

## **Reintroduction of Theravada Bhikkhuni Order**

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The original Buddhist sangha community consisted of bhikkhu and bhikkhuni sangha, that is the community of monks and nuns. Later due to various reasons, the bhikkhuni community became defunct. In Sri Lanka, there is no reference to the bhikkhuni community after the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., that is after the fall of the Anuradhapura period. While kings took steps to revive the bhikkhu order on many an occasion when it became defunct, they did not do so with regard to the bhikkhuni order. The usual excuse given for this omission is that by that time, none of the Theravada countries had bhikkhuni order and hence, there was no possibility of re-introducing it into Sri Lanka.

In the recent times, there has been much agitation by dasasila matas or silmatas, as they are called in Sri Lanka for the re-establishment of the bhikkhuni order. Such agitation is seen in other Theravada countries such as Thailand and Myanmar as well.

Most of the senior bhikkhus opposed the revival of bhikkhuni order citing the Vinaya in support of their stance. They hold that the Buddha laid down the Vinaya rule that a bhikkhuni should be first given higher ordination by bhikkhunis and thereafter this act has to be approved by the members of both orders. Their argument is that as there are no bhikkhunis at present, this cannot be effected.

However, against this, the group that supports the re-establishment of the bhikkhuni order argues that the original rule

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is that a bhikkhuni should be given higher ordination by bhikkhus and also insists that the promulgation of the second method of conferring higher ordination does not operate now. The first method of conferring higher ordination on a bhikkhuni by bhikkhus is still valid.

It is here that lies the crucial issue that should be minutely analyzed and clearly understood for such an analysis and understanding will help to see the problem pertaining to the re-establishment of the bhikkhuni order in its true perspective.

The thrust of this paper is to examine this crucial issue regarding the relative position of the two rules pertaining to the conferment of higher ordination on bhikkhunis.

**Keywords:** dasasimata, higher ordination, bhikkhuni order, senior bhikkhu, two rules regarding higher ordination