian Pandits and Acharyas which were translated directly from Indian sources. Besides these there are hundreds of well-researched commentaries of various lengths written by Tibetan scholars. The tradition of studying Vinaya texts for a number of years in many Tibetan Monasteries still continues. One of the pioneer bhikshus of Tibet, Ba-ratna ordained 100 women headed by a queen named Do-za-tri-gyal-motsun ('gro bz'a khri gyal mo tsun). This was the beginning of the female Sangha in Tibet, which flourished with veneration and support from the public. Until 1959 there were more than 27,000 nuns in Tibet. At present, in the Tibetan community in exile, there are 13 nunneries home to not less than 1,000 nuns. Tibetan society also has encouraged the recognition of yoginis, tulkus and scholars among the female sangha. This is a clear indication that there is no gender discrimination within Tibetan society. Samding Dorje Phagmo and Gungri Khadroma are a few examples of celebrated female practitioners.

Geography and difficulties of transport prevented Tibet from inviting a Sangha of bhikshunis from India to establish such a community in Tibet. However, this does not mean that there were no bhikshunis in Tibet. There are authentic accounts of bhikshuni ordination in Tibet. There are accounts of Drogon Chogyal Phagpa ('gro mgon chos rgyal 'phags pa) having ordained both bhikshus and bhikshunis in the 13th century, of Minyagkabshipa Rigpai Senge having supported the bhikshuni Sangha in

the 14th century and concerning the objections that were said to have been faced by Panchen Shakya Chogden in Central Tibet in the 15th century when he wanted to give bhikshuni vows to Gyama Choedma Tsogdung Padmo etc, which are clear evidence of this.

The meaning of being born in a central land can be interpreted in two ways with reference to geographical position and the status of dharma. On the basis of the status of dharma, that land where the four Anucharas, i.e. bhikshu, bhikshuni, shramanera and shramanerika sanghas exist is considered to be a central land. Here, the question arises concerning whether Tibet can really be considered a central land with nominal representation of all four Anucharas, including bhikshunis. Therefore, His Holiness the Dalai Lama felt that the establishment of a bhikshuni sangha was necessary, so that Tibet could without doubt enjoy the status of being a central-land. Tibetan Buddhism does not permit discrimination of individuals on the basis of race, gender and so forth. Everyone enjoys equal rights, which need to be maintained and even further strengthened. In view of this, His Holiness has on various occasions advised and highlighted the need for improvement in the education of women in general and nuns in particular.

Therefore, we have introduced the study of Buddhist dialectics and philosophical treatises for women here in India. We have also arranged three exclusive winter debate meetings such as Jang-gunchoe for nuns to debate according to the science of logic. To be self-sufficient in the fields of education and the administration of Vinaya practices, emphasis is being given to the education of over a thousand nuns. The possibility of nuns appearing for the highest degree of Geshe at the completion of their studies is also being actively investigated.

His Holiness has also taken keen interest in the various schools of Buddhism and the Vinaya traditions that are in practice in different parts of the world. We have translated the Pratimokkha sutra of Sthaviravadin school into Tibetan at his request and a symposium on the same text was organized by this Department at Sarnath, Varanasi in 1984 with bhikshus and scholars from India, Burma, Sri Lanka and Tibetans participating. They compared the Vinaya-disciplines according to Sarvastivadin and Sthaviravadins and discussed the matter in depth. His Holiness has taken special initiative regarding research into the lineage of bhikshuni ordination. Staff of this department were assigned to carry out research work in this field and to translate the Bhikshuni Pratimoksha Sutra and the Karma-viddhi of the Dharmagupta school. At our request Heng Ching, a bhikshuni from Taiwan

took responsibility for sponsoring a Seminar on the Lineage of Bhikshuni Ordination, which was held in Taiwan in 1997.

In short, His Holiness has stressed the great importance of the lineage of bhikshuni ordination on the one hand, while on the other hand it is a reality that until now the tradition was not able to flourish in Tibet. No lineage other than the Sarvastivadin tradition ever reached Tibet. At present, lineages that include the bhikshuni ordination exist in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, Korea and Sri Lanka. It would be most appropriate if the learned practitioners of these countries could sit together to make necessary decisions regarding further transmission. The importance of the matter itself dictates that individuals even religious leaders cannot take any decision in this regard on their own. The source of the Vinaya tradition is the Buddha, therefore whatever decisions may be necessary regarding the definition and scope of the monastic rules and regulations should be based on the Buddha's words.

For these reasons, the Department of Religion & Culture has taken the initiative to bring together scholars and practitioners of various Vinaya traditions from different parts of the world, so that discussions can be held on various levels in the hope of reaching a concrete conclusion which could then be placed before an authoritative international gathering. Such a body of learned Sangha members can take the final decision, which should then be acceptable to all schools. This is what His Holiness the Dalai Lama wishes us to accomplish. To take a step forward in this direction we have organized this First Seminar on the Lineage of Bhikshuni Ordination in Dharamsala and once again I welcome you all to this seminar.

While exploring possibilities of transmitting the lineage of bhikshuni ordination to Tibetans, there are a few points that we need to keep in mind: Tibetan social customs; whether geographical factors are conducive to the observance of such codes of conduct; whether two Sanghas of different lineage can assemble together and conduct Vinaya activities without any complication; what kind of robes should be adopted. These are some of the issues that we need to think about and discuss. We also look forward to recommendations from this learned assembly about whether we should continue to adhere to Sarvastivadin lineage of ordination if and when the bhikshuni lineage is reintroduced in Tibet, as Tibetans are already familiar with it. Thorough discussion and analysis are essential. Our objective is to discover what will be most suitable and practical for Tibetans.

This question is not simply a matter of achieving equality between the sexes. We hope to adopt the purest form of the bhikshuni lineage out of a wish to be of service to the teachings of Buddha. This in itself will bring great benefits within Tibetan society. Therefore, we look forward to receiving guidance and advice from this learned gathering. I am sure that the next few days' dialogue and discussion will be very fruitful, contributing to the accomplishment of our common goal.

Thank you very much.

DISCUSSION OF BHIKSHUNI ORDINATION AND ITS LINEAGE IN CHINA: BASED ON SCRIPTURES OF CHINESE VINAYA AND HISTORICAL FACTS-BHIKSHU DAO-HAI

SUMMARY

This report is focused mainly on the Chinese history of bhikshuni ordination and documents on its lineage. In addition, it is based on the conditions of bhikshuni ordination recorded in various scriptures of Chinese Vinaya, sutras and abhidharmas (mainly Dharmagupta). Through discussion topic by topic, this report reveals the bhikshuni lineage in China through analogy, its permissibility, degree of purity and completeness according to vinaya doctrines, to provide reference for Tibetan sangha, as they consider establishing a bhikshuni sangha.

Key Words: History of ordination, Lineage of Ordination, Scriptures of Chinese Vinaya, conditions of Ordination, Permissibility, Purity Completeness

INTRODUCTION

1. Principle: Based on historical facts, this report will establish the truth through objective study and examination on scriptures of vinaya and historical documents.
2. Manner: This report answers questions which are summarized from your discussion topics (mainly Discussion Topic A and Discussion Topic B; in case there are duplications or those questions and answers are added to clarify the confusion about the problems. In addition, some exceptions or supplemental explanations, based on Mahayana and Hinayana sutras and abhidharmas, treatises or historical biographies of past Chinese Vinaya masters, are added to make it easier to understand. Following the discussion is a list of source documents and some detail explanation, which are referenced in answering the questions.
3. Basis: This report is mainly based on reliable historical records (the portion of bhikshuni ordination) and Dharmagupta Vinaya. If there are no source documents in scriptures of Dharmagupta Vinaya, we will examine Mahisasaka Vinaya (belongs to Sthavira), Sarvastivada Vinaya, Mulasarvastivada Vinaya (both belong to Sarvastivada), Sanghika Vinaya (belongs to Mahasanghika), and other sutras,

abhidharmas, and treatises by past Chinese vinaya masters for supplement.

MAIN CONTENT

1. RESPONSE TO DISCUSSION TOPICS

Topic A: 2-Group Reception of Ordination from Bhikshus and Bhikshunis

1. With Regard to the Historical Facts and Lineage of Chinese Bhikshuni Ordination:

Q: Does a lineage of the bhikshuni vow introduced into China by Sri Lankan bhikshunis in the fifth century exist unbroken to the present day?

A: The earliest official documents about bhikshus in China appears in Chien-Ning Year 1 of Lin-Ti, Eastern Han (168 CE). At that time, a sangha of 5 bhikshus, led by Chih-Fa-Ling of Northern India, arrived at Chang-An. Following the "Border Land" condition (5 bhikshus to bestow ordination), it marked the first time for bhikshu ordination in China; accompanying with that is the verbal reciting of scriptures of Dharmagupta Vinaya and Karma, one chuan (roll of scripts) each. From then on till Chia-Ping Year 2 (250 CE), when Dharmakala came to Lo-Yang and bestow ordination with 10 bhikshus, a total of 83 years with no record of bestowing ordination with 10 bhikshus.¹ Although it is documented that there were women left home to become nuns, Chih-Fa-Ling et. al. did not bestow bhikshuni ordination upon them, because there are no scriptures in vinaya that permits women to receive 1-group bhikshuni ordination from bhikshus in a border land.²

In Huang-Tsu year 1 of Wen-Ti, Tsao-Wei (220 CE), 52 years since the 5-person bhikshu ordination, there were 10 bhikshunis from Eastern India arriving at Chang-An to bestow Preliminary Karma of bhikshuni on bhikshunis (During those time the bhikshuni ordination has been unclear and not well-defined. Although there were verbal recitation of Karma scriptures, it applies to bhikshus only. With no clear evidence about 2-group reception of ordination from bhikshus and bhikshunis in historical documents, it is widely regarded in general scriptures of Chinese vinaya that bhikshuni ordination as "Base Rules".³)

Later in Chia-Ping Year 2 of Chih-Wang, Wei Dynasty (250 CE), Dharmakala (who is very good at reciting various vinaya) of Central India

came to Lo-Yang to establish Karma of Dharmagupta Vinaya. Furthermore, he translated the scriptures of Sanghika Vinaya⁴, and set the standard of “10 bhikshus” for the re-reception of bhikshu ordination⁵. This marked the beginning of “complete bhikshu ordination” as being recognized in Chinese tradition (the reason is that since 168 CE, there only exists 5-bhikshu ordination for border land).

In Sheng-Ping Year 1 of Mu-Ti, Eastern Chin (357 CE) Dharmakada, a foreign bhikshu, was invited to set up the Ordination Altar⁶, and 4 nuns, including Ching-Chien⁷, received “1-group bhikshuni ordination” from 10 bhikshus⁸. It was generally regarded as the beginning of the existence of bhikshuni in China⁹. From then on it became possible for the reception of full bhikshuni ordination (upasampada) from 11 teachers, 10 bhikshus and 1 bhikshuni), following the example of the reception of ordination of 500 Shakyana women described in Mahisasaka Vinaya.¹⁰ During that time Mahisasaka Vinaya has not been introduced to China. Besides, Mahisasaka Vinaya does not agree that 11-teachers ordination can be applied at later time.

In Yuan-Chia Year 11 of Wen-Ti, Liu Sung (434 CE, some says differently, see note¹²), 77 years after the 1-group reception of ordination of Ching-Chien, 10 bhikshunis including Tieh-So-Lo of Simhala (Sri Lanka today), had asked Sanghavarman as their master to “re-take 2-group full bhikshuni ordination”¹² for bhikshunis Hui-Kuo of Ching-Fu Temple, Ching-Ying, et al. (there were 50 other persons including bhikshu Hui-Chao, see note¹³) at the Altar in Nan-Lin Temple of Nanking. (In Yuan-Chia Year 7 (430 CE) Teacher of Tripitaka Gunavarman of Kubha (Kabul today) came to Yang-Chou, and recognized that bhikshuni Huei-Kuo had attained ordination with the 1-group or 11-teachers ordination, which Huei-Kuo had received previously. But Huei-Kuo was suspicious that the previous ordination she had received to be of median to low quality, the embodiment of ordination is flawed and incomplete¹¹, that she asked to receive the ordination again. Later Gunavarman passed away and the issue of re-reception of ordination ended with no result, that was the reason for what was happening). Altogether there were 323 people received ordination¹³ (however, it is almost certain that no one has received the 2-year “shikshamani vow”¹⁴. Generally this is regarded as the beginning of “the closest to” completely full ordination for Chinese bhikshunis.

Ever since Chien-Wu years of Chi (494-497 CE), the bhikshunis in northern China still maintained the discipline to go to bhikshu temples to receive ordination. There is no record on the clear breakage of the ordination tradition. During the years of Tai-Tzung Tang Dynasty (765-766 CE), it

was documented that there were 10 bhikshus and 10 bhikshunis, selected from those who understood the vinaya and were of high virtue, to attend the ordination altar in the capital city; and this had become “the standard practice forever”. It is obvious that after 2-group ordination of bhikshuni Hwei-Kuo has lasted more than three hundred years (434-766 CE), 2-group ordination for bhikshunis were still highly valued and protected by the government of Tang Dynasty in the eighth centuries¹⁵. Not until 200 years later, during the time of Five Dynasties 908-960 CE, it was clearly recorded that only 1-group ordination was left to exist¹⁶. In February of Kai-Pao Year 5 of Tai-Tsu, Southern Sung (972 CE), the Sung government had ordered that “bhikshunis are prohibited to go to bhikshu temples for ordination”, while setting up separate altars for bhikshuni ordination (see p.1892 a, Buddhism Light Dictionary). Since then bhikshunis had been receiving base rules from a sangha consisting only of bhikshunis, which meant that they could not receive 1-group ordination from a sangha of bhikshus (to receive base rules from a sangha of bhikshunis does not obtain the embodiment of ordination). From the earliest 2-group reception of ordination (434 CE) till the time Tai-Tsu of Sung Dynasty issued the prohibition, there are more than five hundred years (434-972 CE) that had been regarded as the golden age for the 2-group reception of bhikshuni ordination, even for 1-group ordination in China. After that the embodiment of ordination had become incomplete¹⁷.

Later on during the time at the end of Yuan Dynasty and the beginning of Ming Dynasty (1368 CE), the tradition of ordination has been affected due to the conquering by the foreigners, the meanings of ordination had become different greatly and the 2-group ordination is probably inexistent. Through the middle of Ming Dynasty those who understood vinaya became rarer and rarer. By the end of Ming Dynasty and the beginning of Ching Dynasty, in addition to the re-construction of “Three Altar Progressive Ordination” by master Tu-Ti of Pao-Hua-Shan, the revived promotional efforts of 2-group ordination and the writing of “Manners of 2-Group Reception of Ordination”¹⁸ by Vinaya-dhara Shu-Yu a disciple of Tu-Ti, there was only some scattered efforts in the Vinaya School by a few masters like Qu-Yi (1599-1655 CE), Hung-Tsan (1611-1685 CE). At this time the vinaya in China has become much declined and indistinctive¹⁹. Record of 2-group ordination for bhikshuni could only be found during Shun-Chih Year 14 of Ching Dynasty (1657 CE), Kang-Hsi Year 6 (1667 CE) and Kang-Hsi period (after Chien-Yueh died till Shu-Yu finished writing ‘Causes of the Manners of 2-Group Reception of Ordination’, 1679-1703 CE²⁰). Since the Republic (1911 CE), bhikshunis had been receiving ordination through 1-group. With the exception of vinayadhara Tzu-Chou

(1877-1957 CE), who had bestowed 2-group bhikshuni ordination at An-Yang Temple in Peking in Republic Year 44 (1955 CE), 2-group ordination was almost never heard of.

For the past 10 years or so, there were cases where people conducted 2-group ordination, such as Nan-Lin Monastery, Wu-Kuang Monastery in Taiwan, and Pu-Shou Temple at Wu-Tai-Shan, where bhikshuni acharyas would bestow the 10 commandments of sramanerika first; several months later they would bestow the shikshamani brahmacharya vows. Those who had maintained 2 years of pure brahmacharya would be eligible to receive 2-group full ordination. If not considering the lineage of the embodiment of ordination, this 'process' of giving ordination should be regarded as rather complete and flawless. But the bhikshuni ordinations in China today are generally unable to do so!

In a word, the lineage of bhikshuni ordination in China has clearly been broken (to receive base rules from a sangha consisting of bhikshunis only, not to mention receiving 1-group ordination from bhikshus) during Sung Dynasty (around 972 CE). Following the resolution of the prohibition, most of the ordination were 1-group from a sangha of bhikshus. There is no historical documentation that proved that the lineage of 2-group ordination was pure and complete, and this is the situation for bhikshuni ordination in China.

2. WITH REGARD TO THE CONDITIONS FOR COMPLETE AND FLAWLESS BHIKSHUNI ORDINATION

Q: Does the complete and flawless ordination of women require the existence of an unbroken lineage of bhikshuni vows or not? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: According to Dharmagupta Vinaya (Dharma-gupta lineage in China), after women received mundana (shave their heads and become a nun) from the bhikshunis, they would receive the Five Commandments and the Ten Commandments of Sramanerika. After a certain period of time (in Vinaya Marka Sastra it is specified that women who were over 10 years old and had been married needed to practise the commandments of sramanerika for 2 years) of observation, these women, who were considered capable of undertaking the rules and of or over 18 years of age, would be given the Jnapticaturtha Karman (one announcement and three responses) in bhikshuni sangha and thus received the shikshamani six rules. Those

who had maintained 2 years of pure brahmacharya and were over 20 years of age²² (in Vinaya it is said that 2 years to purify the body and 6 rules to purify the mind) would be eligible to request according to the rules for reception of full bhikshuni ordination from 2-group sangha (consisting of 10 bikshus and 10 bhikshunis, in Mahisasaka Vinaya of Sthavira and Bai-I-Karma of Mulasarvastivada Vinaya 12 bhikshunis are required²³). To obtain ordination like this is considered complete and flawless²⁴.

In regard to the completeness and flawlessness of ordination, is it necessary to have 10 bhikshunis who had obtained the same complete and flawless ordination to give ordination? It seems that vinaya masters, of past and today, have concluded like that. However, no clear rules about this can be found in the vinaya scriptures (this is different from the qualification problems whether or not the vinaya acharya had offended the rules, his number of years of ordination (summer retreat) is long enough, and he understood the rules clearly). On the other hand, the term that if the vinaya teachers are pure or not, has been well documented as exceptions in vinayas and sastras. For example, in Hsing-Shih-Chao (based on Dharmagupta Vinaya by master Tao-Hsuan), it is said: "When the to-be-ordained disciple knew that the vinaya acharya had offended the rules, knew that he should not receive ordination from an acharya who had offended the rules, and knew that he would not obtain ordination even given one, if he still went ahead, he would not obtain ordination. If he did not know, then he obtained the ordination."²⁵ In Roll 3 of Sarvastivadanikaya Vinaya, it is said: "When the to-be-ordained disciple did not know that the acharya was not a true bhikshu, and received ordination from this acharya, does he obtain the ordination? The answer: He does obtain the ordination! All the bhikshus offended with Duskṛta." It is also said: "A person who is not a monk becomes an acharya and give full ordination for other people. Will those people obtain the ordination? The answer: They do obtain the ordination."²⁶ Although these three examples are not to be viewed as normal, they show the fact that "whether obtaining the ordination or not depends on the sincerity of the to-be-ordained, not solely depends on the status of the acharya (this involves the problem of lineage)".

3. WITH REGARD TO THE PURITY OF THE SECONDARY 2-GROUP ORDINATION, WHICH EVOLVES THROUGH THE 1-GROUP ORDINATION AFTER THE INTERRUPTION OF THE ORIGINAL 2-GROUP ORDINATION:

Q: During a period in which the lineage of bhikshuni ordination was absent for nearly twelve years (do not know what this comes from?), women

were ordained as bhikshunis by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus (this is the 1-group ordination). Following this, ordination of bhikshunis was conducted by a sangha consisting of bhikshus and bhikshunis (this is the 2-group ordination). Does the bhikshuni ordination conducted by such a sangha result in uncorrupted and pure vows, or does it result in corrupted and impure vows? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: After the breakage of 2-group bhikshuni ordination, women who seek ordination would only receive 1-group ordination. Later with 10 of those bhikshunis who had received the 1-group ordination the 2-group ordination was restarted. Some regarded this 2-group ordination as incomplete, flawed, and contaminated. In the scriptures of various vinaya schools, however, there are only stipulations of the conditions for “does obtain the ordination” or “does not obtain the ordination”, nor the definition of “uncontaminated” or “contaminated” for those “does obtain the ordination” (but whether the process is complete or not is discernible). This still seems involving the question of “lineage”, but the consideration of “lineage”, as discussed in the previous topic, seems not to be emphasized as one thinks in the Hinayana Vinaya. For example, there are so-called from Sarvastivadanikaya Vinaya, and obtaining the ordination naturally after “attaining to the fruit” from Dharmagupta Vinaya.²⁷ These two examples show that the ordination is still obtainable when there is no acharya present, moreover there is no ceremony. Although these are not capable practice for ordinary people, it clearly emphasizes the importance of “sincerity” as mentioned in previous discussion. Similar cases could be found in scriptures of Mahayana vinaya and historical records about monks and nuns.²⁸ However, it needs to be strongly reminded that in order to maintain the continuation of vinaya dharma, we must emphasize “strongly” the importance of “the manner of giving ordination according to the rules”. It is just like what master Tao-Hsuan had said: “From the point of function, continuation means that Karma will be retained forever, widely spread means that Karma maintains throughout all places except Uttarakuru. All the other ways of reception of ordination, (meaning obtaining ordination from “self-vowing” and “attainment of fruit”) are localized and limited.... that is why Karma has been followed throughout history.”²⁹

With regard to the question of 1-group ordination, although it is not documented in scriptures of various vinaya schools that “receiving ordination from a sangha consisting of only bhikshus does not obtain ordination”, in Lu-chao it is written clearly “If a bhikshuni goes directly to a sangha consisting of bhikshus to receive ordination without

undertaking base rules, does she obtain the ordination? The answer: She does not obtain the ordination!³⁰ However, in some other records the ordination is obtained under certain condition.”³¹ This is the clear proof of the statement that “receiving 1-group ordination from bhikshus does not obtain ordination”. Perhaps because it is also mentioned in Lu-Chao that “in some other records” the ordination “is obtained”, vinayadhara Tao-Hsuan, founder of the Nan-Shan school of the Dharmagupta Vinaya in China, quoted the words from the Teacher of Tripitaka Gunavarman (in his will he had declared to have obtained the fruit of Sakrdagamin³²) to admit the permissibility and the possibility of 1-group ordination³³. His opinion was: “Ordination was eventually given by a bhikshu sangha, anyway. If a bhikshuni does not undertake base rules (receive base rules in a bhikshuni sangha), it does not hinder her from obtaining the ordination, such as in the case of Mahaprajapati (the so-called 11-person reception of the ordination discussed in topic 1). However, if there are bhikshunis in the neighbouring areas and the sangha of bhikshus bestows the ordination without having the to-be-ordained taking the 2-year vows (without receiving the shikshamani vows first), the bhikshus had offended the vinaya rules³⁴. The purpose for these rules set by the Buddha to receive base rules first is to nurture and enhance the sincerity for ease of obtaining the ordination. As for the attainment of the ordination, if the Karma is complete in the bhikshu sangha, it is natural to have the attainment of the ordination.”³⁵ This is what has been based on in China. (It is necessary to declare here that this is not the clearly regulated in vinaya. Therefore it can be certain to be incomplete and flawed). After Sung Dynasty (960-1279 CE), 1-group bhikshuni ordination was performed under many circumstances. Since the end of Ming Dynasty and the beginning of Ching Dynasty, it became more and more common. Examining historical documents, reception of the full ordination with 11 persons (10 bhikshus and 1 bhikshuni) according to Mahisasaka Vinaya³⁶ seems possible in early China after Ching-Chien (357 CE).

4. WITH REGARD TO THE EXAMINATION OF THE NECESSITY OF “2-GROUP ORDINATION”:

Q: Is it necessary for a women to seek a sangha of both bhikshus and bhikshunis to receive bhikshuni ordination? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: The regulation stated that it is necessary for a woman to receive 2-group full ordination. It has been clearly documented in the scriptures

of all 5 vinaya systems in China (Dharmagupta Vinaya, Mahisasaka Vinaya, Sarvastivada Vinaya, Sanghika Vinaya, and Mulasargastivada Vinaya, same for the rest of this article). The basis is obvious!

5. WITH REGARD TO THE EXAMINATION OF THE NECESSITY OF “2-YEAR SHIKSHAMANI VOWS”:

Q: Is it appropriate for a woman to receive the vows of full ordination as a bhikshuni without having previously received the shikshamani probationary vow as basis? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: Basically it is ruled in the scriptures of all 5 vinaya systems that before a woman receives the full bhikshuni ordination, it is necessary for her to received the 10 commandments of sramanerika first, then she would receive the 2-year “shikshamani vows” (not a different embodiment of ordination, but on top of the embodiment of the 10 sramanerika commandments, the ‘six’ rules is given to strengthen the mindstream of retaining the vows and to observe the causal condition for full bhikshuni ordination.³⁹ So it is still based on the embodiment of the rules of sramanerika.⁴⁰ To undertake like this is appropriate.⁴¹ As stated directly in Lu-Chao: “When a woman receives the full bhikshuni ordination without receiving the six rules (shikshamani vows) first, does she obtain the ordination? The answer: She does not obtain the ordination!”⁴²

However, it is clearly documented in vinaya scriptures that show that one can still obtain the full ordination without receiving shikshamani vows, or even the 10 commandments (if a woman does not receive the 10 commandments, she can not receive shikshamani vows, since the embodiment of shikshamani vows is based on the sramanerika). The examples for obtaining the ordination if receiving the full ordination only are shown from Dharmagupta Vinaya and Sarvastivada vinaya: “For those who have received full ordination without receiving sramanerika commandments first, Buddha says they have obtained the ordination, only those 10 bhikshus have offended the rules.”⁴³ Quoting this statement, Ssu-Fen-Ni-Chao (revised from Dharmagupta Vinaya by master Tao-Hsuan) has shown agreement of the application on women.⁴⁴ But in a different book Ssu-Fen-Chieh-Mo-Shu, the same author (vinaya-dhara Tao-Hsuan) holds an opposite viewpoint.⁴⁵ Another example was in Karma Text of Mahisasaka Vinaya: “For those over age of 12 and married, experienced with hard working and labouring the full ordination can be

bestowed upon them directly and there is no need for learning 2 years of rules. But the Jnapticaturtha Karman needs to be performed to measure if one is capable or not.⁴⁶ The reason why the Buddha set this rule is that because (1) if a woman has received the full ordination easily, she may transgress the rules and commit sins due to ignorance of the commandments and weakening of will power, and (2) if a pregnant woman has received the full ordination easily, it will cause ridicule and derision. The so-called “6 rules to purify the mind” can avoid the mistakes by violating the rules, and “2 years to purify the body” can avoid being ridiculed and derided.⁴⁷ For those already married, their bodies and minds have experienced through hard working and laboring. Only when it is certain that these women are not pregnant, can the procedure of bypassing 2 years of learning commandments be undertaken.

With regard to the question of whether it is appropriate or not, it can be deduced from the statement “does not obtain the ordination” as shown in Lu-Chao that receiving the ordination without taking shikshamani vows first is obviously “inappropriate” (but in China it has always been like this). If it is unavoidable to bypass the reception of six rules, it is advised to at least follow the previous example from Mahisasaka Vinaya that the vinaya acharya should closely “consider if this to-be-ordained is capable to maintain or not”. It is said: this woman did not undertake the six rules, not did she undertake the similar bhikshuni rules. If she were given the full bhikshuni ordination, considering the depth and extent of the bhikshuni vows, will her will-power and habits be capable enough to undertake the bhikshuni vows,? Also without 2 years of checking for pregnancy, will the embarrassment occur that the woman, after receiving ordination to become a bhikshuni, be found pregnant?⁴⁸ For someone who are the vinaya acharyas but could not closely consider the woman subjectively beforehand, and applies exceptions freely, it is regarded as very inappropriate.

6. WITH REGARD TO THE PERMISSIBILITY OF RECEPTION OF BHIKSHUNI ORDINATION “WITHOUT TAKING SHIKSHAMANI VOWS”:

Q: Is it permissible for a woman to receive the bhikshuni vows without having previously received the brahmacharya vows (the six rules of shikshamani vows)? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: As stated before, basically all 5 vinaya systems do not recognize it as

permissible. Some even shows clearly “one does not obtain the ordination”. However, there are exceptions documented in the scriptures of Mahisasaka Vinaya in China. The “necessity” of this brahmacharya vows will be answered in detail in Question 9.

7. WITH REGARD TO THE PERMISSIBILITY OF RECEPTION OF SHIKSHAMANI VOWS FROM A SANGHA CONSISTING OF ONLY BHIKSHUS:

Q: Is it permissible for a sangha consisting only of bhikshus to bestow the vows of shikshamani? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: After these women received the commandments of sramanerika, they would be ready to received the shikshamani vows through Jnapticaturtha Karman from “a sangha” consisting of bhikshunis, not from bhikshus. It is well documented in the scriptures of the 5 vinaya systems, including Dharmagupta Vinaya.⁴⁹ Even in Pi-Ni-Shin it is stated that if one received the ordination directly from a bhikshu sangha, “the Karma does not count, and both the bhikshus and the bhikshunis have offended the rules.”⁵⁰ But there are exceptions in the vinaya scriptures, for example in the Part 4, Living Mode of Sarvastivada Vinaya it is said: “If the shikshamani transgressed the last 2 rules (meaning ‘not eating at unregulated hours’ and ‘not drinking alcoholic liquor’ in the six rules. If one transgressed one or more of the six rules, the vow is referred to as a broken vow, one should perform the confession for Duskrta, and receive the 2-year Karma again, restart counting from the beginning⁵¹), she then sent representatives to the bhikshus and asked: ‘Would the acharya come to my place to re-bestow the ordination’. Those bhikshus who had heard of this would leave for bhikshunis’ place for a period of seven days.⁵² Similar documentation could be found in the Varsa Khanda, Roll 37 of Dharmagupta Vinaya, and about Varsa in Mulasarvastivada Vinaya (see note 52). In Lu-Chao it is also said: “If a sramanerika received 6 rules in bhikshus, does she obtain the ordination? The answer: She does obtain the ordination!”⁵³ Mentioned here for reference, in Lu-Chao it does not agree to have bhikshus and bhikshunis together to bestow six rules onto sramanerika.

8. WITH REGARD TO THE REGULATION OF THE MANNER OF 2-GROUP RECEPTION OF ORDINATION FROM BHIKSHUS AND BHIKSHUNIS:

Q: In the case of a woman receiving full ordination as a bhikshuni from a

sangha of both bhikshus and bhikshunis, is it necessary that the concerned bhikshus and bhikshunis be present together in one place at the same time? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: Yes. It is regulated in documentation of the 5 vinaya systems⁵⁵ that when receiving 2-group ordination of bhikshus and bhikshunis, 20 bhikshus and bhikshunis altogether (10 each) are required (in Mahisasaka Vinaya and Mulasarvastivada Vinaya, it is further regulated that at least 12 bhikshunis are required.⁵⁶ In Ssu-Fen Sui-Chi-Chieh-Mo and Lu-Chao, it renders the exception for 5 bhikshus and 5 bhikshunis in a border land).⁵⁷ They all need to be present inside the same ordination place to perform the Karma, and not one person can be absent. It is required that the to-be-ordained be asked to receive the base rules among the bhikshunis first (before this happens, bhikshus and bhikshunis need to fix their territories⁵⁸ at the same place separately). Then, during the same day the to-be-ordained shall go to the bhikshus and ask to receive the full bhikshuni ordination. It can not be done in the second day, otherwise the Karma is invalid! (it is said in vinaya scriptures: the to-be-ordained needs to go to the bhikshu temple to ask for reception of ordination. As said in Hsing-Shih-Chao: "Going to the bhikshuni monastery to give ordination is not allowed. In Shih-Tsu-Chuan of Sarvastivada it says: "It is not allowed if it is not according with the rules. In the case of the obstacle of Fa-Yu bhikshuni, her exceptional beauty capable of overturning the whole country would cause her to be insulted on her way to the bhikshu temple, so Buddha made an exception for her. A bhikshuni would be sent to the bhikshus and ask for the ordination, then she would return to the bhikshunis and give the ordination to Fa-Yu. Even in that case a representative still has to go the bhikshus. There is no such case like Fa-Yu right now, even there were, it is still not allowed to go to the bhikshunis.⁵⁹

9. WITH REGARD TO THE NECESSITY OF LEARNING SIX RULES BY SHIKSHAMANI:

Q: In order to train the mindstream of a shikshamani prior to receiving the bhikshuni vows, is receiving Brahmacharya vows a necessary preliminary prerequisite? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: In the systems of Dharmagupta Vinaya, Sarvastivada Vinaya, Sanghika Vinaya, and Bai-I-Chieh-Mo of Mulasarvastivada, the regulation of

2-year shikshamani is set as: “young and unmarried girls of age 18 shall spend 2 years learning commandments” and “married women of age 10 shall be given six rules.”⁶¹ The reasons include that women (or unmarried young girls) do not understand the rules of ordination, do not have majestic manners, are weak in their minds, unbearable of hard toil, and could be found after receiving full ordination that they have been pregnant before pravraj (to leave home and become a nun), etc.⁶⁰ In addition, it is said in Mahisasaka Vinaya of Sthavera “To give the to-be-ordained the full bhikshuni ordination without giving 2-year commandments (i.e. six rules) first, she is too ignorant to learn the ordination. Buddha was asked about this and said: This is incorrect! The bhikshunis have committed the duskṛta. The 2-year commandments should be given first.”⁶² Furthermore in Sarvastivada Vinaya it specifies the number of bhikshunis when giving the ordination (see note 60).

The content of shikshamani vows can be summarized into 3 main groups:

- (1) To learn four basic severe commandments. They are the four primary sins, i.e. adultery, stealing killing and lying. If one committed against these four commandments, she is expelled and can never become a nun.
- (2) To learn the six rules. The six rules are the principle and emphasis of learning for shikshamani vows. They are:
 - a: not to have indelicate contact with a male.
 - b: not purloining four pieces of cash (or less) (this is based on the monetary system in the reign of King Bimbisara of ancient India),
 - c: not killing animals,
 - d: not being even slightly untruthful,
 - e: not having food after the midday meal,
 - f: not drinking wine.

If one committed any one of the six rules mentioned above, she is said to have broken the ordination. She then needs to repent the duskṛta and be given shikshamani vows again for another 2 years.

- (3) To learn all the conduct. One should follow the bhikshunis around to learn and practice all of the bhikshuni commandments and detailed manners of a bhikshuni except two:

- a: taking food by one's own hand (when there is no sramanerika present to give food to bhikshunis),
- b: giving food to bhikshunis.

As stated before, the reason the Buddha set 2 years to learn is:

- (i) to observe if brahmacharya of the to-be-ordained is pure and solid (will power to maintain the bhikshuni vows) or not,
- (ii) to find out if the to-be-ordained is pregnant or not (to avoid being ridiculed). With reasons like these, 2 years of observation is needed!

With regard to the necessity of the shikshamani vows, although it has been explained by quoting Vinaya scriptures as in Question No. 5, vinayadhara Tao-Hsuan, founder of the Nan-Shan school in China, further acknowledged that shikshamani vows were set before receiving full bhikshuni ordination and the to-be-ordained had to receive and retain shikshamai vows first. He held four reasons:

- (1) In vinaya scriptures it is not in clear documentation that allows sramanerika to obtain full bhikshuni ordination without receiving shikshamani vows (As discussed before, it is not allowed under general circumstances. Try to recall Question no. 5).
- (2) Men are determined and resolute, and capable to retain all the detailed commandments. That is why they can receive the bhikshus who gave the ordination directly without receiving sramanera commandments first (only those bhikshus who gave the ordination have transgressed the rules). And women are just the opposite.
- (3) Women are weak both physically and mentally. They are more inclined toward affection and apprehend only things happened within an instant.⁶⁴ Since the full ordination is very profound and delicate for women to retain, a preparatory step is added as the base for the following ordination. If these preparatory rules are not taken, how can one obtain the ordination later?
- (4) Men do not need to check for pregnancy, so there is no time requirement of observation for men. Women are opposite and thus need to have shikshamani vows.⁶⁵ The viewpoint of vinaya systems in China generally follows this tradition and emphasizes that "it is

necessary for the to-be-ordained to receive shikshamani vows first, then she can receive the full ordination after 2 years of purification.” However, this practice has not been manifested ever since ancient time. Since the establishment of the Republic of China, there are some scattered cases of following through this practice, but they all failed to become a trend. Only in the past 10 years or more, the emphasis on the ordination has started to grow on both side of the Taiwan Strait, there are two or three bhikshuni monasteries that promote the shikshamani vows (for example, Nan-Lin Monastery and Wu-Kuang Monastery in Taiwan, Pu-Shou Temple of Wu-Tai Mountain in China). The trend is forming gradually and needs the upcoming generation to inherit and keep striving.

