

Bhikkhunis

by Ajahn Brahmavamso

Ups! One, two, three, not yet! Ok, please sit down. (Announcement: a very good evening to all etc).

Thank you all for coming this evening. And, first of all, I have to say that the title of this talk... I never chose the title, so if anyone accuses me of being controversial, it's not my fault. I'm very happy to talk about anything. And I'm very happy to talk about this.

I arranged for a bhikkhuni ordination, I supported it in Australia and there was a lot of problems for me afterwards. But in the end, sometimes as they say in Australia: "If you're going to make omelette, you have to crack a few eggs". In other words, that whenever you move forward, there's always going to be some problems. And that's always going to happen in the way that people advance in our world. We won't get everybody supporting it. And the answer to the question: has the bhikkhuni ordination's got wholehearted support of monks and Sangha - of course it hasn't, it never will. You'll never get one hundred [percent] support for anything in this life.

Even two people living in a family, husband and wife, what you do doesn't have hundred percent wholehearted support. Of course it doesn't do - we all have arguments and reservations. It reminds me of one of the man who used to do a lot of building work in our monastery in Australia. And he told me that after he has divorced from his wife, he was so heart-broken, and so stressed that he had a heart attack. And fortunately, he was a strong man, but he was only living on 40% of his heart, the other 60% was dead. But forty percent of his heart was good enough for him to even lay bricks at our monastery. So even 40% of your heart is good enough to survive. So you don't need to be wholehearted, even in life. Let alone to move things forward with bhikkhunis.

But one of the important things which I think people should know is actually to have more information about, you know, what are bhikkhunis, and why are there bhikkhunis, and how can there be bhikkhunis. To have more information about how the Lord Buddha set up Buddhism. And you all know that I'm a very, very devout Buddhist and I do keep my rules and I do study. I'm learning Pali. But very few people actually take the time to really appreciate, not just the Buddhist wisdom in teaching the Dhamma, or teaching meditation, but also the Buddhist wisdom in the way He set up the governance of the monastic order. It's absolutely brilliant. And many of you will know that just before the Buddha passed away someone asked him: "Who is going to take over once you pass away?" And with a response of one line, which really helped Buddhism continue to this day, he said: No one, no person will take over as leader of Buddhism, but the Dhamma and the Vinaya, or rather the Suttas and the Vinaya, that will be your teacher from now on. And so by not giving a person full authority, but the teachings and the rules which were laid down that that was the authority. There we have a person who realized the

dangers of hierarchies and this actually kept Buddhism strong. And this also kept Buddhism as the oldest, continuous, democratic institution in our world.

The Buddhist Sangha has continued for almost 2600 years now and its constitution is not hierarchical, but democratic. So the way that the Sangha is organized is in autonomous unions, monasteries, communities, where the boundary of their governance is the monks who live in that area. Usually, we live in monastery, we've got something like a "sima", like a parish boundary. And all the monks who live in that boundary decide on what should be done. Because of that, there is the opportunity for innovation. You don't need wholehearted hundred percent support of all the monks in the world. All you need is a one hundred percent support of the monks in that local community. And that means there is the opportunity for innovation, within the constraints of the rules, but we can try new things.

I compare those monasteries just like trees in a forest, it's a natural order. If a seedling is growing in a forest and it's in a good position where there is water, good soil and, of course, it's gonna be a very big tree in the future. If this seedling is in a sort of rocky area or it's not much water, it's not gonna do well. And the same way every community of monks, if it is in a good position, it really is practicing the Dhamma, as the Buddha said, is keeping the precepts and it is doing things which increase the faith of the local supporters, establish faith in people without faith, it's going to survive and it's going to grow. Look at Brickfields Vihara here. How many other little temples are there in Malaysia? Even in Kuala Lumpur? Why is this temple being so successful? And it's because of the previous chief and continue with the present chief, that's why this place is being very successful. Especially with the former chief, Ven. K. Sri Dhammananda. He managed to innovate, innovate within the rules, but to do things which were going to be relevant, encouraging, inspiring to the local community. So every monastery, every community, every temple will innovate and that's what it's meant to do.

So the Buddhism, because of local area of government is individual monastery, therefore it can innovate. So number one, there isn't wholehearted support, there never will be wholehearted support, all you need is the support of that one particular monastery. And then you will try things out. And that's the one of... maybe it's because I'm a westerner, maybe it's because that is what I was encouraged in my education, to take risks, to try new things, to see if it will work. And sometimes in life when you take a risk you fall flat on your face, it does not work. But what I heard in one of those conferences which I went to in Australia some years ago... Cause when I go to conferences, I speak, but I also listen, I don't just listen to Buddhism, I listen to all different aspects of our world from psychology to medicine. And in this particular case the business practices. And if you take a risk, if you try something new, and it doesn't work out, we call that "forward-failing". Now, when you have the word "forward-failing", it means "yes, you failed, but you've moved forward now in life, in society." Yes, you've learnt from mistakes, but you pushed things forward. And if we don't take those risks, if we're not prepared to fail, how can we ever go forward in life?

