

Tuesday June 17

Paper 1

Sustaining the Buddha Dharma

9:00-11:30 AM

Moderator: Ruth Gamble

Kundasale Subhagya (5)

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The Changing and Challenging Roles of Bhikkhunis in Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT: The main objective of this paper is to study about the changes and challenges of the Bhikkhunis in Sri Lanka. This research is based on the slow modifications, gradual development and actual situation of the Bhikkhunis in Sri Lanka when they give active participation and contribution to every part of the society. The data for the study has been collected from both primary and secondary sources and relevant monographs and religious texts. Ethnographic study has been conducted using observation and interview methods with Buddhist monks, nuns and laity.

BIO: Bhikkhuni Kundasale Subhagya is a young Theravada Buddhist Nun living in Sri Lanka. She lives in Bodhimalakaramaya Nuns Center, Kandy which is situated in the central part of Sri Lanka. She started to work as a Lecturer in 2018 at Intercollegiate Sri Lanka Education Affiliated to the University of Peradaniya. She presented more than 30 national and international conferences and active academic members. She completed the course work of Master of Philosophy from University of Peradaniya in Sri Lanka in 2020.

Loh Pai Ling (25)

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The Changing Roles of Buddhist Women: Empowerment, Feminism, and Leadership

ABSTRACT: Buddhism, frequently perceived through the lens of its monastic traditions and a predominantly male monastic ideal, offers a unique perspective on gender roles. Yet, throughout history, lay Buddhist women have consistently played vital roles in shaping and enriching Buddhist communities and societies. In today's changing world, Buddhism needs a re-evaluation of these roles. As gender boundaries shift and societal expectations evolve, lay Buddhist women face new challenges and opportunities to express their faith and contribute meaningfully. This presentation explores the journey of a Buddhist woman leader, drawing on my personal experiences.

BIO: Sis Loh Pai Ling is a pioneering Buddhist leader, making history as the first woman President of the Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia (BMSM) where she is currently serving her sixth term. Her journey with BMSM began as a committee then the Honorary Secretary of the Kajang Branch, and she now chairs the BMSM Meditation

Section. Sis Loh influence extends both nationally and internationally through various leadership roles. She currently serves as Vice President and is a past President of the Malaysian Buddhist Consultative Council (MBCC). She also represents Buddhists on the National Interfaith Committee Malaysia and chairs the Interfaith Dialogue Standing Committee of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB). She was recently appointed the Vice President of the International Association of Religious Liberal Women (IARLW). With over two decades of dedicated service in interfaith dialogue and Buddhist leadership, Sis Loh has made significant contributions to religious harmony and understanding in Malaysia, while also breaking new ground for women in Buddhist leadership.

Tashi Choedup (63)

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Queerness Embodied by Buddhism

ABSTRACT: 2600 years ago a young person the family of Shakyas decided to leave behind his family, worldly riches, and comforts and went on to seek liberation from suffering for once and all. In doing so he did something that was done by many people seeking answers or say more so reasons for their worldly existence, but moving on in his journey, he challenged the norms of his time in his pursuit for 'liberation from suffering' and as well in his teachings post his attainment of 'Buddhahood.' Thus, among many other things, the Buddha's birth is also a result of breaking the shackles of the 'normal' of his time and era. 2500 years later across Buddhist traditions, popular culture, and academia Buddha is applauded as 'skillful, radical, creative' and so forth. Keeping aside the academia, and popular culture, in Buddhism when Buddha is addressed as 'the one thus gone' for me it is also about one moving through the world by destabilizing the conventions. And for me Buddha is queer for this reason and because of some more. And yet in today's world Buddhists seem to be caught up so much in the conventions that it is even difficult to see the caughtupness as they hold to the various notions that keep the religious institutions seemingly more intact and stable. And queer folks are cautiously engaged in this pursuit of keeping the Buddhist or otherworldly notions firmly rooted. As a queer person in this paper I will explore the Queerness of Buddha and Buddha Dharma and to that what is the position of queer-trans people in a religious institution that continues to practice patriarchy and hold dear the ideas that are queer-trans exclusionary! I will also engage with the Buddha's popular teaching in Kalama Sutta, also called Buddha's Charter of Free Inquiry, Buddha advises not to accept anything just because it is from scripture or tradition or your teacher, but to investigate and verify it before accepting it. What does it mean in contemporary times where Buddhism interacts with worlds of feminism, queerness, social justice, science, and so forth? I will refer to a south Indian Buddhist classic Manimegalai among others to investigate the even presenting nature of queerness in pursuit of enlightenment/Buddha nature.

BIO: Tashi Choedup (They/She) is a trans feminine person who has been working in human rights and social justice movement spaces for 15-plus years and has been a Buddhist monastic (nunk) in Tibetan tradition for over 7 years. Tashi is a founding member of Telangana Hijra Intersex Transgender Samiti, and Queer Swabhimana Yatra. They were also a member of the Telangana State Government's Welfare Board for Transgender Persons. Tashi also closely worked with Telangana Police Women Safety Wing in the conceptualization and creation of 'Pride Place: Transgender (LGBTQIA+) Persons Protection cell and continues to closely work with it in sensitizing and training Police Officers. They work at the Queer-Trans Wellness and Support Center (QT Center), Yugantar, Hyderabad. They also serve as the National Coordinator (India) for the Foundation for the Preservation of Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) and are an executive committee member at the Anveshi Research Center for Women's Studies. They are a core group member of the National Ecumenical Forum for Gender and Sexual Minorities (NEFGSM) at the National Council of Churches of India (NCCI). Tashi engages as a peer counselor with LGBTQIA+ folks. They are a student of Buddhist philosophy and psychology and their primary areas of interest are community building, queer rights, mental health, religion, and faith and their interconnectedness. In their work, they also engaged with work related to palliative care, farmer suicides, and domestic workers, among others. Rooted in the firm belief that no spiritual practice can be apolitical, they actively seek ways to integrate Buddhist philosophy and its contemplative practices with social justice activism.

Julia Surya (Bhikkhuni Ṭhītācārīnī Therī) (45)

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The Development of Theravāda Bhikkhunīs in Indonesia: Progress Toward Gender Equality in Sangha Agung Indonesia

ABSTRACT: The development of Theravāda bhikkhunīs in Indonesia, particularly within the context of Sangha Agung Indonesia, marks a crucial advancement in promoting gender equality within Buddhist traditions. Despite enduring cultural and normative challenges, the growing support from the bhikkhu community has opened new avenues for the recognition and empowerment of bhikkhunīs. This study examines the dynamics between bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs, focusing on how their collaboration strengthens the roles of women within Buddhist institutions. Utilizing a qualitative approach that incorporates historical and social analysis, the research reveals that active support from bhikkhus has significantly enhanced the legitimacy of bhikkhunīs as integral members of the sangha. This mutual support fosters inclusivity and facilitates a collaborative model that accelerates institutional transformation toward gender equality. Moreover, the involvement of bhikkhus has sparked constructive cross-gender dialogue within the Theravāda tradition, contributing to a more balanced and egalitarian approach to religious practice. The study also explores the impact of this partnership on the broader social fabric, noting that the recognition of bhikkhunīs challenges entrenched gender norms within both religious and societal contexts. The

research argues that the partnership between bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs exemplifies core Buddhist values such as wisdom, compassion, and interconnectedness, which are applied to address contemporary social issues. By highlighting these collaborative efforts, the paper offers a positive outlook on the evolving role of women in Buddhism in Indonesia, while contributing to the broader global discourse on gender equality in religious contexts. This research underscores the potential of collaborative gender-inclusive practices in shaping the future of Buddhism in Indonesia and beyond.

