



The Contribution of Thai Bhikkhunīs to the Society

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Abstract

Since the determination of the Buddha to allow women's ordination as Bhikkhunīs to help spreading his teaching, their roles as well as their contribution have begun. Although their roles in the Thai society are not clear at present, it is inevitable to state that their contribution to the Thai society is huge. This paper, which is a qualitative research based largely on the results from in-depth interviews, is thus an attempt to analyze the Thai Bhikkhunīs' contributions to the society, with more than 200 Thai Bhikkhunīs are currently residing in 30 provinces and abroad. The findings resulting from the interviews show that Thai Bhikkhunīs have played great roles in offering Dhamma education, meditation training and even bringing about "social engaged Buddhism" to the awareness of the general public. Besides, the contribution to education as well as Dhamma practice and social work is the most important field where Bhikkhunīs should continue their work to gain acceptance as female monks from the general public in Thailand.

Keywords: Thai Bhikkhunīs, contribution, Thai society.

Introduction

Due to the belief deeply held among Thai Buddhists that the Bhikkhunīs lineage has disappeared at least 800 years ago, Thai people generally hold there cannot be Bhikkhunīs in Theravāda Buddhism. As a result, Thai women have been contented to play the role of supporters to the temples and enter into a peaceful life in the temples as nuns or Maechees, which literally mean ‘mothers (an honorific for ‘women’) who are ordained’ in Thai language. In Burma, they are known as Thila-shin, literally ‘possessors of the precepts’, while in Sri Lanka they are called Silmatavaru (lit. ‘mothers (honorific) observing the precepts’).

The Pali name for these nuns is ‘*upāsikā*’, the same as the word calling the lay women who come to the temple regularly or stay in the temple temporarily or for a long period, observing the 8 precepts and helping to look after the temple. This word means literally ‘a woman who sits down near to (a Teacher)’.

During King Rama IX’s reign, the country was at peace at least with neighboring countries. Therefore this was the period where social development took a great leap forward. Women as well as men received high education and became well aware of global development. During the past two decades, the attitudes about Maechee’s are beginning to change as a result of more attention paid to their education. This was the time we witnessed several women’s achievements in the area of helping underprivileged children and sexually abused young girls or drug addicts to change their behaviors, gain new positive attitudes towards life and learn some Dhamma as means of understanding and learning the righteous way through life. We see the shift in intention of several of the Maechee’s and high educated women for the request for Bhikkhunī ordination. This article, therefore, is an attempt to learn more about the contribution of Thai Bhikkhunīs in the Thai society.

The Origin and Development of Thai Bhikkhunīs

Since Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī, the Buddha’s Aunt and the first woman who entered the Bhikkhunī order by accepting the eight additional rules (garudhamma) with her five hundred women followers, has received the ordination, the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha came to existence. Along its developmental path since the beginning, the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha flourished as a part of the fourfold Buddhist Saṅgha. Up to the time of King Asoka (270-311 BE), Buddhism was thriving and spread outside India.

Thousands of men and women were ordained during this period.¹ During that time, around the 3rd century BC, Buddhism arrived to an area recorded as Suvarnabhumi (land of gold) (Dhammananda, 2009, p. 4), the region covering part of western Thailand and Eastern Burma. Phra Dhammapitaka (P.A. Payutto) identified in Jarik Boon-Jaruk Dhamma (ຈາກີກບຸກ-ຈຳກີກຮຣມ) that the area where Arahants Sona and Uttara spread Buddhism was the ancient Nakorn Pathom.

In view of the increasing interest the world is taking in Buddhism and in view of the fact that Thailand is one of the countries where Buddhism still exists as a living force, it will not perhaps be out of place to know something of the story of how this great faith reached that country.

In Lampoon province, there is a legend that during the reign of Queen Chamadevī (formerly a Mon princess), the first ruler of Lampoon province about 1,300 years ago, there were bhikkhunis in Haripunchai during her dynasty, of which 47 rulers ruled from 1206 BE – 1836 BE. There is an Uposatha hall called “Bhikkhunī Uposatha” still in existence at Wat Phra That Haripunchai. During Phra Kruba Srivichai’s time, it is believed that when he was under detention there, he went to the Bhikkhunī Uposatha for performing Buddhist routines because he was not allowed to join the Bhikkhu saṅgha for uposatha. But nobody knows what happened to these bhikkhunīs.