I remember being a school teacher, I was a school teacher for one year before I became a monk. I think that's one of the reasons why I became a monk, if you teach teenagers

after one year anyone would think of leaving the world. But, when I was a school teacher, I had to set examinations, I had to set tests. And to set the tests as a school teacher, if everybody got ten out of ten, or nine out of ten, that was a bad test. If everybody got one, two, or the higher score was three out of ten, that would be a bad test. The reason is if anyone got ten out of ten, what are you tested them for? They all knew what to do, it was too easy. If it was too hard, then people get disparity. So my aim was to get average about seven out of ten, maybe some people get nine, maybe ten, but the lowest maybe five out of ten. Because as a school teacher, I wanted to encourage and motivate. I never wanted to give the impression that any student in my class couldn't do maths or couldn't do science (fizyka). If they got under five, it means they are hopeless, they couldn't do it and that would mean they would stop trying. But I wanted to find out by giving them the test, what part of my lessons they haven't understood. So whenever you've got seven out of ten, I can pick up the results, get the feedback, this is a part of mathematics I needed to focus on in the next lesson. It was me getting feedback.

That's what failing is like, it gives you feedback of where you need to put more effort, to learn more, to go deeper, to move things forward in life. That's why it is called "forward-failing". So we learn, we grow, we do things better. And I think that's so important in any aspect of life. Even in Buddhism to sometimes take those risks and to see what happens. And, of course, to take risks, you can't get everybody "on board". Usually what happens is - few people say "yes, we want to see if this works, we want to see if it happens, can we have bhikkhunis in our modern world, let's give it a try." You know, a lot of people are watching that. Now, they are on the sidelines and if it does really work, which it seems like it is working, then everybody comes on board, they call it jumping up on the bandwagon. They all say "well, yes, I supported it from the beginning" but really what they were doing is just waiting and seeing.

Now, that's one of the first things... Hello, Venerable, thank you for... chief here... I've already started, so if you'd like to give the introduction after the talk... ok.

We took a risk, notice, they do our retreat center, that was only just finished recently, those of you who have been there know Jhana Grove retreat center and the other day I made a slip of the tongue, because I was tired, I called it Jhana Groove Retreat Center. I prefer that, "Jhana Groove" Retreat Center instead of Jhana Grove because "groove" reminds me of the sixties, it's groovie to meditate, you get in the meditation groove and it feels really good. So sometimes you make mistakes and actually it makes it better in life.

So we take that risk, even as a monk, because sometimes religions can be so conservative, always looking backwards, never looking forward, never even taking risks, trying to do new things, to trying to promote the Dhamma in different ways. Again within the Vinaya, within my rules, but trying new ways to spread that Dhamma. For example, just on Sunday the reason I was in Singapore was for the Buddhist film festival, the "Asian Buddhist film festival". And I gave a talk at the end of the film festival and just suggesting how we can take risks, as even Buddhist, to actually move Buddhism forward. Because, look, where are your kids, what are they doing tonight? They're probably on the Internet, they are watching TV, maybe watching movies. Why can't we actually get this beautiful teachings of Buddhism into movies, into the main stream where people can

really appreciate the teachings of the Buddha?

So, actually, I was suggesting to them an idea that I've had a long time ago, when I was first in Thailand, I saw this cartoon strip in one of the Thai papers. And cartoon strip was called, translated into English from the Thai, it was called "Supermonk". Now, Supermonk had psychic powers, so he could fly through the air. If like a train was about to fall off a cliff, he could use his powers to stop it. But unlike the other superheroes like Batman, and Superman, and Ironman and the other superheroes you see in the movies, unlike those people that the villain, the bad guy would never be sent to jail. He would teach them the Dhamma, give them the five precepts and the bad guys would become monks. What a wonderful ending that was. So at the film festival I said to people, you know, we have all these superheroes, why can't we get someone in Hollywood, you know, to actually to do Supermonk, cause Buddhism is very cool over in the United States. What do you say "bahasis khren" is that right? "Kren?" What's like "cool, popular"? There must be another language. I go to too many countries, I forget which country I'm in.

