

Perspectives on Bhikkhunī Ordination, lecture 10

The Bhikṣuṇī Ordination Rite in the Tibetan Translation of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya

by Bhikṣuṇī Jampa Tsedroen

Overview: Key points

- 1) Introductory Remarks on the Mūlsarvāstivādavinaya tradition in Tibetan Buddhism
- 2) How to become a *bhikṣuṇī* according to the MSV
- 3) The Relevance of *gurudharma* 1 for the Revival of *Bhikṣuṇī* ordination
- 4) Present day ordination of women in Tibetan Buddhism
- 5) Conclusion

1) Introductory Remarks on the Mūlsarvāstivādivinaya tradition in Tibetan Buddhism

- lecture 4: MSV long text (> 8000 pages, many narratives)

Guṇaprabha's *Vinayasūtra* and *Ekottarakarmaśataka*

- *Vinayasūtra* (D 4117): comprises 100 folios; learned by heart by every Tibetan Vinaya monk scholar.
- *Ekottarakarmaśataka* (D 4118). A collection of 101 legal acts (Tib. *las*, Skt. *karman*).¹

Other important Vinaya commentaries

Similar to Buddhaghoṣa *Samantapāsādikā* (5th cent.) in Theravāda

2 main Vinaya commentators in Tibetan Mūlsarvāstivāda tradition:

- Guṇaprabha (5th-6th cent.)
- Śākyaprabha (8th-9th cent.)

Another important commentator: Dharmamitra (12th cent.)

Many **indigenous Tibetan Vinaya commentaries** link the Indian *Vinaya* to Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* (5th cent.).

To find a solution for the revival of *bhikṣuṇī* ordination we need to go back to the roots, the *Mūlsarvāstivāda Vinaya* itself.

Origin of the Vinaya Piṭaka according to Tibetan History

Tripitaka laid down during the **first council** in Rājagṛha in the first rainy season retreat after [the Buddha's] Nirvāṇa (= A.N.). Vinaya Piṭaka recited by Upāli.

¹ For rough indices (Tib. *dkar chag*) to both see Tsedroen (Roloff) 1992, p. 68-75.

In connection to the third council (2nd century) a split into 18 *nikāyas* (Tib. *sde pa bco brgyad*).

Development of the early 18 schools and different *Vinayas*

Nine of the 18 *nikāyas* have left behind Vinaya texts.² Only three of them are complete:

1. Pāli Vinaya of the Theravāda
2. Dharmaguptaka Vinaya of East Asian Buddhism (Chinese translation from Sanskrit)
3. Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya of Tibetan Buddhism (Tibetan translation from Sanskrit)

Looking through the lens of Tibetan Buddhism, this means:

- continuity of Vinaya explanation (Tib. *'dul ba'i bshad rgyun*)
- continuity of Vinaya vows (Tib. *'dul ba'i sdom rgyun*)

In the Tibetan translations of the Indian *śāstras* we find various presentations of the 18 *nikāyas*.³

Vasumitra (2nd cent.) and Bhāvaviveka (c. 490-570): first "split" into Sthaviras and Mahāsaṃghikas.

Vinitadeva and Śākyaprabha: split into four major sects:

1. Sarvāstivādins
 - a. Mūlasarvāstivādins
 - b. Dharmaguptaka
 - c. etc.

² Cf. Yuyama 1979

³ Vogel 1985; Tsedroen (Roloff) 1992, 14-25.

2. Mahāsāṃghikas
3. Sthaviras
 - a. Jetavanīyas
 - b. Abhayagirikas
 - c. Mahāvihārins
4. Saṃmitiyas

None of the living Vinaya traditions can be traced back to the Mahāsāṃghikas, but all 3 are considered (Tib. *gNas brtan pa'i sde*).

Sthavira is not identical with Theravāda.

In Sri Lanka the 3 Sthavira schools (Mahāvihāravāsin, Abhayagiri-vāsin, Jetavanavāsin) were unified in the 12th cent. AD.