BIO: Indonesian born, Bhikkhuni Thitacarini, is a prominent Buddhist scholar and mindfulness educator. She currently serves as a lecturer at Smaratungga Buddha College (STIAB Smaratungga) and has held various leadership roles, including Secretary of the Master’s Program at the Smaratungga Buddha College and Head of the Scientific Publication Division at the Smaratungga Buddha College. Bhikkhuni Thitacarini has a PhD in Pali and Buddhist Studies from the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka and a Master’s degree in Buddhist Studies, also from the University of Kelaniya.

She is an author of the acclaimed book, ‘Meditation for Children’ and has written many articles on mindfulness and Buddhist practices. An international speaker at notable conferences, including the United Nations Day of Vesak in Vietnam and various ASEAN conferences. She has featured in national media for her inspirational journey as a Bhikkhuni and her contributions to mindfulness and education. She also actively mentoring meditation programs and preparing for the Upasampada Bhikkhuni Theravada Sangha in Indonesia.

Thubten Lamsel (19)

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So That the Sun May Never Set: The Role of Monasticism in Sustaining the Buddhadharma

ABSTRACT: In the modern context, monasteries and their monastics no longer serve as the single or central hub for propagating the Buddha’s teachings. Dharma centers, online study courses, lay teachers, and “secular Buddhism” abound. All members of the Buddha’s four-fold assembly may rightly ask: Is there still an important role—or any role at all—for the ordained Buddhist community in modern times? Taking direction from the Buddha’s own words, yes. The Dharmaguptaka Vinaya states, “Failure to keep the Prātimokṣa Sūtra and to conduct the poṣadha as it should be is like the setting of the sun, when darkness shrouds the entire world.” Various scriptural sources indicate that Śākyamuni Buddha saw the presence of a fully functioning monastic community, able to perform the prescribed monastic rituals, as essential to the longevity of his teachings. This paper has two purposes: (i) to make explicit the connection between the existence of the monastic community and the endurance of the Buddha’s teachings, and (ii) to outline the impact of efforts made at Sravasti Abbey to establish a bhikṣuṇī saṅgha. The short and long-term benefits of upholding the Prātimokṣa to both the individual and society will be discussed, and the particular

power of monastics in community highlighted. All members of the Buddha's four-fold assembly benefit when the Buddha's ordained disciples embrace their responsibility to practice in community, uphold the precepts purely so that the ten benefits follow, and perform the prescribed monastic rituals so that the sun of the Buddha's teachings will never set.

BIO: Born in Sydney Australia, Bhikshuni Thubten Lamsel first encountered Buddhism when volunteering in Nepal in 2009. Inspired by the practical teachings of Venerable Thubten Chodron, she moved to train with her at Sravasti Abbey in 2017, taking shiksamana ordination in 2018. She has lived and trained at Sravasti Abbey since that time. Currently, her duties primarily include facilitating the broadcasting and archival of live teachings, prison outreach, event management, and helping in the library. She took full ordination at Fo En Si Temple in Taiwan in April 2024 and has received various sets of teachings on the prohibitive and prescriptive precepts as part of the Abbey's monastic training program. When opportunities arise, she enjoys offering meditation workshops and introductory classes on Buddhism in the local community and online. Before ordination, she worked in public health research and health promotion.

Tuesday June 17

Paper 2A

Buddhist Nuns Navigating & Fostering Change

12:30-1:40 PM

Moderator: Hannah Gould

Sayalay Santacari (26)

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Bridging Tradition and Modernity: Myanmar Buddhist Nuns Engaging with the Contemporary World

ABSTRACT: Myanmar Buddhist nuns, known as *Thilashins*, have historically dedicated themselves to meditation, education, and preserving Buddhist teachings. However, *Thilashins* are now stepping beyond tradition to tackle contemporary challenges and opportunities. This study analyses how Myanmar Buddhist nuns navigate these transformations, balancing tradition with modernity. *Thilashins* face significant structural and cultural challenges, including marginalization within the Theravada Buddhist hierarchy, which denies them full ordination and limits their authority. Despite these barriers, they have emerged as influential figures addressing critical issues such as poverty, education, and gender inequality. Their integration of Buddhist principles with innovative advocacy and community service methods reflects an adaptation to contemporary societal needs. A key focus of this study is the role of *Thilashins* in education. Many nunneries serve as hubs offering Buddhist studies, including *Dhammācariya* and *Sāmanekyaw* courses, monastic education, and secular subjects such as language and computer skills. *Thilashins* advocates for gender justice by challenging traditional roles and promoting equality for Buddhist women through activism based on Buddhist teachings. By addressing societal needs while remaining rooted in the Buddha's teachings, *Thilashins* exemplifies how Buddhist women bridge tradition and modernity. Through global engagement, they amplify their voices in Buddhism and women's empowerment, highlighting the need for greater educational opportunities and broader recognition as pioneers of change.

BIO: I am Reverend Santacari, a Buddhist nun from Myanmar, currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Buddhist Literature at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. I earned my Master's degree in Buddhist Studies in 2015. My journey into monastic life began at Sukhakami Nunnery in Yangon, where I committed fully to Buddhist practice and began teaching young nuns and children at the Parahita Center. To further my understanding of Buddhism, I studied for three years at the International Theravāda Buddhist Missionary University in Yangon. Encouraged by my teacher-nun, I pursued advanced studies in Sri Lanka. Originally, I come from a small village in Myanmar and am the only member of my family of seven to embrace a monastic life. My journey is

guided by a commitment to learning, teaching, and serving others, which I strive to do with sincerity and dedication.

Namgyel Lhamo (81)

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On the Transformative Journey of Female Monastic in the Kingdom of Bhutan

ABSTRACT: In past decade, I have seen a huge transition of nuns and nunneries in Bhutan. They have walked an extra mile to reach and cope with fast changing world. They are still determined to keep moving forward. At the present, I am doing research on female monastics of Bhutan, and I am looking forward to compile the history of previous nuns and nunneries and how they practiced and lived their lives. While reading biographies of great scholars and masters, I came across some female figures and nuns, who were great practitioners and supporters. This is clear evidence for a long history of nuns and female practitioners ever since Buddhism appeared in Bhutan.

BIO: Ven. Namgyel Lhamo is from Bhutan and has been in the robes for nearly 26 years. She completed her Masters in Buddhist Philosophy in June 2013 from Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS) in Sarnath, Varanasi, India. After that, she joined Bhutan Nuns Foundation (BNF) and worked more than 10 years as a program officer. She is fond of her job working for the nuns of Bhutan. During her journey with BNF, her biggest role and achievement was working towards the receiving of Full Ordination on June 21st 2022, which was a historical moment in 21st century. In 2017, she attended the East West Centre in Honolulu, Hawaii for the Asia Pacific Leadership Program, which shaped her working life. While working with BNF, she took an opportunity to receive a Dzogchen teachings for which she feels blessed. Currently, she is pursuing a Doctorate Degree (PhD) at CIHTS on the topic of: The Study of Female Monastic Tradition in Bhutan. She looks forward to completing her doctorate next year.

Ilmoon Cho (4)

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The Changing Roles of Leadership of Korean Bhikkhuni Sangha Leadership

ABSTRACT: Traditionally, the Buddhist Sangha refers to the four-fold assembly of Bhikkhu, Bhikkhuni, Upasaka, and Upasika. Korea is a Buddhist country where the four-fold assembly structure has been firmly maintained since early times. Historically, there are various records and literature on Bhikkhunis with outstanding practices and Buddhist powers within Korean Buddhism. Today, many Bhikkhunis and Buddhist women are playing various roles and exercising leadership in Korean Buddhism and society as a whole. During the lifetime of the Buddha Sakyamuni, the first female monk was ordained at the repeated earnest request of Ananda. Nevertheless, from the perspective of traditional Buddhism it is difficult to say that women have occupied an equal position with men. However, the status, role, and leadership of female monks in the Korean Buddhist temple is not significantly different from those of male monks.