But anyway, Buddhism is very popular in the United States, so you got the popularity of Buddhism, you get free psychic powers, you get the moral message, you get like a cartoon, or whatever, and then you got a winning formula. So the Hollywood is always looking for something new. So, Supermonk. And as it happened, one person in the audience put up their hand and said: "My ex husband worked for Steven Spielberg in DreamWorks and I'm gonna tell him that idea." So "coming to a movie theatre near you soon: SUPERMONK - from Steven Spielberg!" Of course, that's only the start of it. If you have a movie, you always have early the next episode, so after Supermonk of course we'll have to have Supernun, which will mean the bhikkunis as well. And then usually it's a trilogy, so the third episode will be Supernovice.

So it's called innovation. And if we don't do innovation, we are going to be stopping, hindering this beautiful message of compassion and peace and forgiveness and non-violence. We are doing a bad thing by not spreading it as far and wide as we possibly can. This is a beautiful teaching and you how much I've got faith in the Buddhist teachings living out as a monk for thirty-seven years now and how much I still get really inspired by these teachings. And that's one of the reasons that I really tire myself out, just coming to all places and teaching, teaching, teaching, it's because I really value this and I want to sort of spread it far and wide because it's so beautiful, it's so helpful. I do want to make a better world. And I think this is the way it can be done. So if we innovate, we can do more.

And my goodness, how hard is it to get good monks and nuns to teach here in Malaysia? It's so hard, you have to "import" them from Australia, at great cost. Can't you just have homegrown? But it's hard to have homegrown monks, isn't it? So why can't we double our Sangha by having homegrown bhikkunis as well? For me it doesn't make any sense that's all, why we should just have monks and why we can't double our advantage by having bhikkunis as well.

One of the reasons that I was very supportive of bhikkunis was a very practical reason: Buddhism needs more teachers. We can't afford, as men, to do it by ourselves. We need

you, we need more. I know that because I get so many invitations, you just can't keep them all, you can't, there is not enough time in a day. So that's one of the reasons. Of course, one of the other reasons why we really supported it, why we did something about it, because that's one of the other things which I really object to in life. We have conferences, we have talks, we have all these seminars and the first time I heard NATO was actually here in Malaysia. And that's awful. Why is it that we talk, we talk but no one does something. So I said I'm gonna do something, I'm gonna have bhikkhunis. It's really important to actually if you believe in something, if you really want something to happen, don't leave it for other people, you have to do something, you have to take action. "Strive on with diligence" were the last words of the Buddha. Don't just sit there, do something. If you really want to help Buddhism and don't just give dana or donations, you come support this Vihara, you go and clean the toilets, you go and volunteer on the committee, you do something, rather than just sit there and say: "oh, what a wonderful thing it would be if..."

In Bodhinyana Monastery where I live, I don't know if you have this rule in the Maha Vihara, if any monk, novice or lay person comes out to me and has an idea, they say: "I think we should do another book of yours", I say great idea, anyone has an idea about that, you have to do it. If they think that Vihara needs painting, great idea - your idea, you arrange it. There's a lot of people volunteering, but it doesn't mean that you just wanna do something, put it into action, don't just stop on thoughts and ideas, we want action in Buddhism. We want to move things forward, to have more doers than talkers. So I decided, yes, we have to do something about that. And not only that, I knew enough about Buddhism, especially about the Vinaya. I've got a good mind, it was trained in Cambridge, so I have enough of understanding, but there's no way that you can stop bhikkhunis.

The biggest argument which people told me, which I believed them at first, until I got more information, it's to get bhikkhunis, to ordain the bhikkhuni you need another bhikkhuni. At least five bhikkhunis to ordain. They kept on saying in Theravada, the Theravada Bhikkhuni Sangha died out such a long time ago, that's what they say. And it's true, the bhikkhunis practicing Theravada, they died out many years ago. But there is an important part which I know from my Vinaya studies. You know, there is no such thing as a Theravada bhikkhuni, there is no such thing as a Theravada monk, or a Mahayana monk, or a Varjayana monk. All there is a bhikkhu and a bhikkhuni. And a bhikkhu who happens to prefer the Mahayana teachings, or the Theravada teachings, or the Varjayana teachings, but their ordination, their ordination, no matter what lineage, no matter what Nikaya, what sect, that makes them a bhikkhu, if that ordination is valid, they are bhikkhus or they are bhikkhunis. It does not really matter. Now, that's actually a very important part which I got my head around a long time ago and it made a great difference in the way I looked at people in the world. I went to sort of Mahayana temples and there are some of those Mahayana monks that are really good monks and they were doing what I was doing: they were keeping a very strong Vinaya, they were practicing meditation, they were teaching the Dhamma. You know, I thought, what's the difference between them and me? The color of their robes was different, but their practice, they were Buddhists, they were monastics. I realized they were bhikkhus and I was a bhikkhu, we were brothers. And a difference of Mahayana or Theravada made no difference at all.