The introduction of the MSV in Tibet

- by the Bengali abbot of Nālandā University Śāntarakṣita (725-788), came to Tibet in in 763.
- For Tibetans "Vinaya" refers not only to scriptures, but also to monastic practice. They distinguish between
 - "transmission of the explanation" (*'dul ba'i bshad rgyun*)
 - "transmission of the *prātimokṣa* vows" (*so thar sdom rgyun*).
- Both were introduced by Śāntarakṣita. In 779 in bSam yas he granted *upasampadā* to the first seven Tibetan men (*sad mi bdun*). No evidence yet, that women were ordained too. It is assumed that *bhikṣuṇī* ordination was never introduced to Tibet.

Accounts of *bhikṣuṇīs* in Tibet

- between the 12th and 15th centuries.
- 17th Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, mentioned recently:

"the histories show clear examples of many nuns in Tibet who received the Bhikshuni or Gelongma ordination, while there are documented cases of such great lamas as Shakya Chogden [1428-1507], Bodong Chogle Namgyal [1376-1451] and the 8th Karmapa Mikyö Dorje [1507-1554] conferring full ordination to women."⁴

The Four parts of the Tibetan MSV (Tib. 'Dul ba lung sde bzhi)

1. *Vinayavibhaṅga* ('dul ba rnam 'byed)
2. *Vinayavastu* ('dul ba lung gzhi)
3. *Vinayakṣudrakavastu* ('dul ba 'phran tshegs)
4. *Vinayottaragrantha* ('dul ba gzhung dam pa)

The order in the Kangyur is different. The Vinaya section in the Kangyur comprises 13 volumes.⁵:

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1. <i>Vinayavastu</i> ('dul ba lung gzhi) | vol. 1-4 |
| 2. <i>Vinayavibhaṅga</i> ('dul ba rnam 'byed) | vol. 5-9 |
| 3. <i>Vinayakṣudrakavastu</i> ('dul ba 'phran tshegs) | vol. 10-11 |
| 4. <i>Vinayottaragrantha</i> ('dul ba gzhung dam pa) | vol. 12-13 |

Last volume of the *Vinayavibhaṅga* (vol. 9): *Bhikṣuṅīvinayavibhaṅga* (together with the *Bhikṣuṅīprātimokṣa*).

Bhikṣuprātimokṣa: beginning of the *Vinayavibhaṅga* (vol. 5).

⁴ <http://kagyuooffice.org/gyalwang-karmapas-teaching-during-the-1st-arya-kshema-nuns-gathering-why-bhikshuni-ordination-is-important/> (last accessed June 8, 2014).

⁵ *poti/puti* is a corrupted reading of Skt. *pusti(kā)*, *pustaka* - manuscript., book, volume, Tib. *pod*.

MSV has only 17, not 20 *vastus/skandhakas* -- large parts of the *Vinayavastu* preserved in Sanskrit.

No separate **Bhikṣuṇīvastu* (**dge slong ma'i gzhi*), merged with the *Kṣudrakavastu* (Minor matters). Only part preserved in Sanskrit from the *Kṣudrakavastu*: a fragment of the *Bhikṣuṇīkarmavācanā*, ms. c.25(R) of the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford.

2) How to become a bhikṣuṇī according to the MSV

Lecture today is based on the Tibetan translation of precisely this Sanskrit text, the **Bhikṣuṇīkarmavācanā* in the *Kṣudrakavastu*.

The **Bhikṣuṇīkarmavācanā* in the *Kṣudrakavastu*

**Bhikṣuṇīkarmavācanā* consists of two parts:

1. **Mahāprajāpatīgautamīvastu*, the Mahāprajāpatīgautamī story
2. **Bhikṣuṇyupasaṃpadājñāpti*, the manual for *bhikṣuṇī* ordination

Some contemporary Tibetan Vinaya scholars believe that no manual or ceremonial rite (Tib. *las kyi cho ga*, Skt. *karmavidhi*) for *bhikṣuṇī* ordination exists in the Kangyur (not in the *Pravrajāvastu*).

On the term *karmavācanā*

According to Tibetan tradition the Skt. term *karmavācanā*, equivalent to P. *kammavācā*, Tib. *las brjod pa* (Mvy 8663), Engl. "formula for legal acts" or "stating of legal acts" refers to three kinds of [formal] acts. The *Tshig mdzod mun sel sgron me* states in an entrance on the *Karmavastu* (*las kyi gzhi*):

dge slong gi bya ba'i rnams rgyas par dbye na brgya rtsa gcig yod cing, de thams cad bsdus na gsol ba 'ba' zhig gi las dang gsol ba dang gynis kyi las dang gsol ba dang bzhi'i las te gsum du 'du'o.

