

TOPIC: THE ROLE OF THE WOMEN IN BUDDHIST SANGHA

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Addressed at
**1ST INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON
BUDDHIST WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE
SANGHA: BHIKSHUNI VINAYA AND
ORDINATION LINEAGES**

To be opened in Hamburg, University, Germany from 18-20/July, 2007

Dear all the Most Venerable,

Dear the congress,

It is a great honor for Vietnamese nuns to be invited for this congress today. We would like to deeply express our thanks to Organizations. We on behalf of all nuns of Vietnam in general & Dong Nai in particular pray for the Buddha may bless monks, nuns be offered peace and would like to send all polyhistor & deputations, especially the Board of Organization the best wish & hope the Congress shall be greatly successful.

Dear all the Most Venerable,

Dear the congress,

This Speech has been sent prior printing, in summary record of the congress. Due to limited time, we would like just to focus on some main ideas in the Speech as follows:

If we really desire to find out deeply the Buddhism dogmas, we should throw away all prepossessions and use merciful mind. Equalitarian, intelligence in studying so that we deeply understand the his deep teaching. The first thing we should know is what for the Buddha came out into the world? It means that Buddha was born to teach living being to become enlightened, emancipated. He used to declare: "*I became Buddha, you will be Buddha*" So all people on the earth, regardless Monk & Nun, man or woman, old or young people, the poor or the rich...who is strictly obey his teaching, shall become Buddha.

1. Democracy in attainment

Gautama Buddha is first historic head of a religion of human kind, equalizing guideline non-discrimination of sex, like in *Samyatta-nikāya* and *Majjhima-nikāya* Buddha has taught: "*and be it woman, be it man for whom such chariot doth wait, by that same car into Nibbana's presenceshall come they come*"¹.

There are many scriptures and stories from time of Buddha, telling about his female followers with Holy Nun following words: "*O Gotami, perform a*

¹ Samyutta-nikāya I, 5; Majjhima-nikāya I, 16.

*miracle in order to dispel the wrong views of those foolish men who are in doubt with regard to the spiritual attainments of women*² . It is not a meaningless words but proved of many Bhikkhunī when Buddha gathered with most fruitful previous thing such as Holy Monk. Those were proved in *Ekottarikāgama-sūtra as: Mahājāpati Gotamī, Khemā, Uppalavaṇṇā...*³ Through above scripture we can show Holy Nun who could attained enlightenment fullness like Holy Monk. Here we only prove the typical but there are more Holy Nun attained many special achievements.

2. Bhikkhunī's ordination lineages in Vietnam

To continue historical tradition that Buddha founded the Bhikkhunī religion association full of rule in India. Presently, there are many countries promoting dignity for Bhikkhunī like: China, Taiwan, Korea...our Vietnam. Particularly Vietnam still remains very age-old ordination lineages. In century XI, XII, there was the princess Ly Ngoc Kieu after leaving royal she was Dhamma named Dieu Nhan, she was promoted as Venerable by Than Tong King.⁴ In modern period 1956, elderly Nun Nhu Thanh established Mahayana Nunnery branch, and was elected as Senior Nun of Mahayana Nunnery branch of Vietnam. In 1975 Vietnam nation was unified North & South, in 1981, nine system of big Buddhism from South, Central and North held the unified congress called "VIETNAM BUDDHIST SANGHA". At time issued a charter. In such charter, chapter 8, Religion quality, Article 37, 38, 39 specified the Monk & Nun ranks as follows:

<u>MONK</u>	=	<u>NUN</u>
Hoa Thuong (Most venerable)	=	Ni Truong (Most venerable)
Thuong Toa (Venerable)	=	Ni Su (Venerable)
Dai Duc (Reverend)	=	Su Co (Reverend)

In summary, in researching through many kinds of religion, we know Buddhism is the most equalitarian religion. Particularly in Buddhism, our country from the North, Central to the South solely is existing one Buddhist Sangha called **VIETNAM BUDDHIST SANGHA** with one system, one charter and one *Sangha* regulation. Therefore all item stipulated in Charter and regulation in applied for nationwide monk & nun. Our Vietnamese Buddhism is proud of such success, especially the sex equality, which now is great developed in Vietnam.

Conclusion & proposal:

On the occasion of such congress, we would like to express some following proposals:

- According to us, what the Buddha taught always bring the joy & happiness to all people. If any Nun regulation of any country feels pressing with the Eight Chief Rules or the Bhikkhuni Vinaya legislation and improper regulations in your country, you should

² Dhirasekera, Sambhāsā, 1991, 299

³ See 佛光大藏經, 阿含藏, 增壹阿含經一, 佛光山宗務委員會印行, p. 89-90.

⁴ Vietnamese Committee of Social Scientific, Scientific Institute, LY-TRAN BLANK VERSE, volume 1, Ha Noi Social Science Publisher, 1977, p 339-340.

- research to correct appropriately. Specially it is not necessary to force Nun to respectfully keep company with unvirtuous people which made lose the solemn of Buddhist Sangha. To us, Buddhist commandment (Eight Chief Rules or the Bhikkhuni Vinaya) as the boat crossing the river, all passengers tranquilly crossed over & let others using as facility to cross the river.
- Regarding to Dignitary Inaugurating Tradition, we hope Tibet Buddhism tradition should bring about a new turning-point choosing standard Nun who sacrifice their life for *Dharma*, like Venerable Karma Lekshe Tsomo who was inaugurated as a leader to be in harmony with Buddhist Nun regulations of other countries like China, Korea, Taiwan...and our Vietnam in order to display the spirit of merciful mind, equalitarian and intelligence taught by the Buddha to contribute a small part in *Dharma*.
 - On this congress, we wish prestigious Superior Buddhist *Sangha* & polyhistorians and us to discuss together to bring out a general equalitarian regulation for both Buddhist *Sangha* as the Buddha existed. For the promoted & long existing Buddhism, *Bhikkhū*, *Bhikkhni*, *Upāsaka* and *Upāsikā* must unite together to build the brighter & more splendid Buddhism house all over the world.

WISHING THE CONGRESS A GREAT SUCCESS