Look at Chief Venerable here, what Nikaya will you ordained here was it Siam Nikaya, what Nikaya? Doesn't matter, I was ordained in Maha Nikaya Thailand. Ok, that was my lineage as it was. But that doesn't make me separate from the Chief, we're brothers, we're the same sons of the Buddha, that's why we are brothers. So I can't see any difference, all this sects, and Nikayas, I think that is something which as Buddhists in our modern world we should push aside. Now, look, if we can't live in harmony together, how can we teach other people to live in harmony? All these different Nikayas and sects, we are monks, we don't believe in sects of both types. And so, we long to live in peace and harmony together, and it's not just people who are Theravada that could live together, people who are Mahayana, who are Varjayana, they are bhikkhus. As long as their ordination is valid, then they are bhikkhus or they are bhikkhunis. Once I really understood that, I realized, look the lineage has never died out because those bhikkhunis who had been in Mahayana, they have a valid ordination. It's the ordination which makes it valid. So I checked out that ordination. And as monks and nuns visited from Korea and from Taiwan many years ago and I asked: Can I see your ordination ceremony? And it's exactly the same as our ordination ceremony in Theravada, your ordination, my ordination is exactly the same "Motion and three announcements" [kammavaca] (25:09) and I realised it is legitimate, and because it was legitimate there were bhikkhunis. I don't care what robes they wear, I don't care what sort of... type of Sutras they follow as long as they bhikkhunis and they are keeping the Vinaya to a good standard, they could ordain another bhikkhunis.

Understanding that, that was for me one of the keys which meant the bhikkhunis have never died out. They went to China, they've been there all this time, Taiwan, Korea incredibly strong. Their ordination is valid, they have a lineage which goes right back to the Buddha. So it's not a case of history in Bhikkhuni Sangha, Bhikkhuni Sangha has never died out. It's lost in some countries, just like the Bhikkhu Sangha was lost in Sri Lanka. So what did they do? They got Thai bhikkhus to come out. And sometimes the Thai bhikkhus they lost, there was no Thai bhikkhus, they've got monks from Burma or Sri Lanka to restore all. That's all we're doing right now. So legally, legitimately, there's nothing to stop people ordaining bhikkhunis. They can be there, understanding that legally there's no problem.

Again, the next things is: Why not? For many years for me personally it was the legal thing I thought it can't be done, it can't be done, but I realized, yes, it can be done. Not only that, I realized that it can be done. The whole problem bhikkhunis to me open up the door to be friends with monks from all the different Nikayas and Yanas.

I think you've heard me say before: these yanans - Theravada, Hinayana, Varjayana and Mahayana, that's splitting up Buddhism. I really don't like that at all. But think the last time I was here I said that I'm gonna start the new yana, combine all the other yanans together, so you can be one. You know what your Prime Minister say? "Malaysia one, Buddhism one." Imagine, it's wonderful, we have the Vajrayana nuns here, we haven't got any Mahayana nuns here. It's a shame, but Mahayana, Theravada, the Varjayana. So Mahayana, because this is how I teach and how I think the Buddhism should go for the modern world. Take the "H" from Hinayana, take the "aha" from Mahayana and the

"yana" from Varjayana, put them all together and what you get? Hahayana :) That's my yana, add some fun into Buddhism, so not so serious.

Actually, that's something which I said in Singapore yesterday, now I went to, I'm just wandering all over the place and maybe I'm off topic here, but these are good stories. I was in Hong Kong in February giving some teachings, it was a Sri Lankan monk, Ven. Dharmapala, who was... He was actually from (Ku Czin?), that's where he was born. He went to study in Hong Kong and he's really a good organizer, very wonderful monk. So he stayed in this Mahayana temple as the abbot there with Mahayana monks, Theravada monks, they were all working together and nuns, all working together in harmony. And I thought this is a wonderful way that Sri Lankan Theravada, Chinese Mahayana are actually in the same temple, working together harmoniously, what a wonderful symmetry that is. But the Chinese Mahayana tradition is very strict, so I go there and give talks and tell funny stories, smile, make people laugh and at the end of my trip this Mahayana nun, she has been a nun for so many years, she came up to thank me, really sincere thanks. Not because of the teaching, she liked the teaching, but she said "I'm so thankful to you, because before you came whenever I smiled I got scolded. My disciples, my students said Buddhist nuns are not supposed to smile. But now you've come, I can smile, thank you!" So that's what I gave her, I gave her permission to be happy. So when we actually get rid of all this sectarian business, we Buddhists, we can work together. So, as well as making it legally possible to ordain bhikkhunis, it also meant that I can actually be more friendly, more accommodating to all the monks and the nuns from every tradition of Buddhism and I don't know the Varjayana nuns are there.