If one divides the acts of the *bhikṣusamṅha* at length, there are 101.⁶ If one summarizes all of them, there are three:

1. *muktikājñāptikarman*, an act consisting of a motion only (cf. Mvy 8659 Tib. *gsol ba gcig pu*, Skt. *muktikā-jñāpti*)
2. *jñāptidvītyakarman*, an act consisting of one motion and a resolution put one time (cf. Mvy 8661 Tib. *gsol ba dang gynis*, Skt. *jñāpti-dvītya*)
3. *jñāpticaturthakarman*, an act consisting of one motion and a resolution put three times, cf. Mvy 8662 (Tib. *gsol ba dang bzhi*, Skt. *jñāpti-caturtha*)

Bhikṣuṇīkarmavācanā does not only contain formulas for legal acts.

- starts with a narrative, the Mahāprajāpatīgautamī story -- reminiscent of a *nidāna* (Tib. *gleng gzhi*); describes how women's ordination came into being.
- followed by the manual for *bhikṣuṇī* ordination; instructions of the Buddha on how to ordain women step by step. The crux of ordination -- what matters most -- are the correctly performed legal acts, the *karmavācanās*.

Focus today on the second part: **Bhikṣuṇyupasamṅpadājñāpti*, the instruction for conferring *bhikṣuṇī* ordination. But first let me briefly refer to the first part:

⁶ Tsedroen (Roloff) 1992, 73.

The Mahāprajāpatīgautamī story

narrated in the *Kṣudrakavastu* is similar in some ways to the Discourse on Gotamī presented during the first lecture in accord with the *Madhyama-āgama* 116, preserved in Chinese translation.

Few passages are important in the context of *bhikṣuṇī* ordination:

When Ānanda asked the Buddha for the ordination of women, the Bhagavān replied: "Ānanda, don't ask that women go forth in the well-spoken Dharmavinaya, obtain full ordination and become *bhikṣuṇīs*! Why do I say that? Ānanda, if women go forth in the well-spoken Dharmavinaya, the Dharmavinaya will not last long."

Then follow the three similes: The Dharmavinaya would not last long, because likewise

1. "a home, in which there are many women and a few men, is easily attacked and overwhelmed by robbers and abductors";
2. "if a fierce hailstorm is falling on a field with excellent *śāli* rice, the *śāli* rice will be ruined, thoroughly ruined. Due to ill luck it will become destroyed";
3. "if the excellent sugar cane of a householder, who is a farmer, is affected by a plague of mildew, the sugar canes will be ruined. They will become spoiled."

This third simile does not occur in MĀ 116, but in the Tibetan and Sanskrit MSV versions.

No reference to the debt of the mother (like in the Chinese version).

Fourth simile, explaining why the Buddha lays down eight "principles to be respected" (*gurudharmas*):

"Ānanda, in order to prevent and to avoid transgression, I have established eight *gurudharmas* for women, which should be observed by women for their whole life.

"For example Ānanda, a householder, who is a farmer, will, when summer is over and autumn has begun, dam the water at the [mouth of the] channel. Because the water is dammed, it will not trespass. Ānanda, accordingly, I will establish eight *gurudharmas* in order to prevent women's obstruction and to avoid transgression. Let women keep them for life."

Then follow the eight *gurudharmas*. The first four are similar to MĀ 116, but they also differ. For the issue of *bhikṣuṇī* ordination most important is the first *gurudharma*:

"Ānanda, after women have received the going forth and the higher ordination from *bhikṣus*, they should well understand that they [attained] the status of a *bhikṣuṇī*."

The Tibetan differs here from the corresponding Sanskrit fragment:

"Ānanda, the going forth, higher ordination and the status of being a *bhikṣuṇī* should be expected by a woman from the *bhikṣus*."

Recap: Here the Buddha clearly instructed that a nun should seek higher ordination from the monks. Unlike the Pāli parallel (*gurudhamma* 6), there is no mention of *śikṣamāṇā* ordination nor of ordination from both the *bhikṣu* and *bhikṣuṇī* orders.

