

On Bhikkhuni Ordination
Ven. Bhikkhu Anaalayo

It is a great pleasure and honour to be here on this auspicious occasion. As most of you would know, the present event is part of a rather significant development in Theravāda Buddhism which has not always met with unequivocal approval. I think we need to understand the resistance that parts of the tradition have in this respect, an attitude which they believe to be in defence of the true Dharma.

As I hope to have shown with the help of comparative study, however, the true Dharma is otherwise. Passages that show a negative attitude towards bhikkhunīs or women in general clearly do not seem to be early. Rather, they appear to be later interpolations. This holds, for example, for the doctrine of the supposed inabilities of women. Another example is the canonical account of the foundation of the order of nuns. The Pāli version read on its own gives the impression that the Buddha did not want to have an order of nuns. Comparative study of other canonical versions shows that this is not the case. In fact, numbers of passages can be brought up to show that the bhikkhunīs were considered an integral and necessary part of the Buddha's dispensation.

What we are all taking part in today is therefore fully in accord with the Buddha's intention, in as much as we are able to understand them from the canonical sources. The revival of the bhikkhunī tradition is, in my personal view, the most significant development for the Theravāda tradition of the 21st century. The last century saw the rise of lay meditation, which by now has become a mass movement that even affects health care in hospitals and education in secular society. Similar to the many beneficial effects that the full integration of laity in Dharma practice has shown, I believe the full integration of the bhikkhunīs will have numerous beneficial effects.

The modern world is in dire need of a reorientation, and the Dharma is able to offer the frame-work and the tools for this purpose. Yet, such reorientation has to be lived, it has to be taught by example. For that, we need Dharma practitioners from all four assemblies, monastic and lay, female and male. Today's event is another step in this direction, namely the revival of a full Buddhist community of four assemblies by reviving the bhikkhunī saṅgha. I wholeheartedly rejoice in the merits of all those who participate in this or support it, actively or passively. I sincerely believe this is in full accord with the Dharma and at the same time will be for the general welfare of the world at wide.