Do you feel that sometimes you go into temples and you think: oh they're Varjayana, they are not one of us. Isn't that an awful feeling?

Is it sometimes you go to, a Theravada monk and going to temple, are you not the same sect as us, keep out. Where's the kindness, where's the compassion, where's the sense of harmony? We're the children of the Buddha, we have the same father, we don't care what robes you wear. As long as we are Buddhist and have the basic sort of understanding of Buddhism, we're brothers and sisters. What a beautiful world that is when we monks and nuns from all different traditions after all these arguments we can make up and live in peace and harmony. That's inspiring.

So it left me with the idea, we can, just like a Obama said... What did Obama say? "Yes we can", Malaysia boleh! ("Malaysia can do it!") Buddhism boleh! Yes, we can have bhikkhunis. So once we say "yes we can" the question is: Why not? In all my life if anybody ever asked me, just like, you know, the Chief invited me into Malaysia for this talk I don't say "no". I think "Why not?" I have to find a good reason not to come. Otherwise the answer is always "yes". That's in my life. If you ask me something, I always say "yes", unless I can find a very good reason to say "no". My default is "yes". Cause I have a positive mind and I think it's wonderful, Buddhism should have a positive mind. So the answer is "yes", unless I can find a good reason to say "no". And I thought why should I say no?

Over in Perth in Australia years and years ago many westerners, they saw Buddhism,

these were, you know, caucasian westerners who love the Dhamma, who love meditation and they saw Buddhism and they said we love everything about Buddhism except one thing: Where are the nuns? They actually said that to me and for people in countries like Australia, they think: my goodness what's happening, what type of religion are you? You're supposed to be compassionate and wise. Why is it that by your actions, you are treating half the world's population as if it is the second class? You are saying to half the population that you're not good enough, or you're not qualified to join the Sangha. That is considered in the West just to be as bad as racist. One person told me it's like in the United States saying only white people can be monks and black people can't. Could we get away with that? Absolutely not, it's illegal, it's immoral, so one can actually say that males could be Sangha but women can't.

Now, you know, most of those arguments, most of the conversations were monks, we were deciding on what you can do, what you can't do, you woman. What does it feel as a woman? That feels disgusting, why not ask us? It's our life, we want to become nuns, why not? So, the main thing which made me, this is totally honest, with absolute sincerity, the main reason why we had the ordination of nuns in Perth in October 2009 was because four women wanted it. We had four candidates. They've been in brown robes, keeping ten precepts for many years. They were very high quality candidates. When they came up and said: we want to be bhikkhunis, that pushed me to say "yes", if you wanted, of course, I cannot and I will not and I never will stand in your way. Even though I got the flak, I got the problems, they're doing fine, it's really unfair. They are the ones who became bhikkhunis, but I get the criticism. But I don't mind. But they wanted it and they had the training, all the boxes were tick. So if you want it, fine, we'll give it to you. But you do have to get wholehearted support, but from your local community. So, for ordaining bhikkhunis, I had to ask all the monks, do you want it to happen now is it bit more than they expected, and our local lay community as well we boarded up on a ETM bhikkhunis, "we want bhikkhunis" You are the ones who would have to support them. I can't take fruit to them, I'm a monk, you have to look after them, are you willing to do that? And, of course, it was totally unanimous wholehearted support from the lay community, totally. And that really inspired me. In the end, it's really the monks and the local community, yes, they will give you ordination, but the success of the bhikkhunis, that depends on you, the lay community. Because if you want them, if you respect them, then they will be there. Really, it doesn't depend upon the President of Sri Lanka, it doesn't depend upon the Mahanayakas, it doesn't depend upon any monk. If you want them, if you respect them, they are there.

I know that's happening in Thailand, there are many bhikkhunis in Thailand. There's about three, or four bhikkhuni monasteries there. The head monks, for those of you who want to know this, this is... the head monks in Thailand - they are not allowed to pronounce on the bhikkhuni issue, because they have set up with the charter, with the legal document by the government of Thailand many years ago. All they can do, the senior monks, is pronounce on the monks and novices of the two main Nikayas. They cannot disallow bhikkhunis, nor can they allow bhikkhunis, it's nothing to do with them. It's like the government of Malaysia pronouncing on the election in Singapore, no it's nothing to do with Malaysia, it's a different country. And because of that, the head monks in Thailand, they cannot say either way. In the same way, do you know there's many

Mahayana monks, or monks who practice Mahayana in Thailand, the head monks in Thailand can't say anything about them either. It's beyond their limit. They are not allowed to say anything, "yes", or "no".