In Sukhothai period, the time considered the golden hub for the establishment of Buddhism, Thailand has been a Buddhist nation, the first kingdom of the country in 13th century AD where the Theravāda from Sri Lanka, or the Lankavamsa, was accepted. Up to Ayutthaya Period (AD 1350-1767) that lasted for 417 years, this was the period where Thai people suffered through constant warfare with the neighboring countries and internal unrest (Dhammananda 2009, p. 4). Buddhism was flourishing as the main religion giving the people mental strength, peace and hope. This was testified by Thailand sending a team of monks to reestablish Theravāda Buddhism called Siamvāmsa in Sri Lanka in AD 1751 after Sri Lanka emerged from under the control of the Hindu Cholas and wanted to reestablish Buddhism in the land. However with the absence of Bhikkhunī lineage following the Lankavāmsa Theravāda tradition of requiring dual-saṅgha ordination for Bhikkhunīs and the influence of Brahmanism deeply rooted in the Thai cultures placing women at the low echelon of society, there was no incentives for Bhikkhunī ordination during this time.

¹There was a record that there was ordination (pabbajā) of 1,500 women. But apart from that, we have no further information.

At the present Rattanakosin period, particularly in the reign of King Rama IX, Thailand gained economic and social stability. As a result, the level of education of the population rose for both men and women. Like the previous kings, King Rama IX continued with construction and reparation of several temples. The Buddha Monthon was built during his reign. Many institutions and writers contributed a great number of books on Buddhism both in Thai and English. Many temples nowadays offer free Buddhist classes. Thai temples branch out to set up many monasteries in foreign lands.

Thailand today is noted for the equality of the two sexes in business and politics at least relatively in comparison to other countries. In the past two decades it has been observed that women are showing more interest in Buddhism, particularly in meditation practice. However, the belief that bhikkhunī ordination is impossible led women to enter monastic life in the form of maechee's and upāsikās instead.

1. Sara and Chongdee: First Attempt of Bhikkhunīs Ordination

In 2471 BE (1928 AD) (Dhammananda 2009, p. 6-7) a man named Narin (or Klueng) Bhasit started requesting for equal rights for women to be ordained as Bhikkhunīs. He reasoned that having Bhikkhunīs would make the four-fold Saṅgha complete. He donated his house as “Watra Narinvongsa” for his daughters, Sara and Chongdee, who were ordained as Samanerīs when they were 18 and 13 years old respectively. However, after only 2 months they were arrested, defrocked and temporarily jailed. This was because it was against the Supreme Patriarch's Decree of June 18, 2471 BE, forbidding Bhikkhus from giving ordination to Bhikkhunīs, Sikkhamānās and Samanerīs. Their father had to send a petition to HM King Prachadhipok to get them released from jail. Thus, that put an end to the first movement toward Bhikkhunīs ordination.

2. Bhikkhunī Voramai Kabil Singh was a physical fitness teacher and a business women owning jewelry business. In 1955 she became interested in Buddhism because Luang Por Sod, a well-respected monk, miraculously cured her from her sickness requiring no medical operation. Later on, she went to study meditation under many masters in many temples famous for their vipassana methods. She started issuing “Vipassana Banterg Sarn”, a monthly magazine educating readers about insight meditation in 1955. This magazine continued for 32 years until 1987. Through miracles and faith in the power of the Buddha and his disciple monks, she decided to have her hair shaven and accept eight precepts from Phra Prom Muni (Pin Suvajo), Deputy Abbot of Wat Bavornnives Vihāra of Dhammayuti Nikāya. She was permitted to wear a pale yellow robe and called herself Nak Buad (monastic),

not Bhikkhunī. Therefore it was considered acceptable by the Buddhist Council of Monks. Voramai was ordained as Bhikkhunī in a temple called Ta Tao Fa Tzu in a Dhammaduguptaka lineage in Taiwan in 1971 and became the first Thai Bhikkhunī (Christopher, 2016) (Simba Shani, 2013). She converted her home into a temple for Bhikkhunīs and called it “Watra Songdhammadakalyani” meaning “temple where women uphold the Dhamma”.