For example, in the Korean Buddhist temple, female monks can also become the head and representative of a temple. To that extent, the status and roles of female monks in Korean Buddhism today are guaranteed rights and obligations.

BIO: Bhikkhuni Cho Ilmoon was born in Korea. She became a nun in 1989 and completed her PhD in Seon Studies at Dongguk University and practiced Zen for 10 years. She began studying and practicing Tibetan language and Tibetan Buddhist philosophy at Dholmaring, Dharamsala, India in 2008. She received a PhD Philosophy, She is the Current Abbess of Bubryunsa Temple.

Sāmanerī Ariyā Dhammajīvi (62)

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Gratitude and Taking Initiative: Navigating Change as a Buddhist Woman in Transition

ABSTRACT: As a Buddhist woman in transition, I have been using gratitude and taking initiative to navigate change. Gratitude allows me to focus on the positive aspects of my life, to recognize the help, and to naturally reciprocate that help. Taking the Initiative enables me to reciprocate that help. With gratitude to my parents, I worked hard as a refugee teenager to support my family. With gratitude to my birthplace, I provided financial and social support back to my Cambodian community. With gratitude to the Buddha's teaching, I took an initiative to complete the fourfold assembly of the Buddha and to establish inclusivity in my community.

BIO: I am Sāmanerī Ariyā Dhammajīvi, formerly Dr. Marlai Ouch, a co-founder of Cambodian Bhikkhuni Sangha Initiative with a doctorate in Educational Leadership from San Francisco State University. Venerable Tathālokā Therī, Abbess of Dhammadharini Monastery, has served as my bhikkhunī mentor for the last seven plus years as I have worked tirelessly in support of reviving the Cambodian Bhikkhuni Sangha. On the full moon of November 15, 2024, I took the first step towards joining the Sangha myself, receiving my sāmanerī pabbajjā at Wat Meangkolvorn in California, and undertaking nissāya with Venerable Tathālokā Therī as bhikkhuni mentor, and have joined the Dhammadharini community in California, USA. As a Sāmanerī, gratitude and taking initiative continue to be instilled in me. With gratitude for my training in preparation to transition from a Sāmanerī to a bhikkhuni, my initiative focuses on harmony in the Sangha. I am Sāmanerī Ariyā Dhammajīvi, formerly Dr. Marlai Ouch, a co-founder of Cambodian Bhikkhuni Sangha Initiative with a doctorate in Educational Leadership from San Francisco State University. Venerable Tathālokā Therī, founding abbess and bhikkhuni preceptor of the Dhammadharini Bhikkhuni Sangha, which has two locations in Northern California, has served as my bhikkhunī mentor for the last seven plus years as I have worked in support of reviving the Cambodian Bhikkhuni Sangha. On the full moon of November 15, 2024, I took the first step towards joining the Sangha myself. I was the first to receive my Sāmanerī Pabbajjā with a full traditional Cambodian Buddhist ordination ceremony of the Fourfold Assembly and Venerable

Bhikkhu Noun Chandara Ñāṇadīpako MahāThero as Preceptor at Watt Meangkolvorn, Santa Rosa, California, USA. I then undertook the Training in Nissāya with the Venerable Bhikkhuni Ācarinī Tathālokā Mahātherī at Dhammadharini Monastery, Penngrove, California, USA.

Tuesday June 17

Paper 2B

Monastics & Laity Breaking New Ground

1:50-3:00 PM

Moderator: Eunsu Cho

Tran Thi Cam Van (79)

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Do Early Buddhist Notions of Women Endanger Male Celibacy?

ABSTRACT: The first scholastic researchers on Buddhism and gender debates within Western scholarship were published in 1893, in the work of early female scholars of Buddhism by Caroline Rhys Davids, Mabel Bode, and I. B. Horner. Writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, these female writers paved the way for textual study on women in early Buddhism. Modern feminists Sponberg and Diana Paul interpreted Buddhist teaching by comparing it to the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition. Their studies concluded that Buddhist interpretations of women are fourfold: Soteriological Inclusiveness, Institutional Androcentrism, Ascetic Misogyny, and Soteriological Androgyny. The researcher then examines how early Buddhist doctrine presents gender and women without institutionalized androcentrism and the ascetic misogyny concepts which is highly criticized by anti-religious feminists. Hence, this study will investigate: does early Buddhist teaching support the view of women as endangering male celibacy? To address this point, content analysis, textual criticism and qualitative research methods shall be adopted.

BIO: Thi Cam Van (Ven. An Ngoc), a Vietnamese Bhikkhuni, currently studies at Nāgānanda International Institute for Buddhist Studies in Sri Lanka.

Punyaporn Saengkhum (12)

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Leadership and Governance: The Role of the Thai Nun Organization in Education and Social Work

ABSTRACT: The Thai Nun Organization exemplifies the transformative power of leadership, governance, education, and social work in empowering Buddhist women in Thailand. Rooted in Theravāda Buddhism, the organization has adapted to meet modern societal and spiritual needs while preserving traditional values. Since its establishment in 1969, it has developed a governance framework emphasizing inclusivity, transparency, and collective decision-making. Educational initiatives, including those at Mahapajapati Buddhist College, equip nuns with spiritual knowledge and practical skills, preparing them to lead both religious and community development efforts. The organization addresses critical social issues, such as public

health crises and natural disasters. During COVID-19, it mobilized resources to distribute masks, food, and sanitizers to affected communities. It also promotes rural education through the "Elder Siblings Supporting Younger Ones on Mountain Heights" project, benefiting over 1,000 students in 10 remote border schools. Additionally, the Thai Nun Health Empowerment Program enhances the physical and mental well-being of nuns nationwide. Leadership development is central to its mission, blending Buddhist principles with modern management techniques to equip nuns for contemporary challenges. The organization also engages in international collaborations, strengthening its capacity to address shared concerns and fostering unity within the global Buddhist community. This study highlights the Thai Nun Organization's profound impact on Thai society, showcasing innovative programs and sustainable strategies that empower Buddhist women. It reflects the organization's resilience, compassion, and adaptability in navigating an ever-changing world.

BIO: Dr. Maechee Punyaporn Saengkhum is a dedicated Buddhist nun and influential leader in northeastern Thailand. She serves as a board member of the Thai Nun Institute Association, the Head Nun of Udon Thani Province, and the Upper Northeastern Region. Holding a Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from Bodhisastra University, Florida, USA, Dr. Punyaporn combines academic expertise with a deep commitment to community service. Her flagship projects include the "Elder Siblings Supporting Younger Ones on Mountain Heights" initiative, fostering education in remote areas, and the Thai Nun Health Empowerment Program, which enhances the health and well-being of nuns nationwide. Dr. Punyaporn's work seamlessly integrates Buddhist principles with innovative solutions to address societal challenges, reflecting a vision of compassion and sustainability.