Once I understood that, you can't wait for the head monks in Thailand to say yes, or no. They are legally not permitted to say. It's beyond their limit. All they can pronounce and deal with is monks and novices, male monastics of the two main traditions in Thailand, that's all. That was actually told to me recently, I should have remembered that. So, there they are, we can have bhikkhunis, we do have bhikkhunis and the success of the Bhikkhuni Sangha it's all to do with the lay people. So even in Thailand it's becoming successful in Thailand simply because there's enough lay people who want to support. And they're supporting it, and it's growing because of them.

Here in Malaysia we have bhikkhunis. You're both bhikkhunis? You are and you? No samaneri, there's one bhikkhuni there, we need more bhikkhunis who also strive in Malaysia, it's not really anything to do with me, we can support that ordination, I can talk in public about it, but it's up to you to support and respect them. If you regard them as a Sangha, which you should do in a time of the Buddha, the four-fold assembly: bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, upasakas, upasikas - it was the wish of the Buddha to have bhikkhunis. That's why He ordained them. So they are Sangha. I was gonna say "one of the boys", but that's not quite correct. They're Sangha, so please treat them as Sangha. What is the greatest gift? Somebody once said, only want to give it to the Buddha and the Buddha said no that's no the greatest gift, give it to the monks and monks said that's no the greatest gift. The greatest gift is to both Sanghas: to Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Sangha. You look in the texts. So if we only have the Bhikkhu Sangha, you have to be getting the proper "bang for your bucks" as they say, if you've given to the both Sanghas, that's the greatest gift, so says the Buddha. Understanding that, you're understanding the importance of having a Bhikkhuni Sangha and how they should be respected, and how they should be developed and cultivated.

I know from the experience of having our nuns and now bhikkhunis in Perth. Many women come up to me and they say: Ajahn Brahm, we really respect you, we listen to your talks. But, you know, there are some things we can't ask you, or there are some things which you, you're a man, we respect your wisdom, but there are some things which you will never understand, Ajahn Brahm. We go to the bhikkhunis and they understand. I know my limitations. I'm not a monk who can teach everybody everything. So that's why we do need bhikkhunis. And I think that many of you women here understand what I'm talking about. You can go to another woman, a bhikkhuni, and she can empathise with you, she can connect with you in a way which I will never be able to do. I'm a man.

And that's why the men and women in Perth say thank you, thank you, thank you that now we have bhikkhunis, we can come and talk with them. And now we have full teaching, sort of complement. So that's why they really are supporting the Bhikkhuni Sangha over in, especially in Perth, incredibly strong there. That's why I'm sure you gonna see this soon for me, right now it's multi-million dollar plan to build up Dhammasara monastery where our nuns live. So soon you'll be seeing sort of pamphlets

asking for funds for that monastery. And the reason is because of all the publicity, especially about the Perth bhikkhuni ordinations, you know that it, there is one person who has that blog, a Buddhist blog over in the United States. And he had the ten top news stories in 2009, and he worked it out by the amount of traffic on the Internet and Aung San Su Chi, you know, her I think extension of house arrest in 2009, that was the top news story. And the Perth bhikkhuni ordinations, we came in number two, I was surprised! It became news in the United States. And because it was such big news, that meant that we have so many applications of people from around the world who want to actually ordain as bhikkhunis and have a place to stay, support and also training. Now, that last one is really important, it's not just support, it's not just enough food and place to stay. The bhikkhunis, they want to be taught until they can become teachers for themselves. They can be trained in the Vinaya, they can be trained in the Dhamma, they can be trained in meditation. So you have great teachers, female teachers, who can go around the world, teaching meditation retreats that are now but there is not enough of them, they want more of them. That's one thing to ordain bhikkhunis, but they need to be trained as well. And that means that then we have really good bhikkhunis, wise bhikkhunis, ones who can teach meditation, who can inspire. And then the Bhikkhuni Sangha is strong, then monks like me don't need to work so hard to support it, it's independent.