10. WITH REGARD TO THE QUALIFICATION OF TEACHERS IN BESTOWING SRAMANERIKA VOWS:

Q: Is it permissible for a sangha consisting only of bhikshus to bestow the vow of a novice nun?

A: It is not permissible! According to scriptures of the 5 vinaya systems, a woman will obtain the sramanerika vows after Jnaptidvitiya Karmavacana (announcement) among bhikshunis by a “bhikshuni ti-tu (mundana) acharya” first, then followed with Three Refuge Vows (Ssu-Fen-Sui-Chi-Chieh-Mo further quoted from Mahisasaka Vinaya: “After having received the 5 commandments, then receive the 10 commandments later.”⁶⁷) So it is clear that the sramanerika vows are not given by bhikshus. Ever since the end of Ming Dynasty (1679 CE), women in China had received sramanerika vows mostly in the ordination area with other to-be-ordained men, who were there to receive sramanera vows, from bhikshus (Upadhyaya) together. It is unknown which vinaya system this practice was based on. One possible explanation is that this is only temporary under the inadequate circumstances!

It is documented clearly in Pi-Ni-Shin that this is not permissible: “The question: Should the bhikshus give the to-be-ordained women six rules and ten commandments? The answer: There are only three types of Karma the bhikshus should perform on the to-be-ordained women:

- (i) to bestow the full ordination,
- (ii) to perform Manatta,
- (iii) to emancipate from the sins.

'Other than these three types of Karma, there is no documentation in the vinaya scriptures that any Karma should be performed. If one is performed anyway, the Karma is invalid', and both bhikshus and bhikshunis have offended the rule!" It is also asked: "Why do bhikshunis receive the ordination from bhikshus, while shikshamanis and sramanerikas do not? The answer: Women are incapable of learning the rules and practising on their own. This is the reason that full bhikshuni ordination needs to have bhikshus as their teacher. As for shikshamanis and sramanerikas, young and weak in will power, they only need to follow and learn the vows from bhikshunis. There is no need for bhikshus!"⁶⁸ It can be seen clearly according to scriptures that it is not permissible to have a sangha of bhikshus to give sramanerika vows.

Of course, there are exceptions in places where it is difficult to find 'bhikshuni upadyaya'. For example, in Roll 3 of Mahaprajapati Bhikshuni Sutra, it is said: "Ananda asked the Buddha then: So should the bhikshus be the teacher (for the women)? The Buddha replied: No! The bhikshunis should be the teacher. Only when they find no bhikshunis, can bhikshus be the teacher." But who is eligible to give ordination to sramanerikas and be the teacher for sramanerikas? In Sramanerika Sila Sutra it is said: "The Buddha announced to bhikshu disciples that they shall not give ordination to sramanerikas!being neither a bodhisattva, not an arhat, one can not give ordination to sramanerikas!"⁶⁹ Today in China, although there are bhikshunis around, the sramanerika ordination is still given by bhikshus. Without much word, it is obvious whether this is permissible or not!

Topic B: 1-Group Reception of Ordination from Bhikshus

With Regard to the Permissibility, the Completeness, and the Appropriateness of 1-Group Reception of Ordination from Bhikshus (applicable to Sramanerika Vows, Shikshamani Vows, and Bhikshuni Vows). (Including the first three questions)

Q1. Does a woman receive a pure uncontaminated bhikshuni vow, if it is imparted of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

Q2. Does a bhikshuni ordination conducted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus sangha result in corrupted and impure vows? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

Q3. Is ordination of bhikshunis by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus deemed proper and permissible? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: These questions are divided into three parts, with self-supplied question-and-answer to analyse.

Q1: Is it permissible to have sramanerika vows granted by bhikshus?

A: As explained in Question A-10, it is clearly documented in the vinaya scriptures that this is not permissible!

Q2: Is it permissible to have shikshamani vows granted by bhikshus?

A: Firstly, if the sramanerika vows is not permissible, then there are no shikshamani vows to be granted. Because shikshamani vows are built on top of the embodiment of sramanerika vows, as explained in Question A-5.

Secondly, when sramanerika vows are permissible (for example, to invite bhikshunis from other places to grant sramanerika vows), it is permissible to have bhikshus to give six rules, as explained in Question A-7. (This is an exception. When considering the completeness of the lineage of Buddhism and its practice to be retained forever, it is best to follow according to the vinaya scriptures). As it is said in Pi-Ni-Shin: “Bhikshus can not grant to-be-ordained women any other Karma in addition to the full ordination, the Manatta, and the emancipation of sins.” (see the answer in Question A-10). Based on that spirit, official jnapticaturtha karma is probably necessary to be granted by bhikshunis (and it is best to have more than 12 bhikshunis, as explained before). The reason behind this is that, the original purpose of shikshamani vows is to observe the appropriateness of the reception of the full ordination by the novice women with 2 years, six rules and their learning by following through. It is natural that the bhikshunis will be the primary observers, and that is why jnapticaturtha karman shall be granted among bhikshunis. It is obvious the purpose is to reach common comprehension. However, since the bhikshunis learn from the bhikshus as regulated in vinaya systems (the reason is in the answer of A-10), so the bhikshunis receive and learn the ordination from the bhikshus. Now the contents of six rules are to be announced (not karma!), will it be more appropriate to have the bhikshus to do the announcement? As for the case in A-7 that the sramanerika receives the 2-year vows from the bhikshus for renewal, very likely it is to

direct at the special situation that the shikshamani has received jñapticaturtha karma among a sangha of bhikshunis before.

Q3: Is it permissible to have bhikshuni vows granted by bhikshus?

A: (a) If the sramanerika vows is not permissible, then the shikshamani vows to follow is not permissible either. In this case, even if one received 2-Group Reception of Ordination from bhikshus and bhikshunis, as discussed in A-6, it is not acceptable. (Only under some extreme situations can it be accepted, as discussed in A-5.) Not to mention it is 1-Group Reception of Ordination from bhikshus! But as explained in A-3, master Gunavarman (and same for Sanghavarman of later time) still maintained that one can obtain ordination with 1-Part Reception of Ordination from bhikshus, only “the bhikshus have offended the vows” since there were bhikshunis in that area and they did not grant 2-year commandments. Besides, the ordination obtained does not have complete causes, it is only recognized as of the middle to lower quality. Maybe this is so-called “contaminated and impure” in Tibet?

(b) If the sramanerika vows is permissible, and the shikshamani vows is not permissible, then refer to the discussion in (a).

(c) If the sramanerika vows is permissible, and the shikshamani vows is also permissible then the discussion of 1-Group Reception of Ordination from bhikshus is shown in A-3. Although vinaya dharas in China reluctantly recognized that as having obtained the ordination, it is against what the Buddha had set originally. It is an undisputed fact that the ordination, incomplete and flawed, is not of top quality. That is why in general vinaya dharas will go with it reluctantly, but recognize that as “improper”.

With Regard to the Necessity of Receiving Shikshamani Vows before 1-Group Reception of Ordination from Bhikshus.

Q: Is it necessary for a woman to receive brahmacharya vows before she is ordained as a bhikshuni by a bhikshu sangha? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: It is shown in the discussion of A-5 and A-9 that before receiving full ordination, women have concerns about weakness and pregnancy. So it is “necessary” to have a 2-year “shikshamani” group of learning, in order to

have “6 rules to purify the mind and 2 years to purify the body”, and to be prepared for advancing toward reception of the full ordination. All of these have been commonly documented in vinaya scriptures. In the vinaya texts it is even written that without receiving shikshamani vows, one shall not obtain the ordination. Its importance can be seen clearly. Requirements like this have nothing to do with whether it is under 1-Group Reception of Ordination or 2-Group Reception of Ordination.

In China, however, for historical reasons, this commandment has never been recognized. This has been discussed before.

With Regard to the Permissibility and Completeness of Lineage of Bhikshuni Ordination in China.

Q: The first Chinese bhikshuni, after receiving full ordination as a bhikshuni from a sangha consisting only of bhikshus, was again ordained by a sangha consisting of both bhikshus and bhikshunis. Is there a clear source for this in the Chinese vinaya texts?

A: As shown in the question, it should be referring to the historical event that: in Yuan-Chia Year 11 of Wen-Ti, Liu Sung (434 CE) at the Altar in Nan-Lin Temple of Nanking, with Sanghavarman as the upadyaya, 10 persons including bhikshuni Tieh-So-Lo from Sri Lanka had received base rules, and 323 people including bhikshuni Hui-Kuo of Ching-Fu Temple and received 2-group ordination from bhikshus and bhikshunis. (this event has been discussed in detail in A-1) From the point of the ordination history of Chinese bhikshunis and vinaya scriptures, that historical event of granting the ordination have several points that are noteworthy:

(i) It marks the first time for Chinese bhikshunis, with clear documentation in historical texts, to undertake 2-group reception of ordination from bhikshus and bhikshunis. It may count as the root origin of the Chinese bhikshunis!

(ii) In fact, bhikshuni Hui-Kuo and others had already received full ordination before this. So their reception of ordination is a “renewed” one, not a new one. Their original ordination received before was the “1-group reception of ordination from bhikshus”, a common practice since the time of bhikshuni Ching-Chien (357 CE).⁷⁰

(iii) Basically, it can be certain that bhikshuni Hui-Kuo and others had not received 2 years of “shikshamani vows” (see note 70).

(iv) With regard to the renewed reception of 2-group ordination from bhikshus and bhikshunis of Hui-Kuo: During that time Gunavarman, in consideration of the difficult circumstance of a “border land”, declared that “the original reception of 1-group ordination from bhikshus has been obtained and the renewal makes it improving with superiority in quality. So it is ‘better to receive one more time!’” (With regard to “improving with superior quality of ordination”, Satyasiddhi Sastra and Dharmagupta hold the opinion that “the embodiment of ordination” can be improved with superior quality through renewed reception of ordination. This viewpoint is different from that of “Sarvastivada Vinaya” in Tibet. The historical documentation about the renewed reception of ordination of Hui-Kuo is in note 70).

(v) In regard to this event, later during his own time vinaya master Tso-Hsuan (596-667 CE, the founder of Dharmagupta Vinaya in China, also the most influential person in the vinaya orders in China! A true representative of Vinaya in China), also held the same viewpoint as Gunavarman and declared that the ordination had been obtained.

(vi) In regard to the recognition from these two persons mentioned above, both had centred their consideration on “whether 1-group reception from bhikshus has obtained the ordination or not”. As for the fact whether Hui-Kuo had received shikshamani vows or not, that was not discussed. (Maybe because of the difficult circumstances of a border land?)

(vii) Because the 10 foreign bhikshunis including Tieh-So-Lo, received 2-group reception of ordination from bhikshus and bhikshunis, basically regarded that the vinaya teachers of Hui-Kuo and others were capable to pass on the “pure, complete, and flawless” lineage as vinaya teachers. Since their reception of ordination was not a new one (original embodiment of ordination was incomplete as a result of 1-group reception from bhikshus), and they did not have 2 years of learning the commandments, it is concluded, based on these facts, that although they received 2-group ordination from bhikshus and bhikshunis, they did not obtain the complete and flawless embodiment of ordination.

In a word, because of various conditions, bhikshuni ordination in China has never been considered as “perfect and flawless” from the very beginning. Even though, before the Five Dynasties (908-960 CE) the lineage of bhikshuni ordination in general had been continuous and not broken.⁷¹ According to historical facts, ever since the issuance of Prohibition by Tai-Tsu of Sung (around 972 CE), bhikshunis were not allowed to go to the

bhikshus for reception of ordination. According to master Tao-Hsuan,⁷² the lineage of bhikshuni was very likely to be broken.⁷³ After Sung Dynasty, the vinaya order in China seemed to be getting worse and worse. At times there were some scattered cases of 2-group reception of ordination, most of them could not hold on to become a trend. To study and examine the “unbroken and complete” lineage seemed impossible, not to mention whether the process was complete or follow the correct order (as shown in A-2), which was also impossible. Although within last 10 or 20 years, in Taiwan and mainland China there were some bhikshuni monasteries “strictly” follow “complete procedures” to cultivate the next generation and renew the correct way of 2-group reception of ordination, it can only guarantee the correctness and completeness of “procedures”. As for the lineage of ordination, there is nothing to be said.

As for the “1-group reception of ordination from bhikshus”, being the most common one in China, in general it is not broken since the resolution of the Prohibition.⁷⁴ Over the last four hundred years, starting from the death of Ku-Hsin-Ju-Hsin (1615 CE), it has become common that a bhikshu sangha would grant sramanerika, bhikshuni, bodhisattva ordination, in that order, within a very short time⁷⁵ to complete all at one time.⁷⁶ Ritualization becomes more important than the request for actual procedures of vinaya (to pay more attention to the outlook of the rituals and lose the request for the standard of the procedures of vinaya). This has become the characteristic of the vinaya tradition in China for the past four hundred years. Others such as: bhikshus to grant women sramanerika vows (see the discussion in A-10), to grant sramanerika vows with over a hundred men and women at the same time,⁷⁷ do not undertake the six rules of the shikshamani vows (already discussed in A-5, A-9), more than three persons at each altar (each ordination) in order to save time,⁷⁸ and women take bhikshus as their shaving upadyaya which has been a common practice for the last 40 years, etc. From the point of standard of vinaya, most of these are under extreme exception.

Until now, this is the general case in the bhikshuni sangha in China. Through changes of times, it is obvious that the lineage can hardly be regarded as complete. But on the whole, all the bhikshus and bhikshunis in China have been working hard in advancing the ordination reception toward an ideal direction (although the resistance is always strong) as much possible as they can. As the communication of information becomes more convenient and diversified, the qualities of bhikshus and bhikshunis in Taiwan have been improving every year, and the strong promotion for past years by many vinaya masters on the island, it has gradually opened

up and spread out trends like summer retreat, group studying of vinaya, receiving and retaining the Eight Garu Dharma (the eight rules to respect bhikshus by nuns), receiving shikshamani vows, reciting vinaya every half month, going to the bhikshus for lessons, etc. Young bhikshus and bhikshunis are not unaccustomed to vinaya anymore and are learning through every channel there is. Although the specialized “Vinaya Institutes” are not established yet, some groups that are maintaining pure vinaya order begin to unite when sharing the same viewpoint and they are forming in all places. Obviously, they all will become the central pillar of Chinese Buddhism.

Besides, the outside environment and conditions for ordination are changing toward the direction of revolution every year. Although there are some crises caused by the opening up of the reception of ordination, it has become indispensable due to delicacy (the number of people is limited but well educated) and following the correct rules (completely follow the vinaya scriptures set by the Buddha). It is believed that in the foreseeable future, under the proper conditions, opportunities for the correct way of receiving ordination will increase and make the improper way disappear gradually. At those moment, what we need to do is to educate the next generation to self-educate continuously and to educate the generations to come, and this is what we are doing right now.

With Regard to the Proof in Vinaya and Related Considerations of Bhikshuni Ordination Granted by a Bhikshu Sangha.

Q: The practice of a sangha consisting only of bhikshus conducting bhikshuni ordination (involving) a large number of women is becoming widespread in some Buddhist countries. What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: As shown in the conclusion in the previous question B-5, in the past four hundred years, the majority of Buddhism in various areas, based on Chinese Buddhism, has been receiving 1-group ordination of sramanerikas and bhikshunis from bhikshus. And most of them did not receive the complete cultivation and examination of six rules of shikshamani. Not only is this incorrect and an omission of the vinaya systems, but also shows the ignorance of the traditional women’s ordination. For the last four hundred years, there have been several historical facts in the traditional Buddhism of China concerning the ordination. To examine them from the point of “what was correctly set by the Buddha” in vinaya systems, we

could reach the following four conclusions (for most conditions):

1. In China the *sramaneri*ka commandments has always been granted by bhikshus. This is not permissible in the 5 vinaya systems. It is even documented as “not permissible, transgress the sins”. It is only permissible as an exception at a place when there is “no bhikshuni present”. (see discussion in A-10)
2. In China most of the women received full bhikshuni ordination directly without receiving *shikshamani* vows first. In the scriptures of five vinaya systems, this is regarded by all of them as not permissible! In Lu-Chao it is also denounced by saying that “the ordination is not obtained”. Although in Dharmagupta Vinaya and other vinaya systems there are exceptions to allow *sramaneras* to receive bhikshu ordination without receiving the 10 commandments first, founder of the Nan-Shan school Tao-Hsuan, based on the four reasons that women differ from men, has regarded that women are not allowed to apply this example. (see A-5 and A-9)
3. In China women generally received 1-group full ordination from bhikshus. Although it is not documented as not permissible in exact words in the scriptures of the five vinaya systems, it is said in Lu-Chao with verbatim text as “the ordination is not obtained”. Through historical causes, in Chinese tradition it is generally accepted as exception, including *vinayadhara* Tao-Hsuan.
4. In addition, there are other various conditions necessary for the ordination to be obtained, such as: all the subjective conditions of the to-be-ordained (is one clear of obstacles and hindrance both mentally and physically etc.), all the objective conditions of reception of ordination (the successful fixation of territory in the ordination area, the full qualification of ordination teacher, the full number of persons to perform karma, the full assembly of all monks and nuns with the great territories), etc. When all of these are included, the consideration of the completeness and flawlessness of the lineage of Chinese vinaya (or the embodiment of ordination) becomes further complicated and hard to determine.

It is “a fact” that bhikshunis have existed in areas of Chinese Buddhism for a long period of time. The consideration of the completeness of this lineage has more or less turned into a burden for history, and not to be solved easily by later generations. But this does not mean that “the fact”

can be applied in other areas carelessly without careful consideration. With a cautious attitude like that, it is not a question of “fairness or not” about women in other systems, nor a question of “having the right or not” of becoming nuns about women in other systems, but a big subject that concerns the complete Buddhism systems, lineage and whether it can be retained and remain purified forever. Women are different from men mentally, physically and habitually, and this is caused by karma. The Buddha prescribed according to our illness, and added many conveniences⁷⁹ in order to cultivate the natural capacity in women’s practice. How can this be viewed as discrimination against women by Buddhism? Since women are weak both mentally and physically, with heavy arrogance and pride, the Buddha set the requirements of the Eight Garu Dharma and the 2-group reception of ordination by bhikshus and bhikshunis for women to learn from bhikshus. This is the general principle for Buddhism to spread over the world. Being the disciples of the Buddha, not only should the bhikshus follow the doctrines bequeathed by the Buddha, but also shoulder the great responsibility of purifying and preserving Buddhism. Since the Buddha had set the rules that women be given full ordination by the bhikshus, it is only natural that the bhikshus have the responsibility and obligation of careful consideration on pravraj of women. This has nothing to do with whether women have the right to receive ordination or not.

Of course, there are records in historical documentation about the achievement of practising dharma by women. But we need to understand, from a more general situation (not just a few special cases), the possible influence caused by the entry of women into the sangha. In the scriptures of Schavera, Dharmagupta and even sutras, we can find many similar documentations about the influence on the retaining of Buddhism by pravraj of women. For example, in Bhikshuni Khanda, the 17th of Dharmagupta Vinaya it is written: “The Buddha said, now stop it Mahaprajapati, do not say like this: Try to make women leave home to practice dharma. Why? Mahaprajapati, if women leave home to practice dharma in Buddhism, it will make Buddhism unable to be retained longer!” The Buddha also said: “Now stop it, Ananda! Do not try to make women leave home to receive bhikshuni ordination in Buddhism. Why? If women leave home to receive bhikshuni ordination in Buddhism, then it will make Buddhism unable to be retained longer. For example, when there is a family, headed by a well-respected elder, with more women than men (this is the situation in Taiwan), then we can tell the family is declining. ...Also it is like a nice rice field, struck by frost and hails, is destroyed immediately. So Ananda, if women leave home to receive bhikshuni ordination in

Buddhism, then it will make Buddhism unable to be retained longer!” And it is also said: “The Buddha told Ananda that, if women does not leave home to receive bhikshuni ordination in Buddhism, Buddhism shall be retained 500 years longer! Hearing that, Ananda is unhappy and felt regretful (since it is Ananda who had insisted that the Buddha allow women to leave home.) He felt worried and depressed and started weeping with tears.⁸⁰

In addition, as documented in Mahisasaka Vinaya of Sthavira, when Mahaprajapati asked the Buddha’s permission to leave home, the Buddha said: “Stop! Stop! Do not say such words. Why? ‘All Buddhas in the past have not allowed women to leave home’. ‘...All Buddhas in the future will do exactly the same’. ...Mahaprajapati pleaded three times as above, and the Buddha has disapproved three times as above”⁸¹ Then after Ananda had asked on her behalf and the Buddha allowed Mahaprajapati to receive full ordination by following the Eight Garu Dharma, Mahaprajapati had some doubts about the Eight Garu Dharma. The Buddha has made an announcement, which is similarly documented in the Mahaprajapati Bhikshuni Sutra, on the influence on sangha by the pravraj of women: “The Buddha told Ananda, if I allow bhikshunis to pay different degree of respect to bhikshus (to have different attitude of respect to bhikshus according to their status, as requested by Mahaprajapati), it is totally wrong (the Buddha disapproved of it)! Women have 5 hindrances: can not become Indra, nor Mara, nor Brahma, nor a Chakravarti, nor Dharmaraja of Triloka (i.e. the Buddha). If women are not allowed to leave home to receive full ordination, the Dharma of the Buddha will be retained for a thousand years; if allowed to leave home to receive full ordination in Buddhism, after my parinirvana, the upasakas and the upasikas will hold four offerings (offerings on four things) and follow after the bhikshus, saying: Honorable bhikshu, please have pity on me and accept my offering; ...if they meet in the road, they will all untie their hairs and wipe bhikshu’s feet, spread their hair on the ground so the bhikshu can walk over it. Now women are allowed to leave home, then it is the end of those things! After hearing that, Ananda is sad and regretful in tears, he told the Buddha: Bhagavat! Since I did not hear it before and I did not know of this, so I had asked (the Buddha) to allow women to leave home to receive full ordination. If I knew it before, how would I keep asking for three times? The Buddha told Ananda not to weep again, it is because the evil has blocked his mind.”⁸³

In addition, in Mahaprajapati Bhikshuni Sutra the Buddha has clearly said: “If women do not become Buddhist sramana (pravraj), all the

Brahmans (tirthika, those who practise other religions) and at-home Buddhists shall offer their clothes and sheets, and with their head on the ground appeal to the sramana, saying: Wise and virtuous one, who have the pure living of Brahmana, it is my wish that you would walk over these clothes to have me blessed forever. The immeasurable amount of blessing matches the sincerity of my heart and all my wishes would be fulfilled. ...if women do not become Buddhist sramana (pravraj), everyone will offer and serve the sramana with respect, as they will do to the sun and the moon, as they will do to the heavens. Well above those of the tirthika, the pure living of the sramana could not be contaminated, they are just like the mana.⁸⁴

From these quoted above from different vinaya systems and sutras, we can tell the Buddha basically is rather conservative and cautious about the case of women leaving home to receive ordination. Undoubtedly this attitude is exactly what Buddhist disciples in later generation shall follow and learn. Since this is a very serious matter, it is necessary to extensively solicit answers from all Buddhist groups. Only by doing so, with the most complete consideration and most thorough design, this historical decision that will influence for a very long time can be made.

At last, before concluding the answers of the sixteen questions discussed above, it is my wish to provide some opinions with “Taiwan Experience” for references:

1. It has great influence on the actual operation of sangha orders to allow women into sangha formally. In Taiwan it is very common to have both men and women together in the same monastery, it is deeply felt!
2. It seems that it is a fact generally recognized that the superficial prosperity of the Buddhism in Taiwan comes greatly from the contribution of bhikshunis. However, the Buddhism in Taiwan has paid a great price in Buddhism for this. Those problems hidden behind are worth understanding and evaluating in depth.
3. Through the experience of development by the Buddhism in Taiwan over forty years, it has made those foresighted people in Buddhism realize that: the so-called achievement in “secular business” are not equivalent to the growth in “practising and attaining dharma”.
4. The firm establishment of the ethical relationship according to Dharma

between bhikshus and bhikshunis will have a decisive influence on the harmony as one mind, the purification, and improvement to superiority of all Buddhist groups in its entirety.

5. Of course bhikshus need the complete developmental education of sangha, but bhikshuni that is specially applicable to bhikshunis. The content of that education is not exactly the same as those of bhikshus, it requires some professional comprehension and experience to do it adequately.
6. Over the past forty and some years, many venerables of Buddhism in Taiwan have a common experience: It is extremely difficult for men to teach women well, and likewise, it is extremely difficult for men to have their female disciples to get along with each other in harmony as one mind.
7. The dividing lines (judgment for propriety) and vinaya rules between young bhikshus and bhikshunis is necessary to be stringent. Otherwise everything bad and evil will be formed, and it will be come impossible to maintain a pure sangha.

2. SELF-IMPOSED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: From the history of sangha, bhikshunis received 1-group ordination from bhikshus and obtained the ordination at first. Although this was approved first by Gunavarmā, and later by vinaya master Tao-Hsuan, it is still only words from the masters, not directly announced from the mouth of the Buddha. Are there any other proofs about whether or not bhikshunis in China obtained the ordination?

A: There are two recordings in the history of sangha that may be the proof for reference:

The first one is in Roll 89 of Fa-Yuan-Chu-Lin⁸⁵, it says: “in Year 3 of Wen-Ti, Tsao Wei (i.e. Huang-Tsu Year 3 of Huang-Chu, 222 CE), Wen-Ti has set the Panca Parisad, and he had asked what was the origin of obtaining ordination for both bhikshus and bhikshunis, and if there were any prophesies? (this happened after the five bhikshus had received the ordination, and the ten unknown foreign bhikshunis had come to grant base rules) Nobody in the audience could answer. Then one bhikshu made a wish to go to India to ask the sage. So he departed from Chang-An and reached India. He then asked an arhat about whether or not Chinese

bhikshus and bhikshunis had received ordination. The arhat entered into meditation and went to Tusita Heaven to ask Maitreya directly. Maitreya said: 'Bhikshus and bhikshunis, they all obtain the ordination!' and handed the arhat the Gold Flower as a proof. After the arhat arose from meditation, he told the whole thing to the bhikshu, and handed him the Gold Flower. The Gold Flower then entered the palms of the bhikshu, with a height of one foot (ancient Indian measurement). With this auspicious appearance, he was referred to later as the 'Flower Hand Bhikshu'.

Note: About this Flower Hand Bhikshu, it happened after the five bhikshus had received ordination for a border land (168 CE) and these unknown foreign bhikshunis had come to grant full ordination and base rules to Chinese bhikshunis (220 CE) It is obvious the both of them are able to receive the ordination. Now with regard to the base rules for women, if it is possible to obtain the ordination at border land, then it should be undoubted that bhikshuni Ching-Chien should obtain the ordination as she had received full ordination from the ten bhikshus later.

The second one is in Tao-Hsuan-Lu-Shih-Kan-Tung-Luc⁸⁶ (written in February, 667 CE), it says: During the time of the Buddha a deva came to manusys (human's world) and told vinayadhara Tao-Hsuan: For all the vinaya works you have written, transcribed, recorded, annotated, and regulated, except those in the judgment on the relic of the deceased, due to improper translation by earlier people, have some minor flaws, everything else is without mistakes, etc. (it is said 'impossible to make any corrections').

Note: Since the deva at the time of the Buddha has also recognized that these written works by master Tao-Hsuan have no flaws, it proves that it is also without mistakes in the case that master Tao-Hsuan has approved Gunavarman.

Q: Even though, because the process of obtaining the ordination at the time was not complete, may be the vinaya lineage of bhikshunis in China is incomplete or flawed?

A: As discussed before, there are some areas that are incomplete and flawed in the lineage of bhikshunis in China, but whether or not the ordination is obtained does not depend solely on the quality of the lineage. That has also been discussed in A-2, and can be proved again with documentation in Mahayana sutras and vinayas:

(a) In Roll 1 of Chan-Cha-Shan-O-Yeh-Pao-ching it says: “Again in the future, sentient beings like those laypeople or pravraj, who has wanted to but can not receive the pure ordination because they have committed the serious primary sins (killing, stealing, adultery, and lying) before, shall then receive it if they have obtained the purification signs of body, speech, and mind sincerely, by practising the expiration dharma as described above. ...And willing to receive all the rules of the laypeople or pravraj. ...shall make offerings respectfully and sincerely in monastery. “To announce to buddhas and bodhisattvas in every direction by raising my head, and ‘ask my teacher to be the witness, ...being self-ordained without acharya’. In this case they also have obtained the ordination”. It is also said: “For those laypeople, they shall shave their heads, put on dharma clothing, and make petition as above, to vow by oneself to receive the three kinds of ordination to bodhisattva vinaya. This is called ‘to receive full pratimoksa, the ordination name of leaving home as bhikshu and bhikshunis, and they shall study and learn the Hinayana vinaya pitaka’. ...to retain, recite, and observe practising dharma.”⁸⁷

Note: This context clearly shows that although one received the bhikshu ordination through taking vows by himself (it says ‘to receive full pratimoksha’), he may not be able to practise the dharma to benefit others (since it is not clearly said in the context). However it enables him, officially as a bhikshu, to start learning and retaining dharma to benefit himself. (It says that they shall study and learn the Hinayana vinaya pitaka).

(b) In Kuan-Pu-Hsien-Pu-Sa-Hsing-Fa-Ching it says: “After taking the vows of generating broad and generous mind and receiving the eight commandments, one burns various famous incense, spreads out the flowers in a spacious place, and makes offerings to all the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and all mahayana doctrines, saying: I am generating the bodhichitta today, and will take this merit to benefit all sentient being. ...and then prostrate with the head at the feet of all the Buddhas and all the Bodhisattvas, contemplating the Mahayana doctrines... ‘If those laypeople or pravraj do not need upadhyaya, do not have all the teachers, and do not perform karma’. Because of retaining and reciting of Mahayana scriptures, and Samantabhadra exhorting to generate, the dharma eyes and ears of all the Buddha in all directions. By way of this, “the naturally formed spiritual body of tathagata.”⁸⁸

Note: It is said here that ‘do not need upadhyaya, do not have all the teachers, and do not perform karma’ shows the importance of “sincerity”.

(c) In Roll 10 of Rocana-So-Pu-Sa-Shin-Ti-Chieh-Pin of Brahmajala Sutra, it is said: “If a Son of the Buddha, after nirvana of the Buddha, wishing to receive bodhisattva vows, ‘takes the vows by himself in front of the images of the Buddha and bodhisattvas, he will obtain the ordination when he expiates in front of the Buddha for seven days and perceives the good signs (sees the light and flower, etc.).... Having perceived these good signs, he will receive the ordination in front of the images of the Buddha and bodhisattvas. Without these good signs, even he receives the ordination in front of the images of the Buddha, he does not obtain the ordination!” It is also said: “If there is not one teacher within a thousand Li (ancient unit of measurement for length) that can grant the ordination, one can receive the ordination in front of the images of the Buddha and bodhisattvas. And it needs to perceive the good signs.” As for ‘sincerity’, it is also mentioned like this: “If you are receiving the ordination in front of the teacher of bodhisattva vows, then there is no need to perceive the good signs. Why? Because that teacher has been taught by a teacher, and so forth, there is no need to perceive the good signs. So one obtains the ordination when receiving the ordination in front of the teacher. It is because one has generated sincerity, that one obtains the ordination.”

Note: To obtain the ordination through self-ordination requires the auspicious proof of the ‘good signs’. It is not easily done by people in general, and therefore shall not be seen as a normal practice.

Q: In Mahayana sutras and vinayas, there is clear documentation about self-ordination, does this imply that the regulation about the procedures of granting ordination in Hanayaya vinaya system can be ignored?

A: That is totally not the case! What the precious question has cited is only to prove the importance of ‘sincerity’ and the actual existence of ‘self-ordination’, not to replace the ‘Karma rules’, which possess the function of retaining the Buddhism, with the special practices in the Mahayana Buddhism (not the way to do thing under normal circumstance, and able to be done by ordinary people). This has been mentioned in the answer of A-3.


In addition there is another vinayadhara of Nan-Shah school Ling-Chih, with great influence. With his view in Tsu-Chih-Chi, it basically says: in Buddhism there are two major types, ‘teaching with converting and enlightening’ and ‘teaching with discipline and restrained practices’. The former emphasizes to enlighten those who are lost and convert them into the correct direction. There is no fault if they are not followed, the teaching

of Mahayana Buddhism belongs to this type; if one practices Mahayana expiation, one can purify the 'karma sins' but not the 'vinaya sins'. On the other hand, the latter emphasizes establishing the images of Buddhism. If it is not carried out the purifying image can not be established, and nothing is worse than this in deteriorating the Dharma, and Hinayana vinaya belongs to this type; if one can thoroughly practice their expiation by following karma regulations, it may purify the 'vinaya sins' caused by the 'karma sins'. So if one transgressed one of the four primary sins and only asked expiation by 'teaching with converting and enlightening', he could purify the karma sins but the vinaya sins are still there, so he still needs to be expelled! On the other hand, if one expiates with *jñapticaturtha karman* among the bhikshus and bhikshunis by 'teaching with discipline and restrained practices', he may not purify all the karma sins, but the vinaya sins are purified, at least he can still be a 'learning and expiating *sramanera*' and need not be expelled.⁹⁰ Although everything discussed above is to explain that the Mahayana and Hinayana can not replace each other in practising 'expiating sins'. And the situation of receiving ordination is basically like this: although in Mahayana Buddhism there is clear documentation of 'self-ordination', but that is only part of obtaining the 'substance' of the embodiment of ordination in 'teaching with converting and enlightening'. In order to be really 'worthy of the reputation', to have complete bhikshu (bhikshuni) identity in sangha (besides 'substance', also 'form') to be able to perform thoroughly the function of bhikshu (bhikshuni) function (to qualify to give ordination, and perform various types of karma), it is necessary to follow through all the ordination regulations of 'teaching with discipline and restrained practices', to reach the goal. These two types of teaching have their own emphasis in educating and enlightening, they can not be mixed! For example, even being enlightened, Master Hui-Neng, the sixth Master of the Zen in China, still shaved his head and became a bhikshu and received full ordination.

3. REFERENCE FOR SOURCE AND SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENTS

1. 534B VOL. 62 'Ta-Cheng', 'Tsu-Hsing-Chao', in addition to Chih-Fa-Lin at that time, there are also Chih-Chien, Dharmaraksa, Chu-Tao-Shen and Lokasema, total of five people.
2. 708b vol. 60 'Hsu', 'Pi-Chu-Ni-Shou-Lu': "When the nuns come to ask for reception of ordination. Five bhikshus said: 'As said in vinaya, there are only exceptions for a border land for five-bhikshus to give ordination. Not for women'. Then those nuns returned, weeping

with tears.” So it is known that there were nuns already, and asked to receive ordination, but in vain.

3. 535b vol. 62 ‘Ta-Cheng’, Tsu-Hsing-Chao’, and 708b vol.60 ‘-Hsu’, ‘Pi-Chu-Ni-Shou-Chieh-Lu’: “(that bhikshuni from Eastern India) then returned to her country and solicited fifteen people to come. Three of them died in the snow mountains, two died from falling into the dark gorges. Only ten of them survived and reached here. So the nuns all went to the capital city to receive the full ordination. Later they went to Wu area (about south of Yangtze River), and gave ordination to nuns over there, too.
4. 169b vol. 40 ‘Ta-Cheng’, ‘Ssu-Fen-Lu-Hsing-Shih-Chao-Tsu-Chih-Chi’.
5. 702b vol. 60 ‘-Hsu’, ‘Pi-Chu-Ni-Shou-Chieh-Lu’, and 534c vol. 62 ‘Ta-Cheng’, ‘Tsu-Hsing-Chao’.
6. Before this, during years of Hsien-Kang (335-342 CE) sramanera Seng-Chien received ‘Samghika Bhikshuni Karman’ and ‘Chieh-Pen’ from Kusana. 934c vol. 50 ‘Ta-Cheng’, Roll 1 of ‘Bhikshuni Biographies’.
7. Same as the previous note. Bhikshuni Ching-Chien was born as Chung-Ling-Yi at Peng-Cheng (Hsu-Chou of Chiang-Su Province today). Her father was named Tan, a tai-shou (title of magistrate) of Wu-Wei. Ching-Chien was diligent in studying since young, became widowed and poor when young, became learned in Buddha’s teachings since met Chinese sramanera Fa-Shih. Later, she was initiated and left home to become a nun. Through introduction of Fa-Shih, with twenty-four of them, she went to the eminent monk Chih-Shan upadyaya who came to China from Kubha (Kashmir today) (beg for food to live, return to one’s own country in Chien-Wu Year 1, 317 CE), and received ten commandments from him. It is said in Mahaprajapati Bhikshuni Sutra: “The Buddha says, never let bhikshus be the teacher. Only when there is no bhikshuni around, then bhikshus are approved.” 952b vol. 24 ‘Ta-Cheng’, Maybe it is because there is not bhikshuni at that time, so master Chih-Shan would become the teacher of mundana for the women, and give them the ten commandments?
8. Same as the previous note. In Roll 1 of the Bhikshuni Biographies it

is said: When Ching-Chien was asking to leave home to become a nun over Fa-Shih's area, Fa-Shih replied: "There are both monks and nuns in the West Area. 'This country does not have the way to do'. Considering the history, at that time Eastern Chin was confined in the area about Chiang-Su and Che-Chiang Provinces, and separated from the north. It is possible that there was no bhikshuni in that area. So that is why Chih-Shan would give mundana to women disciples as a bhikshu, it also supplied the proofs that when Ching-Chien went onto the altar and received the full ordination (there is no record of foreign bhikshunis coming to China), it is 1-group ordination of ten bhikshus, not 2-group ordination (since there is no bhikshuni), nor eleven-people reception of ordination (since there is no bhikshuni upadyaya).