After promulgation of the remaining 7 *gurudharmas* Buddha spoke:

"Ānanda, if Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī has taken up and keeps these eight *gurudharmas* assiduously, in this case, this itself is her *pravrajyā*, that itself is her higher ordination (*upasampadā*), that itself is her *bhikṣuṇī*hood.

"Then the Venerable Ānanda was delighted and rejoiced in what the Buddha had said; rejoicing he bowed with his head at the feet of the Bhagavān and departed from his presence. He went towards Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī. Then he said to Mahāprajāpatī:

‘Gautamī, [the Bhagavān] gave indeed the permission that women go forth and obtain higher ordination, and *bhikṣuṇī*hood in the well-proclaimed Dharmavinaya. Nevertheless the Bhagavān has established eight *gurudharmas* in order to prevent and to avoid transgression by women. They should be observed by women for their whole life. They should be applied assiduously." [Gautamī replied:] "I will listen to what the Venerable Ānanda says, please speak."

Then the eight *gurudharmas* are reported by Ānanda to Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī. Again the first *gurudharma* is:

"Ānanda, receiving the going forth and the higher ordination from the *bhiksus*, women should well understand that they [attained] the status of a *bhikṣuṇī*."

Also the Sanskrit fragment reads:

"Ānanda, the going forth, higher ordination and the status of a *bhikṣuṇī* should be expected by a woman from the *bhiksus*."

Recap: Ānanda reports to Mahāprajāpatī that the Buddha instructed that a nun should seek higher ordination from the monks. There is no mention of becoming a *śikṣamāṇā* first or receiving higher ordination in front of both, the *bhikṣu* and *bhikṣuṇī* order. These were later developments and the *bhikṣuṇī* order had not been founded yet.

After having reported the eight *gurudharmas* the Tibetan repeats a sentence from above, which is not repeated in the Sanskrit version:

"Ānanda, if Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī has taken up and keeps these eight *gurudharmas* assiduously, in this case, this itself is her *pravrajyā*, that itself is her higher ordination (*upasampadā*), that itself is her *bhikṣuṇī*hood."

Mahāprajāpatī's joyfully accepts the *gurudharmas*:

"Venerable Ānanda, the Bhagavān, in order to prevent womankind's faults and to avoid transgression, has established these eight *gurudharmas*. Women should observe it for life. I accept them with my speech, with my mind and even with the crown of my head.

"It is like this Ānanda: Any girl (*kanyā*) from the *kṣatriya* caste, a brahmin girl, a girl from the *vaiśya* caste, or a girl from the *śūdra* caste, when she has thoroughly washed, fully anointed, cut her hair (*keśa*) and nails (*nakha*), put on white clothes, and if she is given an *utpala* flower garland by someone, a garland [made of the] flowers of the *campaka* tree, a *pāriśaka* garland, or a lemon tree flower (*atimukta*) garland, she would take it with both hands well pleased and delighted and put it on the highest limb of her body, the head. Venerable

Ānanda, likewise with regard to the Bhagavān, in order to prevent [women's obstruction] and to avoid transgression, having established these eight gurudharmas for women, which should be observed by women for their whole life. I accept them with my speech, with my mind and even with the crown of my head."

Then comes the final sentence of the Mahāprajāpatī Gotamī story:

"The Bhagavān, since Gautamī Mahāprajāpatī accepted the *gurudharmas*, gave her permission for *bhikṣuṇī*hood consisting of going forth and higher ordination."

Recap: Mahāprajāpatī received her ordination from the Buddha [through Ānanda] by accepting the eight *gurudharmas*. There is no mention what happened to Mahāprajāpatī's retinue of 500 Śākya women, nor of whether and how they became ordained.

From a legal perspective:

- ordination through accepting the 8 *gurudharmas*: an ancient rite, Tib. *sngon gyi cho ga*, Skt. *purākalpa* (cf. Mvy 9281); cannot be applied for present-day ordination.
- For present-day ordination: current rite, Tib. *da ltar byung ba'i cho ga*, Skt. *vartamānakalpa*, (in short *da chog*) has to be applied: laid down in the manual for *bhikṣuṇī* ordination (**Bhikṣuṇīkarmavācanā*, part 2).