Jin-sook Nam (22)

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Amid Changes in 'Hip Buddhism' in Korea, New Roles and Leadership of Female Lay Buddhists

ABSTRACT: In line with the rapidly changing trends of the times, Korean Buddhism has been developing to meet modern sensibilities and popular needs while maintaining traditional doctrines and practices. One of the phenomena that emerged among them is a new Buddhist paradigm called 'Hip Buddhism'. The combination of the neologism "hip" and Buddhism shows that Buddhism is not just maintaining the classical religious framework, but is also communing with the cultural trends of modern society. "Hip Buddhism" is an attempt to reconstruct traditional Buddhist doctrines and practices with a modern sensibility to make them more familiar to the public. For example, terms and activities such as "Buddha Handsome," "Buddha Handsome," "Paradise is Rock," "I Am a Temple," "NewJeans," and "Temkangs" make it easier for the younger generation to accept Buddhism, and at the same time, they can rediscover the charm of Buddhism through humor and creativity. This trend is not just a cultural trend, but it is significant in that Buddhism reflects popular and contemporary needs. In

particular, the 2024 Seoul International Buddhist Expo attracted young people in their late teens to 30s as the main visitors during the event held under the theme of 'Fun Buddhism', which led to a threefold increase in the number of visitors to the expo compared to the previous year. This shows that hip Buddhism is exerting a new form of social influence beyond simply popularizing Buddhism. The proportion of female lay Buddhists in Korean Buddhism is very high. About 70~80% of lay Buddhists are women, and on the other hand, women play a significant role in Jogye Buddhism, the largest sect of Buddhism in Korea, as nuns make up half of the population. Nevertheless, women Buddhists have traditionally been limited in their ability to hold formal religious authority or leadership, and women's contributions to Buddhism and their roles have often been underestimated. Therefore, this paper will examine in depth the specific roles that lay Buddhists should play in modern Buddhism and the new leadership. Women lay Buddhists will propose ways to extend bodhisattva practices based on traditional Buddhist teachings to modern social cooperation and leadership, thereby contributing to the Buddhist community and social harmony. In particular, we will continue a detailed discussion on how female lay Buddhists can expand their role as leaders of social change, spreaders of popular teachings, and community-centered leaders in the hip trend of Korean Buddhism.

BIO: Jin Sook Nam is a Professor at Dongguk University/ Vice President of the Korean Association of Professors and Buddhists. She is a lay Buddhist and her major is Korean language and literature. She e mainly teaches writing and convergence subjects at university.

Karma Tashi Choedron and Tenzin Dadon (37)
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Empowering Voices: The Evolution of Tibetan Buddhist Women in Leadership

ABSTRACT: The role of women in Tibetan Buddhism has evolved from marginalization to leadership and empowerment. This paper explores the journey of Tibetan Buddhist women as they navigate empowerment, feminism, and leadership within their religious and cultural contexts, focusing on their roles in South and Southeast Asia. Historically, Tibetan Buddhist women faced discrimination and limited access to education and leadership roles, yet many have emerged as influential figures. The paper highlights their progress, ongoing struggles, and future potential in leadership. Addressing discrimination, the paper provides a platform for dialogue and healing, examining systemic barriers and strategies for creating inclusive environments within Tibetan Buddhist communities. Reconciliation is crucial, involving acknowledgment of past injustices and working towards healing and unity. Stories of resilience and recovery showcase how Tibetan Buddhist women use spiritual practices to overcome trauma and advocate for change, promoting gender equality and social justice. Empowerment and leadership are explored, highlighting contributions of prominent Tibetan Buddhist women leaders who challenge traditional norms. The paper celebrates their

achievements while addressing remaining challenges, aiming to create a space for dialogue, learning, and growth. By empowering marginalized voices, the paper hopes to inspire a new generation of leaders advancing gender equality within Tibetan Buddhism and beyond.

BIO: Ven. Dr. Karma Tashi Choedron (Savinder Kaur Gill) is an ordained śrāmaṇerikā with a Ph.D. in Environment and Resource Studies from Mahidol University and an M.A. in Buddhist Studies from IBC, Thailand. She is an Assistant Professor in Intersectional Development and Social Justice at the University of Nottingham Malaysia. Dr. Karma has received awards including the Outstanding Woman in Buddhism Award (2010), the Lord Dearing Award (2022), and the Team Award for Commitment to Enhancing the Research Culture and Environment (2023). She is a Fellow of Advance HE, UK, and Vice-President of the International Buddhist Confederation. In collaboration with Ven. Dr. Tenzin Dadon, Dr. Karma reviewed sexual exploitation in Buddhist practice in "Silent No More! Critical Review of Sexual Exploitation in Buddhist Practice—A Monastic Perspective." She also presented "Sacred Spaces, Silent Suffering: Sexual Abuse in Tibetan Buddhist Contexts" at the Sexual Violence in Buddhism symposium at Northwestern University, US.

Dr. Tenzin Dadon (Sonam Wangmo) became a nun in 1993 at the age of 16 in Dharamsala, India after completing high school in Bhutan. She later received her śrāmaṇerikā (Tib. getsulma) ordination from His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in Dharamsala in 1999. Tsunma Tenzin left her home country to pursue a systematic monastic education which was and to a large extent, still not available to nuns in Bhutan. Tsunma spent 13 years (1993-2006) at Jamyang Choling Institute for Buddhist Dialectics (a nonsectarian nunnery institute) in Gharoh, Lower Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, North India studying Buddhist philosophy, Tibetan language and literature. Tsunma Tenzin holds Master of Arts (M.A) degrees in Buddhist Studies from Delhi University, India. Tsunma Dr. Tenzin Dadon completed her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Gender and Religion at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2017, focusing her anthropological thesis on nuns in Bhutan with the aim of improving the status and living conditions of nuns in her native country. Tsunma is also the first Himalayan Buddhist nun to obtain a Ph.D. Tsunma Dr. Tenzin Dadon has co-authored two books with Tsunma Dr. Karma Choedron titled, 'Two Gurus One Message' published on 12 November 2019 coinciding the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and 'I Can Be Enlightened Too' pending publication in the near future.

Wednesday June 18

Paper 3

Creating Models for Effective Change and Healing

9:00-11:30 AM

Moderator: Jeannine Viau

Mia Livingston (71)

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Healing Trauma through Sangha

ABSTRACT: This is my story of how I recovered from complex trauma with the help of a broader definition of Sangha. This diagnosis is also known as “complex post-traumatic stress disorder” or CPTSD. It has been referred to as “an affliction of the powerless” (Herman, 1992). Officially it’s defined as “exposure to prolonged or repetitive events of an extremely threatening or horrific nature from which escape is difficult or impossible, including repeated sexual or physical abuse” (ICD-11, 2022).

BIO: Mia Livingston has trained as a Zen Buddhist lay practitioner with the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives in England for 20 years. Her parents came from Sweden and the Philippines, and she grew up in their countries as well as across Southeast Asia and southern Africa. She is based in the United States with her husband and youngest stepson. A former journalist and psychotherapist, she is a doctoral candidate focussing on embodied psychotherapy and autoethnography at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. Conference attendees are welcome to connect with her on www.linkedin.com/in/mialivingston, <http://mialivingston.com> and <http://facebook.com/msmialivingston>.

Thich Nu Lien Anh (Le Thi My Hieu) and Shannon Chang (33)

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Healing at the Crossroads: Integrating Buddhist Teachings, Mental Health Counseling, and Societal Oppression in Working with Domestic Violence Survivors

ABSTRACT: This paper examines the intersection of domestic violence, oppression, mental health, and the therapeutic approach based on the foundation of Buddhaddhamma. We aim to highlight how this framework can be harmonized to catalyze healing and resilience. Drawing on our experiences as a Buddhist nun and a layperson training to be mental health counselors at Naropa University, a Buddhist-inspired university in the US, we share insights from our work with DV survivors at Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence (SPAN). We discuss how the Dharma can complement Eurocentric psychology by providing tools for clinical work that support clients and counselors. Furthermore, in order to support this work through Buddhaddhamma, we advocate that the root causes of DV must be addressed with a

lens of societal oppression in mind. A holistic, equitable system of care only exists when our global community collectively takes responsibility against violence.