9. Same as the previous note.
10. 939c vol. 50 'Ta-Cheng', in Biography of Bhikshuni Seng-Kuo in Roll 2 of Bhikshuni Biographies it is said: In Yuan-Chia Year 6 (429 CE), a bhikshuni from Simhala came to Chin-Fu Temple in Capital City of Sung Dynasty, asked Seng-Kuo: 'Has there ever been any foreign bhikshuni in this country yet?' The answer: 'Never.' The question: 'Earlier those bhikshunis (meaning those bhikshunis after Ching-Chien) received ordination, where are the two groups?' The answer: 'They received from bhikshus only. To receive the base rules (meaning to receive base rules from bhikshunis) is to initiate the wills of the to-be-ordained and make it stronger. It is the convenience to 'obtain the ordination'. For example, Mahaprajapati received the ordination with the Eight Garu Dharma, then she became the upadyaya of the five hundred Shakyas women.'" This conversation is a clear proof that at that time, Chinese bhikshunis all received 1-group ordination. Besides, the so called 'Mahaprajapati became the upadyaya' is exactly the special way of interpretation in the Mahisasaka Vinaya, which is translated in Yuan-Chia Year 1 (424 CE) at Yang-Chou (same area in Chiang-Su and Che-Chiang Provinces). This is the so-called eleven people (teachers) reception of full ordination. Therefore this is clear that it is possible to have eleven people ordination for Chinese bhikshunis after bhikshuni Ching-Chien received ordination. But it needs to be emphasized: the Mahisasaka Vinaya does not agree that eleven people ordination is a normal procedure. The answers by bhikshuni Seng-Kuo has later received the approval of the eminent monk from Kubha, Gunavarman, teacher of the Tripitaka.

11. 51b vol. 40 'Ta-Cheng', in Roll 2 of 'Ssu-Fen-Lu-Hsing-Shih-Chao', it quotes from 'Eminent Monks Biography' and said: Hui-Chao of Chi-Huan Temple and others, all fifty people (also see 266a vol. 40 'Ta-Chen') have retaken the full ordination from bhikshu Sanghavarman from India. When they were asked the reason. They answered: "Receiving with doubt first, maybe it is of middle, or lower quality; then in order to pursue superiority we need to retake again." Based on this, the so-called incomplete and flawed process of obtaining ordination (e.g. 1-group reception of bhikshuni ordination) may be the reason for causing the quality of ordination of middle or lower?
12. 941a vol. 50 'Ta-Cheng', in Roll 2 of "Bhikshuni Biographies" it says: "It does not mean the earlier reception doesn't count. It only means to improve to superior quality of ordination". Therefore this historical 2-group ordination of bhikshunis has been regarded as a 'retake'. And the time for the retaking of 2-group ordination, it is based on what was written in Tsu-Hsing-chao (535b vol. 62 'Ta-Chen'). In 941b vol. 50 'Bhikshuni Pao-Hsien Biography' it is also recorded Year 11. If according to 'Bhikshuni Biographies' there are two different years being recorded, Year 9 (937c vol. 50 'Ta-Cheng') and Year 10 (939c vol. 50 'Ta-Cheng'). In addition, about the year Gunavarman came to China, it is recorded Year 7 or Yuan-Chia in 'Tsu-Hsing-Chao' (535c vol. 62 'Ta-Cheng'), 'Bhikshuni Te-Le Biography' (644c vol. 62 'Ta-Cheng'), and 'Bhikshuni Pan-Hsiu Biography'. In 'Bhikshuni Hui-Kuo Biography' it is record as Yuan-Chia Year 6.
13. 266a vol. 40 'Ta-Cheng', 'Ssu-Fen-Lu-Hsing-Shih-Chao-Tsu-Chih-Chi'.
14. 937b vol. 50 'Ta-Cheng', in Roll 2 of "Bhikshuni Biography" it says: bhikshunis receive full ordination directly from the bhikshus without taking base rules first, Gunavarman thinks 'the bhikshunis obtain the ordination, while the bhikshus commit the sins'. When being asked why the bhikshus commit the sins, Gunavarman replied: "Where there are bhikshunis around, one does not make women spending 2 year to learn (six rules), so it is said that he committed the sins." From this, it can be certain that bhikshunis at that time have not spent two years learning shikshamni vows. Most of the vinayadharas in China also thought so.

15. 252a vol. 54 'Ta-Cheng', Manner of Attending the Altar in Roll 3 of 'Concise History of Sangha in the Great Sung Dynasty'
16. see 252b of previous note it says "Liang, LatterTang, Chin, Han, Chou, they only practice the ten teacher rule.
17. see 238 of previous note, in Roll 1 of 'Concise History of Sangha in the Great Sung Dynasty' it has recorded how bhikshunis obtain the ordination: "Recently Tai-Chu has ordered that nuns are not allowed to go to the bhikshus for ordination. Since then bhikshunis only received 1-group ordination, the quality of vinaya can not be complete.
18. 731a-b vol. 60 'ㄩ-Hsu', 'Causes of the Manners of 2-Group Reception of Ordination' by vinaya dhara Shu-Yu. From the description in the context, during the time of vinaya dhara Chien-Yueh, there are still 'Shikshamana' around.
19. 702b vol. 60 'ㄩ-Hsu', 'Records of Ordination of Bhikshus'.
20. 708c vol. 60 'ㄩ-Hsu', 'Records of Ordination of Bhikshunis' by vinayadhara Hung-Tsan, and note (18).
21. 844c vol. 24 'Ta-Cheng'.
22. 684b-c vol. 85 'Ta-Cheng', in 'Lu-Chao' it asked: 'If one receives six rules first, then receives the full ordination in less than 2 years, does she obtain the ordination? The answer: she obtains the ordination, but the teachers transgress sins.' As for those over 20 years of age, it is referring to young girls (not married girls). For married girls, they can receive shikshamani vows as early as 10 years old, then at 12 after they have fully trained then they can receive the full ordination. (see 219c vol. 22 'Ta-Cheng')
23. 219c vol. 22 'Ta-Cheng', 462c vol. 24 'Ta-Cheng'
24. 1065b-1068b vol. 22 'Ta-Cheng', Receiving Ordination Rules Second of 'Ssu-Fen-Pi-Chu-Ni-Chieh-Mo-Fa'.
25. 25c vol. 40 'Ta-Cheng', in Roll 3 of 'Ssu-Fen-Lu-Hsing-Shih-Chao', also see 155b-c Roll 4, there are similar collection.

26. 579c vol. 23 'Ta-Cheng', these two examples, applied in 'Hsing-Shih-Chao' (155b vol. 40 'Ta-Cheng'). In 'Tsu-Chih-Chi' it explains: these two 'asked disciples if they know' and talked if obtaining ordination or not (426c vol. 40 'Ta-Cheng').
27. 215a, 209c vol. 41 '卍-Hsu', Roll 12 of 'Ssu-Fen-Lu-Chieh-Mo-Shu-Chi'; also see 686a vol. 85 'Ta-Cheng', 'Lu-Chao'.
28. The documented proofs and its status in Hinayana Vinaya, will be discussed in the self-imposed questions and answers.
29. 220a vol. 41 '卍-Hsu', Roll 13 of 'Ssu-Fen-Sui-Chi-Chieh-Mo-Shu-Chin'
30. Vinayadhara Tao-Hsuan also said about this: 'There is no clear documentation that says no', Ling-Chih explained: 'It means there is no text that reads "do not obtain ordination without receiving base rules".' So it is emphasized specially that sangha rules have to conform to the Dharma. The Vinayadhara said again: 'I would rather not to receive base rules, it is not certain whether I would obtain ordination. If there is violation in sangha rules, then it is certain I would not obtain ordination. It needs to be taught and warn everyone!' see 284b vol. 41 '卍-Hsu', 'Ssu-Fen-Lu-Chieh-Mo-Shu-Chi'.
31. 684b vol. 85 'Ta-Cheng'
32. 341b vol. 50 'Ta-Cheng', Roll 3 or 'Eminent Monk Biographies'.
33. Vinaya master Tao-Hsuan has quoted many times this paragraph of historical conversation that have decisive influence on Chinese bhikshuni ordination in 'Ssu-Fen-Lu-Sui-Chi-Chieh-Mo-Shu' (as note (30) and 'Hsing-Shih-Chao' (see 51c vol. 40 of 'Ta-Cheng'). And give them positive attitude. See note (36).
34. About 'Bhikshuni obtains ordination, bhikshus transgress sins', vinayadhara Tao-Hsuan basically agreed. As to why 'obtains ordination, transgress sins'? Tao-Hsuan did not explain, but Ling-Chih did a frontal explanation. He thinks that the ordination is obtained because 'sangha rules are not broken'; as for transgressing sins, it is because 'violate basic system (the regulation which was set by the Buddha)' (217a vol. 40 'Ta-Cheng'). His explanation for the former agree with views of Gunavarman. The so-called 'basic system'

actually includes two things, ‘take six rules’ and ‘take base rules’, Gunavarman only admitted that the former is the reason for ‘transgressing the sins’ (see discussion context). As for those receiving the full ordination without receiving base rules first, whether the bhikshus have transgressed the sins, he did not explain. Does it seem that vinaya dhara Ling-Chih put stronger emphasis on 2-group ordination than Gunavarman? This may be what we shall give our best effort to follow.

35. This conversation is based on the Introduction of ‘Monk Biographies’ (see 341b vol. 50 ‘Ta-Cheng’), Bhikshuni Biographies (see 939c vol. 50 ‘Ta-Cheng’), Tsu-Hsing-Chao (see 535c vol. 62 ‘Ta-Cheng’) and Hsing-Shih-Chao (see 51c vol. 40 ‘Ta-Cheng’)
36. 211a vol. 41 ‘-Hsu’, in ‘Ssu-Fen-Lu-Sui-Chih-Chieh-Mo-Shu-Chi’ master Tao-Hsuan has said: ‘If counting only China, since the time before (Liu) Sung Dynasty (434 CE, bhikshuni)

[subsequent notes missing from submitted paper Ed.]

CONCLUSION

This report is mainly the answers based on the sixteen questions from Dharamsala. Although the questions and the answers throughout the whole report seem complicated, the content of the answers actually revolves mainly around three questions, that is:

1. What are generally the historical facts of the lineage of the bhikshuni vinaya in China?
2. What are the most complete conditions, the process and the possible exceptions, based on the ‘correct rules’ of all vinaya systems, for a woman from leaving home at the beginning till becoming officially a bhikshuni?
3. From the viewpoint of the historical fact of the first question, based on the understanding of second question, then examine objectively the degree of completeness and permissibility of the lineage of the bhikshuni vinaya in China. Regardless of the direction of the questions or the content of the answers, generally it does not depart away from these three themes.

In conclusion, ever since the four bhikshunis including Ching-Chien had received the full ordination at first in 357 CE, based on reliable documentation, bhikshunis in China have been accomplished through the exception of '1-group reception of ordination from bhikshus'. Although this has been approved by reverend Gunavarman (from Kashmir) and vinayadhara Tao-Hsuan later, in relation to the similarity of the condition on the reception of ordination by bhikshuni Mahaprajapati, it can be certain that the manner and the process of the reception of ordination is incomplete and flawed. Even till 434 CE, 323 bhikshunis including Hui-Kuo retook the 2-group ordination from bhikshus and bhikshunis, there are still problems of not receiving shikshamani vows to learn rules for two years first, and not a new reception of ordination but of receiving 'improved ordination' (has 1-group reception of full ordination from bhikshus before). It is also a fact that there are questions that essentially the manner and the process of the reception of ordination are still incomplete and flawed. Having this as the origin of the full ordination (upasampada) of Chinese bhikshunis to consider the lineage of vinaya, then it can be certain that this tradition is rather incomplete and flawed (but this does not mean 'absolutely' not obtaining the ordination)

Furthermore in 972 CE, this lineage becomes completely broken, due to the order by the emperor of Sung Dynasty that prohibits women going to the bhikshus to receive ordination! Although it is continued later, there is no documentation to prove that ten foreign purified bhikshunis re-entered China and gave 2-group reception of ordination from bhikshus and bhikshunis. As a result it can only be regarded as practising with an exception manner of 1-group reception of ordination by bhikshus. (same as bhikshuni Ching-Chien) The lineage of bhikshuni vinaya reborn from this is certainly incomplete and flawed. As for the bhikshunis from then on till now, although there are some cases of 2-group reception of ordination by bhikshus and bhikshunis on and off, on one hand, this can only prove the completeness of 'procedures' of receiving the ordination. As for the lineage of vinaya, likewise, it is impossible to consider. On the other hand, even so, currently it is only the very few young bhikshunis who have such conditions. For the majority of the bhikshunis of Chinese lineage (including a great number of bhikshunis of Chinese lineage that we met in Tibet), their manner of receiving full ordination is mostly based on the regulations on reception of ordination in Chuan-Chieh-Cheng-Fan which is widely spread since 1660 CE. In that regulation the bhikshus collectively give women sramanera vows, then within a short period of time give 1-group reception of ordination from bhikshus, in reality it is usually over three persons on each altar, and even without the two-year

shikshamani vows, etc. All these are exact opposite to the correct rules of the vinaya. Based on this, if not considering the lineage of the vinaya, but contemplating the procedure of the reception of ordination, it is very common that the majority of the bhikshunis of Chinese tradition at present have an incomplete and flawed procedure of reception of ordination. It is generally the case for the question of the origin of the lineage of Chinese-Bhikshuni and its permissibility.

Here, I thank every one who has finished reading this long report. It may take a lot of your time and energy. At the same time, I want to thank everyone who has put an effort in this report. Besides these, I thank especially His Holiness the Dalai Lama for his kindness and trust to call a meeting like this one, and letting me to learn and clarify such question. In the mean time it promotes the dialogue and communication between Tibetan Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism. Finally I would like to dedicate the merit of this discussion to the world peace, happiness of human beings, achieving the Buddhahood together!

July 5, 2542 in Buddha's Calendar

Completed at Nan-Pu-To Buddhist Institute, Taiwan

AN ARTICLE FOR THE SEMINAR OF MULASARVASTIVADA,
THERAVADA AND DHARMAGUPTA VINAYA HOLDERS
CONCERNING THE LINEAGE OF BHIKSHUNI ORDINATION-
BHIKKHU HUIMIN (TAIWAN, R.O.C.)

A. Discussion of Bhikshuni Ordination received from a Sangha of both bhikshus and bhikshunis. (All the discussions should be based on source materials derived from the vinaya adhered to by the three schools i.e. Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta)

Q1: Does a lineage of the bhikshuni vow introduced into China by Sri Lankan bhikshunis in the fifth century exist unbroken to the present day?

A: Dual ordination of bhikshunis was not strictly carried out. The bhikshuni vow received from Sangha of both bhikshus and bhikshunis was first transmitted in the Nanlin (Southern Forest) Temple in Yang-zhou in 434 CE. In "Essential Vinaya", the vinaya master Hung-yi (1880-1942 CE) wrote, "According to Buddhist rules, bhikshuni must take their ordination vows twice. First the vows are primarily taken from the bhikshunis sangha, and then the vows are formally bestowed by the bhikshus sangha. The vows actually take effect during the ceremony of the bhikshus sangha. However, this rule has not been implemented since the Southern Sung dynasty (1128-1376)." This shows that since the 13th century, ordination vows have been taken in only one sangha.

The "Bhikshuni Ordination Vow Book" written by the Ching dynasty vinaya master Hung-tsan (1611-1685 CE) also says that "The transmission of the complete ordination vows of the bhikshuni has been long lost." (Wan-hsu 107, p186)

Q2: Does the complete and flawless ordination of women require the existence of an unbroken lineage of bhikshuni vows or not? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: According to the Dharmagupta-Vinayavibhanga, the qualifications for the ordination of upadhyayani are comparable to those for the upadhyaya. Those are the three merits: first, at least ten sangha members, second, wisdom, third, painstaking teaching of disciples. (Dharmagupta-Vinayavibhanga, the chapter of Ordination, Taisho 1428 (v.22), p.800a)

The only difference is that upadhyayani must be at least twelve sangha's

ages, as opposed to the upadhyaya's ten ages. (According to the Dharmagupta-Pratimoksha text, Expiation 131, "If a bhikshuni less than twelve sangha's ages imparts ordination vows, this entails expiation.")

These are the main qualifications of upadhyayani concerning the complete and flawless ordination of women in the bhikshuni vows.

There are two main conditions concerning receiving vows validly. First, the vows must be taken with a solemn heart. Second, valid vows may be received if, first the novice does not know of any impurity on the part of the upadhyaya or upadhyayani, or second, the novice does not know that 'vows taken from an impure upadhyaya or upadhyayani are invalid.' "Dharmagupta-Vinayavibhanga" Chapter 35, Taisho 22, 816B17.

From this we may conclude that the main requirements concerning the validity of the vows are the novice's motivation and her attitude towards the upadhyaya or upadhyayani.

Q3: During a period in which the lineage of bhikshuni ordination was absent for nearly twelve years, women were ordained as bhikshunis by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus. Following this, ordination of bhikshunis was conducted by a sangha consisting of bhikshus and bhikshunis. Does the bhikshuni ordination conducted by such a sangha result in uncorrupted and pure vows, or does it result in corrupted and impure vows? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: Uncorrupted and pure vows may be received. This condition does not result in corrupted, impure vows.

The Indian vinaya master Gunavarman (367-431 CE) said, "As the bhikshuni ordination vows are taken with the bhikshu sangha, even if such vows are valid. This shows that bhikshuni ordination vows taken in a single sangha are uncorrupted and pure. Therefore, after twelve years, the position of upadhyayani may be taken.

Q4: Is it necessary for a woman to seek a sangha of both bhikshus and bhikshunis to receive bhikshuni ordination? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: The viewpoints of Indian and Chinese Vinaya Masters concerning single

sangha and double sangha transmission of ordination vows as below:

The Indian Vinaya Master Gunavarman (367-431 CE) said, “As the bhikshuni ordination vows are taken with the bhikshu sangha, even if such vows are not previously taken in the bhikshunis sangha, such vows are valid”.

The Tang dynasty Vinaya Master Dao-xuan (596-667 CE) agreed, saying, “In the Vinaya sutras, there are no statutes stipulating that vows are not previously taken in the bhikshunis sangha, such vows are valid. However, if ordination vows are taken in only bhikshu sangha, although the novices’ vows are valid, the upadhyaya must make Expiation.”

Q5: Is it appropriate for a woman to receive the vows of full ordination as a bhikshuni without having previously received the shikshamani probationary vow as basis? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: This may not be entirely appropriate. According to the 17th Chapter of bhikshunis in Volume 48 of Dharmagupta-Vinayavibhanga (Taisho 22, 922ff.), the proper order for the ordination of women is first the brahmacharya vows, which are followed by the shikshamani vows, and only then may the bhikshuni vows be taken.

If novices do not take all ten vows but rather directly take the complete ordination vows, the vows may be valid for that person taking them, but the upashyaya is at fault. The case is different for bhikshunis, though, because another step, the shikshamani, is called for. In other words, abrupt vows (that is to say, the case in which the novice does not take the basic five vows or the brahmacharya vows, but directly takes the complete ordination vows) is permissible only for monks, but not allowed for bhikshunis.

There are four reasons for this:

First, there are no statutes allowing bhikshunis to take complete ordination vows directly, without having taken the brahmacharya vows.

Second, males are by nature firm, upright, and principled.

Third, females, being the weaker sex, are less able to abide by the precepts,

so they first must take the vows of shikshamani as the basis of their behaviour. If their behaviour has no basis, with what will they abide by other vows later on?

Fourth, men do not get pregnant, so they are less restricted by the time, but women are the opposite, so they must learn from all the vows.

Q6: Is it permissible for a woman to receive the bhikshuni vows without having previously received the brahmacharya vows? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: This may not be entirely appropriate. According to the 17th Chapter of Bhikshunis in Volume 48 of Dharmagupta-Vinayavibhanga (Taisho 22, 922ff.), the proper order for the ordination of women is first the brahmacharya vows, which are followed by the shikshamani vows, and only then may the bhikshuni vows be taken. (The basic vows are taken in the bhikshunis sangha, whereupon complete ordination vows are taken among the bhikshus sangha.)

The substance of the shikshamani vows is the substance of the brahmacharya vows, without repetition. Shikshamani vows taken directly without being preceded by the brahmacharya vows have no foundation. Therefore, it is not entirely appropriate for the brahmacharya vows to be omitted. ('Taking Vows' chapter, in The Commentary of Karman, Volume 17.35.4)

Q7: Is it permissible for a sangha consisting only of bhikshus to bestow the vows of shikshamani? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: This is not entirely appropriate. According to the 17th chapter of Bhikshunis in Volume 48 of Dharmagupta. Vinayavibhanga (Taisho 22, 922ff.), women being ordained first take the brahmacharya vows, which are followed by the shikshamani vows, and the bhikshuni vows. The basic vows are taken in the bhikshunis sangha, not within the bhikshus sangha.

Also, according to the "Transmission of Shikshamani Vows" chapter in the Vinaya, the correct procedure is, first, requesting to learn the vows; second, learning the vows; third, discoursing on the content of the vows. All of these steps take place within the bhikshuni sangha. Therefore, it is

inappropriate for the bhikshus sangha to transmit the shikshamani vows. (Volume A.30.3 in *The Practical Karman*.)

Q8: In the case of a woman receiving full ordination as a bhikshuni from a sangha of both bhikshus and bhikshunis, is it necessary that the concerned bhikshus and bhikshunis be present together in one place at the same time? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: This is necessary. According to the 17th Chapter of Bhikshunis in Volume 48 of *Dharmagupta-Vinayavibhanga* (Taisho 22, 922ff.), women being ordained first take the preliminary vows among the bhikshunis sangha, after which they go with the bhikshunis sangha to the bhikshus sangha to seek complete ordination vows. Therefore, it is necessary that the concerned bhikshus and bhikshunis be present together in one place at the same time. ('Taking Vows' chapter, in *The Commentary of Karman, Notes and Glosses on Karma*, 1.47.1.)

Q9: In order to train the mindstream of a shikshamani prior to receiving the bhikshuni vows, is receiving Brahmacharya vows a necessary preliminary prerequisite? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: If this question means, "Is receiving the shikshamani vows a necessary preliminary for receiving complete bhikshuni ordination vows? Is receiving the brahmacharya vows a necessary preliminary for receiving the shikshamani vows?" then the answer is yes, this is necessary.

According to the 17th Chapter of Bhikshunis in Volume 48 of *Dharmagupta-Vinayavibhanga* (Taisho 22, 922ff.), women being ordained first take the brahmacharya vows, then the shikshamani vows, and only then the complete ordination vows.

Please refer to the answers to Numbers 5 and 6 in Topic A.

Q10: Is it permissible for a sangha consisting only of bhikshus to bestow the vow of a novice nun?

A: This is not entirely appropriate. According to the 17th Chapter of Bhikshunis in Volume 48 of *Dharmagupta-Vinayavibhanga* (Taisho 22, 922ff.), women being ordained first take the novice nun (*sramenerika*)

vows, shikshamani vows, and ordination vows (the bhikshuni vows within the bhikshunis sangha) among the bhikshunis sangha, and not with the bhikshu sangha.

Also, according to the chapter of Transmission of Sramanerika Vows in the vinaya, the procedure is like sramanera vows: first, hair is shaven from the head; second, the ten precept vows are taken; third, the substance of the vows is taken. The only difference is the addition of the feminine suffix for the novice nun. These steps all take place within the bhikshunis sangha. Therefore, if the novice nun vows were transmitted by the bhikshus sangha, this would not be appropriate. (volume A. 19.5, 30.2, Practical Karman.)

B. Discussion of Ordination of Bhikshunis imparted by a Sangha consisting only of bhikshus. (The discussion should be based on source materials derived from the Vinaya adhered to by the three schools, i.e. Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta).

Q1: Does a woman receive a pure uncontaminated bhikshuni vow if it is imparted by sangha consisting of only bhikshus? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: Yes. (Please refer to Topic A.4)

Q2: Does a bhikshuni ordination conducted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus sangha result in corrupted and impure vows? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: No. The Biographies of Great Monks records that the nuns Hui-kuo and Ching-yin were afraid that their vows were invalid because they had not taken them among both sanghas. They asked Indian Vinaya Master Gunavarman (367-431 CE) for his opinion. He replied, "As the bhikshuni ordination vows are taken with the bhikshus sangha, even if such vows are not previously taken in the bhikshunis sangha, such vows are valid (in other words, vows taken in only one sangha are valid). the situation is like the nun Mahaprajapati" (Taisho 50, 341a28ff.)

Q3: Is ordination of bhikshunis by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus deemed proper and permissible? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: According to the viewpoints of Indian Vinaya Master Gunavarman and Chinese Vinaya Master Dao-xuan, this is not entirely appropriate, because the upadhyaya must make expiation, but the novices' vows are valid.

Please refer to the answers to numbers 4 in Topic A

Q4: Is it necessary for a woman to receive brahmacharya vows before she is ordained as a bhikshuni by a bhikshu sangha? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: Even bhikshuni vows taken in only one sangha must be preceded by shikshamani vows and brahmacharya vows taken in the bhikshunis sangha.

Q5: The first Chinese bhikshuni, after receiving full ordination as a bhikshuni from a sangha consisting only of bhikshus, was again ordained by a sangha consisting of both bhikshus and bhikshunis. Is there a clear source for this in the Chinese vinaya texts?

A: According to the chapter of Explaining the Content of Vows in the "Shih Ch'ao Chi" (Volume 15.29.6), ordination by sanghas consisting of both bhikshus and bhikshunis began in 434 CE. Three Sri Lankan bhikshunis, including Devasara, arrived in the Chinese capital. A total of ten persons took the ordination vows, finally fulfilling the requirements for ordination vows taken in both sanghas. Hui-kuo Ching-yin asked Kashmiri scholar Sanghavarman to be their upadhyaya. A vow altar was built in the front garden of the Nan-lin Temple, and they renewed their vows at this altar. (Please also refer to Volume 3 of the Biographies of Great Monks (Taisho 50, 342b. 11ff.)

Q6: The practice of a sangha consisting only of bhikshus conducting bhikshuni ordination (involving) a large number of women is becoming widespread in some Buddhist countries. What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: There are no references available.

C. Discussions of the Mulasarvastivadin tradition of Bhikshu Sangha imparting Bhikshuni Ordination in Tibet. (All discussions should be based on source materials derived from the vinaya adhered to by the three schools i.e. Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta)

Q1: In the absence of the lineage of bhikshuni ordination, is it proper and permissible for a sangha consisting only of bikshus to impart bhikshuni ordination? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: This is permissible. Gunavarman concluded that there is no difference in vows taken in one or both sanghas. The only difference is that, according to the principles concerning sins incurred during ordinations, the upadhyaya must make expiation.

If the upadhyaya makes thorough expiation, and takes the position of the upadhyaya in further vow ceremonies, then he is faced with repeating a sin after repentance. To avoid this sort of problem, I suggest that a different upadhyaya be appointed each time ordinations are held.

Q2: According to some historical records, in fifteenth century Tibet, Women who were fully ordained as bhikshunis by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus had to receive brahmacharya vows, which were by definition to be bestowed by a sangha of bhikshunis. Since that could not take place, it is said that full ordination of women did not take place. Are there sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems which address this reasoning?

A: It is not clear to me.

Q3: According to the rules of Mulasarvastivadin School, is it permissible for a bhikshu sangha to give a woman brahmacharya vows? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: According to the Dharmagupta-Vinayavibhanga, it is not entirely appropriate for the bhikshu sangha to transmit the brahmacharya vows.

Please refer to Topic A.10.

Q4: Is the bhikshuni ordination imparted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus permissible according to the rules of Mulasarvastivadin schools? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: According to the Dharmagupta-Vinayavibhanga, this is not entirely appropriate, but it is permissible, and does not prejudice those vows thus taken.

Please refer to Topic B above.

Q5: Is there a source in the scriptures of the Mulasarvastivadin system that the bhikshuni ordination imparted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus results in a corrupted and impure vow? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: Please refer to Topic B.2 above for the opinion in the Dharmagupta-Vinayavibhanga.

Q6: Is there a source in the scriptures of the Mulasarvastivadin school which states that a bhikshuni ordination conducted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus results in a pure and unadulterated vow? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: Please refer to Topic B.1 above for the opinion in the Dharmagupta-Vinayavibhanga.

Q7: I wonder what sort of vinaya sources support the claim that the ordination of bhikshunis by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus was practised in Tibet in the fifteenth century?

A: The opinion of Indian and Chinese Vinaya Masters concerning vows taken in one sangha is: the vow is not sullied.

Q8: In the past, in Tibet, the bhikshuni vow was granted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus. Is there a provision for reviving the bhikshuni vow according to the Mulasarvastivadin vinaya? If there is such a provision, what are the sources and the procedures for reviving it, mentioned in the vinaya? If there is no such provision, please describe the sources in the vinaya against granting such a vow?

A: As the answer of Topic A no.4, the viewpoints of Indian and Chinese Vinaya Masters concerning single sangha and double sangha transmission of ordination vows as below:

The Indian Vinaya Master Gunavarman (367-431 CE) said, "As the bhikshuni ordination vows are taken with the bhikshu sangha, even if such vows are not previously taken in the bhikshunis sangha, such vows are valid"

The Tang dynasty Vinaya Master Dao-xuan (596-667 CE) agreed, saying, "In the Vinaya sutras, there are no statutes stipulating that vows are not previously taken in the bhikshunis sangha, such vows are valid. However, if ordination vows are taken in only bhikshu sangha, although the novices' vows are valid, the upadhyaya must make Expiation."

If the Tibetan bhikshuni sangha is to be revived, the proper procedure is as follows.

- (i) The procedure for instituting vows among both sanghas. First, among the bhikshuni sangha, the brahmacharya vows and shikshamani vows are taken. Two years after that, if no transgressions have occurred and the six vows are complete and pure, basic bhikshuni ordination takes place within the bhikshuni sangha. Then a bhikshuni sangha of ten bhikshunis escorts the vow takers to the bhikshus sangha for complete ordination vows.
- (ii) The procedure for instituting vows in only bhikshus sangha. First, the brahmacharya vows and shikshamani vows are taken among the bhikshuni sangha. Two years after that, if no transgressions have occurred and the six vows are complete and pure, bhikshuni vows are directly taken in the bhikshu sangha.

Suggestions

- (i) Since the brahmacharya vows and shikshamani vows must be taken within the bhikshunis sangha, it is therefore proper that the basic bhikshuni ordination vows be taken within the bhikshunis sangha, after which complete ordination vows are taken in the bhikshus sangha.

(ii) Method for Transmission of Vows.

1. Bhikshunis (at least ten) from other countries may be invited to Tibet to transmit the brahmacharya vows and shikshamani vows.

2. Two years after that, the six vows of the shikshamani vows are fulfilled. Then, a bhikshuni sangha from another country may transmit the basic bhikshuni ordination, after which the complete ordination vows are taken among the bhikshu sangha. This is ordination among both sanghas.

Another way would be to have the complete ordination vows taken directly

in the bhikshus sangha, without the assistance of the foreign bhikshunis sangha.

3. If the novices take their vows in one sangha, and then go directly to the bhikshus sangha for complete ordination, even though their vows are valid, expiation is required for the upadhyaya, he must repent before another bhikshu. If, after repentance, the same bhikshu again assumes the position of upadhyaya, he is in danger of repeating a sin after repentance. In order to avoid this sort of situation from arising, a different upadhyaya should be appointed for each ordination ceremony. Of course the ideal solution would be to have vows taken in both sanghas.

Summary

Q1: There was a tradition of the bhikshuni vow from Sri Lanka prevalent in China during the fifth century. Today, can we find an unbroken transmission of this tradition?

A: This transmission was unbroken from the Liu Sung dynasty in 434 CE until the Southern Sung dynasty in the 13th century, after which vows were taken among only one sangha.

Q2: In fourth century China, there was a system in which the imparting of the bhikshuni vow and the preceding preliminary acceptance (into a monastery) were conducted only by a community of bhikshus. This was prevalent in the past in China, and the practice persists today. Sometimes, there is a practice of taking the full vows and the preceding preliminary (actions or novice vows) from a sangha consisting of both bhikshus and bhikshunis.

A: Even bhikshuni vows taken in only one sangha must be preceded by shikshamani vows and brahmacharya vows taken in the bhikshunis sangha.

Please refer to the explanation in Topic B.4.

Agenda

Are there reliable sources for these points? Are they reasonable according to the Dharmagupta Vinaya tradition and reliable commentaries belonging to this tradition? What have the great masters of Vinaya of the past had to say on these points?

It is said that in fifteenth century Tibet, very devout women received full ordination from a sangha consisting of ten bhikshus, including an upadhyaya and acharya. Is there a text that clarifies this history and is there any way of reviving this tradition according to the Dharmagupta vinaya, or are there ways to reintroduce it?

The two main points for the discussion are:

Q1: Are there proper sources in the three specific vinaya traditions such that the complete and pure bhikshuni vow can be generated if the vow is bestowed by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus? Or, What are the sources in the three vinaya traditions which permit says it is acceptable or unacceptable for the bhikshuni vow to be bestowed by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus?

A: If bhikshunis are ordained in only one sangha, the vow is pure and uncorrupted. The Dharmagupta-Vinayavibhanga has no provisions approving or forbidding bhikshunis obtaining ordination in only one sangha.

Q2: A bhikshuni sangha from Sri Lanka went to China in the fifth century and established a new tradition of the bhikshuni vow there. Is there or is there not a way of ascertaining whether or not an unbroken lineage of this vow exists?

A: Dual Ordination of Bhikshunis was not strictly carried out.

CONCERNING THE LINEAGE OF BHIKSHUNI ORDINATION- BHIKSHUNI HENG-CHING SHIH

A: Discussion of bhikshuni ordination received from a Sangha of both bhikshus and bhikshunis (all the discussions should be based on source materials derived from the Vinaya adhered to be the three schools? i.e. Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta)

Q1: Does a lineage of the bhikshuni vow introduced into China by Sri Lankan bhikshunis in the fifth century exist unbroken to the present day?

A: The Chinese lineage of the bhikshuni vow was established in the fifth century with the help of Sri Lankan bhikshunis. The first dual ordination from both bhikshu and bhikshuni sanghas was transmitted in the Nanlin Temple in Yang-chou in 434 CE. (T.50, pp.934-948.)

In terms of the existence of bhikshunis throughout Chinese history since 434 CE, this lineage has never been broken. In the Chinese bhikshuni records there is no time in history when the Chinese bhikshuni lineage is said to be broken, or when there were no bhikshunis.

However, from time to time the dual ordination has not been strictly observed. In other words, in some ordination ceremonies, bhikshuni vows were taken only from the bhikshu sangha, while in others the dual ordination were transmitted. This situation is the same in modern Taiwanese Buddhism.

Q2: Does the complete and flawless ordination of women require the existence of an unbroken lineage of bhikshuni vows or not? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: The complete and flawless ordination of women DOES require the existence of a lineage of bhikshunis, but NOT necessary an "unbroken" lineage, because any broken lineage can always be restored and becomes valid and pure again. Nowhere in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta is there mention of the complete and flawless ordination of women that requires the existence of an unbroken lineage of bhikshuni vows.

Q3: During a period in which the lineage of bhikshuni ordination was absent for nearly twelve years, women were ordained as bhikshunis by a

sangha consisting only of bhikshus. Following this, ordination of bhikshunis was conducted by a sangha consisting of bhikshus and bhikshunis. Does the bhikshuni ordination conducted by such a sangha result in uncorrupted and pure vows, or does it result in corrupted and impure vows? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: Whenever women (i.e. shiksamana) are ordained as bhikshunis by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus. The ordination results in pure vows. However, the precept masters imparting the ordination COMMIT A PAYANTIKA. (T.40, p.51.)

According to the *Biographies of Eminent Monks*, when the Indian vinaya Master Gunavarman (367-431 CE) was asked the same question, he said, "As the bhikshuni ordination is finalized by the bhikshu sangha, even if the "basic dharma" i.e. the ordination taken from the bhikshuni sangha, is not carried out, the bhikshuni ordination still results in pure vows, just as in the case of Mahaprajapati." (T.50, p.341.)