It is important to note that the MSV contains no precedent story for ordination by *bhikṣus*, but an earlier formulation of the first

gurudharma instructing women to receive *pravrajyā* and *upasampadā* from the *bhikṣus*

The Bhikṣuṇī ordination manual (Bhikṣuṇyupasampadājñāpti*)**

Without any clear caesura, the ordination manual starts. The text continues almost imperceptibly, just the actors change. Mahāprajāpatī and Ānanda are not mentioned again. But Upāli enters the stage quoting the sentence from above, omitting the salutation "Ānanda":

"Then Venerable Upāli [asked] the Awakened, the Bhagavān: "Venerable, [you,] the Bhagavān, said, 'if Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī has taken up and keeps these eight *gurudharmas* assiduously, in this case, this itself is her *pravrajyā*, that itself is her higher ordination (*upasampadā*), that itself is her *bhikṣuṇī*hood.' Yet, Venerable, how do the other women become ordained, fully ordained, obtain *bhikṣuṇī*hood?"

The Bhagavān said: 'Upāli, the other women should be gradually ordained and fully ordained.'

When the Bhagavān said: 'The other women should be gradually ordained and fully ordained,' the *bhikṣus* did not know how to proceed gradually. When the *bhikṣus* asked the Bhagavān this kind of question, the Bhagavān answered:

Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī and the 500 Śākya women have received *pravrajyā* and then were fully ordained and attained *bhikṣuṇī*hood by accepting the *gurudharmas*. Other women should proceed gradually."

Recap: Again, there is no mentioning that in the interim, *bhikṣus* alone have ordained women. Rather the MSV stipulates that the

500 Śākya women, just like Mahāprajāpatī, had become *bhikṣuṇīs* by accepting the eight *gurudharmas*.

The MSV version of the Mahāprajāpatī story does not tell the story or the foundation of a *bhikṣuṇī* order. But to carry out women's ordination step by step, it is required. Only after having clarified how it came into existence, the actual ordination manual starts.

Recap: Only from the introduction to the ordination manual we learn that the 500 Śākya women who accompanied Mahāprajāpatī had become *bhikṣuṇīs*, namely by accepting the 8 *gurudharmas*.

The actual ordination manual

- all individual steps of women's ordination are presented in a single manual;

Introductory steps:

- no mention of setting up a monastic boundary. The only time a boundary is explicitly mentioned is at the time of *upasamṃpadā* (no formulas for the determination of *sīmās* included, need to be amended where required);
- a female applicant has to approach any *bhikṣuṇī*;
- interrogation on obstructive conditions and admission.

Triple Refuge and Acceptance of an Applicant as Upāsikā

This comprises in brief:

- an explanation of the 3 refuges and the 5 rules of an *upāsikā*
- 3 bows to the Buddha, 3 bows to any *bhikṣuṇī*

- recitation of a formula for triple refuge and a request for acceptance as *upāsikā* (3 times)
- recitation of a formula for the bestowal of the five precepts of an *upāsikā* (3 times)

Recap: No legal act by a *saṃgha* is required.

Śrāmaṇerikā ordination

- appointment of an announcer *bhikṣuṇī* (*ārocikā*) from among the *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha*, who has to ensure that the other *bhikṣuṇī* has interrogated the applicant on obstructive conditions
- the summons of the *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* and an announcement that the *upāsikā* is seeking *pravrajyā* under the *upādhyāyikā* so and so, she wants to receive *upasampadā* and is pure with regard to obstructive conditions
- the request to an *ācāryikā* to become her *upādhyāyikā*
- the tonsure by a haircutting *bhikṣuṇī* and
- taking a bath in the presence of the haircutting *bhikṣuṇī* incl. a discreet testing of her being with unambiguous genitals while providing her with robes and an alms bowl
- ***pravrajyā*** ordination in front of the *upādhyāyika*, which entails
 - 3 bows to the Buddha and 3 bows to the *upādhyāyikā*,
 - triple refuge and abandonment of the signs of an householder and acceptance of the signs of one gone forth (*pravrajitā*)

- appointment of a *śrāmaṇerikā* preceptor (the *upādhyāyikā* asks another *bhikṣuṇī* to give the *śrāmaṇerika* precepts)
- the request to be accepted as a *śrāmaṇerikā*,
- the assessment of the time of the day and the season of the year (by any *bhikṣuṇī*)
- the bestowal of the ten precepts (Tib. *bslab pa'i gzhi*, Skt. *śikṣāpada*) of a *śrāmaṇerikā* by the *ācāryikā*

Recap: It is important to note that so far, although the *saṃgha* was summoned and several *bhikṣuṇīs* were actively involved, no legal act by a whole *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* is mentioned.