Just like you have your kids, you have kids and you've got to really work, you train them, educate them, look after them, until they are grown, strong, educated and then independent. Yeah, you can still love them and they come visit you, you visit them, but they're independent. And that's what we really have to do with the bhikkhunis, make them totally independent by giving them strength. Is one of the reasons over in Perth I made sure the bhikkhuni monastery is a long way away from the monk monastery, it's about 70 km away. We're to the south of Perth they are to the east of Perth. You know why I did that? Because I wanted them to stop coming to see me to fix up their problems. Cause if they don't learn how to solve the problems themselves, they never grow. So I wasn't next door. Cause what happens if the monks are next door, if they have too much influence by the monks, you just become under the thumbs of the men again. And you don't have that independence, that strength, that's in the time of the Buddha to stand up as an equal to the bhikkhus. Which in our world it is really important. So that's what I've gotten to bhikkhunis and not all the monks support it. But you know, the majority do. The vast majority.

One of the monks, a Thai monk living in the United States, you know what he said to me after bhikkhuni ordination? You'll like this, he said: Ajahn Brahm, well done, you should set up another bhikkhuni monastery in Malaysia. He was Thai, that's what he said, he realized how much support there is in this country. We come to do it in Malaysia of all places, your country, he's a Thai, but he also said: Ajahn Brahm, if you took a poll - and he was a senior Thai monk - he said about 80% of all Thai monks would certainly support bhikkhunis. 80% would. Some of them, they stand on the side-lines, you know, politics they just don't want to make their opinions known in case they offend somebody. He said I know these monks, I'm one of them, you have 80% support. That's wholehearted enough for me, 40% of a heart was enough to keep one of my good friends living and working, he's still alive, I saw him a couple weeks ago. So 80% of your heart of the Monk

Sangha's heart, that's enough for me. You will never get hundred percent and if you wait for hundred percent you just waiting for Messiah to come, and when he comes, I don't know when he's gonna come, but you're gonna die waiting.

And isn't it a wonderful thing that Buddhism, of all the religions, was set up in the very beginning to give that equality to women. Twenty-five, twenty-six hundred years ago there were nuns, bhikkhunis, when many other modern religions are still struggling with the gender issue - like with Christianity, should we have a female pope? No, no, no, no, no, no. Should we have female priests? No, no, no, no, no, no. The Buddha settled that question for Buddhism 2600 hundred years ago and said yeah, why not? So what a modern person that was, modern person with incredible insight into the future. And, look, there are some times when I think about what the Buddha did, it gives me goose-bumps, it gives me goose-bumps right now. The wisdom of that Man way ahead of his time, standing out above all others, no other leader did that. And there you are, followers of the Buddha, you should be so proud of the Buddha, all the woman respected you and set things up. So here in Malaysia in 2011 the doors are open to you as well. And I hope that I'm gonna come to Brickfields Mahavihara one day and I gonna see the bhikkhunis standing up here, giving the Dhamma talk. And I see all the monks, me as well, sitting over there, listening and saying sadhu, sadhu, what an incredibly powerfull talk, wonderful, amazing. Isn't that the case? I don't care who gives a talk, if it is a really good talk, I get inspired. So I'm gonna see that in my lifetime. I want to see great bhikkhunis. If you come up and fill this hall and inspire you all and all you women - would that make you cry? Should do and might make me cry too, at last we have this full equity, we are using all of our resources, males and females.

So, if you have a daughter who says: "mummy, daddy, I want to be a bhikkhuni", what would you say? "NO! You have to get married and have kids, you gotta keep on the family, fill your party!" No, not fill your party, Buddha party . For goodness sake, that's one of the things, you know, I love Chinese people, but there is one thing about Chinese culture which I read. I told this to the chief piest who thought it was very funny and repeated it after I told them to: Chinese people, they are so happy when someone becomes a monk, as long as it's not their own son. He thought that was very funny. It's gotta be someone's son, why not your son? It's gotta be someone's daughter, why not your daughter? And look, as a career path, what a wonderful thing that is. How proud would you be of your son, if he was me and I was your father? Now, my poor dad died when I was very young, but I often think of him. And I often think... that was about forty-five years ago now, he died when I was sixteen. If he could see me now, teaching, helping people, serving people throughout the whole world, he'd be so proud. My son is Ajahn Brahm, he's helping so many people, really helping in a big time, saving their lives, giving them meaning, getting them through the crisis in their lives, getting people to be better people, teaching prisoners not to do that crime again, making positive contributions to the society once they leave jail, instead of robbing and killing and raping again. That's my son! Oh, he'd be so happy and so proud! That could be your son, that could be your daughter. Why are you not proud of letting your children become monks and nuns. For me, I can't get my head around it, I can't understand that.