T'ang Dynasty Vinaya Master T'ao-hsuan (596-667 CE) agreed, saying, "Even if a bhikshuni ordination is transmitted directly from a bhikshu sangha without first carrying out the "basic dharma," it is still valid, as nowhere in the vinaya indicates otherwise. However, the precept masters commit an offense."

Although a bhikshuni ordination imparted by a bhikshu sangha is valid, it is still not "COMPLETE." This is why the Chinese nuns in the fifth century insisted a dual ordination with the help of Sri Lankan bhikshunis.

Q4: Is it necessary for a woman to seek a sangha of both bhikshus and bhikshunis to receive bhikshuni ordination? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: In the vinaya of all schools, Mulasarvastivada, Theravada, Dharmagupta, etc., it is necessary that a bhikshuni ordination be taken from both sanghas. One of the Eight Rules is that a woman must take dual ordination from both sanghas of bhikshu and bhikshuni.

As stated above, in the case that a bhikshuni sangha is not available, the bhikshuni ordination can be transmitted by bhikshu sangha, but the precept masters commit a payantika.

Q5: Is it appropriate for a woman to receive the vows of full ordination as a bhikshuni without having previously received the shikshamani probationary vow as basis? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: A woman must receive shikshamana vows before taking full ordination as a bhikshuni. The proper procedures for a woman to become a fully ordained bhikshuni are to take the sramanerika vows, shikshamana vows and (after two years) bhikshuni vows. (T.22, pp.1065-1068.)

According to the Dharmagupta Bhikshuni Pratimoksha:

“If a bhikshuni does not give the shikshamana precepts to a woman over eighteen or the full precepts to a woman over twenty, she commits a payantika.”

“If a bhikshuni gives two years of training in the precepts to a woman over eighteen but does not give her the six precepts and then, when she is twenty years old, gives her the full precepts, she commits a payantika.” (T.22, p.1037.)

According to the Mulasarvastivadin Bhikshuni Pratimoksha.

“If a bhikshuni fully ordains a married woman who has reached the age of twelve without giving her the six root and six accompanying shikshamana precepts for two years, she commits a payantika.”

“If a bhikshuni fully ordains an unmarried woman who has reached the age of twelve without giving her the six root and six accompanying shikshamana precepts for two years, she commits a payantika.”

“If a bhikshuni fully ordains a woman without training her for two years in the six root and six accompanying shikshamana precepts, she commits a payantika.” (T.24, p.514. See attachment #7.)

Q6: Is it permissible for a woman to receive the bhikshuni vows without having previously received the brahmacharya vows? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: It is permissible for a man to take bhikshu vows without having previously

received the ten sramanera vows. But it is necessary for a woman to take the ten sramanerika vows before taking shikshamana and bhikshuni vows.

Q7: Is it permissible for a sangha consisting only of bhikshus to bestow the vows of shikshamani? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: Only the bhikshuni sangha can bestow the vows of shikshamana. A woman has to take the sramanerika vows and shikshamana vows from a bhikshuni sangha. The reason is that after taking the shikshamana vows, she has to stay with the bhikshuni sangha to study and observe the vows for two years. If she does not violate any of the vows, then she can take the full ordination.

Q8: In the case of a woman receiving full ordination as a bhikshuni from a sangha of both bhikshus and bhikshunis, is it necessary that the concerned bhikshus and bhikshunis be present together in one place at the same time? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: After a woman (i.e. shikshamana) has taken the bhikshuni ordination from the bhikshuni sangha, ON THE SAME DAY the bhikshuni sangha should take the woman (i.e. “basic dharma bhikshuni) to the presence of a bhikshu sangha to be ordained again by the bhikshu sangha, otherwise, the precept masters commit a payantika. (T.22, p.1038.)

Q9: In order to train the mindstream of a shikshamani prior to receiving the bhikshuni vows, is receiving Brahmacharya vows a necessary preliminary prerequisite? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: Receiving sramanerika vows is a necessary preliminary prerequisite for receiving shikshamana vows are the “basis”.

Q10: Is it permissible for a sangha consisting only of bhikshus to bestow the vow of a novice nun?

A: It is not quite clear what the “vow of a novice nun” refers to. If it refers to sramanerika and shikshamana vow, they should be imparted by bhikshunis. There is no reference in the vinaya that indicates it permissible

for a bhikshu sangha to bestow sramanerika and shikshamana vows.

B. Discussion of ordination of bhikshunis imparted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus. (The discussion should be based on source materials derived from the vinaya adhered to by the three schools, i.e. Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta).

Q1: Does a woman receive a pure uncontaminated bhikshuni vow, if it is imparted by sangha consisting of only bhikshus? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: As stated above, a shikshamana receives a pure bhikshuni ordination, if it is imparted by a bhikshu sangha alone, but the precept masters commit a payantika.

Q2: Does a bhikshuni ordination conducted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus sangha result in corrupted and impure vows? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: This question is asking the same thing as the above question.

Q3: Is ordination of bhikshunis by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus deemed proper and permissible? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: It is not proper and permissible; however, in the case that a bhikshuni sangha is not available, and if the bhikshuni ordination is imparted by a bhikshu sangha alone, the novice gains pure vows but the precept masters commit a payantika.

Q4: Is it necessary for a woman to receive brahmacharya vows before she is ordained as a bhikshuni by a bhikshu sangha? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: It is still necessary for a woman to receive sramanerika vows from a Bhikshuni Sangha before she is ordained as a bhikshuni by a bhikshu sangha alone. (T.24, pp.459-464.)

Q5: The first Chinese bhikshuni, after receiving full ordination as a bhikshuni from a sangha consisting only of bhikshus, was again ordained by a sangha consisting of both bhikshus and bhikshunis. Is there a clear source for this in the Chinese vinaya texts?

A: This is recorded in the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* and *Biographies of Eminent Nuns*.

Q6: The practice of a sangha consisting only of bhikshus conducting bhikshuni ordination (involving) a large number of women is becoming widespread in some Buddhist countries. What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: Please refer to section B question three.

C: Discussions of the Mulasarvastivadadin Tradition of Bhikshu Sangha imparting Bhikshuni ordination in Tibet (all discussions should be based on source materials derived from the vinaya adhered to by the three schools i.e. Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharma-gupta).

Q1: In the absence of the lineage of bhikshuni ordination, is it proper and permissible for a sangha consisting only of bhikshus to impart bhikshuni ordination? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, and Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: Please refer to section B question number three.

Q2: According to some historical records, in fifteenth century Tibet, women who were fully ordained as bhikshunis by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus had to receive brahmacharya vows, which were by definition to be bestowed by a sangha of bhikshunis. Since that could not take place, it is said that full ordination of women did not take place. Are there sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems which address this reasoning?

A: Since the Tibetan women did not receive brahmacharya and shikshamana vows from a bhikshuni sangha (which was not existent at the time), they were not eligible to receive a bhikshuni ordination whether from a bhikshu or bhikshuni sangha. During the full ordination ceremony, the novices should be asked if they have taken shikshamana vows and observed them without violation. (T.24, p.462.) Thus, strictly speaking,

the Tibetan bhikshuni lineage established in the fifteenth century is invalid.

Q3: According to the rules of the Mulasarvastivadin School, is it permissible for a bhikshu sangha to give a woman brahmacharya vows? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: According to the rules of the Mulasarvastivadin School, it is NOT permissible for a bhikshu sangha to give a woman sramanerika vows. The sramanerika vows are given by a bhikshuni sangha. (T.24, p.459.)

Q4: Is the bhikshuni ordination imparted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus permissible according to the rules of Mulasarvastivadin Schools? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: No specific reference to this can be found in the rules of Mulasarvastivadin or any other schools. However, according to the Indian Vinaya Master Gunavarvam and Chinese Vinaya Masters it is permissible, but the precept masters commit a payantika. (Please refer to Section A question number three.)

Q5: Is there a source in the scriptures of the Mulasarvastivadin system that the bhikshuni ordination imparted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus results in a corrupted and impure vow? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: No reference to this can be found.

Q6: Is there a source in the scriptures of the Mulasarvastivadin school which states that a bhikshuni ordination conducted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus results in a pure and unadulterated vow? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya of systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: No reference to this can be found.

Q7: I wonder what sort of vinaya sources support the claim that the ordination of bhikshunis by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus was practised in Tibet in the fifteenth century?

A: I do not know the answer.

Q8: In the past, in Tibet, the bhikshuni vow was granted by a sangha consisting only of bhikshus. Is there a provision for reviving the bhikshuni vow according to the Mulasarvastivadin vinaya? If there is such a provision, what are the sources and the procedures for reviving it mentioned in the vinaya? If there is no such provision, please describe the sources in the vinaya against granting such a vow?

A: Since the Tibetan bhikshuni lineage established in the past was NOT done exactly according to the proper procedures (see section C question number two.), there is no point for reviving it.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

A bhikshuni sangha from Sri Lanka went to China in the fifth century and established a new tradition of the bhikshuni vow there. This lineage has never been broken, because no historical record indicates otherwise.

Although it is true that from time to time the Chinese bhikshuni ordination was imparted only by a bhikshu sangha alone, this did not make the bhikshuni ordination or the whole lineage of bhikshuni invalid. In modern Taiwanese Buddhism, we can find that some bhikshuni ordinations are imparted by both sanghas, while some by a bhikshu sangha alone. The ordination imparted by a bhikshu sangha alone is valid and pure, because the bhikshu sangha is the final authority to validate the bhikshuni ordination. However, since the precept masters do not impart the ordination exactly according to the proper procedures, they commit a payantika. In conclusion, the Chinese bhikshuni lineage has been an unbroken and pure lineage since its establishment in the fifth century.

The next question then is how the Tibetan (or Theravada) bhikshuni lineage can be established with the help of Chinese bhikshunis. According to the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta, the proper procedures for a woman to become a bhikshuni are as follows:

Lay woman

Sramanerika: Ten vows taken from the bhikshuni sangha

Shikshamana: Six vows taken from the bhikshuni sangha. After two years without violation of the precepts.

(Basic-Dharma) Bhikshuni: Full bhikshuni ordination taken from a bhikshuni sangha. On the same day going to a bhikshu sangha.

Bhikshuni: Full bhikshuni ordination taken from a bhikshu sangha.

Therefore, my suggestion is that the Tibetan women can be sent to a Chinese bhikshuni sangha to take the sramanerika and shikshamana vows. Then, they should stay with the Chinese bhikshunis (and Tibetan bhikshunis when available) to study and observe the vows for two years. After that, they should first take the bhikshuni vows from the Chinese bhikshuni sangha first and then on the same day take the bhikshuni vows from a Chinese bhikshu sangha OR from a Tibetan bhikshu sangha.

If they take the ordination from a Tibetan bhikshu sangha, the question may be which system of vinaya, the Dharmagupta, or Mulasarvastivada, the future Tibetan bhikshunis should follow. I would think that they can follow the Mulasarvastivadin vinaya, since the bhikshu sangha has the final authority in the process of the bhikshuni ordination.

After twelve years of the initial Tibetan bhikshuni ordination, the Tibetan bhikshunis will be qualified as upadhyayikas and they (at least ten) can transmit the bhikshuni ordination without the help of Chinese bhikshunis.

Tibetan nuns never enjoyed the same level of support and always face more obstacles than monks. Thus any decision regarding the establishment of Tibetan bhikshuni lineage should be taken from a place of compassion for the benefit of our Tibetan sisters, the Dharma and the world, rather than standing on a technicality that might be viewed as sexist from a modern stand point.

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama said, "If we could restore the lineage of the bhikshuni vow in Tibet, it would not only enable us to make Tibet a country possessing the 'fourfold' assembly of Buddha's followers, but also a "central" land of the Dharma, every Buddhist in the world would like to see a bhikshuni lineage established in Tibetan Buddhism. Not only is it important to Tibetan Buddhism, but also it will help preserve the Dharma and Buddhist traditions in the world. Therefore, in order to ensure the existence of bhikshunis, we hope that the lineage of bhikshuni can be established in every Buddhist country.

BHIKSHUNI ORDINATION IN CHINESE TRADITION & POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BHIKSHUNI LINEAGE IN TIBETAN BUDDHISM—BHIKSHUNI HENG-CHING SHIH

Since the Chinese Communists unintentionally “opened” Tibet’s doors to the western world, Tibetan Buddhism has become more and more popular. As a result, the Tibetan tradition has attracted quite a few women to join the Buddhist Sangha. In Buddhism there is a four-fold assembly of disciples, namely, upasaka and upasika (layman and laywoman), bhikshu and bhikshuni (fully ordained man and woman). However, Tibetan Buddhism has never had a bhikshuni sangha in its history. The lack of a bhikshuni sangha implies not only that Tibet is not a “central” land of the Dharma, but also that Tibetan Buddhism harbors sexual discrimination.

In recent years, Tibetan Buddhism in the West has faced more and more pressure from its Western followers in general and Western nuns and female devotees in particular, to establish a bhikshuni lineage. The Dalai Lama, who has been very open-minded concerning this issue, has assigned Tibetan monks familiar with vinaya to do research on various vinaya traditions and the bhikshuni lineage in Chinese Buddhism in order to investigate the possibility of establishing Tibetan bhukshuni lineage.

Recently two conferences were held especially to discuss the bhikshuni lineage. Vinaya masters from various Buddhist traditions gathered together to discuss the issues that the Tibetan tradition is most concerned with, namely, the validity and continuity of the Chinese bhikshuni lineage, the procedures of the bhikshuni ordination, the difference between Dharmagupta and Mulasarvastivada Vinayas, and the actual procedures to be followed if a Tibetan bhikshuni sangha is to be established, etc. In response to these two conferences, this paper deals with the issues mentioned above and makes suggestions for the possible establishment of a Tibetan bhikshuni sangha.

I. PROCEDURES OF BHIKSHUNI ORDINATION

It is a well-known fact that the first Buddhist nun was Mahaprajapati, the aunt and stepmother of the Buddha.¹ It was recorded that one time when the Buddha was staying at Kapilavastu, Mahaprajapati together with five hundred Sakya women came to ask for the Buddha’s permission to renounce the world and “go forth from home into homelessness in the dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder.”³ They were refused three times by the Buddha. Finally, on behalf of the women, Ananda asked the Buddha

if a woman, having left the household and taken ordination, could realize the fruit of arhatship. The Buddha responded positively to the question, but he also made a condition that women follow the “eight chief rules” (gurudharmas) before allowing them to be ordained.

The eight chief rules vary slightly in different vinaya texts. According to the Dharmagupta Vinaya, the eight rules are:

1. A bhikshuni, even if she has been ordained for one hundred years, should bow down before even a newly ordained bhikshu.
2. A bhikshuni is not to revile or abuse a bhikshu.
3. A bhikshuni should not admonish a bhikshu whereas a bhikshu can admonish a bhikshuni.
4. A bhikshuni should receive the upasampada ordination from both bhikshu and bhikshuni sanghas after two years of studying the precepts.
5. A bhikshuni who has committed a serious offence should undergo the manatta discipline towards both bhikshu and bhikshuni sanghas.
6. Every half month the bhikshunis should ask the bhikshu sangha to give exhortation.
7. A bhikshuni should not spend the rainy season in a district where there is no bhikshu.
8. After keeping the rainy season, the bhikshunis should hold the ceremony of repentance of their offences (pravarana) before the bhikshu and bhikshuni.⁴

The practice of these eight rules thus became a necessary condition for any woman wishing to become a Buddhist nun and guidelines governing the relationship between the bhikshu and bhikshuni sanghas.⁵ The fourth rule specifies that the upasampada (full bhikshuni ordination) has to be confirmed by the bhikshu sangha. Although it appears that the final authority of the full ordination lies on the bhikshu sangha, the supervision of the whole process of a woman’s ordination, beginning with the pravrajya ordination, leading to the shikshamanika ordination (for two years’ study of the six dharmas) and culminating in the upasampada ordination (except the final step), lies with the bhikshuni sangha. In other words, the Buddha

gave the bhikshuni sangha the right and full responsibility to train its novices. The following are the steps and procedures in becoming a bhikshuni.

Any woman who resolves to become a bhikshuni needs to go through three steps: sramanerika, shikshamana and bhikshuni (including two separated ordinations).

1. Sramanerika ordination

The first step in the ordination process for women is to ask permission to leave the household life and to request pravrajya ordination from the bhikshuni sangha. Before doing this, a lay woman (or layman) has to obtain the consent of both parents.

One of the questions put at the pravrajya and upasampada ceremonies of the candidate for ordination is "Have your parents given their consent?"⁶ In the case of a married women, she has to obtain the consent of her husband before she can be ordained.⁷

After the woman gets permission from her parents or husband, the bhikshuni sangha is also required to give its permission. The Preceptor Bhikshuni (karmakarika), who asks for the permission from the bhikshuni sangha, says, "May the Noble Sangha listen! The girl so-and-so desires to receive the pravrajya ordination from the upadhyayini so-and-so. Now is the proper time for the Sangha to grant so-and-so the pravrajya ordination."⁸ This request ought to be repeated once more. After the bhikshuni sangha gives its consent by remaining silent, the bhikshuni master then shaves her head and confers the pravrajya ordination.

After taking the pravrajya ordination, the woman may take the ten precepts from her preceptor and becomes a sramanerika. According to the Dharmagupta Vinaya, a sramanerika must: (1) be at least twelve years of age, or old enough to be able "to chase crows"⁹; (2) keep the ten precepts of a sramanerika; and (3) eat only one meal a day.¹⁰

2. Shikshamana ordination

A sramanerika who is at least 18 years old may then take the shikshamana ordination with her upadhyayini before the Bhikshuni Sangha. She then lives as a shikshamana for a two-year period. There are two reasons for the requirement of two years of shikshamana training: (1) to ascertain that

she is mature enough to become a bhikshuni, and (2) to ensure that she is not pregnant.

According to the Dharmagupta Vinaya, the reason for the two-year training is that after joining the Sangha some young women did not know the precepts and therefore misbehaved. The Buddha therefore made the two-year training a requirement prior to the upasampada ordination.¹¹

The *Dasabhanavara Vinaya* (*Shih-sung lu*) gives another reason. At one time some bhikshunis unknowingly ordained a pregnant woman. Later, when they found out about her pregnancy, they accused her of sexual misconduct and wanted to expel her from the sangha. She defended herself by explaining that she was pregnant before she became ordained. The bhikshunis reported this to the Buddha, who proclaimed, "From this day hence, a sramanerika ought to study the six dharmas (six precepts) for two years so determine whether or not she is pregnant."¹²

Only women eighteen and older are to be given shikshamana ordination, but there is one exception: a girl who is ten years old and has been married is allowed to take shikshamana ordination. There are four rules concerning the siksmana ordination in the Dharmagupta Vinaya, namely,

- (i) If a bhikshuni does not give the shikshamana precepts to a woman who is over eighteen or the full precepts to a woman who is over twenty, she commits a payantika;
- (ii) If a bhikshuni gives the two-year training in the precepts to a woman over eighteen but does not give her the six precepts, then when she is twenty years old gives her the full precepts, she commits a payantika;
- (iii) If a ten-year-old girl who has been married has had two years of training in the precepts, a bhikshuni can give her the full ordination when she is twelve years old. If she gives her the precepts when she is younger than twelve, she commits a payantika;
- (iv) If a bhikshuni ordains many disciples, yet does not teach them for two years nor provide them with two things (i.e., Dharma and the requisites), she commits a payantika.¹³

In addition to the ten precepts of the sramanerika, a shikshamana must observe six dharmas. However, the shikshamana precepts given in the various Vinaya texts do not agree.¹⁴ In Dharmagupta Vinaya the six dharmas are

to abstain from: (1) unchastity and from touching a man, (2) stealing, (3) killing, (4) false speech, (5) eating at improper times, and (6) intoxicants.¹⁵ The Mulasarvastivada Vinaya gives six dharmas and six anudharma (incidental dharmas). The six dharmas are to abstain from: (1) going along a road alone; (2) crossing a river alone; (3) touching a man's body; (4) sleeping in the same room with a man; (5) eating that which is not received from another; (6) eating leftover food.¹⁶

Regardless of the number of shikshamana precepts there are, the purpose is to train in the observance of the precepts strictly and to prepare the shikshamanas for bhikshuni ordination. The Dharmagupta Vinaya specifies that in case of any violation of the shikshamana precepts, the precepts must be retaken and the shikshamana has to begin the two-year training all over again.

Before a sramanerika may take a shikshamana ordination, the bhikshuni sangha must give its permission. The procedure for shikshamana ordination involves only the candidate, her upadhyayini, and the bhikshuni sangha. First, the sramanerika requests permission by saying,

“May the Noble Sangha listen! This sramanerika so and so is requesting the two-year study of the shikshamana precepts. My upadhyayini is so-and-so. May the Sangha, out of compassion, grant me the two-year study of the precepts.”¹⁷

She repeats this request three times. Then the bhikshuni karma master recites the so called “one-statement and four-karma” on her behalf. This procedure consists of stating the motion once, asking for agreement three times, and stating the decision. The Karma Master introduces the four-fold karma with this statement:

“May the Noble Sangha of Bhikshunis listen! This sramanerika, so-and-so, has asked the Sangha for two-year study of the precepts. Her upadhyayini is such-and-such. Now is the proper time for the Sangha to grant her the two-year study of the precepts. This is the motion.”¹⁸

After making this statement, the karma Master Bhikshuni begins the first karma:

“May the Noble Sangha of Bhikshunis listen! This sramanerika so-and-so has asked the Sangha for two-year study of the (shikshamana) precepts. Her upadhyayini is such-and-such. The Sangha is to grant her the two-

year study of the precepts. If you sanction (this karma), please remain silent. If you don't sanction (this karma), please voice your objection."¹⁹

The second and the third karmas follow in the same general format. If there is no objection, the Karma Master announces the sangha's assent. The upadhyayini then states the shikshamana precepts one by one and asks the sramanerika if she will be able to keep them. After the sramanerika answers in the affirmative to each precept, the shikshamana ordination ceremony is complete.

3. Full Bhikshuni Ordination (upasampada)

(1) Full Bhikshuni Ordination from the Bhikshuni Sangha

After a shikshamana has completed two-year training, she is eligible to take the upasampada ordination to become a bhikshuni. First, the shikshamana should go to a qualified bhikshuni and request that she becomes her Preceptor (upadhyayini). To do this, she says,

"I, so-and-so, request your reverence to become my Preceptor. By following your reverence, I will be able to receive the upasampada ordination."²⁰

After this request has been repeated three times, the Preceptor replies, "Your request is granted." Then two other precept masters should be chosen. They are the karmakarika Bhikshuni and the Instructor Bhikshuni (raho' nusasaka). According to the Dharmagupta, in addition to the three preceptors, another seven "Witness Bhikshuni Masters" should be present at the upasampada ceremony.²¹ The karmakarika is responsible for carrying out the karmas, while the Instructor Bhikshuni, responsible for determining whether she is qualified to receive the upasampada ordination, instructs and asks the candidate various questions (antarayika dharmas, obstacles) to determine her qualifications. The Instructor Bhikshuni asks her the questions in a secluded place, because some of the questions are personal. The number of questions varies in different versions of the Vinaya. There are twenty-four questions in the *Pali Vinaya*,²² thirty-two in the *Mahasanghika Vinaya*,²³ twenty-three in the *Dharmagupta Vinaya*,²⁴ and thirty in the *Mulasarvastivada Vinaya*.²⁵

After the candidate is found to be pure and free of obstacles to ordination, she can formally receive the full ordination. The Instructor Bhikshuni should inform the Sangha by saying, "I have now finished questioning so-and-so, and she is pure. There would be no obstacles to her upasampada

ordination.” Then the Karma Master Bhikshuni recites the three karmas:

“May the Noble Sangha of Bhikshunis listen! So-and-so shall receive the upasampada ordination from such-and-such Upadhyayini Bhikshuni. She is pure and has no obstructing dharmas. She has reached the required age (of twenty) and is equipped with a bowl and (five) robes.²⁶ Now is the proper time for the Sangha to grant her upasampada ordination. If you sanction [this karma], please keep silent. If you do not sanction it, please voice your objections.”²⁷

This is the first karma. The second and the third follow the same pattern. If there are no objections, the Karma Master Bhikshuni then states the sangha decision and the upasampada before the bhikshuni sangha is completed. The sramanerika who has completed this ordination is referred to as a “basic dharma Bhikshuni.”

(2) Full Bhikshuni Ordination from the Bhikshu Sangha

Next is the final step of the bhikshuni ordination, that is, the ordination from the bhikshu sangha. On the same day that the upasampada ordination is given by the bhikshuni sangha, the bhikshuni precept masters and the candidates (“basic-dharma” bhikshunis) should go to the bhikshu sangha, composed of ten precept masters. First, the Preceptor Bhikshuni asks the bhikshu sangha to grant the upasampada to the candidate. She makes the request as follows:

“May the Noble Sangha of Bhikshus listen! So-and-so has received the upasampada ordination from Bhikshuni such-and such. She has been found to be pure and without obstructing dharmas. She has reached the age (of 20) and is equipped with [five] robes and a bowl. She has studied and kept the [shikshamana] precepts purely. Now is the proper time for the Sangha to grant her the upasampada.”²⁸

The bhikshu sangha expresses its consent by keeping silent. Then the candidate herself must ask the bhikshu sangha to grant her the upasampada, repeating the request three times. After the request is granted, the Karma Master Bhikshu asks the candidate about the obstructing dharmas (exactly the same questions already asked by the bhikshuni sangha). After the candidate is found to be pure, the Bhikshu karma master performs the final karmas to grant the upasampada. These consist of stating the motion once and asking for agreement three times. These karmas are the same as recited in the presence of the bhikshuni sangha.

In the *Dharmagupta Vinaya*, after the four karmas are performed the Karma Master Bhikshu states each of the eight parajika precepts and asks the candidate if she can keep these eight precepts. He also asks whether she can accept and abide by the four-nisraya dharmas (requisites):²⁹ using robes made of rags, begging for food, lodging under trees and using urine as medicine.³⁰ After she responds in the affirmative to all these questions, the upasampada ordination ceremony is complete, and the candidate becomes a fully ordained bhikshuni.

The ordination for sramanerika, shikshamana, and bhikshuni are basically the same in various Vinayas, with slight differences. All the Vinaya traditions agree that for a woman to become a fully ordained bhikshuni, she has to go through these three stages. The ordinations of sramanerika and shikshamana have to be given by the bhikshuni sangha and the ordination of bhikshuni by both bhikshu and bhikshuni sanghas. This signifies that the bhikshuni sangha has the right and responsibility for screening, accepting, and training its new members.³¹ Thus, although the upasampada ordination has to be taken from both sanghas, as I.B. Horner said,

“If the final decision of allowing a candidate to become a senior rested with the almsmen, the preliminary and formative stages were entrusted to the almswomen. There was the power of acceptance or rejection, and in them was vested, equally with the men, the knowledge of the qualifications necessary for following the higher path.”³²

In Taiwan many of the bhikshu vinaya masters who have presided over many of the so-called “triple platform” ordinations³³ fail to see the significance of the role played by the bhikshuni sangha in a woman’s spiritual process from laywoman to bhikshuni. Therefore, they allow nuns to receive the upasampada ordination from the bhikshu sangha alone, erroneously according the bhikshu sangha full authority for the ordination of women, while in actuality the Buddha entrusted the right and responsibility for training novice nuns to the bhikshuni sangha.³⁴

II. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHINESE BHIKSHUNI LINEAGE

According to the *Ta-sung Seng-shih Lueh* (*The Brief History of Buddhism in the Sung Dynasty*), the first Chinese woman to become a Buddhist nun was named A-pan. No record of the date or details about her life can be found. Strictly speaking, she cannot be called a bhikshuni because she only took refuge with the Triple Jewels and did not take any other precepts, simply

because the Vinaya was not available at the time. The earliest translation of the Vinaya was completed by the Vinaya Master Dharmakala of Central Asia during the Chen-pin period (249-253 CE) in Lo-yang. He translated the *Seng-chih chieh-hsin, the Essentials of the Mahasanghika Vinaya*. In 254 CE another Vinaya master Dharmarsatyā translated the Dharmagupta Karman. This marked the beginning of the bhikshuni ordination strictly following the procedures of the Vinaya. However, the first full ordination of bhikshunis did not take place until almost two centuries later in 434 CE.

The *Biographies of Bhikshunis (Pi-chiu-ni-chuan)* records the biography of the first Chinese Bhikshuni. Her name was Ching-chien and she was born as the daughter of a magistrate in 291 CE. She was diligent in learning in childhood and became widowed at an early age. She taught music, writing and reading to the children of the wealthy and nobility. Although she took delight in learning Buddhism, she found no teacher to give her instruction. At last she met the monk Fa-shih, who was versed in Buddhist scriptures, and studied Buddhist teaching under his guidance. One day she said to Fa-shih, "Since the scriptures mention that there are bhikshus and bhikshunis, I wish to be ordained as a bhikshuni."³⁶ Fa-shih told her that although there were bhikshu and bhikshunis in the Western Land (India), in China the precepts was incomplete.³⁷ Ching-chien asked, "What is the difference between the precepts of bhikshu and bhikshunis?" Fa-shih replied, "The foreign monk said that there are five hundred precepts for bhikshuni. "Fa-shih agreed to make inquiries about the bhikshuni precepts and ordination for her. He asked the Monk Jnanagira from the kingdom of Kashmir, who explained, "The precepts for bhikshunis are basically the same as those for the bhikshus with only minor differences. But without the proper procedures, nobody can confer the precepts. The nuns can take the ten precepts from the bhikshu sangha, however, they will have no bhikshuni preceptors to depend on for their studies."³⁸ Nevertheless, Ching-chien, together with twenty-four other women was ordained by Jnanagira and took the ten precepts of a sramanerika.

During the Hsien-kang period (335-342 CE) of the Chin Dynasty, the monk Seng-chien brought back from the Central Asian Kingdom of Yueh-chih the *Mahasanghika Bhikshuni Karman* and the *Bhikshuni-pratimoksha*. In the first year of Sheng-ping (357 CE), the Indian monk Dharmagupta was invited to Lo-yang to setup a precept platform to confer bhikshuni ordination, but the Chinese Monk Tao-ch'ang objected on the basis of the *Chieh-yin yuan-ching (Sutra of the Origin of the Rules)*.³⁹ The reason for his objection was probably that aside from the bhikshus, there were no bhikshunis to confer the ordination. The ordination ceremony went ahead

despite his objections and was performed on a ship in the middle of a river. Ching-chien together with three other women became the first bhikshuni in China. More precisely speaking, Ching-chien was the first Chinese bhikshuni to take the upasampada from the bhikshu sangha only. However, as all Vinaya systems specify, the upasampada should not be given by bhikshunis alone, but by both bhikshu and bhikshuni sanghas. This “incomplete ordination” was not remedied until more than half a century later.

The earliest records of the dual ordination of bhikshunis can be found in the biographies of Gunavarman and Sanghavarman, and the *Biographies of Bhikshunis (Pi-ch' iu-ni chuan)*. Gunavarman, a Vinaya master from Kashmir, came to Yang-chou in 430 CE. And translated many Vinaya master from Kashmir, came to Yang-Chou in 430 CE. And translated many Vinaya texts.⁴⁰ Sanghavarnam, a Vinaya Master from India, came to Yang-chou four years later in 434. Both of their biographies found in the *Kao-seng Chuan (Biographies of Eminent Monks)* mention their involvement in the dual ordination of the Chinese bhikshunis.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the most thorough account of the dual ordination is found in the biography of the nun Seng-kuo, one of the first groups of Chinese nuns to be fully ordained.

Seng-kuo had unusually strong faith and devotion, as she had presumably established affinity with the Dharma in her former lives. It was said that “even as a baby at breast, she did not transgress the monastic rule of not eating after mid-day.” She did not get permission to leave the household life until she was twenty-seven. Seng-kuo diligently pursued Buddhist practice and strictly observed the precepts. Her meditation practice was at such a high level that she could meditate from dusk to dawn and “stretching in spirit to the pure realm of the divine, her body stayed behind looking as lifeless as dry wood.”⁴² Her biography continues to record how she was involved in the first dual ordination in China.

In the sixth year of the Yuan-chia (429 CE), a foreign boat captain named Nan-t'i brought eight Buddhist bhikshunis from Sri Lanka to the capital of the Sung dynasty. The Sri Lankan nuns stayed at Ching-fu Ssu (Luminous Blessings Monastery). Not long after, they asked Seng-kuo, “Have foreign nuns ever been here before us?”⁴³ Seng-kuo answered that there had been none. The Sri Lankan bhikshunis then asked if that was the case, how had Chinese nuns taken full ordination from both bhikshu and bhikshuni sanghas? Seng-kuo replied,

“They took the ordination from the bhikshu sangha only. Those women

who went through the ritual of entering the monastic life began the reception of monastic obligations. This reception was an expedient to cause people to have great respect for the monastic life. Our eminent model for this expedient is the Buddha's own step-mother, Mahaprajapati, who was deemed to have accepted the full monastic obligation by taking on herself, and therefore for all women for all the time, the eight special prohibitions incumbent on women wanting to lead the monastic life. [These she accepted from the Buddha only.] The five hundred women of the Buddha's clan who also left the household life at the same time as Mahaprajapati considered her as their instructor."⁴⁴

Although Seng-kuo justified the validity of the single-ordination observed by the Chinese bhikshunis, taking the case of Mahaprajapati as a good example and precedent, she herself still had some doubts. So she consulted with Vinaya Master Gunavarman about whether it was permissible to retake the ordination. Gunavarman replied,

"[The Buddhist threefold action of] morality, meditation, and wisdom progresses from the subtle to the obvious. Therefore, receiving the monastic obligations a second time is of greater benefit than receiving them only once."⁴⁵

Concerning the question of the validity of the single-ordination taken by the Chinese bhikshunis, Gunavarman replied,

"As the bhikshuni ordination is finalized by the bhikshu sangha, even if the "basic dharma" (i.e. the ordination taken from the bhikshuni sangha) is not conferred, the bhikshuni ordination still results in pure vows, just as in the case of Mahaprajapati."⁴⁶

Concerning the question of the possibility of re-ordination, Gunavarman replied,

"Very good! If you wish to increase your wisdom [by retaking the ordination], I will certainly offer my help with joy. However, since the Sri Lankan bhikshunis [who are in China] have not reached their "precept age,"⁴⁷ and their number is less than ten,⁴⁸ they should first start learning the Chinese language."⁴⁹

Four years later in the tenth year of Yuan-chia (433 CE), the ship captain, Nan-t'i, brought back eleven more bhikshunis from Sri Lanka, including one named Tessara. By this time those bhikshunis who had arrived earlier

had become fluent in Chinese, and Gunavarman had passed away. Thus, Seng-kuo and the other Chinese bhikshunis requested the Indian Vinaya Master Sanghavarman to preside over the dual ordination at the ceremonial platform in Nan-lin Monastery. Altogether more than three hundred women were ordained by both sanghas. This marked the beginning of the proper transmission of dual ordination for women in China, that is, of receiving the precepts from both bhikshu and bhikshuni sanghas.⁵⁰

According to the brief history of the dual ordination in China related above, three things are clear. First, the single-ordination-conferred *sice Ching-chien* in 357 CE was valid and pure. As Tao-hsuan (596-667 CE), the Patriarch of the Chinese Dharmagupta Vinaya School, stated in the *Su-fen-lu Che-mo Shu Chi-yen Chi*:

“Even if a bhikshuni ordination is transmitted directly from a bhikshu sangha without first conferring the “basic dharma”, it is still valid, as nowhere in the Vinaya indicates otherwise. However, the precept masters commit an offence.”⁵¹

All the Vinayas of the different Buddhist schools specify the requirement of dual ordination. Although it is true that, strictly speaking, a single-ordination from either the bhikshu or bhikshuni sangha alone is not in accord with the Vinaya, still nowhere does the Vinaya indicate that single-ordination is valid. Tao-hsuan did not explain why the precept masters commit an offence, but it presumably had to do with not following the procedures strictly. When asked the same question,⁵² Gunavarman answered, “Wherever bhikshunis are available, if a bhikshu preceptor confers a bhikshuni ordination to a woman without having first trained her in the precepts for two years, he commits an offence.”⁵³ This means that a bhikshu commits an offence if he knowingly gives bhikshuni ordination to a woman who has not gone through all the necessary stages (*sramanerika*, *shikshamana*, and bhikshuni ordination) from a bhikshuni sangha. As discussed previously, before a bhikshu gives the bhikshuni ordination, he has to ask the woman whether she has been trained in the *shikshamana* vows for two years, and whether she has already received ordination from the bhikshuni sanghas. If he does not ask these questions or knowingly ordains a woman without *shikshamana* or “basic-dharma” bhikshuni status, he, not the woman, commits an offence. The general rule for the outcome of this improper conferring of the ordination is that “the precept receiver obtains the precepts, whereas the precept giver commits an offence.” Here the main issue is not why and what offence a bhikshu commits for giving the *upasampada* to a woman who has not

received ordination from the bhikshuni sangha first. The important point is that an ordination by the bhikshu sangha only, even technically flawed with respect to prescribed procedures, is still valid and a woman taking such an ordination obtains “uncorrupted” and pure vows.

