

**Statement of Support from His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama
Delivered at the First International Congress on Buddhist Women's
Role in the Saṅgha: Bhikṣuṇī Vinaya and Ordination Lineages.
Hamburg University, Hamburg, Germany, July 18 - 20, 2007**

The Buddha taught a path to enlightenment and liberation from suffering for all sentient beings and people of all walks of life, to women as well as men, without discrimination as to class, race, nationality or social background.

For those who wished to fully dedicate themselves to the practice of his teachings, he established a monastic order that included both a Bhikṣu Saṅgha, an order of monks, and a Bhikṣuṇī Saṅgha, an order of nuns.

For centuries, the Buddhist monastic order has thrived throughout Asia and has been essential to the development of Buddhism in all its diverse dimension - as a system of philosophy, meditation, ethics, religious ritual, education, culture, and social transformation.

While the Bhikṣu ordination lineage still exists in almost all Buddhist countries today, the Bhikṣuṇī ordination lineage exists only in some countries. For this reason, the four-fold Buddhist community (of Bhikṣus, Bhikṣuṇīs, Upāsakas, and Upāsikās) is incomplete in the Tibetan tradition. If we can introduce the Bhikṣuṇī ordination within Tibetan tradition, that would be excellent in order to have the four-fold Buddhist community complete.

- In today's world, women are playing major roles in all aspects of secular life, including government, science, medicine, law, arts, humanities, education, and business. Women are also keenly interested in participating fully in religious life, receiving religious education and training, acting as role-models, and contributing fully to the development of human society. In the same way, nuns and followers of Tibetan Buddhism around the world are keenly interested in full ordination for nuns within the Tibetan tradition.

- Given that women are fully capable of achieving the ultimate goal of the Buddha's teachings, in harmony with the spirit of the modern age, the means and opportunity to achieve this goal should be completely accessible to them.

- The most effective means and opportunity for achieving this goal is full ordination (Upasampada) as a Bhikṣuṇī and full participation in the life of a community of Bhikṣuṇīs, that is, a Bhikṣuṇī Saṅgha in their practice tradition.

- Full ordination for women will enable women to pursue wholeheartedly their own spiritual development through learning, contemplating, and meditating, and also enhance their capacities to benefit society through research, teaching, counseling, and other activities to help extend the life of the Buddhadharmā.

On the basis of the above considerations, and after extensive research and consultation with leading Vinaya scholars and Saṅgha members of the Tibetan tradition and Buddhist traditions internationally, and with the backing of the Tibetan Buddhist community, since 1960s, I express my full support for the establishment of the Bhikṣuṇī Saṅgha in the Tibetan tradition.

Within the Tibetan community, we have been striving to raise standards of nuns in terms of education, introduced Buddhist philosophical studies and also worked to introduce the bestowal of a Geshe degree (highest academic degree of monastic studies) for nuns as well. I am pleased that we have been successful in accomplishing these aims to a great extent.

I also believe that, since a Bhikṣuṇī Saṅgha has long been established in the East Asian Buddhist traditions (of China, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Korea) and is presently being revived in the Theravada tradition of South Asia (especially Sri Lanka), the introduction of the Bhikṣuṇī Saṅgha within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition should be considered seriously and favorably.

But in terms of the modality of introducing Bhikṣuṇī vows within the tradition, we have to remain within the boundaries set by the Vinaya - otherwise, we would have introduced the Bhikṣuṇī vow in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition long time ago.

There are already nuns within the Tibetan tradition who have received the full Bhikṣuṇī vow according to the Dharmagupta lineage and whom we recognize as fully ordained. One thing we could do is to translate the three primary monastic activities (Poṣadha, Varṣa, Prāvaraṇā) from the Dharmagupta lineage into Tibetan and encourage the Tibetan Bhikṣuṇīs to do these practices as a Bhikṣuṇī Saṅgha, immediately.

I hope that these combined efforts of all Buddhist traditions bear fruit.

-The Buddhist Bhikṣu Tenzin Gyatso