Cause a good monk, or a good nun, they can do so much for this world, much more than

doctors, or nurses, or engineers, or dentists. Much more than that. They can fix your teeth, but you will have to come back again next week to get it fixed up again. They can heal people's diseases, but eventually you find that people die. But as Dhamma, you fix up the mind and that's forever, and that's fixing up big time. No more suffering, uuu that's big stuff, monks and nuns can do that. So it's not just opening doors to women to become bhikkhunis, you also have to cooperate. If your daughter gets inspired and says: mummy, daddy, I think what I really want to do in my life is to become a nun, a bhikkhuni, to train and later on to go up and to teach. I want to this particular time help in the reestablishment and growth of the Bhikkhuni Sangha in Malaysia. I wanna be part of this, I wanna do it - never say "no". Say: "Wonderful! I'm so proud of you!" Cause that's what's happening. It's not just allowing, or letting the bhikkhunis ordain, we need the raw material. So we encourage people. And listen, all of you young ladies, or middle-aged ladies – it doesn't really matter as far as I'm concerned if you're thinking of becoming of bhikkhuni, think of all the suffering you're leaving behind. Boyfriends! Oh, they are pain in the back, boyfriends always try to play you. Look at how much money you have to spend at the hairdressers, trying to keep fashionable, the clothes, the make-up. Oh, that must be really painful! How many hours do you spend in the bathroom before you can go out? I didn't spend any time in a... Actually, I did get a shower before I came up here, that's all. I didn't need to put up any make-up to teach you. I didn't need to get my hair done. It's just so nice being a monk. I don't have to worry about even fashion. It's old fashion robes, for 2500 years, we're keeping it this way, it's such a lovely life, have so many friends, so many people look after you, so many people you love and love you, it's wonderful. Boyfriends were pain in the neck.

You know what the bhikkhunis used to say? A... what's the time? Ok, I'll be finishing in a few moments. There were the bhikkhunis in the Therigatha, if any of you want to be inspired, the Therigatha, these verses of the enlightened women in the time of the Buddha. They didn't just become bhikkhunis, they became Arahants, fully enlightened, with great powers it all works, total equity. So what they used to say? Once you became a bhikkhuni, they used to say, they gave up the three crooked things. So, all of you thinking of becoming a bhikkhuni, you're giving up the three crooked things. Now, what those three crooked things were?

The first one was the ladle (chochla) which people have to cook, you know you have to cook for your husband, cook for your kids, spend all the time cooking, cooking, cooking. It must drive you crazy! Sometimes I remember my poor old mum. My poor old mom, she'd get up in the morning to make breakfast for everybody didn't have day's off, afterwards she'd have to wash up, maybe an hour of break and start cooking lunch, then maybe go out to get the fruit and then comeback, start cooking again. As soon as it was cooked, she'd prepare for everybody a nice lunch, then she'd have to have to wash up all the pots and pans afterwards.

Now, my dad and me and my brother, we were watching the TV, she was in the kitchen cooking dinner. And when I look back, poor old lady, she went well, but she was also a cook in the house. So, giving up cooking, ooohh wouldn't that be wonderful? So much free time! So, that's the first crooked thing, the ladle, the cooking thing.

The second crooked thing was the house broom. That was a symbol of housework, you know, I'm not sure what it's like in Malaysia, things have changed a lot in the west and now the husbands do a lot of the housework. But I think is still as it was - the sweeping and washing and laundry and all that other stuff. So that was a symbol of housework. So once you became a bhikkhuni, no more cooking, people come to you, they feed you. That's an amazing thing, being a monk, not only do they feed you, but sometimes they pay you for accepting their food, they give you donations as well. So, no more cooking, no more cleaning. Those are the two crooked things.

And you know what the third crooked thing is? The husband, or the boyfriend. That's what they used to say, the three crooked things you give up. Oh, what bliss, no more crooked things I have to deal with again. So you women give up the three crooked things and have to peace and freedom and happiness of being a monastic. Look, many of you have known me for a long time, I come here many, many times. Am I having a good time? Am I a happy monk? And it's not just when I'm in front of you. When you meet me at the airport, when people see me when I'm not in public, still a happy monk. Do you want to be happy like me? Do you? Well, give up those three crooked things.

Thank you for listening. [the audience: sadhu, sadhu sadhu] Very good. Now, I'm not sure the last time I was here, but I have to teach you the three sadhus again. Cause sometimes when people do sadhu, sadhu, sadhu it's just so dull and depressing. Depression is a big thing in our modern world. There's a lot of depression in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia now? This is how to overcome depression: when you do something, give everything you've got. So, let's do the three sadhus again: SADHU, SADHU, SADHU!!! Did that make you happy? [audience: YES!] Now you understand why? Whatever you do, give everything you've got.

Transcribed by: Marcin Zakrzewski & Aleksandra Łobacz (Portal Sasana.pl)

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