Second, from the brief history of the dual ordination in China, it is clear that the first dual ordination which took place in 433 CE followed the proper procedures, and the bhikshuni lineage thus established was pure and flawless. However, during the Conference held in Dharamsala in August, 1998, Dao-hai, a conservative vinaya master from Taiwan argued otherwise. For two reasons, he argued that the Chinese bhikshuni lineage could not be considered “perfect and flawless.” The first reason is that Hui-kuo and other nuns had previously received bhikshuni ordination from bhikshus alone and thus “not a new one.” Dao-hai contends that such an ordination would invalidate subsequent ordinations, though there is nothing in the Vinaya to substantiate his claim. The second reason is that Hui-kuo and other nuns were not trained in the precepts for two years prior to their dual ordination, although there is no evidence to support this contention.⁵⁴

As the history of the dual ordination indicates, after the arrival of the Sri Lankan bhikshuni Tessara and the second group, which made up the necessary quorum of ten, Hui-kuo and many of other nuns took the upasampada first from the bhikshuni sangha and then from the bhikshu sangha headed by Sanghavarman as the Preceptor in the very first dual ordination in China. How can this first dual ordination be considered “not a new one,” and thus “incomplete”? Even if it were a re-ordination, nowhere does the Vinaya indicate that re-ordination is invalid. On the contrary, re-ordination was considered a re-affirmation. This can be attested to by the affirmation given in the *Sarvastivada Sastra (Sa-po-lo Lun)*, which says, “To re-ordain enhances the quality of a previous ordination. One who is re-ordained does not lose one’s previous precept age.”^{55,56} Therefore, Dao-hai’s theory which dismisses the Chinese bhikshuni lineage on these grounds is not credible.

Dao-hai also strongly asserted that Hui-kuo and the other nuns had not taken the shikshamana ordination and thus had not trained in the precepts for two years, but he did not provide any textual proof for this claim. In fact it can be argued that the nuns had trained for two years. The first group of Sri Lankan bhikshunis stayed at Ching-fu-ssu the monastery where Seng-kuo and other nuns lived, for four years before the arrival of the second group. During these four years, it is quite likely that the Sri Lankan

bhikshunis conferred the shikshamana ordination on the Chinese nuns to prepare them for the dual ordination. They must have been very keen to make sure that complete and proper ordination procedures for the nuns' ordinations were observed; otherwise they would not have raised the question concerning the validity of the previous single-ordination. Even if the Chinese nuns did not formally train in the precept for two years, their dual ordination was still valid and pure, because, as mentioned before, the fault for conferring the ordination improperly falls on the bhikshu precept masters, not on the bhikshuni precept candidates.

We can conclude that an authentic bhikshuni lineage in China was properly established according to the vinaya in the fifth century. This lineage continues without interruption up to the present day. There is no record that indicates otherwise.

The most detailed record of eminent bhikshunis is the *Pi-ch'iu-ni chuan* compiled by Pao-ch'ang in the early sixth century. From the sixty-five biographies included there, we get a picture of a bhikshuni sangha with a remarkably high level of learning and spiritual attainment. Pao-ch'ang praised them,

“For several hundred years nuns of great virtue appeared in China one after the other. Of these nuns, Shan-miao and Ching-kuei achieved the epitome of the ascetic life; Fa-pien and Seng-kuo consummately excelled in meditation and contemplation. Individuals such as Seng-tuan and Seng-chi, who were steadfast in their resolution to maintain chastity, and Niao-hsing and Fa-chuan, who were teachers of great influence, appeared very frequently. Such virtue as theirs is like the deep ocean or the lofty peak-like the harmonious music of bronze and jade bells.”⁵⁷

It is evident from the biographies that the bhikshuni sangha was very strong from the fourth to the sixth centuries. Although two persecutions of Buddhism took place in 446 and 574 CE, they did not cause lasting destruction to Buddhism. Actually, Buddhism flourished during the Six Dynasties (265-589 CE), especially during the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534 CE). According to the *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* (*A Chronicle on the Buddha and Patriarchs*), there were four million monks and nuns in the Northern Wei during the sixth Century. In the south Buddhism flourished and was influential as well, especially during the lineage Dynasty at which time Emperor Wu-ti was renowned for his earnest support of Buddhism.

Buddhism flourished even more during the Sui and T'ang Dynasties

(581-907), a period referred to as the golden age of Buddhism in China.⁵⁸ The bhikshuni sangha developed extensively throughout these periods. The bhikshunis came from all walks of life and social classes, and they included queens, princesses, court ladies, etc. Regrettably, after the *Pi-chiu-ni chuan* was compiled in the sixth century, no biographies of bhikshunis were again compiled.⁵⁹ Still, scattered biographies of bhikshunis can be found in various historical records, such as dynastic histories, epitaphs, bronze and stone inscription, etc. Many of the bhikshunis were outstanding in teaching, meditation, and moral discipline. In the Ch'an School some bhikshunis also became teachers of Ch'an monks.⁶⁰

Although Buddhism suffered a great setback and lost much of its vitality due to T'ang Emperor Wu-tsung's persecution that lasted from 841 to 845 CE, it survived intact.⁶¹ In fact, the census taken during the reign of Emperor Cheng-tsung of the Sung Dynasty (997-1021 CE) reveals that there were more than 397,000 bhikshus and 61,000 bhikshunis at the time.⁶² As for the lineage of dual ordination, there is no record of any break. On the contrary, there are two records in the *Ta-sung shih lieh* that clearly indicate that dual ordination was conferred during the eighth and ninth centuries. This document records that in 765 CE Emperor Tai-tsung of T'ang decreed that an ordination platform be established in the capital city and that ten bhikshus and ten bhikshunis of great virtue and well versed in the Vinaya be selected to confer the ordination. It also records that this "became the standard practice forever."⁶³ The *Ta-sung seng-shih lieh* also documents that Emperor Yi-tsung of T'ang (859-873 CE) had an ordination platform built in the Hsien-tai Palace where the nuns of Fushou Nunnery received an ordination conferred by ten bhikshus and ten bhikshunis.⁶⁴ This indicates that the dual ordination was standard practice.

It is well documented that the dual ordination was carried out from the fourth to the tenth centuries. However, in the fifth year of the Kai-pao year (972 CE) the Northern Sung Emperor T'ai-tsu issued a decree that bhikshunis be prohibited from going to bhikshu monasteries for ordination.⁶⁵ This means that nuns would have to take the upasampada from the bhikshuni sangha only. Vinaya master Dao-hai from Taiwan, drawing on this record, concludes:

"In a word, the lineage of bhikshuni ordination in China has clearly been broken (to receive base rules from a sangha consisting of bhikshunis only, not to mention receiving 1-group ordination from bhikshus) during Sung Dynasty (around 972 CE). Following the resolution of the prohibition, most of the ordination were 1-group from a sangha of bhikshus. There is

no historical documentation that proved that the lineage of 2-group ordination was pure and complete.⁶⁶

This speculative and incorrect conclusion is drawn without any textual proof. Actually, there are textual references that indicate otherwise. The earliest record of prohibition is found in the *Ta-sung seng-shih lieh* written by Tsun-ling:

“After the years of Chien-wu (335-348 CE), the nuns had been going to the monasteries of monks to take ordination without interruption throughout all the previous dynasties. Recently Emperor T'ai-tsu (972 CE) issued an edict forbidding nuns from going to the monasteries of monks to take ordination. After that, the nuns obtained the “basic dharma” from the sangha of bhikshunis alone. The ordination was not complete. Now the present Emperor [T'ai-tsung, the successor of T'ai-tsu] is sagacious and makes intelligent decisions. Those who are protective to the Dharma should make a request to the Emperor to restore the old practice [of dual ordination] lest the Dharma should perish.”⁶⁷

Four years after the decree of prohibition issued in 976, Emperor T'ai-tsu died and his son T'ai-tsung succeeded him. In the same year Tsun-ling compiled the *Ta-sung seng-shih lieh* (*The Brief History of the Buddhist Sangha in the Great Sung*) by order of Emperor T'ai-tsung. Taking into consideration that Tsun-ling was an eminent and learned monk respected and trusted by Emperor T'ai-tsung, and was ordered by him to compile the history of the sangha and biographies of eminent monks, and also considering that Tsun-ling was very concerned with the effect that the edict might have upon Buddhism, it is possible that he himself made the request to the Emperor to abolish the edict. There is also evidence indicating that the edict lasted for only a few years, certainly not long enough to disrupt the bhikshuni lineage.

The first evidence that the edict was short-lived is Emperor Chen-tsung's (997-1021 CE) edict of 1010 CE, which states:

“The edict ordered that in the T'ai-pien Hsing-kuo Monastery in the imperial city, the official Kan-lu Precept-platform be established [to give ordination] and the other official precept-platforms be established all over the country, totally seventy-two.”⁶⁸

The precept platforms were built by the court and thus naturally regarded as official. That means that all monks and nuns went to the official precept

platforms to take ordination; therefore nuns were able to get dual ordination as usual. Since only thirty-eight years elapsed between the edict of prohibition and the edict of re-establishing the official precept platforms, this would not be long enough for the lineage to totally die out, even in the worst case scenario.

The second source of evidence comes from Chih-p'an's Fo-tsu T'ung-chi (compiled between 1258-1269).⁶⁹ Chih-p'an comments on the edict of prohibition:

“The intention [of the edict] was to keep distance between monks and nuns [not to forbid nuns from taking ordination]. However, [Emperor Tai-tsu] did not know that nuns must take the final ordination from the Bhikshu sangha. There is no rule [in the Vinaya] that allows nuns to take ordination from their own sangha only. This [edict] was only a temporary remedy for impropriety and should not be taken as a normal practice. NOWADAYS THE EDICT IS NO LONGER IN EFFECT.”⁷⁰

It is obvious that by the time of Chih-p'an, the prohibition had already been lifted and the dual ordination was restored. This passage lends credence to the theory that dual ordination was the norm during this period.

There are not many historical documents that indicate how the dual ordination was implemented after the thirteenth century, however, it is clear that the lineage of dual ordination for bhikshunis continued, for at least two historical records of the practice can be found. The first is from Hung-tsan's *Pi-chiu-ni Shou-chieh Lu* (*The Record of the bhikshuni Ordination*) and the second is from Shu-yu's *Erh-pu-seng Shou-chieh Yi-shih* (*The Ritual for the Dual Ordination*).

Hung-tsan (1611-1685), a Vinaya Master of the Ch'ing Dynasty (1644-1912), mentions in his *Pi-chiu-ni Shou-chieh Lu* in 1657 CE., when he was in Kuang-chou, many nuns coming from different counties asked him to give them the upasampada ordination. Hung-tsan thus got together ten bhikshus and ten bhikshunis to confer the dual ordination.⁷¹ Shu-yu (1645-1721 CE) was also a Vinaya Master. In the preface of his *Erh-pu-seng Shou-chieh Yi-shih*, he recorded a dual ordination:

“In the spring of 1667 CE, the Venerable Bhikshuni Mi-chau from Kunshan and Madame Hsu came to our monastery to make offerings. The accompanying shikshamanas made a request to my late Master to give a

dual ordination. They stayed at the monastery to study for half a month and were able to know the proper departments. My late master then asked Bhikshuni Mi-chau to be the Upadhyayini, Bhikshuni Chau-tseng from Yang-chou to be the Karma Master, and bhikshuni Yuan-cheng from Chen-chou to be the Instructor Master. He also chose seven other virtuous bhikshunis as Witness Masters to preside over the ordination.”⁷²

From the above two records, it is very clear that during the seventeenth century the dual ordination was still being carefully implemented, and the proper procedures were being observed. However, Hung-tsan also says that “the dual ordination had been long lost.”⁷³ Probably what he means was that the nuns only took the ordination from the bhikshu sangha alone. However, so far no historical record can be found to verify his statement. Even if Hung-tsan was right, the ordination from a bhikshu sangha only, as discussed early in this paper, is still valid, although the precept master conferring it commits an offence.

On the other hand, there is another record that indicates the dual ordination had been discontinued. In his *Essence of the Vinaya*, Vinaya Master Hung-yi (1880-1942) wrote,

“According to the rules set by the Buddha, bhikshunis must take their ordination twice. First, they take the “basic dharma” from the bhikshuni sangha, and then the vows are taken formally from the bhikshu sangha. The ordination actually takes effect during the ceremony with the bhikshu sangha. However, the dual ordination rule has not been implemented since the Southern Sung Dynasty (1128-1276).”⁷⁴

Although Hung-yi was a respectable Vinaya master, his statement is obviously incorrect. This can be proved by the fact that dual ordinations were given to nuns during the seventeenth century, as Hung-tsan and Shu-yu’s writings show.

After Hung-tsan and Shu-yu, the tradition of bhikshuni ordination continued until today. Although it is true that in some cases the dual ordination procedure has not been strictly observed,⁷⁵ still the bhikshuni ordination and the lineage of Chinese bhikshunis continue. In other words, in the historical records there is no evidence indicating that there is any time in Chinese Buddhist history when there were no bhikshunis.

III. A COMPARISON OF THE DHARMA-GUPTA AND THE MULASARVASTIVADIN

Bhikshuni Pratimoksha Sutras

Aside from a concern for the validity of the Chinese bhikshuni lineage, Tibetan Buddhist scholars have also been very concerned with the differences between the *Dharmagupta Bhikshuni Pratimoksha Sutra* followed by the Chinese bhikshu and bhikshuni sanghas and the Mulasarvastivada followed by the Tibetan bhikshu sangha. The *Dharmagupta Bhikshuni Pratimoksha Sutra* was translated into Chinese in the Later Chin Dynasty (383-418 CE) by Buddhayasas. This text has been exclusively followed by the Chinese bhikshuni since the T'ang Dynasty when the Dharmagupta Vinaya School was established. There are two Chinese translations of the Mulasarvastivadin Bhikshuni Pratimoksha and Vinaya: one is the *Ken-pen Shou-yi-chieh-you-pu Pi-ch'iu-ni Chieh-ching* and the other *Ken-pen Shou-yi-chieh-you-pu Pi-chi'iu-ni Pi-na-yeh*. Both of these texts were translated by Yi-ching during the T'ang Dynasty. There are also two Tibetan translations of the Mulasarvastivadin Bhikshuni Vinaya: the *Bhikshuni Pratimoksha Sutra (Dge slong ma'i so sor thar pa'i mdo)* and the *Bhikshuni Vinaya-vibhanga (Dge slon ma'i 'dul ba rnam par 'byed pa)*, although the texts exist, no Tibetan bhikshuni lineage has ever been established based on these texts.

Much important research on Bhikshuni Vinaya and Pratimoksha Sutras translated from Sanskrit have been done. For example, Akira Hirakawa's *Ritsuzo no Kenkyo (Studies on the Vinaya Scriptures)* has a section on the *Bhikshuni Pratimoksha Sutra* from various vinaya traditions, Karma Lekshe Tsomo's *Sisters in Solitude* contains English translations of the Chinese Dharmagupta and the Tibetan Mulasarvastivada Bhikshuni Pratimoksha as well as a comparative study on these two traditions, and Chatsumarn Kabil Singh's *A Comparative Study of Bhikkhuni Patimokkha*. This section of the paper is based on their research.

Despite minor variations in the number of precepts, the categories of precepts cited in the Dharmagupta and the Mulasarvastivada Bhikshuni Pratimoksha Sutras are identical, namely, the parajika-dharma, sanghavasesa-dharma, etc. The number of items in each category is given as follows:⁷⁶

	Dharmagupta (Chinese)	Mulasarvastivada (Tibetan)
Parajika	8	8
Sanghavesesa	17	20
Nihsarghika-payantika	30	33
Payantika	178	180
Pratidesaniya	8	11
Saiksa	100	113
Adhikarana-samatha	7	7
Total	348	372

The eight parajika offences for bhikshunis are basically the same not only in the Dharmagupta and Mulasarvastivada versions, but in all extant versions of Bhikshuni Pratimoksa. The eight parajikas include prohibitions against (1) sexual conduct, (2) stealing, (3) taking life, (4) falsely claiming the attainment of supernatural powers, (5) touching a male's body or being touched with desire, (6) touching a man's clothes or entering a covered place with a man, (7) concealing the wrongdoing of a bhikshuni guilty of a serious offence, and (8) persistently following a suspended monk, after the third admonishment. They are identical in the two versions however, the Mulasarvastivadin Bhikshuni Pratimoksa includes the prohibition against taking the life of a human fetus (in other words, abortion), while the Chinese Dharmagupta text makes no mention of a fetus.

The category of sanghavesesa has 17 precepts in the Dharmagupta and 20 in the Mulasarvastivada. Of the seventeen sanghavesesa in the Dharmagupta, only one has no equivalent among those in the Mulasarvastivada, namely, accusing a layperson before a government official. The Mulasarvastivada has one sanghavesesa, which has no equivalent in the Dharmagupta, namely, pursuing the wealth of the deceased. The reason that there is a difference in the number of sanghavesesas between the two versions, 17 versus 20, is because the seventh sanghavesesa of the Dharmagupta combines the four "alone precepts," into one, while the Mulasarvastivada takes them separately. These precepts include crossing water alone, entering a village alone, staying overnight in a village alone, and staying behind the group alone.

According to Karma Lekshe Tsomo, only two out of the seventeen sanghavesesas in the Chinese version have no equivalent among the sanghavesesas in the Tibetan translation: accusing a lay-person before a

government official and ordaining a woman known to be a thief. On the other hand, six sanghavesas in the Tibetan translation have no equivalent in the Chinese, though some occur elsewhere: (1) ordaining a woman without permission from her guardian, (2) pursuing the wealth of the diseased, (3) forsaking the Dharma, (4) digging up faults of bhikshunis, (5) misbehaving with women, (6) and enjoining bhikshunis who are misbehaving together not to live separately.⁷⁷

In the category of the nihsargha-payantika, all Vinayas list thirty precepts, except the Mulasarvastivada, which has thirty-three precepts. Among the thirty, sixteen precepts concern robes and the proper time and manner to obtain them; two concern the begging bowl; one concerns medication; eight concerning business exchange; and three concern gold and silver.⁷⁸ There is one nihsargika-payantika in the Dharmagupta that has no equivalent in the Mulasarvastivada: accepting a robe in an emergency and keeping it beyond the proper time. There are four rules in the Mulasarvastivada that have no equivalent in the Dharmagupta: washing clothes and cooking for an unrelated bhikshu, taking a robe from an unrelated bhikshu, having one's upper robe blessed on a new moon, and openly begging for oneself.

In the category of the payantika, the Dharmagupta has 178 precepts, while the Mulasarvastivada has 180. Among these precepts, there are three, which occur only in the Dharmagupta, while there are thirty precepts that occur only in the Mulasarvastivada.⁷⁹

A number of payantikas deal with offences related to ordination. For example, there are twelve precepts common to both the Dharmagupta and Mulasarvastivada, including ordaining (1) a pregnant woman, (2) a sramanika not trained for two years in the six rules, (3) a married girl less than 12 years, (4) a married girl of 12 years but not agreed upon by the sangha, (5) a prostitute, (6) a woman with a husband, (7) a woman less than twenty years old, and (8) an emotionally disturbed woman; the other precepts include: (9) after giving ordination, not taking care of one's trainee; (10) not ordaining a well-qualified shikshamana; (11) not going before the bhikshuni sangha on the same day as the ordination with the bhikshuni sangha; (12) giving full ordination before one has been a bhikshuni for twelve years.⁸⁰

There are several payantika precepts that are not found in the Mulasarvastivada, namely, ordaining a woman with both male and female organs, ordaining a woman who discharges urine and excrement from the

same orifice, and ordaining a woman who is nursing. The rule that a bhikshuni cannot give ordination every year (that is, can only ordain disciples every other year) is found only in the Mulasarvastivada. It is worth mentioning that although the eight gurudharmas specify that a woman should take full ordination from both sanghas, among all the Vinaya traditions, only the Mahisasaka Vinaya contains a precept against ordaining a woman by one sangha only.

There is a very important principle behind all these rules concerning bhikshuni ordination. That is, women who receive ordination in violation of these rules incur no offence; instead, an offence is entailed on the part of bhikshus or bhikshunis, who gave ordination (i.e., precept masters). For example, during the Buddha's time, it happened that a pregnant woman was ordained. Although such a physical condition would be a hindrance to her religious life, the Buddha did not invalidate her ordination. Instead, he allowed her to give birth to her child and raised it among the bhikshuni sangha.⁸¹ Therefore, ordaining a pregnant woman was prohibited, but in case of an infraction of this precept, rather than on the woman herself, the fault is on the bhikshu or bhikshuni who knowingly gives ordination to a pregnant woman. The principle that the precept masters take the blame in case of a violation against the ordination rules applies similarly to the dual ordination. That is to say, if bhikshu precept masters give full ordination to women who have not taken full ordination from the bhikshuni sangha first, the women commit no offence; rather, the bhikshu precept masters commit an offence. The rationale for this principle is that the precept master's should know the rules better than the precept receivers; therefore, the fault falls on them rather than the precept receivers should any violation of the ordination rules occur. As a result, even if such an infraction should occur, the bhikshunis who receive ordination from bhikshu sangha alone still obtain a pure and flawless ordination.

In the pratidesaniya category, all Vinaya traditions have eight rules, except the Mulasarvastivada that has eleven. In the Dharmagupta, the eight rules are asking for the following foods when a bhikshuni is not sick: cheese, oil, honey, sugar, milk, cream, fish, and meat. In the Mulasarvastivada we find milk, yogurt, butter, ghee, oil, honey, sugar, fish, meat, dried meat, and partaking of food in a learner's house without being invited.

Finally, in the saiksa category, the Dharmagupta has 100 rules while the Mulasarvastivada has 99, however, the contents of the rules differ considerably. Here is a list of the number of rules in different saiksa categories:⁸³

S.No.	Different Sections	Dharmagupta	Mulasarvastivada
1.	Manner of wearing robes	2	12
2.	Manner of entering a devotee's house	25	26
3.	Manner of accepting and eating food	23	35
4.	Manner of exhortation	20	22
5.	Manner of urinating and passing excrement	3	3
6.	Climbing a tree higher than the height of a human being	1	1
7.	Behaviour related to cetiya	26	0
	Total	100	99

The most apparent difference between the two renditions is that the Dharmagupta has 26 rules related to cetiya. This difference reflects the great importance the Dharmagupta School places on the worship of cetiya.

The last category of bhikshuni precepts includes the seven *adhikarana-samatha* rules which are the same in both *vinaya* traditions. These rules deal with legal questions regarding to the settling of disputes about the Dharma and the *Vinaya*.

The above brief comparison shows how the precepts contained in the *Bhikshuni Pratimoksha Suttas* of these two *Vinaya* traditions agree and differ from each other. They do not differ much regarding the more important precepts in the *parajika*, *sangha-vasesa* and *nihsargika-payantika* categories. Most of the differences are found in the *saiksa* rules: the manner of accepting and eating food, behaviour related to *cetiya*s, etc. These rules are basically the guidelines for daily conduct and decorum for the *bhikshunis*, and do not have much to do with fundamental ethics and morality.

In as much as they do not come under any penal section, there is no punishment for violating any of them; a transgression is not considered a criminal act, but simply bad manners.⁸⁴ Some of the rules seem unrealistic and archaic and can therefore be considered "lesser and minor precepts" that can legitimately be abolished.⁸⁵ For example, one *saiksa* rule requires a *bhikshuni* "not to give teachings while standing to one who is sitting, unless the person is sick." Obviously this reflects modes of behaviour

current at the time, but the application of this rule is somewhat irrelevant in the present day.

In sum, if Tibetan Buddhism were to establish a bhikshuni lineage based on both the Dharmagupta and Mulasarvastivada Vinayas, it would not cause any serious problem in terms of keeping precepts, because even through there are differences between the Dharmagupta and Mulasarvastivada Bhikshuni Pratimoksas, the differences are minor and their essence is the same.

IV. THE POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TIBETAN BHIKSHUNI LINEAGE

In light of the discussion above, there are two possible ways to establish a Tibetan bhikshuni sangha. One is either through dual ordination by both bhikshu and bhikshuni sanghas, and the other is through single ordination from the bhikshu sangha only. Ordination by bhikshuni alone can be ruled out because it is specifically prohibited in the eight gurudharmas, the bhikshuni karman, and the commentaries of all vinaya traditions.

1. Ordination from both Bhikshu and Bhikshuni Sanghas

As the eight gurudharmas specify, a bhikshuni should receive a full ordination from both bhikshu and bhikshuni sanghas. If the Tibetan Buddhist tradition is to establish a bhikshuni lineage through dual ordination strictly according to the Vinaya, it has to depend on a Buddhist tradition that has a living bhikshuni sangha. At present, the bhikshuni sangha exists only in China, Taiwan, Korea, and Vietnam. Since the Korean and Vietnamese bhikshuni lineages were both received from China, it is better that Tibetan Buddhism seek the help of the Chinese bhikshuni sangha.⁸⁶

Although Tibetan Buddhism has sramanerikas, they are ordained by Tibetan bhikshus, not by bhikshunis. Strictly speaking, this is not in accord with the Vinaya, which specifies that women should be ordained at each and every stage (i.e., sramanerika, shikshamana, and “basic dharma” bhikshuni) by the bhikshuni sangha. Therefore, to establish a bhikshuni lineage, Tibetan Buddhists can ask elder, respected Chinese bhikshunis to ordain women in the Tibetan tradition as sramanerikas. When the sramanerikas become eighteen years old, the Chinese bhikshuni masters can give them shikshamana ordination and train them for two years in the six-shikshamana precepts. The two years’ training is very important in that the novices are tested to see whether they can keep the precepts, and

whether they are determined enough to lead a vigorously religious life. After two years of training, the Chinese bhikshuni precept masters should give them the full ordination (upasampada). Ten bhikshuni precept masters, who must have been bhikshunis for at least twelve years, are needed to give the ordination. After taking this ordination from the Chinese bhikshuni sangha, the Tibetan nuns become "basic-dharma" bhikshunis.

The final stage of the full ordination is taking the ordination from the bhikshu sangha. The Tibetan "basic-dharma" bhikshunis have two choices, that is, they can take the full ordination either from the Chinese bhikshu sangha or Tibetan bhikshu sangha. Taking the matter of Vinaya lineage into consideration, it is probably better that the Tibetan "basic-dharma" bhikshunis take the ordination from the Tibetan bhikshu sangha. This way, when the Tibetan bhikshu precept masters give the ordination, they can transmit the Mulasarvastivadin bhikshuni pratimoksa to the Tibetan "basic-dharma" bhikshunis, and no problem will arise as a result of the bhikshus and bhikshunis following different Vinaya lineages. As for the sramanerika and shikshamana ordinations previously taken from the Chinese bhikshuni sangha, there would be no problem, since the ten-sramanerika precepts and the six shikshamana precepts are basically the same in the Dharmagupta and Mulasarvastivadin Vinayas.

In other words, the first Tibetan bhikshuni dual ordination is to be conferred by a Chinese bhikshuni sangha in conjunction with Tibetan bhikshus. Tibetan Buddhists can take the first dual ordination of Bhikshunis in China as a precedent. As discussed above, the Chinese nuns at Nanlin Temple received the dual ordination from the Sri Lankan Bhikshuni Sangha and the Chinese Bhikshu Sangha. Although it is not known precisely which Vinaya tradition was transmitted to the Chinese bhikshunis. In other words, it is likely that the initial dual ordination of Bhikshuni in China itself was a combination of two different Vinaya traditions. This is significant in that no question has ever been raised concerning the validity of this lineage.

A dual ordination conferred by the Chinese bhikshuni sangha and the Tibetan Bhikshu sangha could be given continuously for twelve years until finally there would be a group of Tibetan bhikshunis who have been ordained for the required twelve years and would therefore be qualified to conduct the ordination themselves.⁸⁷ According to the Mulasarvastivada tradition, the Tibetan bhikshunis would need to be at least twelve in number. After maintaining the bhikshuni precepts for 12 years, they would be qualified to serve as precept masters to Tibetan nuns. After that, Tibetan

Buddhism would no longer have to depend on Chinese bhikshunis for conducting the dual ordination.

2. Ordination by the Tibetan Bhikshu Sangha Alone

If the Tibetan Buddhist tradition wants to avoid combining two different Vinaya traditions in establishing its bhikshuni sangha, it can do it by depending on its own bhikshu sangha without help from Chinese bhikshunis. As discussed above, the Indian Vinaya Master Gunvarman as well as Chinese Vinaya Master Tao-hsuan asserted that a single ordination from the bhikshu sangha alone or a dual ordination from both sanghas are not different in terms of the validity of the ordination. In other words, regardless of the procedure used, both types of full bhikshuni ordination result in pure and flawless vows for the bhikshuni ordination candidate. The only difference is that the bhikshus who give the single ordination commit a payantika. What the Tibetan tradition could do is have ten Tibetan bhikshu precept masters give the bhikshuni ordination according to the Mulasarvastivadin Vinaya to a group of Tibetan nuns. As a result, the Tibetan nuns would become bhikshunis, while the bhikshus would commit a payantika. Since these Tibetan precept masters commit a payantika and would have to confess their transgression, it would be better not to have the same group of precept masters give the bhikshuni ordination every time, so that they will not commit the same offence again and again.

Theoretically, the establishment of a Tibetan bhikshuni lineage by the Tibetan bhikshu sangha is feasible. The Tibetan tradition could initiate a dual ordination of bhikshunis as soon as the first group of at least twelve Tibetan bhikshunis, ordained by the Tibetan bhikshu sangha, had been ordained for twelve years. The feasibility and validity of such an ordination is based on the assumption that the bhikshu sangha has the final authority in the bhikshuni ordination process. The initial ordination process by Tibetan bhikshus alone would be justified, because no Tibetan bhikshunis are currently available to give the bhikshuni ordination. If all schools of Tibetan Buddhism come to a consensus and agree that a bhikshuni ordination conducted by the Tibetan bhikshu sangha alone is valid, under these circumstances, most of the problems concerning the establishment of a bhikshuni lineage will be solved. However, the Tibetan Buddhists who choose this solution may be challenged, when a valid lineage exists, as to why they do not seek the help of the Chinese bhikshunis. If the Chinese nuns could seek help from Sri Lankan bhikshunis in the fifth century, how much more easily Tibetan Buddhists could get the help of the Chinese

bhikshunis today. Not to seek the help of a recognized extant bhikshuni lineage when the Chinese bhikshunis are ready and willing to help and to continue questioning the purity of their lineage could be taken as an affront.

Although both ways of establishing a Tibetan Buddhist bhikshuni lineage suggested here are slightly flawed, both ways are feasible because neither is against the principles or spirit of the Mulasarvastivadin and Dharmagupta vinayas. Tibetan Buddhism is known for putting great importance on unbroken lineages. Since a Mulasarvastivadin bhikshuni lineage cannot be found anywhere in the world today, the Tibetans will have to choose between either a dual ordination with the help of the bhikshuni lineage of other traditions or a single-ordination from their own bhikshu sangha. To choose the first way, Tibetan Buddhism would have to accept the fact that the Chinese bhikshuni lineage has continued unbroken since its establishment in the fifth century which is true, and that the conjunction of two different lineages poses no problem because all Vinaya lineages derive from the Buddha. If they choose the second way, the Tibetans have to accept the premise that an ordination from the bhikshu sangha alone is valid when a bhikshuni sangha is not available. Tibetan bhikshus have been giving sramanerika ordination to women for centuries and consider this practice valid because of the unavailability of bhikshunis. Using the same logic, they can legitimize giving Tibetan nuns bhikshuni ordination.⁸⁸ Besides, nowhere does any vinaya specify that a bhikshuni ordination by bhikshu sangha only, even if incomplete, is invalid. All that is required is that certain Tibetan bhikshus be willing to take the lead in initiating the bhikshuni sangha in the Tibetan tradition.

CONCLUSION

Although Tibetan nuns (sramanerikas) have been in existence for many centuries, they have never enjoyed the same level of support as monks have and have always faced more obstacles. Bhikshuni ordination is the right and obligation of a nun. Any decision regarding the establishment of a Tibetan bhikshuni lineage should be taken from a stance of compassion for the benefit of Tibetan women, the Dharma and the world. Rather than stand on a technicality and take a position that will be viewed as sexist from a modern standpoint, Tibetan bhikshus should be able to see the great benefit that nuns can accomplish. As Ven. M. Wimalasara said to the Tibetan monks, when he attended the First Seminar of Vinaya Scholars Concerning the Lineage of Bhikshuni Ordination in Dharamsala in 1999, "If you have good intentions, you will find a way." Many women in the Tibetan tradition are waiting to assess the intentions of their bhikshu

sangha. They expect the Tibetan monks to find a way and make a favourable decision to fulfil their wishes.

1. The first conference was held in November, 1997 in Taipei, Taiwan. It was sponsored by the Center for Buddhist Studies at National Taiwan University. The Dalai Lama sent Geshe Tashi Tsering to attend the conference. The other participants included Chinese bhikshunis, bhikshus, and scholars. The discussions concentrated mainly on two topics:
 - (i) the formation and development of the Chinese bhikshuni lineage and
 - (ii) the difference between the vinaya systems of Dharmagupta and Mulasarvastivada. The second conference was held in August, 1998 in Dharamsala. It was sponsored by the Department of Religious and Cultural Affairs of the Tibetan Government in exile and included Vinaya masters from Taiwan, the Theravada tradition and the Tibetan tradition. Among the invited speakers, there was only one bhikshuni representative, apparently a very uneven ratio.
2. The story of how Mahaprajapati became a nun can be found in the following sources:
 - (i) *Pali Cullavagga X* (I.B. Horner, *The Books of the Discipline*, Pali Text Society, London, 1975, vol.5, pp.352-356.)
 - (ii) *Madhyamagama* (T.1, pp.605a-607b).
 - (iii) *Gautami-vyakarana-sutra* (T.1, pp.856a-858a).
 - (iv) *Dharmagupta vinaya* (T.22, pp.922c-923c).
 - (v) *Mahasajghika vinaya* (T.22, pp.471a-471b).
 - (vi) *Mahisasaka vinaya* (T.22, pp.185b-186b).
 - (vii) *Malasarvastivada vinaya* (T.24, pp.350b-351a).
 - (viii) *Mahaprajapati Gautami-bhikshuni sutra* (T.24, pp.945b-947a).
3. I.B. Horner, *The Book of the Discipline*, vol.5, p.352.
4. The *Ssu-fen Lu*, T.22, p.923a-b.
5. There is some debate about whether or not the eight chief rules are an accurate representation of the words of the Buddha. First, the formation of the eight rules goes against the Buddha's general procedure for establishing precepts, which is, whenever a monk or

nun did or said something improper, accordingly a precept was set up to prevent future occurrence. Second, there is evidence that at least some of the eight rules did not exist at the time that the bhikshuni lineage was established. For example, the pacittiya rule 52 in the Pali Bhikshuni Vibhangha says that “Whichever nuns were to verbally abuse or revile a monk-this is an offence involving expiation.” (For the background of the formation of this rule, see Gregory Schopen, “The Suppression of Nuns and the Ritual Murder of their Special Dead in Two Buddhist Monastic Texts,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol.24, 1996, pp.563-592.) This rule is equivalent to the second rule of the eight chief rules. If the eight rules were proclaimed before the establishment of the bhikshuni sangha, this pacitiya rule would not have to be proclaimed again.

6. *Ssu-fen Lu (Dharmagupta Vinaya)*, T.22, p.925a.
7. For a detailed discussion of the need for consent of parents or husband, see I.B. Horner, *Women in Primitive Buddhism*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, p.174-184. The Pali Vinaya states, “Let no son, almsman, receive the pabbajja ordination without his father’s and his mother’s consent. He who confers the pabbajja ordination [on a son without permission] is guilty of a dukkata offence.” (I.B. Horner, *Women in Primitive Buddhism*, p. 149). The *Ssu-fen Lu* also states, “If a bhikshuni ordains a woman without first receiving the permission of her guardian, at that instant, her act is to be considered a sanghavasesa offence.” (T.22, p.519b.) The “guardian” refers to the parents, husband, mother-in-law, father-in-law or uncles. According to the Therigatha, it seems that this rule was closely followed during the Buddha’s time. However, nowadays in Taiwan, where there is a large number of bhikshunis, this rule is not very strictly observed. In the case of a woman who cannot get consent from her parents or husband, it is argued that an adult woman has a legal right to act on her own behalf and make her own decision without anybody’s consent.
8. *Tan-wu-te lu-pu tza che-mo (The Karma of the Dharmagupta Vinaya)*, T.22, pp.1047-1048a.
9. *Ssu-fen Lu*, T.22, pp.810c-p.811a. The Mahasanghika vinaya specifies that a “crow-chasing sramanera” is between the age of seven to thirteen (T.22, p.461b).
10. Akira Hirakawa, *Monastic Discipline for Buddhist Nuns*, Kashhi Prasad Jayasawal Research Institute: Patna, 1982, p.299.