Śikṣamāṇā ordination

2-years training in six [main] precepts and six subordinate precepts

- to one, who is staying at home [and] has reached the age of ten years (Tib. *khyim du gnas pa lo bcu lon pa*), or
- to a young woman (Tib. *gzhon nu ma*, Skt. *kumārī*), who has reached the age of eighteen years.

The ritual contains:

- the summoning of a *saṃgha* of at least 12 *bhikṣuṇīs*
- bowing to the assembly (Tib. *'khor*, Skt. *pāriṣada*)⁷
- request for and bowing to an *upādhyāyikā*
- request from the noble female *saṃgha* to receive training for 2 years under the *upādhyāyikā* so and so in six [main] precepts and six subordinate precepts

⁷ Determination on boundary (Tib. *dkyil 'khor*, cf. Tib. *mtshams yas*, Skt. *sīmā*, Mvy. 7710) seems to be required.

- a formal application/motion by a *bhikṣuṇī* to the *bhikṣuṇī-saṃgha* to carry out a legal act of bestowing *śikṣamāṇā* training under the *upādhyāyikā* so and so
- one declaration/resolution by the *karmakārikā* of the actual act (*karmavācanā*)
- the announcement of the decision

Recap: *śikṣamāṇā* ordination requires a legal act by a *saṃgha* of at least 12 *bhikṣuṇīs* consisting of a motion and a resolution put one time (*jñāptidvītyakarman*).

- teaching of the *śikṣamāṇā* precepts, the six [main] precepts and the six subordinate precepts

Upasaṃpadā (Higher ordination)

The provision for higher ordination starts with a request by the *śikṣamāṇā* for the '*brahmacaryopasthānasamvṛti*' (Tib. *tshangs par spyod pa la rim gror bya ba'i sdom pa*) from the *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha*.

Brahmacaryopasthānasamvṛti (*Permission for the Celibate Life*)

This entails:

- outfitting the candidate with five robes and the alms-bowl and appointment of the *raho'nuśāsikā* (Tib. *gsang ba ston pa*) and the *karmakārikā* (Tib. *las byed pa'i dge slong ma*) by the *upādhyāyikā* (Tib. *mkhan mo*)
- gathering of a *saṃgha* of at least 12 *bhikṣuṇīs*
- 3 bows to the gathered assembly

- request by the *śikṣamāṇā* for the *upādhyāyikā* or an *ācāryikā* to become the *upādhyāyikā* (3 times)
- "blessing" (taking into possession) of the 5 robes
- verification of the alms-bowl
- "blessing" (taking into possession) of the alms-bowl
- confirmation of the Instructor in Private (*raho'nuśāsikā*) and trust in her by the *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha*
- the *upādhyāyikā* entrusts the *śikṣamāṇā* to the female instructor through sole application (*muktikājñapti*)
- exhortation of the *śikṣamāṇā* by the *raho'nuśāsikā*
 - to be honest
- interrogation by the *raho'nuśāsikā* concerning the *āntarāyika dharmas* (40 questions)
- interrogation concerning previous ordination, *śikṣamāṇā* training, debts, name of oneself and the *upādhyāyikā* (4 questions)
- seven more questions (only in Tib., not in Skt. parallel)
- interrogation concerning diseases (43 questions)
- instruction by the *raho'nuśāsikā* to come for interrogation in the midst of the *saṃgha*
- request by the *raho'nuśāsikā* to the *saṃgha* to let the *śikṣamāṇā* enter and approval by the *saṃgha*
- request by the *śikṣamāṇā/upasampatprekṣiṇī* to the *saṃgha* for *brahmacaryopasthānasamvṛti* (3 times)