3. Bhikkhunī Dhammanandā, the daughter of Bhikkhunī Voramai, is the first Thai woman to be ordained in the Theravāda monastery belonging to the Dambulla Chapter in Sri Lanka. At this time the bhikkhunī Sangha in Sri Lanka had been revived since the 1998 CE Bhikkhunī ordination in Bodhgaya, India, by the Theravāda bhikkhu Sangha. On February 7, 2001, she took her Samanerī ordination from Syamvamsa Bhikkhus at Tapodaramaya temple in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The whole event was presided over by Dhammadoloka Bhikkhu of Amarapura, a Theravāda monk. In 2003, she was ordained as a Bhikkhunī in Sri Lanka, the first Thai woman to be ordained in a Theravāda monastic lineage. Her ordination lineage is Syamopali from Dambulla Chapter.

Contribution to Education

Education according to the Longman Dictionary Contemporary English means “the process by which a person’s mind and character are developed through teaching, especially through formal instruction at a school or college.” Moreover, pertaining to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term ‘education’ refers to a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools or colleges, to improve knowledge and develop skills.

Thailand owes much gratitude to King Rama V who founded two Buddhist universities in Thailand, Mahamakuta Raja Vidyalaya² and Mahachulalongkorn Raja Vidyalaya,³ for the purpose of increasing the progress and stability of the Buddhist education. During his reign, a vast number of books on Buddhism was written by many scholars; the most significant ones by the Supreme Patriarch, Prince Vajirāñanavarorasa, who was Rama V’s half brother.

² Mahamakut Buddhist University (Educational Council of Mahamakuta-Raja-Vidyalaya) was established as Ecclesiastical Buddhist University on November 30, 1945 and officially opened on September 16, 1946.

³ Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University (Mahachulalongkorn-Raja-Vidyalaya) was established as Ecclesiastical Buddhist University on January 9, 1947 and officially opened on July 18, 1947.

Bhikkhunī Dhammanandā (Dhammananda, 2016) is the first modern Thai woman who has actively committed and sacrificed herself with great responsibility pursuing many applaudable activities to uplift women's education and capability forward strengthening Buddhism.

Foreseeing that education is the most important mean for women to gain respect, and be well trained to be specially engaged, she sets up many training classes at her monastery for Thai and English-speaking Buddhists and non-Buddhists to learn about the Buddhist way of life and the Buddha's teachings. Her Arama has a training program for international Bhikkhunīs.

Bhikkhunī Dhammanandā, born Chatsumarn Kabil Singh (ฉัตรสุมาลัย กบิลสิงห์), is a daughter of Voramai Kabil Singh and Kokiat Shatsena. Chatsumarn received Buddhist instruction and training along with the nuns in her mother's monastery and became a samanerī when she was 13 years old. She says that her father, Kokiat, was "the first Thai man I knew who strongly supported the revival of the Bhikkhunī Sangha in Thailand (Chatsumarn, 1991)." Unusual for Thai women at her age, Chatsumarn received very high formal education. After high school, she received her BA with honours in Philosophy from Visva Bharati University, India; her MA in Religion from McMaster University in Canada, and her Ph.D. in Buddhism from Magadh University in India (Dhammananda, 2010, pp. 91-2). During this time, she lived the life as a layperson having taught for two years at McMaster University in Canada and 27 years at Thammasart University in Bangkok, Thailand, in the Department of Philosophy and Religion.

In 2014, Dhammanandā Bhikkhunī was appointed as Pavattini by a Sri Lankan preceptor during a group ordination for women monks in Songkhla, Thailand. As a fully ordained Bhikkhunī and Pavattini now, she sets up many programs to help educate, train and develop women, both monastics and lay.

Contribution to Dhamma Practice

According to the Oxford Dictionary, Dhamma as a noun (in Indian religion) means the teaching of the Buddha, truth, or law that affects the whole universe, and according to Longman Dictionary "Practice (n) means something that people do often, especially a particular way of doing something or a social or religious custom". Thus, Dhamma practice means "to apply the teaching of the Buddha or the religious custom in our ways of lives."

Bhikkhunīs who teach Dhamma (Ajahn Chahn, 1981, p. 31) can be classified into two types: 1) those who teach history and development and general knowledge about Buddhism, especially Dhamma or the Buddha's teachings; and 2) those who teach meditation. Teaching Buddhism in the first category which includes teaching Dhamma, Abhidhamma, and Pali language. These different aspects of teaching Buddhism can be found at Buddhist Bhikkhunīs' institutes, temples, and government schools. Bhikkhunīs may also teach meditation and some have become quite successful at it; especially recently, as more and more people become interested in learning and practicing meditation.