11. *Ssu-fen Lu*, T.22, p.756a-b.
12. *Shih-sung Lu*, T.23, p.326a.
13. T.22, p.1037c. Karma Leshe Tsomo, *Sisters in Solitude*, Sri Satguru Publication: Delhi, 1997, p.54.
14. For a discussion of the shikshamana precepts in the various Vinaya traditions, see Hirakawa, *Monastic Discipline for the Buddhist Nuns*, p.53-54.
15. T.22, p.924b-c.
16. T.23, p.1005a.
17. T.22, p.1048a.
18. T.22, p.1048b.
19. *Ibid.*
20. T.22, p.1048c.
21. According to the *Mulasarvastivada Vinaya*, there should be twelve Bhikshuni precept masters.
22. I.B. Horner, *The Book of the Discipline*, vol.5, p.375.
23. Hirakawa, p.60-62.
24. T.22, p.1048c.
25. T.24, p.461c-462a. The questions include: (1) whether the candidate has received permission from her parents or husband; (2) whether she has completed the two year study of the precepts; (3) whether she has committed a serious offence (such as killing her parents); (4) whether she has a upadhyayini; (5) whether she is a woman; (6) and whether she has diseases such as leprosy, scabies, tuberculosis, mental disease, etc.
26. A bhikshuni should have three robes (*kasaya*): 1. Sanghati (assembly robe), 2. Uttarasangha (upper robe), and 3. Antaravasaka (vest or shirt).
27. T.22, p.1049a.
28. T.22, p.1049b.
29. In the Mahisasaka and Dharmagupta Vinayas, four s nisrayas are mentioned, the other Vinayas mention only three.

30. In the *Mahasanghika, Sarvastivada and Mulasarvastivada Vinayas*, the three nistrayas are explained before taking the upasampada to make sure that the candidate understands the austere life she will have to lead. However, in the Dharmagupta and the Pali Vinaya, the nistrayas are explained after the upasampada.
31. Nowadays in both Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist traditions, it is a common practice for the bhikshus to ordain laywomen and confer the sramanerika vows. However, this practice is not in accord with the Vinaya.
32. Horner, p. 144.
33. The so-called "three-platform ordination" includes the pravrajya, upasampada bhikshu and bhikshuni, and bodhisattva ordinations. Usually it takes one month for all the procedures.
34. According to all the Vinaya traditions, women should take the pravrajya, sramaneraika, shikshamana, and bhikshuni ordinations from the bhikshuni sangha. Therefore, strictly speaking, a bhikshu should not ordain a woman as his disciple. However, the ordination of female disciples by bhikshus is a very common practice in Taiwanese and Tibetan Buddhism.
35. *The Biographies of Bhikshunis (Pi-ch'iu-ni chuan)* compiled in 516 CE by the monk Pao-ch'ang record the lives of sixty-five eminent bhikshunis. For the English translation of this text, see Kathryn Ann Tsai, *Lives of the Nuns*, University of Hawaii Press, 1994.
36. T.50, p.934c.
37. During Ching-chien's time, the *Dharmagupta Karma*, which describes the karma procedures for the ordination of bhikshunis, had already been translated, but it was probably not available in south China. The *Sarvastivada Vinaya* was the first complete version of the Vinaya to be translated and it was not completed until 404 CE. This is why Fa-shih said that the "precepts" were incomplete.
38. T.50, p.934c.
39. An other name for the *Chieh-yin-yuan ching* is *Pi-na-yeh (Vinaya)*, T.24, pp.899-903.
40. The Vinaya texts that Gunavarman translated include the *Hsa-hsin*, the *Karman of the Dharmagupta Vinaya*, the *Brief Treatise on the Five Precepts of the Upasaka*, and the *Twenty-two Precepts of the Upasaka*, etc. (T.50, p.340a).

41. T.50, p.341b and T.50, pp.342b.
42. Kathryn Ann Tsai, tr., *Lives of the Nuns*, p.53.
43. There is another record of the arrival of the bhikshunis from India in the *Pi-ch'iu-ni Shou-chien Lu* (*The Record of the Bhikshunis' Taking Precepts*). This text says, "During the end of Han Dynasty and the beginning of Wei Dynasty (around 220 CE) two bhikshunis from eastern India came to [the Capital] Chang-an. They asked the Chinese nuns from whom they had received the precepts. They replied that they had only taken the five and ten precepts from the bhikshu sangha. These two Indian bhikshus sighed and said that the nuns of the borderland (i.e., Chinese nuns) were not fully ordained. They then returned to their country and solicited fifteen bhikshunis to come to China to administer the bhikshuni ordination; of these bhikshunis three died in the snow mountains and two died from falling into dark gorges. Only ten of them survived and reached China. There upon many Chinese nuns went to the capital city to receive the full ordination. Later these Indian bhikshunis went to the area of Wu (south of Yangtze River) and gave ordination to Chinese nuns there, too." (Hsu Tsang Ching, vol.) This account is not found anywhere except the *Pi-ch'iu-ni Shou-chien Lu* by Hung-tsang. Since this text was not written until the seventeenth century, its authenticity is dubious.
44. Kathryn A. Tsai, p.54; T.50, p.939c.
45. Ibid.'
46. T.50, p.341b.
47. For a bhikshuni to be qualified to act as a preceptor she must have been a fully ordained as a bikshuni for more than twelve years.
48. There should be ten bhikshunis (the three preceptors and three witnesses) to confer bhikshuni ordination.
49. T.50, p.341b.
50. In the biography of the nun Pao-hsien, the year given for this ordination is 434 CE:
51. *Manji Zokuzo Kyo* (Hsu Tsang Ching), Pai-ma Publisher, Taipei, vol. 64, p. 454.
52. The nun Hui-kuo asked Gunavarman, "All the Buddhist nuns here in China who earlier received the obligation to keep the rules did

not receive them according to the fundamentals of the rituals. They had as their eminent precedent the Buddha's step-mother, Mahaprajapati. But those first Chinese nuns did not know, and neither do I, whether there is any difference [between Mahaprajapati's situation and that of the nuns who came after her]." Gunavarman replied, "There is no difference." Hui-kuo continued, "According to the literature of the monastic regulations that I have read, the teacher who administers the rules and the obligation to follow them has committed an offence by permitting women to receive the rules from the Assembly of Monks only. [Therefore, how can there be no difference?]" (Kathryn Tsai, *Lives of the Nuns*, p.37; T.50, p.937b.)

53. T. 50, p.937b.
54. Dao-hai, "Discussion of Bhikshuni Ordination and its lineage in China: Based on Scriptures of Chinese Vinaya and Historical facts," paper delivered in the 1st Seminar of Vinaya Scholars Concerning the Lineage of Bhikshuni Ordination, Dharamsala, 3-5 August, 1998, p.18
55. The "precept age" refers to the number of years a monk or nun has been fully ordained as a bhikshu or bikshuni.
56. T.49, p. 344c.
57. Kathryn Tsai, *Lives of the Nuns*, p.17.
58. For a detailed study of bhikshunis in T'ang Dynasty, see Yu-chen Lee, *T'ang-Tai Te Pi-chiu-ni (Bhikshunis in the T'ang)*, Hsieh-shen Publisher, 1989.
59. In almost every important dynasty, the biographies of eminent monks were comiled, but this was not the case with regard to bhikshunis.
60. Hen-ching Shih, "Chinese Bhikshunis in the Ch'an Tradition," *Philosopher's Review*, vol.15, 1992, pp.181-207.
61. This persecution did not last very long. Although hundreds of thousands of monks and nuns were forced to return to lay life, still many escaped from the persecution. After Emperor Hsuan-Tsang (846-859 CE), Wu-tsang's successor, ascended the throne he ordered that state ordination platforms be built to re-ordain the monks and nuns forced to return to lay status. Therefore, despite this devastating persecution, neither the bhikshu nor the bhikshuni lineage was broken.
62. T.49, p.465c.

63. T.54, p.252a.
64. Ibid.
65. T.54, p.238c.
66. Tao-hai, "Discussion of Bhikshuni Ordination and Its lineage in China: Based on Scriptures of Chinese Vinaya and Historical Facts," p.5.
67. T.49, p.463a.
68. T.49, p.404a.
69. For a partial translation of the *Fo-tsu tung-chi*, see Jan Yun-hua, *A Chronicle of Buddhism in China 581-960 CE*, Visva-Bharati: Calcutta, 1966.
70. T.49, p.396b.
71. Hsu-tsan Ching, vol.107, p.94.
72. Vol.107, p.115.
73. Vol.107, p.93.
74. Hung-yi, *Lu-hsueh Yao-lueh*, in *Hung-yi Ta-shih Fa-chi*, vol.3, .1531.
75. Among the Bhikshuni ordinations held in Taiwan in recent years, a few of them were conferred by both sanghas, while the others were by the bhikshu sangha only.
76. Karma Lekshe Tsomo, *Sisters in Solitude*, p.136.
77. Ibid., p.140.
78. Kabilsingh, p.74.
79. Kabilsingh, pp.94-96.
80. T.22, pp.1037b-1038a; T.24, p.514-515a.
81. T.22, pp.754c-755a; *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, vol.20, p.385.
82. In the Tibetan translation of the *Mulasarvastivadin Bhikshuni Pratimoksa*, there are 113 saiksa rules. (Karma Lekshe Tsomo, *Sisters in Solitude*, pp.120-127.)
83. Shih Hui-min, "chung-tu Pi-ch'iu-ni chuan-ch'eng yu Tsi-tsang pi-ch'iu ni seng tuan chih ch'ung-chien," the *Journal of the Center for Buddhist Studies*, National Taiwan University, vol. 3, 1998, p.1-19.

84. W. Pachow, "A Comparative Study of the Pratimoksa," In *Sino-Indian Studies*, Vol. IV, part 2, ed., P.C. Bagchi, Shantiniketan, India, 1955, p.69.
85. Before the Buddha entered parinirvana, he told Ananda that "the lesser and minor rules may be abolished." (I.B. Horner, the *Book of the Discipline*, vol.5, p.398.)
86. Due to political tensions between Communist China and Tibet, it is unlikely, though not impossible that both sides will consider cooperating on this religious issue. Thus, the bhikshunis in Taiwan are probably the best choice for the Tibetan tradition. Besides, the bhikshuni sangha in Taiwan is now very strong and vital.
87. Tibetan bhikshus can also choose to confer the full ordination only once, and wait for twelve years until the Tibetan bhikshunis become qualified to conduct the dual ordination in conjunction with Tibetan bhikshus.
88. The same logic can apply to the sramanerika and shikshamana ordinations. Until Tibeian bhikshunis are available, the bhikshu sangha can legitimately give the ordination to Tibetan nuns.

CONCERNING THE LINEAGE OF BHIKSHUNI ORDINATION—
VEN. M. WIMALASARA THERO OF THE MAHA BODHI
SOCIETY, INDIA

**A. Discussion of Bhikshuni Ordination Received from a Sangha of
Both Bhikshus and Bhikshunis**

Q1: Does a lineage of the bhikshuni vow introduced into China by Sri Lankan bhikshunis in the fifth century exist unbroken to the present day?

A: It is difficult to say whether there is written evidence to prove or disprove that the lineage of Bhikkhuni vows/ Bhikkhuni ordination introduced into China by Sri Lankan Bhikkhunis in the 5th century exists unbroken to the present day.

Q2: Does the complete and flawless ordination of women require the existence of an unbroken lineage of Bhikshuni vows or not? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya system, the Mulasarvstivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A2a: The vinaya procedure for Bhikkhu Ordination as well as Bhikkhuni ordination was drawn up some fifteen to twenty years after the establishment of Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni order by the Buddha. Up to that time both the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Sangha functioned without Pratimokkha vinaya rules. Rules came to be enacted one after another with the growth of the Sangha and the commission of acts of impropriety, unbecoming of a member of the Sangha. At the time the Vinaya rules were enacted the existence of both the Sanghas was a reality which has to be taken into account as a permanent feature of the Sa-sana.

A2b: After the ordination of Maha-pajapati, the Buddha allowed the Bhikkhus alone to grant ordination. “Anujanami Bhikkhave Bhikkhuhi Bhikkhuniyo upasampadetum.”¹ Perhaps this rule has been adopted until the promulgation of dual ordination. (Dual ordination could not be implemented if all the patimokkha vows were not laid down. Dual ordination and Patimokkha (vows 311) are the two sides of the same coin).

A2c: Therefore according to the above description the complete and flawless ordination of women does not depend on the existence of an unbroken lineage of Bhikkhuni vows/ordination.

A2d: When we examine how and why dual ordination was introduced, it

is apparent in the Cullavagga that at the beginning the privilege of questioning the candidate for ordination and granting her ordination was vested in the hands of the Bhikkhus; but, later, due to certain complications that arose, this privilege was transferred to experienced and competent Bhikkhunis who had to do it in the presence of Bhikkhunis, separately, and the candidate being cleared and ordained by Bhikkhunis, was the immediately brought before the order of Bhikkhus for the completion of ordination.

A2e: In the pacittiya rules² the word 'probationary nun' (sikkhamana) has appeared for the first time, as well as we find the same word 'sikkhamana' appearing in the garudhamma No 6. But in the Bhikkhuni ordination procedure in the Cullavagga the word sikkhamana does not appear. Instead, the word 'upasampadapekkhdyo'³ appears.

A2f: Therefore, if we follow A2b, it is not necessary to have the existence of an unbroken lineage of Bhikkhuni vows for the complete and flawless ordination of women.

If we follow A2d, it is necessary to have the existence of an unbroken lineage of Bhikkhuni vows for the complete and flawless ordination of women.

Q3: During a period in which the lineage of Bhikshuni ordination was absent for nearly twelve years, women were ordained as bhikshunis by a sanghas consisting only of bhikshus. Following this, ordination of bhikshunis was conducted by a sangha consisting of bhikshus and bhikshunis. Does the bhikshuni ordination conducted by such a sangha result in uncorrupted and pure vows, or does it result in corrupted and impure vows? What are the sources for this in scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A3a: This ordination fulfils the need for dual ordination. But whether the necessary Bhikkhuni convention for a probationary nun has been fulfilled or not, prior to their ordination should be examined. If this criterion is not followed, then it may result in corrupted and impure vows. If, it is followed the result may be uncorrupted and pure vows.

A3b: According to Mahavamsa Queen Anula and her followers received ten precepts only from the Ven. Mahinda Thera in the 3rd century BCE. in Sri Lanka and there is no mention of following sikkhamana criteria prior to ordination. Therefore, we can presume that at the time of the 1st

ordination mentioned in the question No. 3. Bhikkhus may have given ten precepts, followed by the dual ordination. If so, the result may be uncorrupted and pure vows.

Q4: Is it necessary for a woman to seek a sangha of both bhikkhus and bhikshunis to receive bhikshuni ordination? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three-vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A4a: Bhikkhus are permitted by the Buddha to give ordination to Bhikkhunis according to Cullavagga.

“*anujanami Bhikkhave Bhikkhuhi Bhikkhuniyo upasampadetum*”⁴ “I allow you monks to give higher ordination to Bhikkhunis.”

A4b: Subsequently dual ordination was also permitted.⁵

A4c: A2 answer is applicable.

Q5: Is it appropriate for a woman to receive the vows of full ordination as a Bhikshuni without having previously received the shikshamani probationary vow as basis? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A5a: It is not appropriate for a woman to receive the vows of full ordination as a Bhikkhuni without having previously received the shikshamani (sikkhamana)⁶ probationary vows, according to picittiya rules.

A5b: There is no mention of sikkhamana during the initial stages of Bhikkhuni Ordination, except in the Garudhamma No 6.

A5c: The Samaneri observing ten precepts (*dasasikkha-pada-ni*) appear, in Vin IV.⁷

“*Yo pana bhikkhu bhikkhussa va bhikkhuniya-va-sikkhamana-ya va samanerassa va apaccuddharakam paribunjeyya pacittiyam’ti.*”

A5d: When sasaha was introduced to Sri Lanka in 3rd century BCE Ven. Mahinda did not give sikkhamana to Anula and 500 Women. Instead he gave ten precepts. (*dasasikkhapadani*).⁸

A5c: If there are Bhikkhunis who can give the convention to train a probationary nun (*sikkhamana*), then this rule may be followed. If not, the procedure followed by the Ven. Mahinda to give ten precepts may be followed.

A5f: The *pacittiya* rule for *sikkhamana* is not mentioned in the *Mahavamsa* when Ven. Mahinda Thera gave ten precepts to Sri Lankan women, and the *Garudhamma No 6*, which mentions two years probation (as *sikkhamana* prior to dual ordination) has not been considered, at that time.

Q6: Is it permissible for a woman to receive the *bhikkhsuni* vows without having previously received the *brahmacharya* vows? What are the sources for this in the scriptures for the three *vinaya* systems, the *Mulasarvastivada*, *Theravada* and *Dharmagupta*?

A6a: At the beginning *brahmachari* vows were mentioned in the 6th *Garudhamma*, while introducing *sikkhamana*.

A6b; *Sikkhamana* (probation period), *Samaneri* (ten precept female novice) categorically denote *brahmachari* vows.

A6c: It is not permissible for a woman to receive the *bhikkhuni* vows without having previously received *brahmacharya* vows, according to *pacittiya*.

A6d: One of the vows included in both *sikkhamana* and *samaneri* is as follows. “*Abrahmacariya veramani sikkhapadam*”.

Q7: Is it permissible for a *sangha* consisting only of *bhikshus* to bestow the vows of *shikshamani*? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three *vinaya* systems, the *Mulasarvastivada*, *Theravada* and *Dharmagupta*?

A: According to *pacittiya* rule LXIII of *Vin. vo. IV*, it is not permissible for a *Sangha* consisting of only *Bhikkhus* to bestow the vows of *Sikkhamana*.⁹

Q8: In the case of a woman receiving full ordination as a *bhikshuni* from a *sangha* of both *bhikshus* and *bhikshunis*, is it necessary that the concerned *bhikshus* and *bhikshunis* be present together in one place at the same time? What are the sources for this in the scriptures for the three-*vinaya* systems, the *Mulasarvastivada*, *Theravada* and *Dharmagupta*?

A: It is indicated that she should first take ordination with the *Bhikkhunis*

and then take ordination with the Bhikkhus, immediately afterwards. But it may not be at the same place.¹⁰

Q9: In order to train the mindstream of a shikshamani prior to receiving the bhikshuni vows, is receiving Brahmacharya vows a necessary preliminary prerequisite? What are the sources for this in the scriptures of the three vinaya systems, the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and Dharmagupta?

A: The question does not arise, as the answer is indicated in question No 6.

Q10: Is it permissible for a sangha consisting only of Bhikkhus to bestow the vow of a novice nun?

A10a: It was permissible for a Sangha consisting of Bhikkhus to bestow Bhikkhuni Ordination at the beginning, as discussed in A4.

A10b: According to Mahavamsa, the Ven. Mahinda only gave ten precepts to Anula and others but it is not clear whether the conditions for the novice's vows prevailed at that time they were awaiting the arrival of Sanghamitta to receive ordination.¹¹

A10c: It is not clear in the texts whether the Sangha consisting of only Bhikkhus could bestow the vows of a Novice nun (Samaneri pabbajja dasisikkhapadani)

Introduction

The pupillary succession of Bhikkhuni vows/ ordination/Vinaya Kamma/ is the pivotal point of the establishment of the Bhikkhuni Sangha. This establishment depends on the code of conduct of the Bhikkhuni Sangha. The disciplinary proceedings are well written and are relevant to the context. The Vinaya rules should be used in the proper way to perform various Vinaya Kammass. In the Vinaya pitaka we can find the method how, and when the vinaya kamma can be executed.

There are important disciplinary acts which cannot be changed according to individual wishes eg. samanera ordination procedure, higher ordination procedure, uposatha, pavarana, kathina, and so on which are performed according to the prescribed method in the vinaya. The vinaya pitaka prescribes the use of Kammavaca to arrive at important decisions pertaining to numerous vinaya acts.

Kammavaca, an ecclesiastical vote, is the name for the proceedings at an ecclesiastical meeting by which questions are decided by vote. A resolution proposed at the meeting is called fiatti, "declaration". There are two ways of deciding a question at a chapter of Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis. The one is called 'natti dutiya kammavaca', in which the question is put to the chapter only once, and the other, is called natticatuttha kamma vaca in which the question is put three times. Those who approve the resolution proposed, have to remain silent, while those against it have to speak out. In order to pass the motion all have to agree by silence. There are some occasions where several voting tickets differing in colour are used. (Cullavagga IV, 14, 26) the number of Bhikkhus or Bhikkhunis in a chapter must be at least five.

For the dual ordination of Bhikkhunis 'natti catuttha' kammavaca are repeated twice and it is known as atthavacika. i.e., once before the Bhikkhunis and a second time before the Bhikkhus.

Ovada Patimokkha / anapatimokkha

During the Buddha's time, the Buddha himself gave exhortation which is known as Ovada Patimokkha. Later, the Bhikkhus were instructed to recite the list of rules of vinaya on uposatha days, which is known as anapatimokkha, desana.

Before reciting the anapatimokkha, there is a nine fold preliminary function to be done. (pubba kiccam).

1. Sweeping the place
2. Lighting the Lamp
3. Spreading the sitting mat
4. Preparing water for drinking and using
5. Bringing consent of the Bhikkhus who are qualified to give their consent
6. Bringing the purity of these very Bhikkhus who do not participate in the uposatha
7. Telling the season

8. Counting the Bhikkhus

9. Instructing the Bhikkhunis

Today in Theravada countries on the Uposatha day when Bhikkhus gather to recite the Anapatimokkha the above nine prescribed questions, are asked. To answer these questions is compulsory, prior to recitation. In order to answer question No 9, the reply is given in a negative way. 'That there is no instructing the Bhikkhunis because of their non-existence now.'

This function of instructing Bhikkhunis is known as 'Bhikkhunovada'. According to Vinaya Cullavagga there are eight qualities a Bhikkhu should have, in order to give instruction to Bhikkhunis.¹²

In Bhikkhuni Pittimokkha too the above nine preliminary functions are mentioned. In the case of No 9, the Bhikkhunis must receive instruction from Bhikkhus.

Ordination

The lineage of the Bhikkhuni vows/ordination/ vinaya kamma are interrelated and interdependent. And, also, the Bhikkhus' commitment to execute these functions is inevitable.

The ordination is nothing other than a convention, which can be reached by the unanimous agreement of the chapter/order. The minimum requirement for a chapter for Bhikkhuni Ordination is twenty in number, comprising of ten Bhikkhus and ten Bhikkhunis, who are qualified by a 'Thera convention' and a 'Theri convention.' If there are not ten Bhikkhunis who are qualified, the question arises as to how ordination can be granted. At present this is the question of Theravada countries.

In contrast to Theravada countries, Mahayana countries such as China, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, believe that the continuation of the lineage of Bhikkhuni vows/ordination/vinaya kamma is existing. But, to prove or to disprove the authentic unbroken pupillary succession of Bhikkhunis remains a hot and unsolved puzzle.

Two thousand five hundred years of saga of the Sasana, is not entirely recorded. Therefore, to find an unbroken pupillary succession of Bhikkhuni order through the texts, archaeological evidence, historical evidence or any other source prevailing now, is a difficult task.

Hence the answer should be derived by impartial discussion and the unanimous agreement of all the schools of Buddhism.

The Lineage of the Bhikkhuni vows (ordination) in connection with the Theravada Vinaya

The Buddha established four categories of disciples. i.e., Bhikkhu, Bhikkhuni, Upasaka, Upasika. These four categories are known as the fourfold society (catuparisa). In addition there were male and female novices and female probationers known as samanera, saimaneri, and sikkhamana respectively.

Presently, in Theravada countries such as Burma, Thailand and Sri Lanka, the traditional Bhikkhuni Order is non-existent and many Buddhist women are living as 'ten precept' nuns. In Sri Lanka they are called 'Dasasil Mata' in Burma 'Thila-shin' and in Thailand 'Maechee'.

For the study of Bhikkhuni Ordination it is necessary to refer to:

1. Pali canonical sources, and
2. Non-canonical sources.

Pali Canonical Sources For Vinaya

The available Pali Canonical sources are

1. Parajika
2. Pacittiya
3. Mahavagga
4. Cullavagga
5. Parivara

Herman Oldenberg from 1879-1893 edited the Vinaya pitaka in five volumes. eg. Vol 1. Maha-vagga 1879, Vol. 11 Cullavagga 1880, Vol. III Pa-ra-jika-1881, Vol. IV Pa-cittiya 1882, Vol. V Pariva-ra 1893, These Volumes have been translated into English by I.B. Horner known as 'The Book of the Discipline' in 6 volumes, belonging to the 'Sacred Books of

the Buddhists' (S.B.B.) Series. P.T.S.

Primary Source References of Bhikkhuni Vows

Theravada Bhikkhuni vows in Pali, are found in Vin. vol. IV ed. H. Oldenberg 1882. Under the Heading 'Bhikkhuni Vibhanga' p.p. 211-351, which are translated into English by I.B. Horner in the Book of the Discipline Vol. 111, P.P. 156-426., in 1942-The Bhikkhuni vows (Patimokkha rules) are a total of 311, categorised into:

Parajika	8
Sanghadisesa	17
Nissaggiya	30
Pacittiya	166
Patidesaniya	8
Sekhiya	75
Adhikarana Samatha Dhamma	7

Bhikkhuni Ordination is granted to a woman who will undertake to practise these vows.

Source References of Bhikkhuni Ordination

During the life time of the Buddha the Bhikkhuni ordination procedure was practised in two ways.

Rule 1. According to Cullavagga, "anujaindmi Bhikkhav Bhikkhuhi Bhikkhuniyo upasampadetium ti" - "I allow, Monks, nuns to be ordained by monks."

Rule 2. According to Cullavagga, but, later, "anuja-na-mi Bhikkhave ekato upasampannaya Bhikkhuni sanghe visuddhdya Bhikkhu sanghe upasampadanti" - "I allow, Monks, ordination in the order of monks after she has been ordained on the one side, and has cleared herself in the order of nuns."

These two instructions of the Buddha appear in Cullavagga in two different places.

It is not clear whether after the promulgation of dual ordination, the first promulgation of ordination by Bhikkhus alone is invalidated. But, one of the rules of the eight chief rules (Garudhamma No. 6) is that Bhikkhunis must be ordained by dual ordination having completed two years as a probationer.

This rule of the Garudhamma disagrees with rule No. 1 and agrees with rule No. 2.

The eight chief rules were accepted by Maha-paja-pati Gotami and that itself was her ordination.

“Yadaggena Ananda, Maha-pajapatiya Gotamiya atthagarudhamma patiggahita tadeva sa upasampanna” (Cullavagga).-“Ananda when the eight important rules were accepted by Gotami Paia-pati the Great, that was her Ordination” (Bk of the Disc. Vol. V. p. 357)

Then there was a question by Maha-pajapati as to how the others should be ordained. As answer to this question, the Buddha has promulgated the rule No 1. It appears that there was no necessity to have dual ordination as there were no Bhikkhunis and there were no such formalities and conditions prevalent, at the beginning. Later on, when the Bhikkhunis grew in numbers and there arose transgressions, and, the Bhikkhus were unable to question the twenty four relevant Vinaya questions,¹³ from female candidates, prior to ordination then the Buddha promulgated dual ordination, as depicted in Cullavagga.

The time lag between the promulgation of rule No. 1 and rule No 2, according to Pali texts, is considerable. The Buddha during the first fifteen to twenty years¹⁴ of his ministrations, recited the ovada Patimokkha¹⁵. How was the ordination procedure for Bhikkhunis conducted during these fifteen to twenty years? It is presumed that rule No. 1 may have been followed in giving ordination to Bhikkhunis during this period.

The dual ordination came into practice after fifteen to twenty years when the ana-Patimokkha (Patimokkha rules which were recited on uposatha days by Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis) was introduced. Since then it appears that Rule No 2 had been adopted, to ordain Bhikkhunis.

Arising of Sikkhamana

Pacittiya Pali mentions the reasons for the arising of Sikkhamana.¹⁶ During

the ordination procedure, Cullavagga does not mention the word Sikkhamana. but, mentions “upasampadapekkhaya”¹⁷ Now we have a question whether upasampadapekkhaya conveys the same meaning used for the same candidate who is seeking ordination as Sikkhamana. There is another word used in Vinaya pitaka i.e. samaneri who is having ten precepts. Does the word upasampad-apekkliayo, indicate either sikkhamana or samaneri or both?

The lineage of the Bhikkhuni vows/Bhikkhuni ordination after the Parinibbana of the Buddha upto 3rd BCE.

It is accepted in early Buddhism that the Bhikkhuni Sangha continued uninterrupted in India until 3rd century BCE. After the 3rd Sangha council, the Ven. Mahinda visited Sri Lanka and gave ten precepts to Queen Anula and her retinue.¹⁸ The Theri Sanghamitta along with eleven other Bhikkhunis¹⁹ had the opportunity to carry the sapling of the Bodhi tree to Sri Lanka and also bestow ordination on Queen Anula and her retinue, who had already accepted the ten precepts from the Ven. Mahinda. Thereby, a Bhikkhuni Sangha was established in Sri Lanka.

The lineage of the Bhikkhuni vows/ Bhikkhuni Ordination from 3rd century BCE to 10th century CE in Sri Lanka

According to Mahavamsa, royal patronage supported the Bhikkhuni Sangha. Descriptions of Bhikkhuni aramas and other facilities for the uninterrupted continuation of Bhikkhuni Sangha are on record. In Sri Lankan history, we note the complete disappearance of any references to the existence of Bhikkhuni Sangha after the reign of King Mahinda IV (956-972 CE).

The Lineage of Bhikkhuni Vows/ Bhikkhuni Ordination Gifted to China in 5th century CE.

The following quotation is from the reliable works, “Buddhist Texts through the Ages” edited by Dr. E. Conze, and the passage used here (from page 293) is the translation of Arthur Waley, a scholar of great repute.

In the sixth year of Yuan Chia (429 CE) the foreign ship owner Nandi arrived from the Lion country (Ceylon), bringing with him some Bhikkhunis. They went to the Sung capital Nanking and lived in the Ching-fu convent. After a time they asked the (ten precepts) nun Seng-kuo whether any other foreign nuns had ever come to China. She told them

that they were the first that had ever come. "Then how did previous nuns manage to have Bhikkhunis as well as Bhikkhus to conduct their ordination?" asked the Bhikkhunis from Ceylon. "We were ordained by a senior Bhikkhu" said Seng-kuo. "Any women whose nature prompted her to take the vows was accepted. The earnest desire of the candidates gave rise to this expedient, which is in some measure justified by the case of (the Buddha's Aunt) Prajapati, who was admitted to the Sangha on the strength of her eight declarations of reverence and afterwards she in turn acted as sila Upadhyaya (preceptress in the rules) to five hundred ladies of the Sakya clan."

Such was Seng-kuo's reply. But in her heart of hearts she was not very happy about the situation and consulted the master of the three canons (tripitakacarya) Gunavarman, who supported her contention. She also asked him if it was possible for nuns who had been ordained already (taking ten precepts from a Bhikkhu only) to be re-ordained (with the assistance of Bhikkhunis). "Morality, meditation and wisdom" he said, "are all progressive states. If an ordination is repeated so much the better."

In the tenth year (433 CE) the ship owner Nandi came again to China bringing the Sinhalese Bhikkhuni Tessara and ten other Bhikkhunis from Ceylon. The Bhikkhunis who had arrived previously could now speak Chinese. They asked the Indian Bhikkhu Sanghavarman to re-ordain with their assistance, three hundred Chinese nuns...at the southern forest monastery (at Nankin), receiving them in batches. (Takakusu-Lives of Bhikkhunis 934, 939, 946).

The lineage of the Bhikkhuni vows/ordination in China/ Korea/Tibet

Please refer to article by Acharya Tashi Tsering and Philippa Russell, under the caption 'An account of the Buddhist Ordination of Women'.

It is the general view today that in Theravada countries the four-fold society instituted by the Buddha is disrupted, due to the absence of Bhikkhunis. If the Buddhist community envisages the re-establishment of Bhikkhuni Sangha, how and why and under which circumstances could it be done needs to be examined thoroughly and a unanimous decision should be arrived at, as a basic principle.

It would be much better to have the four-fold society in the original form as instituted by the Buddha rather than the three-fold society.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Sikkhamana

A female probationer undertaking six precepts for two years prior to receiving ordination. The six precepts are :

Abstaining from

1. Killing,
2. Stealing
3. Unchastity
4. Lying
5. Taking intoxicants
6. Eating at the wrong time²⁰

A probationer requests the order for the agreement as to training for two years in the six rules, a second time and a third time, having worshipped the feet of Bhikkhunis. (Bhikkuninam pade vanditva) and the Bhikkhunis agree by their silence.

“Now at that time nuns ordained a pregnant woman and a woman giving suck. This was reported to the Buddha. Hence, this rule²¹ for a probationer as an agreement for the training for two years in the six rules, was introduced.

“Sikkhamana nama dve vassani chasu dhammesu sikkhitasikkha”²²—
“A probationer is usually known by the term sikkhamana at the end of the period of two years she becomes a novice (samaneri) observing the ten precepts.”²³

The word sikkhamana also appeared at the very beginning in the 6th Garudhamma.

Samaneri

A ‘female novice’ means one conforming to the ten rules of training

(*dasasikkhapadika*).

‘Samaneri nama *dasasikkhapadika*.²⁴

At the end of the probation period of two years (as *sikkhamana*) she becomes a novice (*samaneri*) observing the ten precepts.^{24A}

Bhikkhuni

One ordained by both orders. “She is ordained by a motion of the order of nuns where the resolution is put three times and followed by the decision (as the fourth item *natticatutta*) then she is ordained in the same way by the order of monks, therefore, she is ordained by eight *vinaya* acts (*atthavacika*).²⁵

‘*Bhikkhuni nama ubhatasanghe upasampanna*²⁶-The *Bhikkhuni* vows are a total of 311.²⁷

Samanera

“*Samanero nama dasasikkhapadiko*”.²⁸

“A male novice means one conforming to the ten rules of training”²⁹

“Now how many rules for training are there for us and in which we are to train?” “Monks, I allow ten rules for training for novices and novices to train in this...”³⁰

“*Kati nu kho amhakam sikkhapadani*,

Kattha ca amhehi Sikkhitabbanti. Bhagava etam attham arocesum. Anujanami Bhikkhave samaneranam dasasikkhapadani, tesu ca samanerehi sikkhitum: panatipata...jataruparajata patiggahana veramani.”³¹

Garudhamma

The first woman to be ordained in Buddhism was *Mahapajapati*-aunt and foster mother of the Buddha. According to the *Cullavagga* of the *Vinaya Pitaka* there are eight important rules *atthagarudhammas*, *Mahapajapati Gotami* had to abide by to receive ordination.

1. A nun who has been ordained even for a century must greet respectfully,

rise up from her seat, salute with joined palms, do proper homage to a monk ordained but that day.

2. A nun must not spend the rains in a residence where there is no monk.
3. Every half month a nun should desire two things from the order of monks, the asking of the observance day and the coming for the exhortation.
4. After the rains a nun must invite before both orders in respect of three matters. What was seen, what was heard, what was suspected.
5. A nun offending against an important rule must undergo manatta for half a month before both orders.
6. When as a probationer she has trained in the six rules for two years she should seek ordination from both orders.
7. A monk must not be abused or reviled in any way by a nun.
8. From today admonition of monks by nuns is forbidden. Admonition of nuns by monks is not forbidden.

Rule No. 6, which declares that a probationer should train in the six rules for two years before her ordination again appears in the pacittiya No. 63. And also, there are three other rules appearing in the pacittiya, But four other rules are not there. Therefore, it is a question why pacittiya rules are included in the Garudhammas. And also, why only four rules are included in pacittiya and not all.

In Bhikkhu Pacittiya also Garu dhamma is mentioned in connection with Bhikkhunovada.³²

Bhikkhuni ordination procedure

Samantapasadika³³ the commentary to the vinaya describes eight different procedures of ordination of which the acceptance of the eight garudhamma is the form of ordination of the first Bhikkhuni, Mahapajapati.

The eight procedures are:

1. Ehi Bhikkhu pabbajja-The calling of the Buddha come Bhikkhu

2. Tini Saranagamana-Taking the three refuges. namely, Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.
3. Ovada patiggahana, Mahakassapa Thera was ordained in this manner.
4. Panhavyakarana-Sopaka Thera was ordained in this manner.
5. Atthagarudhamma Patinnata-Mahapajapati Gotami was ordained in this manner.
6. Dutena-courtesan Addakasi was ordained in this manner.
7. Atthavacika-Dual ordination of Bhikkhunis.
8. Natticatuttha kamma-The ordination procedure of Bhikkhus at present.