BIO: Bhikkhuni Thich Nu Lien Anh was ordained at the age of thirteen by the Most Venerable Thich Nu Hoa Lien at Ngoc Phuoc Vihara following the Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation (Đạo Phật Khất sĩ Việt Nam) tradition. She received a comprehensive education in secular subjects and Buddhadhamma, deepening her studies in information technology, American and English literature, and Buddhadhamma in both English and Vietnamese. In 2022, her journey brought her to the United States, where she pursued a master's degree in Clinical Mental Health

Counseling at Naropa University, Colorado. Bhikkhuni Lien Anh's professional work focuses on integrating Eurocentric Psychotherapy and spiritual wisdom. Her contributions include organizing and teaching meditation retreats for Westerners, counseling survivors of domestic violence, providing psychological and emotional support to high school students, and presenting professional conferences. Coming to Sakyadhita 2025, she looks forward to sharing insight from her personal spiritual practice and learning from the profound wisdom of others across cultures and regions.

Shannon Chang was born and raised in Southern California to Buddhist parents from Taiwan. She studied Sociology in undergrad and did her honor's thesis on the scarcity of Asian-American female leaders in US corporations. During and after college she has been fortunate enough to travel to more than 60 countries. Although raised Buddhist, her personal relationship with it as an adult began through attending her first Vipassana retreat in 2018. Her professional experiences have ranged from launching a program to train victims of the conflict in Colombia with job skills, managing projects that connected New Zealanders with Latin America, and training to be a mental health therapist at a domestic violence center in Colorado, US. Having just finished a Master's degree at Naropa University in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, she plans to work with under-resourced clients and create the change needed for a more just world. Shannon speaks English, Mandarin, and Spanish.

Sandra Ng Siow San (58)

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Reflections on Pilgrimage, Research and Coping with Change

ABSTRACT: This is a personal reflection on navigating the intersecting identities of researcher and pilgrim, inspired by my PhD research on Buddhist pilgrim experiences — a journey that catalyzed personal and professional transformation. Using Ray and McFadden's notions of the web (2001, p. 203) and the quilt (2001, p. 205), I explore how they illuminate my research process and lived experience as both researcher and pilgrim. Just as my interviewees' journeys unfolded as acts of meaning-making, my own candidature also became a pilgrimage: a transformative dharma path shaped by uncertainties, insights, and changes. This turning point prompted deeper and intentional engagement with Buddhist wisdoms. Amidst the pressures of academia, I

turned to creative practices, like painting and journalling, as tools for mental health and resilience. These practices became vital threads in my “quilt” of coping mechanisms, cultivating spaces for self-reflection and compassion. While I was not yet a certified coach, my mindfulness practice and growing interest in coaching philosophies were already shaping how I approached and navigated change, challenge and the support of myself and others. These perspectives, coupled with Buddhist wisdoms, deepened my appreciation of the processual nature of pilgrimage, where the journey itself is the destination. By centering personal experiences as a lens for broader themes of mental health and resilience, this essay seeks to highlight the transformative power of slow, deliberate practice as an antidote to the fast-paced demands of modern life, thereby bridging scholarship and lived experiences, and offering personal realization, acceptance and nurturance.

BIO: Sandra Ng Siow San’s interest in human journeys, practices, experiences, and meaning-making continues to inspire, challenge, renew, and nurture her work across diverse spaces as a learner, practitioner, educator, Design Thinker, and certified Wayfinder Life Coach through the Martha Beck Institute. The collection of stories and insights from her PhD research project helped to engage, connect, and expand her cognitive, emotional, and somatic awareness, encouraging her to look beyond and delve deeper into pilgrimage not merely as a categorical journey to sacred places but as an archetypal human experience. She welcomes questions or comments at siousan@gmail.com to extend the conversation beyond this page.

Amnuaypond Kidpromma (82)

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Women and the Ritual of Sacralization and Commodification of Buddhist Amulets in Thailand

ABSTRACT: This paper highlights the traditional and changing roles and positions of women in the ritual of sacralization and commodification of Buddhist amulet-medallions (talismans) in contemporary Thailand. The earlier studies by Stengs (1998), Tambiah (1984), Kitiarsa (2007), Soontravanich (2013), Seeger (2013), and Reynolds (2019) among others, suggest that religious objects such as amulets and various Buddhist sacra are male gendered. The rituals and the meaning of such material sacra are read, conveyed, and sustained by male monastics and their lineages. Amulets are sacralized and commodified by men. Those who authenticate amulets are known as “amulet experts” (Sean Phra or Nak Leng Phra). On the other hand, women are traditionally thought of as an ‘untouchable’ in the sacred domain due to their filthy and polluted body. Their interaction with such sacred objects is believed to desecralize or even destroy the power of the amulets. These cultural reasons are given to substantiate why women are excluded from involvement in the amulet cult and from participating in its exchange circuits. This paper, as part of ongoing research, challenges these cultural gender assumptions and argues that there are more women take an active role in the ritual of amulets sacralization and commodification. Their

new roles in the amulet cult as a ritual performer and an amulet expert entail gender transition in contemporary Thai society.

BIO: Dr Amnuaypond Kidpromma earns her PhD in Religious Studies from Lancaster University. She is an assistant professor on Religious Studies at the Department of Philosophy and Religion, Chiang Mai University. Her research interests include gender studies and Anthropology of religion (Hinduism and Buddhism). Her current researches are on Transgenderism and religious belief and practices and, women and sacralised objects and amulets in Thailand and Dying and Death in Baul of Bengal.

Cindy Rasicot (77)

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Bhikkhuni Dhammananda's Life and Legacy on Women's Empowerment and Modern Buddhism

ABSTRACT: Bhikkhuni Dhammananda defied convention to become the first fully ordained woman in the Theravada Buddhist tradition in Thailand. Her story is one of courage, patience, and compassion. Dubbed the "Rebel Monk" by the Thai press, she endured harsh criticism and personal attacks from the media, the public, and senior orthodox Thai monks, following her novice ordination in 2001. Throughout the controversy, Venerable Dhammananda remained patient and determined in her stance. Her story, her life, and her courage are an example to all of us of what it means to speak truth to power. The presentation focuses on Bhikkhuni Dhammananda's importance as a feminist religious leader for Buddhist women seeking empowerment. The two qualities that distinguish her leadership are courage and compassion. The discussion will begin with an overview about her academic/activist background, followed by her path to ordination, and conclude with her vision for empowered Buddhist women leaders in the future. Venerable Dhammananda is a highly engaging speaker, internationally recognized Buddhist scholar, socially engaged feminist, and environmental activist. She is currently the Abbess of Songdhammakalyani Temple, the first monastery established by and for Buddhist women in Thailand. She has led the way for women to be ordained and inspired 285 women to go forth as Bhikkhunis in her country. She has offered temporary novice ordination to more than 1,000 women. In 2019, the BBC named her to its list of 100 of the most influential women in the world because of her tireless work to re-establish the Theravada monastic lineage in Asia.

BIO: Cindy Rasicot is a retired psychotherapist, spiritual teacher, and author of *This Fresh Existence: Heart Teachings from Bhikkhuni Dhammananda*. The book describes the remarkable life of Venerable Dhammananda and shares her gentle wisdom about how to live a more powerful and compassionate life. In 2005 Cindy travelled to Thailand with her family where she met Bhikkhuni Dhammananda — an encounter that changed her life forever. She wrote about her spiritual journey in the award-winning memoir *Finding Venerable Mother: A Daughter's Spiritual Quest to Thailand*. Cindy received novice temporary ordination twice from Bhikkhuni Dhammananda at her all-

female monastery, Songdhammakalyani Temple, in Nakon Pathom, Thailand. She previously hosted the YouTube program, Casual Buddhism, a series of conversations with Venerable Dhammananda about spiritual issues and Buddhist practices. Guests have included Jack Kornfield, Sylvia Boorstein, Joan Halifax, and many others. Cindy lives in Pt. Richmond, California. Learn more about Cindy at www.cindyrasicot.com.