In Thailand, there are two types of Dhamma activities — teaching Dhamma to children and to adults. Teaching Dhamma to children refers to Dhamma study programmes for children from nine to twelve years old. The subjects covered include ethics, character development, and meditation practice. Cooking classes are also included. Their cooking activities are much appreciated during temple or school fairs, especially on national holidays and important Buddhist days, such as Visakha Puja and Makha Puja days. Teaching Dhamma to adults covers teaching meditation to villagers, including how to practice mindfulness in daily life, how to engage in wholesome activities, and how to avoid unwholesome activities. This type of teaching is deeply satisfying for most people.

Bhikkhunī Sīlanandā (สุดรัตน์ จันทร์วีรี) (Sudarat Junthaveesri), an outstanding one in this area, was born in Bangkok on June 2, 1972 from Chinese settlers family. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Marketing Management at Ramkamhang University and a Master of Arts in Buddhist Study (MA) from the International Buddhist College (IBC), Sadao, Songkhla Province, Thailand.

Bhikkhunī Sīlanandā is the Bhikkhunī who stands out amongst others in her contribution to teach Dhamma practice to youngsters and their parents. Because of her interest in mind cultivation and studying about herself, she became a Maechee during 1998-2002 at Suan Mokkh Temple, Surat Thani, Thailand. During this time, she had the opportunity to join with the well-known social activist, Sulak Sivaraksa, in his group to do social development activities. Then she heard about the possibility of becoming a Bhikkhunī from the news of Dr. Chatsumarn Kabil Singh's ordination as a Samanerī in Sri Lanka. Afterwards, she went for training on the roles and contribution of Bhikkhunīs at Wat Songdhammakalyani for three months. Through these experiences, she gained many ideas to devote herself to Buddhism in her role as Bhikkhunī and dedicating herself to help others doing social works.

Bhikkhunī Sīlanandā received an Outstanding Women in Buddhism Award in 2008 at the Association for the Promotion of the Status of Women under the Royal Patronage of

HRH Princess Soamsawali (APSW-Thailand).

After she had gained total confidence, i.e. faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, she decided to be ordained as Samanerī at Pyna Temple (Samnuksong Savetsomboon), Pathumthani province, Thailand. Bhikkhu Khosin was her Uppachaya.

Four years later, she was ordained as Bhikkhunī on March 8, 2006 at Kutidao Temple, Ayudhaya province, Thailand. Bhikkhu Punnavimol was her Uppachaya and Bhikkhunī Louis Kul Sue was her Pavattini.

To strengthen her meditation practice, after becoming a Samanerī, she went to study and practice under the supervision of Luang Por Kumkien Suwanno, at Wat Pa Sukhato, located at Ban Mai Thajalern, Ta Mafai Wan Sub-district, Ampur Kangkro, Chaiyaphum Province for four years during 2002-2006. Luang Por Kumkien was the abbot and was very kind, full of compassion and helpful in guiding her through vipassana meditation. Luang Por used Dhamma in managing the monastery so that there was an atmosphere of unity and honouring one another. Bhikkhunīs and Samanerīs were treated with generosity and respect so that Samanerī Sīlanandā could devote her time to study the Dhamma Vinaya, especially the roles and responsibilities of monks to the society.

Dhamma Practice at Wat Pa Sukhato

After her ordination as Bhikkhunī, she realized that she would need further education in order to spread the Buddha's teachings and carry out social works to help develop the society. After attending the International Buddhist Women (Sakhayadhita) Conference in Malaysia, she became interested in receiving international education, which she thought was important and necessary. Hence, she decided to attend the International Buddhist College (IBC) located in Songkhla Province, Thailand, in July 2006.

Studying there, she had the opportunity to learn about all the different Nikāyas (Sects) of Buddhism, including Mahāyāna, Theravāda and Vajrayāna. She also learned about and was impressed by the Bodhisattva's precept. "It is a good condition which we should grow within our hearts. We will not quarrel with one another if we see the other persons like they are our own selves. They are also Buddha's children. So, welcome them, be supportive and work together in unity."

After finishing her MA from IBC, she was invited by Maechee Nudeaw to stay at Wat Pa Khamsorn Buddhadhammasatri, Sawangdandin, Sakhonakorn Province in 2010.