Atthavacika-Dual Ordination Procedure of Bhikkhunis³⁴

Having previously being informed through an experienced and competent Bhikkhuni, the candidate for ordination (upasampadapekkhaya = Sikkhamana/ Samaneri?) comes before the order with upper robe draped on one shoulder. She then bows down at the feet of the Bhikkhunis and sits down on her haunches with joined palms and asks for ordination saying, "I am asking the order for ordination. May the order raise me up, out of compassion." This is repeated thrice, then the experienced and competent Bhikkhuni puts the twenty-four questions to the candidate for ordination in the presence of the order of Bhikkhunis. When the questions have been answered satisfactorily the senior Bhikkhuni asks the order of Bhikkhunis three times whether they consent to the candidate of ordination being ordained, and, if so, to remain silent, but to speak out if any one dissents. If all remain silent, the candidate of ordination is proclaimed ordained by the order of Bhikkhunis. She is immediately brought before the order of Bhikkhus dressed in the same manner and a similar procedure is repeated. The senior Bhikkhu informs the assembled Bhikkhus that the candidate for ordination wishes ordination, that she had been cleared in relation to twenty-four matters and that she has been ordained on the side of the order of Bhikkhunis. The Bhikkhus are then asked if they agree to her ordination, if all remain silent, she is proclaimed to be ordained by the order of Bhikkhus, and becomes a full fledged Bhikkhuni after obtaining higher ordination from both sections of the order. To her are then explained three of the four requisites, i.e. food, clothing, and medicine. The other

requisite allowed to Bhikkhus, i.e. forest dwelling, is not allowed to Bhikkhunis. Further, a Bhikkhuni is told the eight things which should not be done, the indulgence of which would constitute a grave transgression (the eight parajika rules).

Endnotes

1. P.357 BK. of Disc. V Horner. P.257Vin vol. II Oldenberg.
2. P.318 Vin IV pacittiya rule LXIII. P.364BK of Disc. vol. III rule LXIII.
3. P.255CV. II Vin vol. II. P.355 BK of Disc. V.
4. Vin II Cv II 257 H Oldenberg PTS, Samantapasadika PTS. 1291, 8-26. P.357 Book of Discipline Horner.
5. P.357 Bk of Disc. V Horner. P.271 CV vol. II H. Oldenberg.
6. P.318. Vin IV pacittiya Pali-H. Oldenberg. Pacittya rule LXIII. P.364 BK. of disc. vol.III IB. Horner-Expiation rule LXII.
7. P.121 Vin IV pacittya pali Pa. LIX Oldenberg. P.411 vol. II pacitiya Pali LIX Horner.
8. Mahavamsa-atthadasamo pariccheto 9th verse PTS. Geiger. P.122. English Translation.
9. P.P. 318, 319 Vin. vol. IV pacittiya LXIII-Oldenberg. P.P. 364, 365 Bk. of Disc. vol. IV pacittiya LXII-Horner.
10. Cv II P. 273-Oldenberg. P.378 BK of Disc. vol.V Horner.
11. P.122 Mahavamsa. Geiger's translation.
12. P.265 the BK. or Disc. vol. II Horner.
13. P.271 c.v. II catuvisam, antarayike dhamme. Oldenberg). P.375 Bk. of the Disc. vol.V. Horner.
14. P.126 Samantapasadika (Pali commentary to Vinaya by Buddhaghosa) Hewavitarana.
15. Mahapadhana Sutta Digha Nikaya.
16. P.P. 318, 319, Vin vol. IV pacittiya LXI, LXII, LXIII, Oldenberg. P.P. 364, 365, Bk of Disc. vol.IV pacittiya LXI, LXII, LXIII.
17. P.375 Bk of Disc. vol.V Horner. P.271 Vin vol.II Oldenberg.

18. Mahavamsa P.122 Geigers translation.
19. Ibid. P. 128.
20. P. 365 the BK of Disc. vol. III Horner.
21. Pacittiya rule LXIII.
22. P. 122. Vin IV. Pa LIX, P. 343, Vin IV. Pa XCI-XCIII.
23. P. 44. Encyclopaedia of Buddhism vol. III.(under, Bhikkhuni) 1971.
24. P. 411 vol.III BK of disc., Pa XCI-XCIII. P. 412, BK of Disc. vol.II Pa LIX. P. 343. Vin IV. P. 122 Vin vol. IV pa LIX.
- 24a. P. 44. Encyclopaedia of Buddhism vol. III 1971. (Under the Caption Bhikkhuni).
25. P. 32. BK of Disc. vol. II f.n. Nissaggiya pa IV.
26. P. 122. Vin vol. IV pa LIX. P. 412 BK of Disc. II Pa LIX.
27. P.P. 211-351. Vin. vol. IV Oldenberg. P.P. 156-426 BK of the Disc. III.
28. P. 122 vol. IV Vin. Pa LIX.
29. P.412. BK of Dis. II Pa LIX.
30. P. 105 IV BK of Disc.
31. PP. 83, 84, Vin vol.I, Mahavagga.
32. P. 267 BK of. Disc. vol. II.
33. Samantapasadika-Simon Hewavitarana Bequest Series. Part I 1929 (sinhala script).
34. P.273, Vin II, Oldenberg. P.377, Bk of the Disc. V Horner.

SEMINAR ON MULASARVASTIVADA, THERAVADA AND DHARMAGUPTA VINAYA HOLDERS CONCERNING THE LINEAGE OF BHIKKHUNI ORDINATION—VEN. DR. RASTRAPA MAHATHERA, BUDDHAGAYA

Introduction

The Pre-Buddhistic scriptures although mentioning the existences of the Paribrajaka, the Mendicants or the Samana-Brahmanas, do not have any definite inscription about any form of the Constitutional Sangha or the Order of the Bhikkhus and the Bhikkunis. On the other hand, there were ample examples that, the women sections of the human species were met with undignified status, in every field, particularly, with regard to religious affairs. It was the Historical Buddha, the Most Compassionate One, who first of all, allowed the natural justice to the womenkind and had given equal capability, as par the manhood, so far as the spiritual attainment is concerned. Though at the initial stage, the Buddha was reluctant enough, but had to consent, in view of Ven. Ananda Thera's earnest prayer, imposing eight rigorous conditions or the "Gurudharmas". Undoubtedly, the Buddha Himself instituted the formal Bhikkhuni Sangha, side by side the Bhikkhu Sangha which had already been installed. The Sakyan Queen, Mahaprajapati Gautami along with a batch of the Sakyan lady-devotees was accorded ordination for the formation of the Bhikkhuni Sangha.

The lineage of the Bhikkhuni Sangha

In spite of various schools of buddhistic thoughts prevailing all over the Buddhist countries, the Pali Canonical Scriptures since approved and unamimously adopted in the First Buddhist Council held at Rajagriha and their subsequent translations in Tibetan, Chinese, Ceylonese and Sanscrit versions written by the famous Buddhist Monks and the reputed scholars, emphatically narrated the existence of the traditional Bhikkhuni Sangha. It, therefore, proves the maintenance of the Bhikkhuni lineage for many centuries. But due to political upheavals and most unfortunate inordinate tortures and other motivated malicious attitudes from various quarters, the Bhikkhuni Sangha was practically lost to the memory. And presently, it has become a matter of great delight and joy that a number of Buddhist schools, with generous aptitude fostering for the revival of the Bhikkhuni Sangha.

What the Buddhist schools are?

Let me be pin-pointed with the references in accordance with the topic of the seminar concerning the Lineage of the Bhikkhuni Sangha as depicted in the Mulasarvastivada, Theravada and the Dharmagupta Schools. Perhaps, we all are aware that the Doctrine or the Teaching of the Buddha mainly rests on the four Noble Truths, the Eight-fold Noble Path and the Law of the Cause and Effect or Dependent Origination. No question of any 'vada' or what so ever should therefore, arise. It may simply be styled as the 'Buddhavada' only. All these schools and many other divisions were the subsequent manifestations to suit the sectarian motifs of the Missionaries and to some extent, might be influenced by the territorial environmental aspects. Which ever be the fact, if anybody goes through the vows and precepts pertaining to the ordination of the Bhikkhuni Sangha, he will be surprised to note that the basic deviations amongst the schools is insignificant. Particularly, the schools under concern, the Mulasarvastivada, Therevada and Dharmgupta virtually maintain a total similarity advocating the procedural formalities for the ordination of the Bhikkhuni Sangha.

About the Scriptures

The Vinaya Pitaka or the Book of the Discipline for the Bhikkhus and the Bhikkhunis, specifically, the Culla Vagga and the Parivara Patha, which were resolved to be the direct sayings of the Buddha maintain the following:

“Anujanami Bhikkhave Bhikkhuni Bhikkhuniyo upasampadetum.”
 “O Monks, I hereby proclaim that the monks will give higher ordination to the Bhikkunis.”

The Vinaya Pitaka having been considered to be the canonical authentic source, in the above cited admonition of the Buddha, the Bhikkhu Sangha hold the every authority to perform the ordination ceremony relating to the Bhikkhuni Sangha. There lies the unquestionable validity in the procedure.

In consideration of the physical nature and the other associated habitual conditions of the Bhikkhuni Sangha might have compelled the Bhikkhu Sangha for drawing up the constitutional rules and the bye-laws for the introduction of the Probationary periods of two years and the Dual ordinations by the Bhikkhuni Sangha and the Bhikku Sangha. These additions and interpolations to the basic formula, under no circumstances, can be admitted to be corrupt and invalid.

The historical background detailing the introduction of Buddhism in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) has been put into account in the *Dipavamsa* (The Chronicle of the Island), *Mahavamsa* (The Great Chronicle) and in Buddhaghosha's *Samantapasadika* 'the comentary to the Vinaya Pitaka'. It was Ashoka, the Emperor the great and the ever greatest missionary who sent his son Ven. Mahindra and daughter Ven. Sanghamitra accompanied by a group of the Bhikkhus and the Bhikkunis for dissemination of Buddhism there. It was narrated that the Queen Anula and her followers observing the Ten Precepts were given ordination and thus the lineage of Bhikkuni ordination was consecrated. The event was occasioned about 232 BCE and upto 9th or 10th century CE was in Vogue. During 4th or 5th century CE the Bhikkhunis from Sri Lanka travelled to China and are stated to have passed the lineage of the Bhikkhuni Sangha there.

It is also recorded that during Han dynasty (25-220 CE), that is during 1st and 2nd century CE Buddhism travelled to China. The Vinaya texts which were translated during mid-3rd century CE under the guidace of the Dharmagupta schools expressed no distinctive variations from that of the Pali Canonical Vinaya Text. Although the existence of the Bhikkhuni or the Bhikkhuni Sangha in China during the early centuries appeared to be very very absent, according to the *Biographies of Nuns* by the monk Pao Chiang of Liang dynasty (502-477 CE) had a clear mention that one Chund Ling-i of P'eng ch'en, born to be the daughter of a Governor in 287 CE having inspired by the Buddhistic thoughts, had undergone through the Buddha's Doctrinal Teachings under a learned monk Fa-shin. She took the Ten Precepts and many women followed her but until 433 CE during Sung dynasty, a full-fledged Bhikkhuni Sangha was instituted in China with the help of the Sri Lanka Bhikkhunis. '*The Biographies of Eminent Monks, the Chinese Monastic Order for Women, the Zam-ling Tsal Wei Melong* by Yonten Rinpoche Gyatso, *Statistical Figures* compiled by M.Sentor, *A Manual* written by Muti (Sen Yuch) during Ming dynasty and the Tibetan records' etc, reveal that, inspite of contradictory eventualities, in China the Bhikkhuni Sangha was in a thriving position right up to 1957. It is also stated that at the time of cultural revolution in China many monks and the nuns fled away to safety. They have established the monasteries and the nunneries there and continued ordination of the Bhikkhus and the Bhikkunis, thus perpetuating the ancient lineage and teachings. The Dharmagupta school is also followed in Korea, Japan, Vietnam etc.

In Tibet the Mulasarvastivadin Vinaya tradition is preserved and followed. The historical and the religious records available have established that during

the reign of king Tri-song Detsen, 8th century CE the Bhikkhu Sangha lineage was formed in Tibet. But there exists no circumstantial evidence of establishing the Bhikkhuni Sangha lineage before 12th century CE.

According to the *Condensed Vinaya Vastu* - a famous commentary on the *Vinaya Agama* written by Gunaprabha and in addition to this, as written by an eminent 13th century scholar, Kun-khen Tso-na-wa, in his commentary, *Dul-wa-so-tik* on *Vinaya Vastu*, the Bhikkhuni Sangha lineage was duly taken place in Tibet after ordination of the Tibetan women by the great Tibetan Lamas. It was considered valid. There were reasons and counter-reason to the validity of such Bhikkhuni ordination but the great Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) with all consent supported the Bhikkhuni ordination of Gyama Bhikkuni (Chodup Palmo Tsotrum) who had received her ordination from a group of masters which included Panchen Shakya Chokden himself as the chief preceptor. The establishment of the Bhikkhuni lineage in Tibet by Panchen Shakya Chokden was also strongly supported by another eminent Lama Akya Yon Zin in his work *Dri Len Nung Tsel*. In a text *Zam-Ling Tsal-wei Melong*, compiled by Tagsand Paljor Sangpo in 1934 has also mentioned records of ordinations of the Bhikkhunis in Tibet and China as well.

In view of the foregoing analysis, in my concluding paragraph of the Topic, I like to assert the following opinion. The Buddha was the sublimest Advent of the Democrat, the human conception could ever think of His Teachings are solely meant for the complete eradication of all evils and thereby to achieve the Deliverance from the cycle of boundless sufferings. The Buddha had advocated the principle, of Majjhima Patipada or the 'Middle Path' expressedly discarding all types of extremities. More over, for the progress and perpetuation of the Buddha Sasana he deliberately and meticulously wished for the justifiable well-being of the 'Catu Parisada' or the Four-fold pillars together namely, the Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhunis, the Upasakas (Lay devotees) and the Upasikas (the lady devotees). Therefore, if I am correct, I should say that, some of the conditions mentioned in the scriptures may be cited as the protective reasonable measures for the Bhikkhunis, as well as, for the Bhikkhu and for thriving of the durability of the Dhamma. But the conditions which vibrate the chauvanistic and fundamentalist attitude, should under no circumstances, be ascribed to the Buddha, the Emancipations.

The Buddha had always glorified the self-respect, self-confidence and independent aptitude of men and women. So denying of the Natural Justice

Democratic Freedom and Humanity's right should never come from the Buddha and all such rules are unquestionably be considered to be the subsequent motivations and not otherwise. In the above stated circumstances, when the competent Bhikkhu Sangha having been authorised by the Great Buddha Himself for the rightful ordination of the Bhikkunis, I do not admit any compatible reasoning, as to why the question of lineage should crop up. The Doctrine of the Buddha while in agreement with the scientific Truth of Cause Effect, or otherwise, the Way of life, I strongly suggest that this Great Assembly of the Order of the Sangha and the eminent Scholars, should have a passionate ponderance over the issue and at any rate, should not impose hegemonistic, malicious and unfortunate allocations to hinder the normal revival of the illustrious Bhikkhuni Sangha which had been adorned with marvellous spiritual attainments during the life time of the Buddha and thereafter. The Bhikkhuni Sangha representing the motherly lovingkindness inherently possess the universal impact of Peace, Harmony, Integrity and Broader outlook for the upbringing of the society in a rightful way which is in great need of the strife-stricken world of to-day. Therefore, time and again, I urge upon the Great Assembly of the Sangha to pick up in unison a collective resolution for the immediate actualization of the Bhikkhuni Sangha all over the globe with all the necessities straightway dissociating with all sorts or malign and insignificant vows and precepts which are in extant. If Bhikkhuni Vinayas, in some of the forms are flourishingly in existence, in many Buddhist countries, we should not bother over the issue of lineage, rather all our endeavour should be adhered to the reviving glorification of the time-old prestigious Bhikkhuni Sangha, all through the Buddhist countries, within the parameter of their own Sangha.

Before I come to the conclusion, I warmly congratulate the positive move taken for the revival of the Bhikkhuni Sangha and had already been materialised on the 8th December, 1996 at Sarnath, under the joint collaboration of the Maha Bodhi Society of India, the World Sangha Council and the Sakyadhita Organisation of International Buddhist Women. And furthermore, the appreciation for organising the International Full Ordination ceremony at Buddhagaya during the 15th to 23rd February, 1988 by the committee of Religions Affairs, Fo Kuang Shan Buddhist Order, Taiwan, knows no bound, wherein the undersigned had the privilege of taking active participation. Once the system has put into motion, the dynamic acceleration to the great cause of the Dhamma and the Bhikkhuni Sangha, should have their advancement for maintaining the much needs of the hour, Peace, Harmony, Brotherhood Fellow feeling,

Tolerance, Equality and Justice to the humankind.

Finally, I herewith convey my sincerest Best wishes to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Noble Laureate and the authorities concerned for their boundless affection bestowed, on the undersigned for active participation in the seminar and for their keen interest towards revival of the Bhikkhuni Sangha.

All Beings be happy and harmony may prevail on earth.

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AN ACCOUNT OF THE BUDDHIST ORDINATION OF WOMEN— ACHARYA TASHI TSERING AND PHILIPPA RUSSELL

INTRODUCTION

The Buddhist Vinaya is the code of conduct governing monks and nuns as laid down by the Lord Buddha himself. Each rule may be traced back to the Buddha's words which were memorised by his disciples and recited at the first Buddhist council at Rajgir two months after the Buddha's death. All the Vinaya texts stem from this source. The first schism of the Buddhist order took place in the third century BCE, approximately one hundred and ten years after the Buddha's death, in the reign of King Ashoka and resulted in the formation of the Mahasanghika and Sthavira (Theravada) schools. There are differing views as to the cause of this schism, but it seems more likely that it was over questions of doctrine than of Vinaya.¹ Subsequent divisions produced a total of eighteen schools. There is general agreement concerning the theories and practices of these eighteen schools, but there are different opinions regarding their names and about how the division took place.²

Today, Vinaya texts are available to us in Pali, Tibetan, Chinese and Sanskrit or translations from them. The Pali Vinaya belongs to the Theravada school, which advocated a strict adherence to the precepts and was powerful in South India and Sri Lanka. It is recognised to be one of the most authentic sources of the words of the Buddha. The Mulasarvastivada Vinaya is preserved intact in Tibetan. In Chinese, texts of five schools the Sarvastivada, Mulasarvastivada, Dharmagupta, Mahasanghika, and Mahisasaka are almost complete, along with fragments from the Kasyapiya and Sammitiya schools.³

In addition to these, more recently various Sanskrit Vinaya texts have been discovered in Eastern Turkestan, Nepal and Gilgit and a number were brought from Tibet. A comparative study of the various available texts reveals in general a remarkable agreement in terms of content, with discrepancies only arising over details. Within the Vinaya texts are some sections which contain instructions for monks and some with instructions for nuns, though for a complete understanding of the nuns' (Sanskrit: bhikshuni) Vinaya, it is necessary to refer to the text as a whole. Therefore the Bhikshuni Vinaya does not exist as a complete independent unit.⁴

INDIA

The instructions for bhikshunis begin with an account of how women came to form a monastic community. At the time when the Lord Buddha was staying at Kapalivastu in the Nigrodharma, Mahaprajapati Gautami, his foster mother and aunt went to see him in grief following the death of her husband, his father. When she arrived she bowed before him and standing on one side requested him to allow women to renounce their homes and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline which he would dictate. The Blessed One replied, 'Enough O Gautami! Let it not please thee that women should be allowed to do so.' Three times she repeated her request and three times he gave the same reply until at last she bowed before him and sadly left his presence.

When the Blessed One had remained at Kapalivastu for as long as he thought fit, he set out on foot along with his followers for Vaishali where he stayed in the Mahavana in the Kutagara Hall. Mahaprajapati Gautami cut off her hair and donning saffron robes, set out to follow him along with a number of women of the Shakya clan. When at last they arrived, with swollen feet and covered with dust before the Kutagara Hall, the venerable Ananda saw them weeping and looking very sorrowful. Surprised, he asked, 'Why are you standing there with swollen feet, covered with dust and with tears streaming down your faces?' Mahaprajapati Gautami told him of how the Blessed One would not allow women to leave their homes and take ordination. At this he was moved, and telling her to wait awhile, he went into the hall where he bowed before the Lord Buddha and took his place on one side. Then he spoke: 'Behold Lord, Mahaprajapati Gautami is standing outside under the entrance porch, with swollen feet, covered with dust and with tears streaming down her face because you the Blessed One will not allow women to enter the homeless state and take ordination. Would it not be well, Lord, to grant them permission to do as they desire?' But the Lord replied 'Enough Ananda! Let it not please thee that women should be allowed to do so.' Three times he received the same reply. Then he pondered how to broach the subject in a different way and he asked, 'Are women, Lord, capable when they have left the household life and taken ordination are they capable of realising the fruit of conversion, or of the Second Path or of the Third Path or of Arhatship?'

'Yes, Ananda, they are capable.' 'If then, Lord, they are capable of doing so, since Mahaprajapati Gautami has proved herself of great service to you, the Blessed One, by caring for you as she would her own child when your mother died, would it not be well, Lord, to allow women to take

ordination and enter the homeless state?’ To this the Buddha replied: ‘To leave home and become ordained is not suitable for women, why? because if women were to take on homeless life, the rule of Dharma would not be maintained for a long time. Just as, O Ananda, a family with many women and few men is subject to easy attack and spoilation, so if women leave their homes and become ordained the Dharma will not last long. However, Ananda, if Mahaprajapati Gautami will accept the eight chief rules which I will lay down, let that be her ordination.’⁵

So runs the story of how the bhikshuni lineage was established, and how the Buddha’s aunt became the Superior of the order of bhikshunis. The eight chief rules laid down by the Buddha are principally concerned with establishing the relationship between the order of bhikshus and the order of bhikshunis, a relationship in which the bhikshunis were both subservient to and dependent upon the bhikshus.

There is some debate about whether or not this account is an accurate representation of the words of the Buddha. I.B. Horner in her book, *Women in Primitive Buddhism*, suggests that it was a later invention by monks in order to preserve the common myth regarding the place of women in society. While there is no scriptural evidence to support this view, it is true that the Vinaya reached its present form some time after the Buddha had passed away and since it was preserved in the memories of his disciples, recited and debated over at the first two councils, but only written down much later, there was ample room for a blend of fact and myth to take place. For example, the Pali Vinaya was not given a written form until after the fourth great council in 29 BCE and the Mulasarvastivadin tradition was written down even later than that, in the second century CE. However, we must accept the account as it stands when discussing and implementing the rules governing the ordination, status and discipline of bhikshunis.⁶

THE VOWS AND ORDINATION

The eight chief rules stand apart from the pratimoksha vows of a bhikshuni and although their order varies in the different Vinaya texts extant, their content is largely the same.⁷ The eight chief rules (Gurudhamas) according to the Mahasamghika Bhikshuni Vinaya are as follows:

1. A bhikshuni, even if she has been ordained for 150 years should be respectful towards even a newly ordained bhikshu.
2. A bhikshuni should receive the upasampada ordination in the two

orders after two years of studying the precepts.

3. A bhikshuni should not admonish a bhikshu for either real or unreal offences and she should only admonish another bhikshuni for real offences.
4. A bhikshuni should not receive donations before bhikshus.
5. A bhikshuni must confess her offences and request absolution from them before both the assembly monks and the assembly of nuns every half month.
6. Every half month the bhikshunis should go to a monastery and request a bhikshu to give them teachings. He will visit the nunnery the following day, where he must be welcomed correctly before reciting the pratimoksha and giving the bhikshunis advice.
7. A bhikshuni should not pass the rainy season by living alone without relying upon a bhikshu.
8. When the rainy season retreat is over, the bhikshunis should observe the ceremony of repentance of their offences (pravarana) before the two orders.

These rules are discussed at length in Hirakawa's *Monastic Discipline for the Buddhist Nuns*. The second rule deals in detail with the ordination of a woman. As a prerequisite for receiving novice vows, she should put her faith in the three refuges and take the five lay-person's precepts, thus becoming an upasika.

The five precepts of a lay-person are as follows:

1. Not to kill any living being
2. Not to speak falsely
3. Not to take intoxicants
4. Not to engage in sexual misconduct
5. Not to take that which does not belong to him or her.

Thereafter, she could, having reached the age of fourteen, be ordained a novice (Pali: Samanera, Sanskrit: Sramanerika) or in the case of an orphan at the age of seven, accepting the ten precepts and coming under the care and guidance of a spiritual mentor.

The ten precepts of a novice are divided into four roots and six branches. The four roots are as follows:

1. Not to kill any living being
2. Not to steal anything worth a straw
3. Not to engage in sexual intercourse
4. Not to speak falsely.

The six branches are as follows:

- i) Not to watch or take part in singing and dancing or musical and theatrical performances
- ii) Not to possess ornaments, gold or silver
- iii) Not to use perfumes or decorate oneself with flowers
- iv) Not to take intoxicants
- v) Not to eat outside the regulated hours
- vi) Not to sleep or sit on a high or broad bed

It is stressed that these vows should be observed very strictly, particularly that of chastity. This is the same rule as is laid down for male novices, however, while males take full ordination (upasampada) at the age of twenty without further ceremony, female novices must undergo a very strict two year probationary period before receiving full ordination at the same age. The probationary vows can not be taken before the age of eighteen.

According to the *Mulasarvastivadin Vinaya Sutra*, probationary (Pali: Sikkhamana, Sanskrit: Siksamana) precepts have to be conferred by at least twelve fully ordained bhikshunis, including the instructor and spiritual mentor bhikshunis. However, the Sarvastivadin and Dharmagupta Karam

Vinaya traditions clearly tell of the probationary precepts, but do not mention the number of bhikshunis required to impart them.

The presentation of these vows varies in the different schools. According to the Mulasarvastivadin (Tibetan) tradition, there are six root and six branch precepts which concern the pure behaviour of the probationary nun. In the Mahasamghika (Chinese) tradition a list of eighteen probationary precepts are given which firmly dictate her status within the order of nuns and the strict maintenance of discipline. Both of these traditions vary slightly from the presently available Sanskrit Vinaya text, but the reason for these discrepancies is unclear. It is suggested that the purpose of this two year probationary period was to ensure that the candidate for full ordination could not be pregnant and give birth to a child after she had been ordained, thus giving the order a bad name.

Having successfully completed the two years probationary period and reached the age of twenty, the probationary nun would receive full ordination (upasampada), first from the order of bhikshunis and then from the order of bhikshus. This is termed ordination from both orders (ubhatosamgha). The preceptor bhikshuni must first obtain permission from the order of bhikshunis for her disciple to receive ordination. It is important to note that a probationary nun without a preceptor bhikshuni may not receive full ordination. According to the Sarvastivadin and Dharmagupta traditions, although it is clearly stated that both monks and nuns are required for the full ordination of women, the number required is not mentioned. In the Mulasarvastivadin tradition, in addition to the preceptor bhikshuni and the karma master bhikshuni, ten bhikshus and twelve bhikshunis are required in a central area, whereas in a border region only four bhikshus and six bhikshunis are required.

The bhikshus and bhikshunis, who confer ordination should themselves have been ordained for at least ten years, and are therefore termed 'elders'. Having determined that the candidate fulfills the conditions necessary for receiving ordination, she is brought before the sangha where she is given the five pieces of clothing and a bowl. She then requests the sangha three times to confer the ordination on her. After further questioning, establishing that there are no obstacles preventing the candidate from joining the order, she is accepted into it and has the vows contained in the bhikshuni pratimoksha explained to her. Having completed the ceremony before the order of bhikshunis, it must again be performed before the order of bhikshus on the same day. Provision is also made for special cases, to allow this ceremony to be performed by means of a messenger to prevent

the new bhikshuni from having to go out of the gates of the nunnery if there is fear for her chastity should she do so.

The number of rules in the bhikshuni pratimoksha is different in the various traditions, and extensive comparative surveys of them have been undertaken.⁸ The Mulasarvastivadin (Tibetan) tradition lists a total of 366 vows for bhikshunis, 222 of which are held in common with bhikshus. In the Pali Vinaya the total is 311 and in the Mahasamghika it is 290. These vows cover every aspect of a bhikshuni's life in which she might encounter moral downfalls. Both the number of vows and their content is exhaustively dealt with by Professor Hirakawa in his English translation of the Chinese text of the Mahasamghika Bhikshuni Vinaya.

The way of life in a nunnery was very similar to that in a monastery, but the rules governing nuns were very much more restrictive. They were not permitted either to dwell alone or to go out alone; they must always be accompanied by another nun. The eight chief rules placed nuns both below and dependent upon monks for even their regular bi-monthly ceremonies. It is said that Mahaprajapati Gautami requested the Buddha to revise his ruling that monks should be shown respect by nuns irrespective of their seniority, and to say that respect should be paid to seniors irrespective of their sex, but this request was not granted. The fact that the status of nuns was not very high, along with the common view that to become a nun was an aberration from the norm, resulted in the bhikshuni sangha remaining quite limited and therefore becoming vulnerable in the face of political and cultural change. However, this is not to say that there were not a considerable number of nuns or that there were none who gained high attainments both at the time of the Buddha and in India after his death, but it does reveal that women were not actively encouraged by the Buddha to adopt the homeless life.

In the early Buddhist scriptures there are quite a few references to nuns both in the Vinaya and in the Minor Tradition texts. Examples of these are the Avadanas, stories of the deeds of monks and nuns, and the Kusdraka collection of texts, primarily verse compositions including the Sthavigathas or Therigathas which are psalms of the elder nuns or autobiographical lyrics.⁹

These give us a picture of a substantial bhikshuni sangha at the time of the Buddha, embracing women from all castes and backgrounds. There were queens, such as Mahaprajapati Gautami herself and Khema, consort of King Bimbisara who became famous for her great insight; women from

merchant families who seem to have made particularly good preachers; Brahmin ladies such as Bhadda of the Kapilas who was famous for her memories of former lives and her scholarship; and Nanduttara a former Jain who was a renowned speaker and debater. Among those whose castes are not mentioned, there is Sona, who was first in capacity of effort, Bhadda Kaccana, the first to attain great gifts and Singalamata, chief of those emancipated by faith, to name but a few whose accomplishments were particularly noteworthy. Many attained Arhatship including Khema who is said to have become an Arhat even before becoming ordained and Mahaprajapati's unnamed nurse who after much struggle became an Arhat in her old age.

The kind of life an applicant had lead prior to seeking admission into the order was irrelevant. There were unmarried young girls, who first had to gain the consent of their parents, married ladies who entered with the consent of their husbands or those such as Dhamma who, unable to gain her husband's consent, remained faithfully with him until his death before entering the order, and those who followed their husbands in taking ordination. There were widows and even prostitutes, each with her own complex history which lead to her making such a decision. While there were many who entered out of faith and disgust for the worldly life, the most common motivation was grief. Mahaprajapati Gautami herself entered after the death of her husband.

The most touching story must be that of Kisa-Gotami. She was married to the son of a merchant in Saralti. After ten months she had a son, who was bitten by a snake and died almost before he could walk. Grief-stricken and unable to believe that this catastrophe was real, she took her dead child and wandered about from house to house in a state of madness. At last an old man advised her to seek out the Buddha who happened to be nearby. She went to him and told him her story hoping for some medicine to revive the dead child. He listened to her lamentations and seeing her potential said 'Go, enter the town, and at any house where yet no man hath died, thence bring a little mustard seed.' She thought this would be easy but soon found that every house she visited had suffered loss in the death of a child, parent, or relation. When she perceived, as the Buddha had intended she should, that she was just one among many, a sharer in the common lot, she gained insight into the truth of existence, left her child at the charnel ground, accepted that all things are impermanent and entered the order.

Apart from these scriptural sources, another area which may be fruitfully

examined for references to nuns is that of rock inscriptions. Two coping inscriptions at Bodhgaya concerning Kurangi and Srīma suggest that Kurangi was a queen and Srīma a nun.¹⁰ Far more significant are the inscriptions at Sanchi (186-318 CE) which record the contributions made to the sacred edifices by large numbers of nuns.¹¹ There are also a few similar records of nuns in the Kushana empire.

In addition to these records there is evidence that the lineage of bhikshunis was maintained at the time of Ashoka, for both his queen Devi and his daughter Sanghamitta are known to have become nuns. However, references to bhikshunis after the time of the Buddha are scanty. There are no records in the Vinaya texts of any bhikshunis either making offerings or receiving relics at the time of the Buddha's Parinirvana, nor does it seem that any bhikshunis took part in the great councils. We can therefore assume that whilst the lineage was not broken between the time of the Buddha's parinirvana and the time of Ashoka, the number of bhikshunis was fairly limited and their status remained restricted.

It seems clear that the order of bhikshunis flourished and waned in India concurrently with the teachings of the Buddha. Under the Guptas (319-700 CE) the latter exerted an influence on the masses, but during the early mediaeval period (701-1305 CE) it more or less died out. During this age of decline, the standards of the monasteries also deteriorated and it was no longer respectable for any but the poor and rejected to join a nunnery and consequently nuns became the butt of story-tellers' jokes."¹²

SRI LANKA (SINHALADVIPA)

The story of how Buddhism was taken from India to Sri Lanka in the time of Ashoka is told in the Pali chronicles of the island, namely *The Island Chronicle (Dīpavamsa)*, *The Great Chronicle (Mahāvamsa)* and in Buddhaghosha's *Samantapasādikā*, which is a commentary to the Vinaya Pitaka. These texts were written in the fifth and sixth centuries CE, eight or nine centuries after the events they record took place. They tell of the friendship which developed between Devanāmpīya Tissa who had just succeeded to the throne of Sri Lanka and King Ashoka through an exchange of gifts. As a further friendly gesture in 232 BCE,¹³ Ashoka sent a group of monks and nuns to the island led by his son Mahindra, to teach and spread the words of the Buddha.

In this group Ashoka also sent his daughter Sanghamitta along with a number of senior nuns (theris). Some speak of a group of eleven

bhikshunis,¹⁴ while others give the names of eight: Uttara, Hema, Masaratta, Aggimitta, Veggu, Pabbata, Matta and Dhammadasi.¹⁵ Sanghamitta is said to have ordained numerous women led by Queen Anula as bhikshunis and to have given various teachings at the capital Anuradhapura. This story is told in chapter eighteen of *The Island Chronicle* and so is reasonably reliable. It is also recorded in *The Great Chronicle* that Sanghamitta carried the Bodhi tree seedling to Sri Lanka, where it was ceremonially planted in the Mahamegha garden at Anuradhapura. It was a seedling of this tree which was later returned to replace the tree in Bodhgaya. According to *The Great Chronicle*, Queen Anula and her followers were observing the ten precepts and residing at a nunnery called Upasika Vihara when Sanghamitta came. After their ordination King Devanam-piya Tissa erected twelve nunneries for them. Sanghamitta passed away in the ninth year of the reign of King Uttiya, Devanam-piya Tissa's successor. Her remains were cremated near the Thuparama dagoba.

After Anuradhapura fell to the Tamil invaders under Etara (189 BCE), the bhikshuni order was patronised by King Karan Tisa of Ruhuna (south Sri Lanka). It is recorded that two of King Karan Tissa's daughters joined the order of bhikshunis and references to bhikshunis in *The Island Chronicle* suggest that the order flourished during this period both in Ruhuna and at Anuradhapura. *The Great Chronicle* and the Thuparamsa record that 13,000 bhikshunis took part in the inauguration ceremony of the Ruauveli and Mirivetya dagobas at Anuradhapura built by King Dutugemmu (101-77 BCE), after he had driven out the Tamil invaders.

Throughout *The Great Chronicle* there are frequent references to the daughters of kings who became bhikshunis and to occasions when the bhikshunis were offered meals. Various pieces of archaeological evidence such as land deeds on copper plates and stone inscriptions reveal that there was a flourishing bhikshuni sangha which lasted up to the ninth or tenth century CE. Chinese and Sri Lanka records state that bhikshunis travelled to China in the fourth or fifth century CE, where they passed the lineage of bhikshunis to the Chinese. In order to do this the Sri Lankan bhikshunis must themselves have correctly received the lineage from the Indian bhikshunis, and have been aware of the need to preserve and disseminate the lineage.

Despite political, sectarian and economic difficulties in the country, Buddhism and the lineage of bhikshu endures even to this day in Sri Lanka. However, since no mention of bhikshunis can be found in any records

beyond the tenth century it seems that their lineage died out around that time. It is likely that, because nuns were necessarily restricted to cities and nunneries, they were more vulnerable than monks, who were able to retreat to safety in troubled times. In the present day there are nuns in Sri Lanka who observe the ten precepts and who live in monastic institutions but they are not fully ordained bhikshunis and do not claim to be. This is the same situation as in Thailand and Burma, which followed Sri Lanka in adopting the Theravada tradition of the Buddha's teachings.

CHINA

In contrast to Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand, which were Hinayana countries, Tibet, China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam followed the Mahayana tradition of the Buddha's teachings. The Mahayanists, however, did not possess a distinctly different Vinaya but rather adopted the old school texts. When Buddhism began to reach China in the first and second centuries CE, it was these texts which were taken and translated into Chinese.