Wednesday June 18

Paper 4A

Dharma Teachers: Authority & Transmission

12:30-1:40 PM

Moderator: Tomomi Ito

Christie Chang (7)

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In Her Footsteps: Celebrating the Multifaceted Legacy of Bhikshuni Dr. Shi Heng-Ching

ABSTRACT: This paper pays tribute to Bhikshuni Dr. Shi Heng-Ching (1943–2024), a luminary in Buddhist scholarship and education. Her legacy encompasses academic achievements, digital preservation of Buddhist texts, and the advancement of Bhikshuni ordination. Interweaving academic rigor with personal reflections, the paper explores her enduring impact on the Buddhist community and the author's life. It celebrates her dedication to promoting Buddhist values, her compassionate mentorship, and her role in bridging traditional practices with contemporary needs.

BIO: Dr. Christie (Yu-ling) Chang is a linguist, translator, and educator who led CIEE study abroad programs at National Chengchi University in Taipei (2001–2020). A prominent Buddhist activist, she served as President of Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women (2009–2013) and was elected a Joint President of the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) in 2017, being the only laywoman among the eight presidents. During the pandemic, Dr. Chang continued leading Sakyadhita Taiwan, writing, and moderating webinars, including her column "Dharma ABC" for Humanity magazine. She also began sharing compassion through music, releasing her album M. Sam in the Met(t)averse (<https://ladiesgentlemen.lnk.to/SamintheMettaverse>) and spearheading a global peace movement through the multilingual song We All Have Moms (10-minute, 5-language remix: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-x3RhZnlpY>). Recently, she has traveled extensively with her husband, Dr. Frank Tien, sharing their experience teaching in Bhutan and participating in historic interreligious dialogues among women at the Vatican.

The Dharma Teacher Venerable Dhammawati

ABSTRACT: There are many details and contributions of Ven. Dr. Bhikkhuni Dhammawati, my revered Dhamma teacher who lives, practices, and teaches in Nepal. Presently, she is 91 years old and continues to do various kinds of religious activities. This paper highlights Ven. Dhammawati Guruma's practice of the Dhamma and her authority and transmission to propagate Buddhism. Since a book of her life up until 2016 has already been published, this paper foregrounds her work for the benefit of national and international students between the period of 2016 to 2024. It will show how she serves the Dhamma in the face of continued struggles and challenges.

BIO: Ven. Shraddha Gautami is a Theravada Buddhist nun. She was born in 1985, Kathmandu, Nepal. She received her ordination at the age of thirteen. She has been learning Buddhism in Nepal since her childhood, and received her further education in Buddhism and English in Sri Lanka. She has completed her Diploma in English and completed her Bachelor in Arts degree (BA) in 2008. She received her Master of Arts degree (MA) in 2010 from University of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka. She continued her studies in Buddhism and Pali and awarded by the Philosophy of Doctorate (PhD) in 2019 from Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies in Sri Lanka. Her title of research topic is "A Comparative Study of the Origin and Development of Śramaṇa Tradition and the Buddhist Order (Saṃgha)". Meanwhile she was awarded by Glorious Sun Group scholarship from Hong Kong University in the academic year 2020/2021 and completed the one-year Master degree in Buddhist Counseling course successfully. After completed her studies, she has been appointed as a visiting lecturer in Postgraduate Institute Pali and Buddhist Studies in University of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka.

The Master Of The Nuns Huyn Lien: The Beacon Of Vietnamese Khat Si Buddhism In the Central Highlands

ABSTRACT: The Kinh people migrated to the Central Highlands in multiple waves. Alongside lay Buddhists, some monastics ventured into this new land to spread the Dharma. Influenced by the Buddhist Revival Movement and the establishment of the An Nam Buddhist Association, monks undertook the mission of bringing the Dharma to the highlands. Notably, Bhikkhuni Master Huynh Lien played a pioneering role in establishing and developing Khat Si Buddhism along the nation's frontier. Khat Si Buddhism is a distinctly Vietnamese tradition. Under the leadership of Bhikkhuni Master Huynh Lien, it rapidly expanded in the Central Highlands. Facing religious discrimination under the Ngo Dinh Diem administration, she led and participated in protests advocating religious freedom. She also advised the women's rights movement and spearheaded demonstrations demanding the release of political prisoners in Dak Lak and Kon Tum. Bhikkhuni Master Huynh Lien established monasteries to provide

training for nuns, founded orphanages for the elderly and children, and set up schools for underprivileged students. Additionally, she collaborated with hospitals to offer medical aid to those in need. Recognizing the importance of monastic education, she actively mobilized resources to build Buddhist schools and supported nuns in studying abroad to strengthen the monastic community. She was an exemplary disciple of her master, Bhikkhuni Master Huynh Lien who combined humility with resolute leadership. She nurtured many accomplished nuns within the Khat Si tradition, particularly in the Central Highlands. Gifted in poetry and literature, she transformed Buddhist scriptures and commentaries into verse, making them more accessible to future generations. Her literary contributions, including poetry and prose, infused Vietnamese literature with the essence of the Buddha's teachings.

With a steadfast commitment to propagating the Dharma, Bhikkhuni Master Huynh Lien played a crucial role in shaping a uniquely Vietnamese Buddhism in the Central Highlands. Her efforts not only strengthened Buddhist influence in the region but also contributed to safeguarding the national frontier and illuminating the red basalt land with the light of Buddhism. This study aims to highlight her remarkable contributions and the impact of Khat Si Buddhism in the Central Highlands.

BIO: Thich Nu Thuong Hue is currently a student majoring in Religious Studies at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City. She is Deputy Secretary of the Chinese Buddhist Translation Center, Vietnam Buddhist Research Institute.

Thich Thien Phu graduated with a Master's degree from the Vietnam Buddhist University in Hue in 2022, and currently works as a PhD student at the Vietnam Buddhist University in Hanoi where she is a member of the Executive Committee of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, Gia Lai province. She is a member of the Gia Lai Provincial Dharma Propagation Committee and a teacher of Gia Lai Provincial Buddhist College

Thich Thien Phu and Phan Thi An Phu (70)

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VENERABLE NUN DIEU KHONG – A PILLAR OF THE VIETNAMESE BUDDHIST NUN COMMUNITY IN THE 20TH CENTURY

ABSTRACT: In the 1930s, Vietnamese Buddhism appeared to be a means of bolstering people's faith during the nation's turmoil. Advances were made with the global Buddhist revival movements and the initiation of Buddhist reform throughout the three regions of Vietnam, the establishment of the An Nam Buddhist Association led by renowned monks from the central region such as Venerable Tinh Khiết, Giac Tien, Tri Thu, Don Hau, along with kings and intellectuals such as King Bao Dai, Nguyen Khoa Toan, and Queen Mother Tu Cung, Le Dinh Tham, among others. However, the flourishing of Vietnamese Buddhism today would not have been possible without the contributions of Venerable Nun Dieu Khong. After ordaining, Venerable Nun Dieu

Khong established many orphanages from Hue to Ho Chi Minh City to care for unfortunate children. With education as her mission, she founded many nuns' monasteries to provide spaces for nuns to study and practice, and participate in the establishment of Buddhist cultural centers, and Buddhist academies. In addition, she founded women's associations and developed vocational training classes. Venerable Nun Dieu Khong also launched the Nguyệt San Liên Hoa (Lotus Journal) which became a publication center for Buddhist scriptures. Venerable Nun Dieu Khong embodied the Bodhisattva spirit, with a noble aspiration despite being a woman, demonstrating the spirit of "Compassion" and "Wisdom" to illuminate the path of Vietnamese Buddhist nuns. Through this, authors gain a deeper understanding of the philosophical, ethical, and spiritual contributions she made to Vietnamese Buddhism.