Bhikkhunī Sīlanandā explains that the meaning of practicing meditation is “knowing our mind, especially through listening to and practicing the Dhamma of the Buddha, such as the five Sīlas and Anatta (non-self). Strengthening your mindfulness through practicing the “know”, that is, knowing everything at the moment it happens will lead to letting go. Know that state of mind, do not push it away. Listening to the Dhamma is like planting a grain. Then the seedling of the state of awakening or enlightenment (Buddha) will grow.”

“Walking meditation practice to sharpen consciousness, or being mindful of your thinking, speaking or acting as it happens will peel off selfness in our thinking from moha. Knowing and letting go will gradually refine the mind. A delicate mind will know the degree of severity of moha. We must know our mind. No matter what impact we are receiving, we must let go and continue to do our duty.”

She sets as her personal goal to develop her own mind and Samādhi by increasing and strengthening Sati. By this means, she is able to counsel and solve other people’s problems. This requires a strong and clear state of mind. In addition, she studies the Tipiṭaka and behaves in accordance with the Dhamma Vinaya: for example, attending or chanting the Pāṭimokha every fortnight. This is how she practices by herself without waiting for guidance from anyone.

Activities and a Process to Enhance Morality of the Society

Internal Change: Teach moral values to youngsters whose attitudes have been incorrectly instilled since their very young age.

External Change: Practice insight meditation to stimulate their mindfulness (Sati) so that they know what is happening, thereby become conscious of their outward behaviors toward themselves and others. When they have Sati they will know what is happening. They will have less moha. Through different techniques she teaches many ways of making merits such as:

1. Designing activities that make children think of the monastery as an important part of their lives. When they have any problems, they will go to the monastery for help rather than relying on unwholesome means.

2. Teaching Dhamma of the Buddha by relating to the story of their daily lives, e.g. teaching the Paticcasamuppāda using a simple example of being bitten by a mosquito, etc.

3. Using games in teaching Dhamma. For example, the Sekkhiya Dhamma Group uses a game to understand oneself by sitting on the ground, each person drawing from the

same given picture but the results turning out differently. It shows that things are different because different people have different perceptions.

4. Teaching moral values and virtues especially commending on the life history of meritorious persons: such as praising the merits of fathers and mothers, relating the story of a diligent person, a dutiful son who looks after his parents with gratitude and showing pictures of physically or mentally handicapped children. This will activate the children's mind to do something good and feel compassionate towards other people.

5. Meditation practice, both walking and sitting: many children experience that walking meditation could help reducing or eliminating their unhappiness (dukkha).

Her Dhamma practice programs have been successful not only for children. Their parents became good supporters of the temples and many of them have accepted the five Sīlas as their rule of conduct. Bhikkhunī Sīlanandā would put the parents into the same class with their children so that they all learn Dhamma from her sermons.

Contributions to Social works

Bhikkhunī Rattanavalī (จำเนียร รัตนบุรี) (Jamnien Ratanaburi) has had a lot of experience in socially engaged Buddhism in wide ranging fields, including having been a Maechee helping setting up the Thai Maechee Institute in cooperation with Bhikkhunī Dr. Lee. She has been finding scholarships for Samanerīs and Bhikkhunīs to further their study or training in Thailand and abroad. At her Rayong monastery they offer classes teaching Dhamma and training youngsters to do good services to the communities. She also gives consultation to teenagers.

She was born in a typical rural family at Chamai Sub-district, Amphur Thungsong, Nakhon Sri Dhammarat Province. After she finished Nakhon Sri Dhammaraj Teachers College, she went to Bangkok in order to study for her BA (Social Psychology) at Ramkhamhaeng University. She graduated with an MA (Social Policy and Planning) at Krurk University.

After she completed her BA, she thought that psychology could not really explain the working of the human mind, but that the Buddha's teaching was the real science of the mind. She then studied and practiced Dhamma at Wat Phra Dhammakaya for six years. She was an Upasika upholding the eight precepts and working at the temple while at the same time learning the way of the Buddha. She realized that what the Buddha taught could be practiced until we could understand the inner workings of our minds. Finally, she decided to be ordained as a Maechee at Wat Paknam Pasicharoen for two years. During that time

she realized that her status as an unsponsored Maechee put her in the lower echelon of the temple. Out of the 160 Maechees only five had the chance to study. Obviously, she was not one of them. Eventually, she made up her mind to seek for a meditation center elsewhere like in Chonburi and Karnchanaburi provinces where she could concentrate on doing meditation and vipassana on her own in order to study the higher Dhamma as explained in the book written by Luang Por Wat Paknam.