The earliest Chinese translations of the Vinaya were of the Dharmagupta Schools and were translated in the mid-third century. It is clear that by this time there was a thriving sangha of monks, laymen and laywomen, but while there are various obscure references to nuns as far back as the Han dynasty (25-220 CE), there is no evidence of the existence of bhikshunis.

The first clear record of a Chinese nun is found in *The Biographies of Nuns* by the monk Pao Ch'ang of the Liang dynasty (502-557 CE). Her name was Chung Ling-i of P'eng Ch'en and she was born the daughter of a governor in 287 CE. Widowed at an early age, she taught music, reading and writing to children of noble families. When she heard about Buddhism, she embraced it gladly but for some years found no one to give her instructions. At last she met the monk Fa-shin, who was well-versed in the Buddhist scriptures and had established a monastery at the western gate of the capital city during the Chin-hsing period (313-316) of the Tsin dynasty. Chung Ling-i received teachings from this monk and studied the scriptures under his guidance.

One day she said to Fa-shin, "As it is said in the scriptures that there are bhikshus and bhikshunis, I wish to be ordained as a bhikshuni." He replied, "In the Western land there are both monks and nuns but the sangha is incomplete in this country." He agreed to make inquiries about the

bhikshuni precepts and ordination for her and therefore asked Sramana Jnanagira (Chih-Shah) of the kingdom of Kashmir, who came to China at the end of the Yung-chia period (307-312) of the Tsin dynasty. He explained that the precepts for bhikshunis are generally the same as those for the bhikshus with only minor differences, but that without a proper traditional system nobody can confer the precepts. Nevertheless, a female devotee may receive the ten precepts from a bhikshu and become a novice, but without a preceptress she has nobody to depend on for her studies.

Chung Ling-i then cut off her hair and along with twenty-four other women, she received the ten precepts from the Kashmiri master and took Ching-Chien as her ordination name. They established the Chu-lin (Bamboo Grove) nunnery at the western gate of the capital city and as they had no preceptress, they studied fruitfully under the instruction of Ching-chien, who was quite competent to teach them. Gradually the nunnery became well established and Ching-chien took in more disciples.

During the Hsien-Kang period (335-342) of the Tsin dynasty, the Sramana Seng-chien obtained from the kingdom of Yueh-chih the Mahasanghika-bhikshuni kraman and the bhikshuni-pratimoksha which were translated into Chinese. In 357 at Loyang the foreign monk T'an Mo-chief-to (Sramana Dharmagupta) was asked to set up an ordination platform, but the Chinese monk Shih Tao-ch'ang raised an objection based on the *Sutra of the Origin of the Rules (Mahaprajapati Sutra)*. It is probable that his objection was that there were no qualified bhikshunis present to take part in such an ordination ceremony. Although the ceremony went ahead and there is no mention of anyone questioning the status of the resulting bhikshunis, the women themselves expressed deep concern over this and finally remedied the situation about half a century later.

During this period both monks and nuns exercised a good deal of influence in political and court circles. Ho Ch'ung as governor of Yang-chou fostered the growth of monasteries and in 345 the Empress Dowager Ch'u founded the Yen-hsing nunnery for the nun Seng-chi. However, imperial patronage of nuns around the middle of the fourth century led to their involvement in palace intrigues and by the beginning of the fifth century their influence upon the court and government had assumed dangerous proportions.¹⁶ In particular, a nun of unknown origin who "possessed a wide learning of Buddhist and non-Buddhist subjects and excelled in literary composition...together with the emperor, the Great Preceptor (i.e. Ssuma Tao-tzu) the (officials) of the inner palace and the (court) literati used to hold discussions and to compose literature."¹⁷ In 385 Ssu-ma Tao-tzu made

her abbess over more than a hundred nuns in the Chien-ching Nunnery which he founded for her. It is estimated that in the period under the Emperor Hsia-wu (373-396) in the region controlled by the Eastern Chin there were 1,786 temples and 24,000 monks and nuns.¹⁸

In the year 428 or 429 CE the king of Sri Lanka, having heard that the emperor of China had embraced Buddhism, sent an envoy with gifts and messages of good will. *The Biographies of Buddhist Nuns* tells of how around the same time as these missions at least two groups of Sri Lankan bhikshunis arrived in China and participated in the re-ordination of a number of Chinese bhikshunis.

The most thorough account of the re-ordination is found in the biography of Seng-kuo of Kuang-ling. Even as a baby it was clear that she had unusual faith and devotion for she would not suck her mother's breast after midday. Though she had wanted to become a bhikshuni ever since she was a child she was unable to do so until she reached the age of twenty-seven. She went on to become very well-versed in the Vinaya and reached a very high level of meditation.

In the year 429 Nandi, the owner of a foreign ship, brought a group of bhikshunis from the kingdom of Sri Lanka (Suhadvipa) to the capital of the Sung dynasty (Nanking), where they were lodged in the Ching-lu Nunnery. While they were there, they asked Seng-kuo whether any foreign bhikshunis had been to China before and when they said they had not, they asked how, in that case the Chinese bhikshunis had received dual ordination in accordance with the Vinaya. Seng-kuo explained that they had received their ordination only from bhikshus. At this the foreign bhikshunis said that perhaps that was sufficient since the ceremony of ordination was only an expedient to rouse the feeling of respect in the minds of those who were ordained into the sangha. They also suggested that since Mahaprajapati had received her ordination through accepting the eight chief rules directly from the Buddha, who was a bhikshu, this could be taken as a precedent for the ordination of bhikshunis by bhikshus alone. It is worth pointing out here that neither of these arguments are valid, because the Buddha himself gave instructions about how bhikshunis should be ordained and it is not reasonable to cite as a precedent an occasion which took place before that instruction was given.

Having had doubts sown in her mind about the authenticity of her ordination, Seng-kuo discussed the matter with the Tripitaka master Gunavarman and came to the conclusion that it would be better for them

to be ordained again. Therefore, in 433 Nandi brought another group of eleven bhikshunis from Sri Lanka, headed by Devasara and more than 300 Chinese bhikshunis received full ordination for a second time at Nan-lin monastery.

The biography of Pao-hsien of the Pu-hsien nunnery records that she was one of the group who received ordination for a second time from Sanghavarman and the foreign bhikshunis in 434 at Nan-lin. It says: "This did not mean that their previous ordination was ineffective, but that they wished to increase the goodness of Vinaya." It goes on to remark that, "Curious people brought confusion to the system of ordination". In 474 the Vinaya master Fa-ying lectured on the *Dasadhyaya-Vinaya* in the Tsin-hsing monastery and one day, more than ten bhikshunis from the audience wished to receive full ordination for the second time. Pao-hsien then took the matter in hand and proclaimed that bhikshunis were not permitted to receive full ordination for a second time without good reason. The teachers of those bhikshunis who had received their full ordination below the proper age-limit were to assemble their disciples to make repentance and then go to the authority in charge of monastic affairs to ask for permission. This granted, they could receive their full ordination anew with proper witnesses.

The visits of the Sri Lankan bhikshunis are also recorded in *The Biographies of Eminent Monks* by Hui Chao in the biographies of Gunavarman and Sanghavarman who were both Vinaya masters who translated Vinaya texts into Chinese. It is also known that Gunavarman had been to Sri Lanka himself with the ship captain Nandi, so it is possible that he assisted in arranging for the bhikshunis to visit China.

These accounts show how despite reassurances that their lineage was valid, taking the ordination of Mahaprajapati as their example, the Chinese nuns went to great lengths to ensure that their lineage was sound and in accordance with the Vinaya. They accord with the accounts of the same event recorded in *The Biographies of Eminent Monks*. Moreover, Kathryn A. Tsai in her article *The Chinese Monastic Order for Women: The first two centuries*, points out that since many of the convents in which the nuns in *The Biographies* lived were still flourishing when Pao-Ch'ang put together his collection (6th century CE) he would have had access to convent records and recollections, so there is every reason to accept his accounts as authentic. This being the case then, we have a picture of a considerable bhikshuni sangha with a remarkably high level of learning and meditation. Many nuns are described as being educated in both secular and religious literature, as being child prodigies, as being able to quickly memorise the

scriptures, or as being particularly adept at meditation. In a society where education for women was far from the norm one might suppose that the convents provided an attractive alternative to home and family for the intelligent and religious-minded women.

Apart from the high level of literacy and meditation among these nuns there are several other interesting features of the Chinese sangha. Vegetarianism has become an inseparable characteristic of Chinese monks and nuns, fully in accordance with the Buddha's teaching, but made practical by the monastic institutions where they cook their own meals. At the time of the Buddha monks were wandering mendicants who accepted what they were offered so could not refuse meat or fish. A feature of the early sangha community which was never fully accepted by the Chinese was the Persian custom of 'Sky burial', that is exposing the dead to be devoured by birds. Certainly it would have been contrary to the morality of Confucianism for children to dispose of the bodies of their parents in such a way. Finally, there is the practice of different degrees of self-immolation frequently mentioned in the biographies. This varied from branding a few marks on their bodies, burning off one or several fingers, to even burning themselves to death. Such practices are quite contrary to the Buddha's teachings. He strongly condemned human sacrifice or any practice which causes harm to one's body, because the body has to be used to gain spiritual advancement. The scriptural reference which is taken as the basis for these practices is in the twelfth chapter of the *Fan-Wang-ching* (*The Lotus Sutra*), which contains a story of a Bodhisattva who offered his body to the Buddha as a living candle.¹⁹ As a result of this, in the course of the ordination ceremony currently used in the Chinese lineage, monks and nuns brand their shaven scalps with three, nine or twelve marks. This stipulation is not found in any of the texts of the Theravada school.

There were two periods of persecution of Buddhists, in 446 and 574, neither of which caused lasting damage to Chinese Buddhism. It is likely that the bhikshuni lineage survived these difficulties, for on the whole the age of the six dynasties (265-589) was a golden age for Buddhism with a healthy flow of Chinese pilgrims going to India to study and collect the scriptures and a number of Indian missionaries reaching China.

In the North the Wei dynasty (386-534) is renowned for its support of Buddhism. A census taken in the year 477 reveals that there were 100 temples and 2,000 monks and nuns in the Northern capital, while in the entire country the figures were 6,478 and 7,725,820. The period is famous for cave temples at Yun-kang near the first northern capital of Shansi and

at Lungmei near the second capital Loyang. In these caves are a number of inscriptions by nuns who erected images, usually in memory of a dead child or husband, the loss of whom had led to their departure from household life.²¹

In the South, Buddhism became influential later than in the North but it flourished during the Liang dynasty at Nanking and by 527 southern China was as thoroughly Buddhist as the North. According to the records of Fa-lin, in the Eastern Chin period there were 1,768 temples and 24,000 monks and nuns which had increased to 2,846 and 82,000 under the Liang.²²

The monastic traditions continued to flourish after the reunification of the North and South, through the Sui dynasty, until the years 841-845 of the Tang dynasty when Buddhism was devastatingly suppressed by the Emperor Wu-Tsang, an ardent Taoist who ruined his health by taking longevity potions. Though this persecution was of short duration it served a crippling blow to the already declining influence of Buddhism on the mass of the people.²³ From then until the nineteenth century Buddhism continued to exist and there were many eminent scholars in each generation, but its position in national life markedly declined.

According to the statistical figures on the order of bhikshunis in China compiled by M. Sentor, nuns were ordained in China right up to 1957. However, we have very little information about how this vow was conferred or of how the lineage was maintained up to that point. Hwei Shin Fa-Shih, a modern Chinese master says that even during the Tang dynasty no records can be found about dual ordination being given, so in his opinion it was around the Sung dynasty that the lineage of dual transmission was broken. However, when we look at the historical records there is no evidence of there being any time from their introduction to China up to the cultural revolution when there were no bhikshunis in China.

According to a manual written in the Ming dynasty by Mu ti (Sen Yueh) a very famous Vinaya master, at that time there was no dual transmission. Later, his disciple Shu Yu wrote a manual for the bhikshuni dual transmission. It is the opinion of Hwei Shin Fa-Shih that even though they wrote this book, according to the records of Bau Hoa Mountain, a famous place for Vinaya transmission, they did not actually use this method to give the transmission.

The Tibetan records have only two references which relate to bhikshunis in China. The *Zam-ling Tsal Wei Melong*, which contains numerous

biographies of distinguished Tibetan scholars, mentions that during the thirteenth century about 4,425 monks and nuns received dual ordination from Phagpa, a Tibetan lama who exerted much influence over the court of Kublai Khan (1260-1294) in China and in Mi-nyak. In addition to this, a text called *Yonten Rinpoche Gyatso*, which is the biography of an eminent scholar Ken-chen Ka-shipa Rig-pei Sengye, records that in the 14th century the bhikshuni sangha did exist at Tashi Rabgang in Mi-nyak, but it is not clear where this lineage came from or whether bhikshunis took part in the ordination ceremonies.

At the time of the cultural revolution many monks and nuns fled from China to safety nearby, particularly to Taiwan and Hong Kong. In these places they have re-established their monasteries and nunneries and continue to ordain both bhikshus and bhikshunis, thus perpetuating their ancient lineages and teachings.

KOREA

In Korea, Buddhism flourished from the fourth century through to the fourteenth century when, during the Yi dynasty, it suffered in competition with Confucianism. All the texts and teachings used in Korea came directly from China and it is assumed that among them also came the lineage of bhikshuni ordination. During the Yi dynasty all monks and nuns were banished from the capital, but they continued their practice in the more isolated areas of the Korean peninsula. Whether or not the bhikshunis were able to survive this extended period of hardship is unclear. By the end of the nineteenth century Buddhism in Korea was in a sorry state of degeneration, but since then it has undergone a remarkable revival and it is said that there are now 10,000 practising monks and nuns in the country. These days bhikshunis are ordained by the bhikshuni sangha alone and receive 348 vows. According to the Venerable Il Ta of Haen Sa monastery dual ordination of bhikshunis did exist in Korea until about one hundred years ago when it was discontinued.

TIBET

According to historical and religious records, during the reign of King Tri-Song Detsen in the eighth century, the Mulasarvastivadina Vinaya tradition and the bhikshu sangha lineage were established in Tibet. However, there are no similar written records which give evidence that the bhikshuni lineage was also introduced at this time. It is the opinion of many learned Tibetan scholars and researchers that the bhikshuni lineage

did not exist in Tibet before the twelfth century.

The Mulasarvastivadin Vinaya tradition was first established in Tibet by the great abbot Shantarakshita; later, after a decline it was restored to its former glory by La-chen Gong-pa Rab-sel (832-915), and finally it flourished and spread under the guidance of Kashmiri and Indian masters. However, this propagation of the Vinaya did not include the bhikshuni lineage and it seems that no Indian or Kashmiri pandit ordained women in Tibet. The bhikshuni lineage was apparently maintained in India during the eighth century but it is suggested that it did not go to Tibet because of the inaccessibility of the region.

In the great translator Nagtso's eighty verse praise of Atisha it says: "You (Atisha) are the crown ornament of the four types of disciple." The four types of disciple referred to are the bhikshu, bhikshuni, novice monk and novice nun. From this we can deduce that all four ordination lineages existed in India at the time of Atisha in the eleventh century. Since they existed then, they must have been maintained since the time of the Buddha and therefore must have existed in India in the eighth century.

In Tibet in the eighth century the only Vinaya tradition permitted by order of King Tri-Song Detsen was the Mulasarvastivadin tradition, which had no living lineage of the bhikshuni vow. Atisha himself belonged to the Mahasanghika tradition, which had a living bhikshuni lineage, but he did not propagate it in Tibet, probably because he did not hold the permitted Vinaya tradition himself. Another reason could have been that bhikshunis were required to take part in the ordination of women and if there were no bhikshunis already in Tibet, then the ordination ceremony could not have taken place.

Even though the Mulasarvastivadin bhikshuni sangha lineage in India had died out, texts concerning it such as the *Bhikshuni Karma Vakya*, the *Bhikshuni Pratimoksha*, the *Bhikshuni Vibhangha* and other commentaries were translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan. Why the bhikshuni lineage was not propagated despite the translation of all this related material is an unresolved question.

There is evidence that from the twelfth century a few great Tibetan lamas did give the bhikshuni vow to Tibetan women without the assistance of bhikshunis. The validity of this transmission is disputed. There are some texts which contain passages which suggest that it is permissible for a bhikshu to ordain a bhikshuni. In the karma base of the *Condensed Vinaya*

Vastu, which is a famous commentary on the Vinaya Agama written by Gunaprabha,²⁴ it says: “A bhikshu can be fully ordained by means of the bhikshuni ceremony and vice versa, a bhikshuni can be ordained by means of the bhikshu ceremony”. This suggests that a bhikshuni can be ordained by the same means as a bhikshu.

In addition to this, Kun-Khyen Tsona-wa, an eminent thirteenth century scholar said in his text entitled *Dul-wa so-tik*, which is a commentary on the *Vinaya Vastu*, that the *Vinaya Agama* says: “Upala asked the Buddha, if a bhikshuni were ordained by means of the ceremony for the ordination of bhikshus, would she be a fully ordained bhikshuni? To which he replied: ‘Yes, she would be qualified to be called a bhikshuni.’” However, this quotation cannot be traced in the available editions of the *Vinaya Agama* itself.

In a commentary to the commentary to the *Condensed Vinaya Vastu* by Gunaprabha called *Dul wa dur gya cher drel pa* (*The Elaborate Commentary to the Vinaya Sutra*) written by Dharmamitra,²⁵ when discussing the eight valid causes for a bhikshu to break his rainy season retreat it says: “Also, for the purpose of giving bhikshuni (*san ju nye nye*) vows a bhikshu may leave the rainy season retreat, which he has agreed to abide by, for a period of seven days.”

Taking these scriptures as their basis some lamas did ordain women. However, this practice was totally opposed by Go Rampa Sonam Sengye (1429-1489), who wrote in his supplement to the *Dom sum rab gye* of Sakya Pandita²⁶: “Some say that nowadays there are some bhikshus in Tibet who give the bhikshuni vow, but it is not right to do so because as a prerequisite for receiving ordination from a bhikshu the woman must first receive the vow of celibacy and full ordination from the bhikshuni sangha. No exception to this rule is stated in the Vinaya texts.” Although he says, “some bhikshus are giving the bhikshuni vow”, he mentions no names so we do not know who in particular he was referring to. Only in a commentary to his work written by Khen-chen Ngawang Chodak (1572-1641) entitled *Dom sum rabje kha khong ge drel wa* is one name, ‘Nam-so etc’, given.

The great fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) in his work *Nam je ser dok* speaks of the great Geluppa Dulwapa who was said to have given the vow but who, on being challenged and told that it was not right, denied having done so. In the same text he also mentions that the abbot Namka Sonam along with one lama from Shang province ordained a woman called Rang

Jon Won Mo at Churwar, but says that it is not known where this information came from. As evidence supporting the theory that bhikshunis did exist in Tibet the Fifth Dalai Lama gives a detailed account of how, in the fifteenth century, the Panchen Rinpoche ordained a bhikshuni at Gyama in central Tibet, who in time became renowned for her pure morality. This refers to the Panchen Ser-dok, not the U Panchen.

An account of the ordination of the bhikshuni at Gyama is also found in the biography of Panchen Shakya Chokden written by Drol Chok.²⁷ It tells how when Panchen Shakya Chokden was staying at Gyama monastery in central Tibet, Chodup Palmo Tsotrum of Gyama received the bhikshuni ordination from a group of masters which included Panchen Shakya Chokden himself as the chief preceptor, Chen-na Dhup-pe Gyal-po as the karma master, Jey-trak Mar-pa as the instruction master (Bramacharya-upavasak acharya), Trung Tsang-pa as the announcing master and Choche Sam-ten and others as ceremonial assistants. Thereafter she became known as the Gyama bhikshuni.

The establishment of the bhikshuni lineage in Tibet by Panchen Shakya Chonden was strongly supported by another eminent lama Akya Yonzin in his work *Dri Len Nung Tsel*. The Fifth Dalai Lama also mentioned that Khenpo Ngawang Chodak had said that since the Panchen Ser-dok was extremely well-versed in Vinaya, if he had given the bhikshuni vow then it must have been valid.

During the period between 1456 and 1539, Karma Trinley, a learned Kagyu scholar, in his book called *Pema Karpo*, which was a composition written in reply to questions posed by Gyaton Chunpo, replied to the thirteenth question, "Do the rituals for giving the bhikshuni vow exist in Tibet?" "There are many texts such as the *Vinaya Agama*, the *Karma Shatam* and the *Karam Vakya* which relate to bhikshunis in Tibet. On a practical level there is no bhikshuni vow in Tibet in accordance with the faultless Hinayana tradition, because there are no bhikshunis in Tibet from whom new bhikshunis could receive ordination and it is laid down in Vinaya texts that there should be at least four. However, I feel that Mahayana bhikshunis did exist." What is implied by 'Mahayana bhikshuni' remains unclear.

In a text called *Zam-ling Tsal-Wei Melong* which was compiled in 1934 by Tagsang Peljor Sangpo there are some records of ordinations of bhikshunis in Tibet and China. It says that during the thirteenth century Chogyal Phagpa ordained a total of 4,425 bhikshus, bhikshunis, novice monks

and novice nuns in Nepal, China and Minyak. We also know that in the text called *Yonten Rinpoche Gyatso*, composed by Ka-shi Rig-pey Sengye, Sang-po in 1945 about his teacher khen-chen Ka-shi-pa Rig-pei Sengye, on page eighteen there is an account of a bhikshuni called Tashi-bel in Minyak Rabgang which says that around her there grew a bhikshuni sangha, that is, a group of bhikshunis large enough to give the ordination to new bhikshunis.

From this we can see that there is considerable disagreement among Tibetan scholars on the subject of the ordination of women. While Sengye Sang-po asserts that a bhikshuni sangha did exist in Minyak in Tibet, the great Fifth Dalai Lama in his book on Vinaya called *Dulwei-le-chok* clearly says that the bhikshuni sangha never existed in Tibet. With such distinguished scholars involved on both sides of the argument it is difficult to come to any definite conclusion.

THE BHIKSHUNI VOW TODAY

Recently, considerable interest in the Chinese and Korean bhikshuni lineages has been shown by Tibetan novice nuns and novice nuns from western countries who have been ordained in the Tibetan tradition. They are interested to discover whether it might be possible to transmit the lineage of bhikshuni ordination to the Tibetan tradition. This quest has also received the encouragement of H.H. the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and the late Gyalwa Karmapa. To this end a number of Tibetan and Western nuns have visited Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

In July 1981 Ani Pema Choden went to Miu Fat Monastery in Hong Kong where she received full ordination from the order of monks alone, without having received the probationary vows two years beforehand. In Po Lim Monastery the same procedure is followed, the valid lineage of monks vows being used to authenticate the ordination of women.

In Taiwan the situation is much the same. The American bhikshuni Huo-Hsien received her ordination at Hai Ming Ssu in Taiwan in 1982. In her letter from Taiwan she describes how most monks and nuns postpone taking any precepts until they attend the three-platform ordination and then receive the novice monk or nun ordination, the full ordination and the Mahayana ordination all at one time. No mention is made of the probationary nuns ordination. She too was only given full ordination by ten monks; though ten nuns were present, they only served as helpers.

The American bhikshuni Karma Lekshe Tsomo not only received bhikshuni ordination in Korea, she then went to Taiwan to be re-ordained, thus following the same pattern of ordination as was practised in China when the Sri Lanka bhikshunis came. In 1984 four Tibetan nuns travelled to Hong Kong where they were ordained by a community of ten nuns headed by Tri-Sing. All these ordinations took place according to the Dharmagupta tradition.

When considering the authenticity of these ordinations there arise three main areas which require further investigation. The first is that of the lineage itself. While it is impossible to be a hundred per cent certain, we may assume that the bhikshuni lineage did travel from India via Sri Lanka to China and Korea. It is necessary, therefore, to closely examine all possible historical records and artefacts which might illuminate the period from the fifth century to the present day, in order to reach a definite conclusion.

The second question is that of dual ordination. In the section on Tibet we have pointed out three scriptural quotations which suggest that ordination by bhikshus alone is acceptable. There is also considerable opposition to this idea and it is therefore difficult to reach any definite conclusion about it.

The third point arises over the probationary nuns vows which all the available Vinaya texts say should be taken two years before receiving full ordination. According to the *Mulasarvastivadin Bhikshuni Pratimoksha*, not to do so is regarded as an offence of the eightieth kind while the *Sarvastivadin Pratimoksha* states that it is an offence of the sixty-third kind and the *Dharmagupta Pratimoksha* states that it is an offence of the 122nd kind. However in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Korea this stipulation is not followed. The Ven. Shig Hiu Wan of the Institute for Sino-Indian Buddhist studies recognises the need for this vow to be conferred and that it is being neglected. He also speaks in his 'interview' of the need to build a college for training bhikshunis. This would be a most welcome move and of great benefit to those women interested in studying the vows and becoming ordained.

There can be no doubt of the purity and strength of intention of the Chinese and Korean masters who are struggling to maintain their practices and lineages in this turbulent world. The strict discipline maintained in their monasteries and the attention paid to upholding the Vinaya are worthy of respect and admiration.

It is the opinion of Tibetan scholars that if scholars from Hong Kong, Taiwan,

Korea, Tibet and Vietnam could form a symposium to research and reconstruct the bhikshuni lineage from the fifth century in China to the present day, and if it were found to be sound, then there would be no reason why the bhikshuni vow should not be introduced into the Tibetan tradition.

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5. Pali Vinaya Text p.320.
6. G.S.P. Mistra p.20; I.B. Horner; S. Dutt p.11.
7. G. Roth p.XXXI.
8. Hirakawa p.39 ff.
9. I.B. Horner.
10. D.K. Barua, *Buddha Gaya Temple: Its History*. p.184-5.
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12. In Bhavabhuti's *Malti-Madhaya* and the *Sashakumaracarita* by Dandi, Buddhist nuns are depicted as go-betweens between lovers.
13. Opinions vary with respect to the date of Mahindra's arrival in Sri Lanka; another account says he arrived in 307 BCE and that the bodhi tree seedling (and Sanghamitta?) arrived considerably later, in 288 BCE.
14. *The Entrance to the Vinaya*, p.267-269.
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TIBETAN NUNS

Tibetan nuns and Tibetan nunneries are not something that have sprung up just recently but are as old as Buddhism in Tibet. There were many nunneries of all schools in Tibet which enjoyed equal recognition and where many famous nuns had gained high realizations and thus affected the lives of many others through their advanced spiritual development. To mention only a few, there were Ralung Nunnery near Shigatse founded in the 12th century, Tsang Danna Nunnery where the famous Jetsun-ma Dubdung Rinpoche spent all her life in prayer, and in the Kongbay area there was the famous nun Ando who spent her life in a cave belonging to her nunnery praying and meditating.

More recently, nun Chong-kso Jetsun-ma Rinpoche, from a nunnery south of Lhasa, was well known not only for her realizations, but also for her courage as a freedom fighter and as such she was killed for her country and religion. When in 1959 troubles started with the Chinese occupation forces, she was one of the leading women to oppose Chinese rule. Nuns were held in high esteem and given due respect, and they in turn did their best to help and serve their community.

In the Lhasa area alone there were five large and seven smaller nunneries. One of the larger ones was Nechung Ri, and an account of it is given here as it is remembered by one of its former nuns, Ngawang Chozin, also one of the founding members of Geden Choling Nunnery. Nechung Ri Nunnery dated back to the early 15th century. Its mother nunnery was situated at the site where Sera Monastery now stands near Lhasa, but details of it are no longer available. After the exalted Jetsun Jamyang Choje had decided to found Sera monastery, he divined that it should be built at a certain place and sent some of his disciples to investigate. To their consternation they found a nunnery at the very spot, and reported this to the master. According to the vinaya (Code of Discipline for Buddhist Monks and Nuns) monasteries and nunneries should not be built on the same site, so Jetsun Jamyang Choje decided that the nunnery should be moved elsewhere. He discerned again by divination, that the nunnery should be rebuilt on a hill shaped like a conch, to the east of Lhasa. One of his disciples went to the indicated area where, indeed, he found a hill shaped like a conch, but still he was uncertain as to the exact site for the nunnery. While resting and surveying the area, he watched an eagle circling

high in the sky carrying something in his beak. Suddenly the eagle swooped, dropped whatever it had been carrying and flew away. Overcome by curiosity, the disciple went to look and found that the object had fallen onto the part of the hill shaped like the mouth of a conch. He decided that the new nunnery should be built there and so it was—subsequently being named Nechung Ri. From then until the occupation of Tibet by the Chinese, Sera Je Monastery offered a certain quantity of grain annually to Nechung Ri in return for the grounds that had originally belonged to its mother nunnery.

Nechung Ri was built in the traditional Tibetan style: the temple in the middle of the complex surrounded by living and administrative quarters. One had a wide, beautiful view over the surrounding area, the climate was pleasant and the drinking-water was pure and cool. In front of the nunnery were lush meadows on which its cows, yaks and other cattle grazed and behind it were high mountains with caves for meditation. The whole nunnery was set in deep, peaceful forests.

Two of the meditation caves were very famous in themselves because the renowned early translator Ra Lotsawa was said to have meditated in one and Lama Jetsun-ma Khajoe Pemo went to the Pure Land of Vajra Yogini from the other. Before that she had given many teachings to a great number of both ordained and lay disciples. Amongst other things she had been offered fields where the nuns grew their own crops. Before her incarnation as a woman, Lama Jetsun-ma had been born many times as a man and had always lived as a monk. In this life, when she was a girl of eight, she had joined Nechung Ri and after meditating there for thirty years, she eventually attained the Rainbow Body.

Traditionally, life in the nunnery was something like this. The senior nuns taught the newly ordained ones to read and write, and also taught them the scriptures, how to memorize their prayers, to conduct religious ceremonies and to play instruments like cymbals, trumpets and drums etc. Some of the nuns were skilled in various crafts, for example, in embroidery, sewing and the making of beautiful shoes, and others helped the ladies of well-to-do families to make their jewellery. Lamas were invited to give scriptural teachings to all the nuns.

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SUMMARY OF THREE ESSENTIAL TEXTS ON THE LINEAGE OF BHIKSHUNI ORDINATION—PREPARED BY GESHE TASHI TSERING

Out of great concern for the Vinaya discipline, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has time and again emphasized the need to conduct intensive investigations of the lineage of Bhikshuni ordination. Consequently, the Department of Religion and Culture, has undertaken extensive research and discussions to examine the prospects of Tibetan nuns receiving the entire set of Bhikshuni vows, which form the basis of all higher training in ethics and discipline. We have published three books covering such major topics as the Vinaya according to the Sarvastivadin tradition exclusively practised in Tibet, the Vinaya according to the Dharmagupta tradition followed in India, the mode of transmission of vows, and the origin of Bhikshuni ordination in India. A summary of these three books follows.

According to available sources, no lineage of Bhikshuni ordination existed in Tibet in the past. However, a Tibetan translation of the *Vinayavibhanga* according to Sarvastivadin tradition states that “if a Sangha comprising solely of Bhikshus initiates women as Bhikshunis through an exclusively Bhikshu ceremony, the act though complete shall incur minor misdeeds (Nyes byas, Sekkhiyas).” Interpreting this proclamation literally, several Tibetan masters including Shakya Chokden ordained Tibetan women into Bhikshunihood through a ritual conducted by a Sangha consisting exclusively of Bhikshus. The new system introduced by Shakya Chokden met with much opposition from his contemporaries such as Kunkhyen Gormapa Sonam Senge. There were two main reasons for their objection. The first was that none of the early pioneers of the Vinaya had set any precedent through undertaking ordination of Bhikshunis by a Bhikshu Sangha in Tibet. The second was that it is against the *Root Vinaya (mDo rtsa)*, which states that “unless one has received the vows of celibacy (Brahmacari, Tshangs spyod nyer gnas) one shall not become a Bhikshuni.” The text further states that “one shall then be ordained by a Sangha,” where ‘Sangha’ in the context of Bhikshuni ordination according to Vinaya refers to a Sangha of Bhikshunis.

Masters including Kunkhyen Gormapa totally disapproved of the ordination of Bhikshunis by a Bhikshu Sangha because it contradicted the *Extensive Explanation of Vinaya Sutra (rGya cher 'grel)*, which states that “unless one has received the vows of celibacy, she shall not seek Bhikshuni ordination.” And [to a nun] according to the text, “the celibacy vow must be bestowed by Sangha constituted only of Bhikshunis.” Since Tibet never

had a Bhikshuni Sangha throughout its history, the practice of ordaining women as Bhikshunis by a Bhikshu Sangha is seen tantamount to denouncing the Buddhadharmā. Also, the practice is strongly condemned by Vinaya holders on the grounds that it violates the Vinaya discipline.

However, Tibetan masters including Panchen Shakya Chokden, who held that the said practice does not deny the rules set in Vinaya, respond to the objection by saying that the Bhikshuni ordination by two Sanghas - Bhikshu and Bhikshuni - needs to be separately interpreted, in the sense that the requisites outlined in the Vinaya sources are required by the former not the latter Sangha. Drukchen Padma Karpo also supports this view. From this perspective, the feasibility of receiving Bhikshuni vows from a Bhikshu Sangha can be proven, but it seems there is no irrefutable Vinaya statement that the vows received are pure and complete.

Even in regard to this, arguments persist as to whether it is appropriate for a Bhikshu Sangha to ordain as Bhikshuni a woman who has not received the celibacy vows. It is possible to find Vinaya sources recording women receiving Bhikshuni ordination from a Bhikshu Sangha under such circumstances in which it is difficult to find Bhikshuni Sangha. However, there is no Vinaya source proving that vows received in such a manner is pure and complete.

Taking into account the fact that early Tibetan masters such as Panchen Shakya Chokden approved the ordination of Bhikshunis under a ceremony conducted exclusively by a Bhikshu Sangha, we have published a book entitled *Thub dbang zhal lung (Oral Transmission of the Supreme Victor)*. The outcome of a series of discussions with Vinaya-holders and scholars of different traditions and a close study of translations of the Vinaya according to the Sarvastivādin School and the other materials available at the Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, the book primarily examines the possibility of bestowing the complete Bhikshuni vows on Tibetan novice nuns according to the Sarvastivādin tradition.

Secondly, the book presents a brief account of the lineage of Bhikshuni ordination in China. The facts concerning the origin of Chinese Bhikshuni lineage are based strictly on a sixth century Chinese text *The Biographies of Chinese Nuns* and its translations found in other language. When the Bhikshuni ordination was newly introduced into China, followers there adopted two different process of ordination. While one followed the normal process, the other involved a practice of ordaining women as Bhikshunis by Sangha consisting only of Bhikshus. In justifying the latter procedure,

which was adopted in the fourth century and is practised to this day, Chinese Bhikshunis cite a fifth-century dialogue between Sri Lankan nuns and their Chinese counterparts. At that time, the visiting Sri Lankan nuns asked there had been any Bhikshunis in China in the past. Knowing that there were no Bhikshunis before, they asked how the first Chinese Bhikshunis were ordained. The Chinese explained that like Prajapati, the earliest Chinese Bhikshunis sought ordination from a Sangha comprising only of Bhikshus. Despite having given this explanation, the Chinese Bhikshunis still felt overcome by doubts pertaining to the appropriateness of such a procedure. They therefore asked the Indian master Gunasena, who was then in China, if it were possible to receive Bhikshuni ordination for a second time. The master not only consented to a retaking of the vows on the ground that it enriches the vows received and observed so far, but also acknowledged the procedure they initially followed. However, it is distressing that apart from Gunasena's view, no corroborative statement in support of Bhikshuni ordination by a Bhikshu Sangha is found in the Vinaya according to Dharmagupta tradition, which is widely followed in China.

Besides this, some texts also present another lineage of Bhikshuni ordination that initially began in China during the fifth century. This lineage, which started with the ordination of Chinese women as Bhikshunis jointly conducted by a group of Sri Lankan Bhikshunis and the Indian master Sanghaverma, is said to be extant in China even today. However, like the previous system, this also remained a claim that is unsupported by any substantial or reliable evidence.

Texts explaining the origin of the Bhikshuni ordination followed in China are found widely and their credibility and authenticity can easily be assessed. However, Tibetan nuns intending to follow the Chinese Bhikshuni tradition must carefully examine two things: firstly, whether it is possible to find Vinaya sources supporting the tradition of Bhikshuni ordination conducted exclusively by a Bhikshu Sangha, and secondly whether the lineage of Chinese Bhikshunis initially ordained by a group of Sri Lankan Bhikshunis and Bhikshus that remains extant in China is pure and unbroken. Despite our earnest effort and continuous research, we have not been able to find substantial proof of these two issues, which now draws greatest concern from the followers of Vinaya. This has been the only reason for failure in establishing a formal procedure concerning the ordination of Tibetan women into Bhikshunihood according to the Chinese Bhikshuni tradition, and allegations that this failure is rooted in a sense of gender discrimination are baseless and unwarranted. Finally, with deep concern to find a solution

to this issue, we are hopeful that the books we have published on the Bhikshuni ordination will prove a reliable source for study and research on the Bhikshuni ordination.

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