BIO: Thich Thien Phu graduated with a Master's degree from the Vietnam Buddhist University in Hue in 2022, and currently works as a PhD student at the Vietnam Buddhist University in Hanoi where she is a member of the Executive Committee of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, Gia Lai province. She is a member of the Gia Lai Provincial Dharma Propagation Committee and a teacher of Gia Lai Provincial Buddhist College

Wednesday June 18
Paper 4B
Roundtable on Sexual Violence
1:50-3:00 PM
Moderator: Sharon Suh

Karma Chodron, Tenzin Dadon, Ann Gleig, Sarah Jacoby, & Amy Langenberg (39)

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Buddhism and Sexual Abuse Across Cultures and Contexts

ABSTRACT: Sexual misconduct and abuse are old problems in Buddhist monastic and lay contexts. Issues involving rape and sexual consent are attested in the Vinaya, and have affected Buddhist communities across cultures, languages, and lineages ever since. The problems of sexual misconduct and abuse are ones that few Buddhists wish to expose, but they cause indelible harm to Buddhist disciples, including especially nuns, young monks, girls, and women. All the panelists participated in what appears to be the first-ever academic conference focused on Buddhism and Sexual Violence, which was held at Northwestern University on October 25, 2024. One highlight of the event was its international scope, with speakers from Tibet, Bhutan, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka, as well as the United States. Another highlight was the way the conference enacted a survivor-centered approach to the problem of Buddhism and sexual violence, featuring many speakers who shared their first-hand experiences of this harm and its ramifications. This roundtable discussion, moderated by Sakyadhita president Sharon Suh, seeks to continue the conversations started at the 2019 Sakyadhita gathering, and at Northwestern University in the fall of 2024, with the aim of forming a broader coalition of Buddhist women who seek to reduce the harm of sexual misconduct and abuse in Buddhist practice settings.

BIO:

Ven. Dr. Karma Tashi Choedron (Savinder Kaur Gill) is an ordained *śrāmaṇerikā* with a Ph.D. in Environment and Resource Studies from Mahidol University and an M.A. in Buddhist Studies from IBC, Thailand. She is an Assistant Professor in Intersectional Development and Social Justice at the University of Nottingham Malaysia. Dr. Karma has received multiple awards, including the Outstanding Woman in Buddhism Award (2010), the Lord Dearing Award (2022), and the Team Award for Commitment to Enhancing the Research Culture and Environment (2023). She is a Fellow of Advance HE, UK, and Vice-President of the International Buddhist Confederation. In collaboration with Ven. Dr. Tenzin Dadon, Dr. Karma has critically reviewed sexual exploitation in Buddhist practice in "Silent No More! Critical Review of Sexual

Exploitation in Buddhist Practice—A Monastic Perspective." (Sakyadhita, 2019). Additionally, she presented "Sacred Spaces, Silent Suffering: Sexual Abuse in Tibetan Buddhist Contexts" at the Sexual Violence in Buddhism symposium held on 25 October 2024 at Northwestern University, US.

Dr. Tenzin Dadon (Sonam Wangmo) became a nun in 1993 at the age of 16 in Dharamsala, India after completing high school in Bhutan. She later received her *śrāmaṇerikā* (Tib. getsulma) ordination from His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in Dharamsala in 1999. Tsunma Tenzin left her home country to pursue a systematic monastic education which was and to a large extent, still not available to nuns in Bhutan. Tsunma spent 13 years (1993-2006) at Jamyang Choling Institute for Buddhist Dialectics (a nonsectarian nunnery institute) in Gharoh, Lower Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, North India studying Buddhist philosophy, Tibetan language and literature. Tsunma Tenzin holds Master of Arts (M.A) degrees in Buddhist Studies from Delhi University, India. Tsunma Dr. Tenzin Dadon completed her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Gender and Religion at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2017, focusing her anthropological thesis on nuns in Bhutan with the aim of improving the status and living conditions of nuns in her native country. Tsunma is also the first Himalayan Buddhist nun to obtain a Ph.D. Tsunma Dr. Tenzin Dadon has co-authored two books with Tsunma Dr. Karma Choedron titled, 'Two Gurus One Message' published on 12 November 2019 coinciding the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and 'I Can Be Enlightened Too' pending publication in the near future.

Ann Gleig is Associate Professor of Religion and Cultural Studies at the University of Central Florida. She is author of *American Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Modernity* (Yale University Press, 2019) and co-editor with Scott A. Mitchell of *The Oxford Handbook of American Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, 2024). Her most recent project is a study of sexual abuse in North American and transnational Buddhism, co-written with Amy Langenberg, to be published in 2026 by Yale University Press. She is also an editor for the *Journal of Global Buddhism*.

Sarah H. Jacoby is a professor in the Religious Studies Department at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She specializes in Tibetan Buddhist studies, with research interests in Buddhist revelation, religious auto/biography, Tibetan literature, gender and sexuality, translation studies, and the history of eastern Tibet. She is the author of *Love and Liberation: Autobiographical Writings of the Tibetan Buddhist Visionary Sera Khandro* (Columbia University Press, 2014), co-author of *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2025), and co-editor of *Buddhism Beyond the Monastery: Tantric Practices and their Performers in Tibet and the Himalayas* (Brill, 2009). She has recently written articles on Buddhism and motherhood as well as the history of Vajrayāna sexuality, and she is currently finishing a complete Tibetan-English translation of the autobiography of Sera Khandro Dawai Dorje (1892-1940).

Amy Paris Langenberg is Professor of Religious Studies at Eckerd College in Florida, USA. She specializes in South Asian Buddhism, with a focus on gender, sexuality, and female monasticisms. She is author of *Birth in Buddhism: The Suffering Fetus and Female Freedom* (Routledge, 2017) and has published articles in *History of Religions*, the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Religion Compass*, *Religious Studies Review*, and the *Journal of Global Buddhism*. Her most recent project is a study of sexual abuse in North American and transnational Buddhism, co-written with Ann Gleig, to be published in 2026 by Yale University Press.

Thursday June 19

Paper 5

Buddhist Networks - Care, Education, & Transformation

9:00-11:30 AM

Moderator: Darcie Price-Wallace

Malia D. Wong (51)

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Planting Seeds: Teaching Buddhist Values in a Secular World

ABSTRACT: This presentation will explore innovative approaches to teaching Buddhist principles for social harmony in a Catholic university setting, particularly when engaging with a non-religious student body and navigating the sensitivities of neighboring Buddhist communities that may be more culturally or linguistically focused within. By framing Buddhist teachings such as mindfulness, compassion, and interdependence in universal and secular terms, respect, inclusion, and social harmony can be fostered. This presentation will examine some strategies for balancing interfaith engagement with honoring the preferences of Buddhist groups that may be hesitant to welcome external religious perspectives.

BIO: Dr. Malia D. Wong is an Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies, Chaminade University of Honolulu.