Having done this for four years, she joined a committee called the “Thai Maechee Institute” at Wat Bovornivet. She was instrumental in navigating the pilot project to establish the Thai Maechee Institute from the beginning: surveying and selecting the area for setting up the Institute, receiving applications from students and managing the administration department.

Later she met Bhikkhunī Dr. Lee (Lingium) from the USA. It was then that she learned that women’s roles in Buddhism was not limited to just being a Maechee and that she could become a Bhikkhunī. After that she visited many Bhikkhunīs’ monasteries in Thailand and met with prominent Bhikkhunīs such as Bhikkhunī Gotamī (Dr. Prem Sukhsawasdi), a Thai-born American citizen who was ordained in India. She learned of how to become a Samanerī but she herself was not sure that she could be ordained as Bhikkhunī legitimately in Thailand. It was so much against the belief instilled in her since she was young that Bhikkhunīs were non-existent since the Buddha’s Nibbāna.

Later on, she met with three Sri Lankan Bhikkhunīs and one Lama Bhikkhunī from Tibet. It was then that she started to realize that Bhikkhunīs still existed in the world. The discussion about the arrangement of her ordination as a Samanerī in Sri Lanka began. Finally, with whole-hearted permission from her parents, she was ordained as a Samanerī in 2002 in Sri Lanka. When she returned in Thailand, she could not find a Theravāda monastery to stay in. So she went to stay at the Pra Mae Guan Yin Bodhisattva’s Hall, Chok Chai 4, Bangkok while working as an assistant researcher for The World Buddhism University located at the Benjakiri Public Park, Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok. During this time, she met with many difficulties traveling to work and received pressures from leading her life as a Samanerī, since the Thai society then had little knowledge about Bhikkhunīs. She withstood all the pressures carrying out her practice and spreading the Dhamma until her ordination as Bhikkhunī. She was ordained as a Bhikkhunī in an International Dual-Saṅgha ordination ceremony in 2006 at Wat Kudidao, Amphur Muang, Pra nakhon Sri Ayutthaya Province. The Upachaya was Pra Punnavimol. Her Pavattini was a Taiwanese Bhikkhunī named Louis Kul Sue.

Notion of Enhancing Moral Values of the Society

Bhikkhunī Rattanavalī has a strong opinion concerning the social structure in Thailand which is considered the land of Buddhism. More than 95% of the population are Buddhists. However, the negative value judgment on Buddhist ordained women in Thailand, she believes, results in the negative impact on the status of women in the Thai society. It leads to Thai women accepting their behind-the-scene roles of sacrificing self-interest for the family, as only the sons could earn the highest merits for their parents by ordaining as monks. Problems of sexual oppression, such as sexual harassment at the workplace and child molestation are the results of the low respect for women. Therefore, she feels that it is necessary to uplift and promote the status of women in Buddhism to help women to regain respect from the Thai Society and reducing the negative value judgment attached to women in general.

Conclusion

In performing good deeds without expecting for their own personal returns to serve mankind for the benefit and happiness of the community, the country and even the world, bhikkhunīs need to have strong determination, perseverance and resolution to dedicate themselves toward strengthening Buddhism while also helping to pull other people out of their own sufferings. There are over 200 Thai Bhikkhunīs now residing in 30 provinces and abroad. Their works and efforts both in Thailand and across the international networks have become apparently prominent.

The hurdles and hardships over which Bhikkhunīs had to cross and overcome served to become the incentives pushing these Bhikkhunīs to dedicate themselves and work hard toward spreading the Dhamma education and practices to the communities around them. Most of them get involved in socially engaged activities in order to their contribution to the Thai society would become evident and beneficial to all parties involved.

Even though the position of Bhikkhunīs in the Thai society is not clear at present, it is inevitable that Bhikkhunīs will play an increasingly important role in the Thai society. It is a matter of time that the legal validity of single ordination of Bhikkhunīs by Bhikkhus will become well-known and bring about true understanding about the Buddha's intention for the roles of Bhikkhunīs in the fourfold Saṅgha.

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