- formal application by the *karmakārikā* for interrogation concerning the *āntarāyika dharmas* in the midst of the *saṃgha*
- interrogation in the midst of the *saṃghas* concerning the *āntarāyika dharmas*
- repetition of the interrogation as above, but this time in the *saṃgha*
- formal request to the *saṃgha* by the *karmakārikā* to grant *brahmacaryopasthānasamvṛti*
- one declaration of the actual act (*karmavācanā*) by the *karmakārikā* -- an act consisting of one motion and a resolution put one time (*jñāpti-dvitīya-karma*)
- announcement of the decision

Karma in the Presence of the Twofold Saṃgha (ubhayasaṃgha)

The formal act in the presence of the twofold *saṃgha* starts with a request for *upasamṃpadā* and is introduced as follows:

After the whole bhikṣu saṃgha consisting of at least ten bhikṣus has gathered and is seated in a small boundary ('khor, maṇḍalaka) and the entire bhikṣuṇī saṃgha consisting of at least twelve bhikṣuṇīs has gathered and is seated in a small boundary, [the ordainee] should go in front of the karmakāraka-bhikṣu, [kneel] on a bunch of grass (rtsa chun po, viṇḍaka) or on a cushion (khong tshangs can, masūrikā), put her palms together and request upasamṃpadā from both saṃghas.

She says: Venerable members of both saṃghas, please listen! I, named so-and-so, for a [special] purpose say the name of upādhyāyikā so-and-so, under whom I am seeking full ordination. I named so-and-so request full ordination from both saṃghas.”

Then follows:

- a formal application (*jñapti*) by the *karmakāraka bhikṣu* for interrogation concerning the *āntarāyika dharmas* in the midst of both *saṃghas* followed by an exhortation and all the interrogations as before, but this time in the midst of both *saṃghas*
- formal application by the *karmakāraka* for *upasamṃpadā* by both *saṃghas*
- declaration by the *karmakāraka* of the actual act (*karmavācanā*) (3 times)
- announcement of the decision

This time boundaries are mentioned and an act consisting of one motion and a resolution put three times (*jñāpticaturthakarman*) is performed by a twofold *saṃgha*.

- finally, after ascertaining the time when the higher ordination has been received, the principles or guidelines to be observed are announced by the *karmakāraka-bhikṣu* (*las byed pa'i dge slong pha*). These principles are:

1. the three supports of life (Tib. *gnas gsum*, Skt. *trayo niśrayāḥ*),

2. the eight defeats (Tib. *phas pham pa brgyad*, Skt. **aṣṭau pārājikā dharmāḥ*, cf. Mvy. 8358),

3. the eight principles to be respected (Tib. *bla ma 'i chos brgyad*, Skt. *aṣṭau gurudharmāḥ*) and

4. the four dharmas for a recluse (Tib. *dge sbyong gi chos bzhi*, Skt. *catvāraḥ śramaṇīkāraka dharmāḥ*).

3) The Relevance of *gurudharma* 1 for the Revival of *Bhikṣuṇī* ordination

After the ordination of Mahāprajāpatī and the 500 Śākya women by accepting the 8 *gurudharmas*, these became part of the current rite (*da chog*). They became guidelines to be observed.

The instruction that *bhikṣuṇīs* should receive ordination from *bhikṣus* is, depending on the circumstances, still valid. In legal terms in the living tradition the first *gurudharma* would have to be considered either as a permission (*gnang ba*) or as a prescription (*sgrub pa*). This permission has never been withdrawn, but for centuries was repeated after each and every *bhikṣuṇī* ordination carried out.

An ordination received

- by accepting the 8 *gurudharmas*: ancient rite (*sngon chog*)
- in front of both communities: current rite (*da chog*).

Advice to receive the going forth and the higher ordination from *bhikṣus* remained part of the the current rite (still valid). A prohibition (*dgag pa*) that an ordination cannot be performed by *bhikṣus* alone is not recorded in the MSV.

4) Present day ordination of women in Tibetan Buddhism

For centuries *bhikṣus*, including H.H. the Dalai Lama himself, give the *upāsikā* precepts, the going forth, and the *śrāmaṇerikā* precepts to women by employing the male manual for ordination (*pha chog*). This means: for women's ordination the same manual is used as for men.

For the specific intermediate steps, however, the manual for females (*ma chog*) has to be applied. The manual for males does not provide formulas for *śikṣamāṇā* and *brahmacāryopasthānasamvṛti*.

These intermediate steps are required in order to arrive at what tradition reckons to be “flawless and perfect *bhikṣuṇī* vows” (*dge slong ma 'i sdom pa nyes med phun sum tshogs pa*).

Requires *śikṣamāṇā* precepts, and the *brahmacāryopasthānasamvṛti*, both supposed to be conferred by a *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha* alone.

Recap: Vinaya scholars who hold this view will also assume that *śrāmaṇerikā* vows given by *bhikṣus* alone are not “flawless and perfect *śrāmaṇerikā* vows”, but that they are "vows involving a minor infraction" (Tib. *nyes byas kyi sdom pa*). In this case we have to ask, whether *upāsikā* and *pravrajyā* given by *bhikṣus* need similarly to be considered a minor infraction (Tib. *nyes byas*, Skt. *duṣkṛta*), or whether exceptions are possible, and if so, under which circumstances and based on which instructions.

What is at stake is the question whether, in the absence of a *bhikṣuṇī saṃgha*, *śikṣamāṇā* ordination and *brahmacāryopasthānasamvṛti* can be given to *śrāmaṇerikās* by a *bhikṣu saṃgha*.

Samdhong Rinpoche during the Hamburg congress in 2007:

“*bhikṣus* may if necessary leave their summer retreat [i.e., the rainy season retreat] to confer *śikṣamāṇā* ordination, which is normally given by *bhikṣuṇīs* alone. This allowance implies that *bhikṣuṇīs* are not available to give such ordination themselves. Inferring from this . . . where no *bhikṣuṇīs* are available, the *brahmacarya* and *bhikṣuṇī* ordination ceremonies may also be performed by the *bhikṣu saṅgha* alone.”

Varṣavastu, the section on rainy season retreat, indicates that a *bhikṣu* can leave for up to 7 days in the following cases:

- 1) a *śrāmaṇerikā* asks him to come in order to confer on her the training of a *śikṣamāṇā*;
- 2) a *śikṣamāṇā* who has completed the two years training period asks him to come in order to confer on her the higher ordination.

This permission can be understood in two ways:

- a) he might go to participate in a higher ordination performed together with a *bhikṣuṇī* community, or
- b) he might go to participate in a higher ordination performed by a *bhikṣu* community alone.

That the higher ordination can be given by *bhikṣus* alone is only clear from the first *gurudharma*.

Permission that a *bhikṣu* community can give the vow (*sdom pa*) of full ordination and the vow of a *śikṣamāṇā*, and also the *brahmacāryopasthānasamvṛti*:

Guṇaprabha's *Vinayasūtra*:

“It is also [similar] for the *śikṣamāṇās* regarding the *brahmacaryopasthānasamvṛti* and the higher ordination.”

Ācārya Dharmamitra's *Extended Commentary on the Vinayasūtra*:

“The meaning of ‘It is also [similar] for the *śikṣamāṇās* regarding the *brahmacarya upasthāna* vow and full ordination’ is: If a *śikṣamāṇā* wishes to receive the *brahmacarya upasthāna* vow and also full ordination and the *śikṣamāṇā* is outside the boundary (*sīmā*) [of the *bhikṣus*], then to accomplish these two purposes for the benefit of the Dharma — to bestow the *brahmacarya upasthāna* vow and to give full ordination — *bhikṣus*, even if they have accepted the rainy season and are inside the boundary, may leave the boundary for up to seven days after having done the requisite blessing, stating that they will return within this time.”

While these indications are not from the Vinaya itself, but from the commentaries, they do have a comparable importance for members of the tradition, who consider the Vinaya commentaries as authoritative.

5) Conclusion:

- clear canonical evidence that, based on the first *gurudharma*, *bhikṣus* can give all stages of a woman's ordination, if circumstances so require.
- if performed by Tibetan Mūlsarvāstivāda *bhikṣus*, the *bhikṣuṇīs* would automatically become part of the Mūlsarvāstivāda lineage.

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