Catherine Schuetze (72)

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Women Using Global Buddhist Networks to Leverage Better Outcomes for Animals

ABSTRACT: This talk discusses ways to profoundly benefit animals by leveraging local and international networks of Buddhists and Buddhist women. To demonstrate this, I will use an international veterinary-led animal welfare organization, Vets Beyond Borders, as a case study. Vets Beyond Borders was formed by a collaboration of primarily Buddhist women and female veterinarians who wanted to develop animal welfare programs in South Asia. Several programs were subsequently established in traditional Buddhist communities in India by utilizing local and international Buddhist networks. Globally, women are more likely to support animal welfare and rescue programs. They are also more likely to volunteer in community organizations. Additionally, more women occupy leadership positions in community and international animal welfare organizations. Once a male-dominated profession, Western veterinary science has transitioned to consist primarily of women. Asian veterinary graduates are also increasingly female, transitioning in modernity due to increased opportunities for women. Veterinary-run programs can promote ethical and practical solutions to animal suffering and prevent ongoing killing. For example,

sterilizing street dogs for population control is an alternative to killing them. This presentation explores the potential of these networks, focusing on women's leadership, where women dominate animal welfare industries, to establish sustainable initiatives that integrate Buddhist values and veterinary expertise. Buddhist teachings on alleviating suffering naturally extend to animals, making animal welfare a spiritual and ethical priority in Buddhist communities. Animals are also the only other realm of migrating beings with which humans have direct contact. This presentation highlights successful collaborations between Buddhist leaders, lay practitioners, veterinarians, and animal welfare advocates. Drawing on examples like the SARAH program in Sikkim, it describes how Buddhist ethics inspired new veterinary programs, animal rescue shelters, and community education initiatives. These efforts demonstrate how local and international Buddhist networks can mobilize resources, promote awareness, and foster cultural resonance. Women's leadership is central to these programs, bringing unique perspectives and community trust. Women often take active roles in grassroots fundraising, volunteer coordination, and public education, ensuring the cultural and ethical alignment of animal welfare programs. Their involvement enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of these initiatives, especially in rural and underserved areas where animals play critical roles in livelihoods and ecosystems.

BIO: Dr. Catherine Schuetze, BVSc, BVBiol, CVA, BAPS (Hons), PhD candidate, The University of Sydney.

Diki Palmu Sherpa (73)

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Female Veterinarians, Community Networks and Animal Welfare in a Traditional Buddhist Society

ABSTRACT: This talk describes the transition from killing street dogs to modern techniques of desexing and vaccinating them in Sikkim, a Buddhist state in India. As a female leader and veterinarian in our traditional Buddhist community, I faced many challenges but also found great strength from my female Buddhist networks and my own Buddhist practice. I will discuss the challenges and opportunities of being a Buddhist woman in a rapidly modernizing Buddhist community. Further, I discuss how socially engaged Buddhist programs like the SARAH (Sikkim Anti-Rabies Animal Health) program can utilize Buddhist practice for personal development and Buddhist ideals of compassion and equanimity to promote animal welfare and public health in the community. In 2005, to stop the government from continuing mass street dog shootings, my veterinary colleagues and I developed a humane and compassionate dog population management program. The SARAH program used modern desexing and mass anti-rabies vaccination methods to control the dog population and prevent rabies deaths in animals and humans. The program collaborates with two international animal welfare organizations, which came about through international Buddhist networks. We developed this unique holistic, long-term, and sustainable state-wide anti-rabies, animal health, and welfare program. It is the first state-wide government-

sanctioned and funded initiative in India and possibly Asia. I ensured that mass dog shootings were banned in future, changing to a non-violent approach to control the street dog population and rabies, which is more accepted by our community. I have trained many veterinarians and paravets in these protocols, and our program has influenced and supported similar work in other states of India and abroad, multiplying the benefits. Despite the struggles and working continuously without a break, we have achieved what we thought was impossible. Our program is stronger than ever after twenty years of committed work. As a female veterinarian in a leadership position, I was in charge of the clinical side of the program. I faced personal challenges and found strengths in our conservative Buddhist community. I will discuss how I used the strengths of my women's networks and female-led community groups like Ngung Ney practice. Women are key educators in the home and community. They set society's moral and ethical standards. Utilizing them for public education and participation was key to the program's success. I encouraged the next generation of female veterinarians and paravets, training them to be strong leaders for animal welfare. Now, an all-female team runs dog desexing and anti-rabies vaccination programs in remote villages and regions. The SARA program practices Dharma through socially engaged Buddhism in the community, helping the helpless animals. Women leaders in the program and community are an essential part of that.

BIO: Dr. Diki Palmu, Assistant Director and Animal Husbandry Superindant and Veterinary Services Department, Government of Sikkim.

Rachelle Saruya (84)

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From Making a "Vow" to Raising Children in a Buddhist Way: The Path and Progression in a Myanmar Buddhist Mother's Religiosity

ABSTRACT: It has been suggested that the lived experience and symbolism of motherhood has helped Theravada Buddhism to flourish in Southeast Asia (Andaya 2002). Yet, childlessness also arguably has helped drive its growth, insofar as women who decide to renounce the householder life are represented among renunciants (Langenberg 2017). This paper deals with the former, looking at the world of aspiring and emerging Buddhist mothers, their wishes to conceive and give birth to children, and then the pregnancy and birthing experiences that will help define them as lay Buddhists. Utilizing ethnographic methods, I compare women's lived experiences in Myanmar, with those who live in the Burmese diasporic communities in Japan and in the US. This project highlights Buddhist women's own voices and experiences, documenting the changes in their religiosity, and in short, helps us to understand what being a Buddhist mother in and outside of Myanmar means.

BIO: Rachelle Saruya is a Visiting Researcher at the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia at the University of Tokyo. She recently received her PhD in the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto (2023) and is currently working on her manuscript on the

making of Myanmar Buddhist nuns through their education, code of conduct, and the spaces in which the nuns live their lives. In addition to her work on nuns, she has also written about laywomen and their role in spreading Abhidhamma teachings transnationally, Burmese American girl children and young women's experiences with Theravada Buddhism in the SF Bay Area, and on wishing-for-children rituals in the scriptures and in contemporary Myanmar women's practices.

Kustiani (35)

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Building Education Through Temple Education Program: A Story in Countering Mobile Game Addiction and Moslem TPQ

ABSTRACT: This presentation explores the theme of "Buddhism and Education: Innovation and Social Harmony." Children's habit of playing games with mobile phones discourages their use of critical thinking skills and limits their ability to learn. These traits are evident in Buddhist children in the Central Java region of Indonesia. This talk will discuss how a temple program called Taman Pendalaman Dhamma (TPD) has been implemented in Central Java to help educate and instill positive character traits in children. The program teaches children to memorize the suttas and study general subjects such as mathematics, science, geography and English. TPD is evidence based and illustrates how educating children in The Dhamma builds their character. There are many challenges faced in implementing TPD, since this is an activity that has never been done before. In memorizing suttas, it is important to provide information about the meaning and value of the suttas to help build positive character traits in the Buddhist children. General subjects must be taught and this requires a competent teacher who has broad insight and experience in teaching TPD.

BIO: Kustiani born on 28th March 1985 in Indonesia. She completed her PhD in Buddhist Studies at the University of Kelaniya Sri Lanka in 2013. Until now, she has devoted herself for more than 12 years in her birth country, Indonesia, and especially in Syailendra Buddhist College, to build Buddhist religious education and empowering Buddhist communities in various regions in Indonesia. She completed her doctoral degree with a thesis entitled "Psychological Process of Buddhist Ethics based on Abhidhammic Analysis". Not only teaching, but also she is conducting research and community service activities. She wrote many articles on various themes; Abhidhamma, gender, economics and so on. She participated in various international conferences such as the ATBU, IABU, and Sakyadhita Buddhist Women conferences. In the field of community service, Kustiani became the driving force and founder of a women's cooperative organization called Prema Mart. Currently Prema Mart has several business branches such as Prema Bakery, Prema Batik, Prema Jamu, Prema Oil, and Prema Organic. Starting in late 2024, he and his team initiated the establishment of after-school learning for Buddhist children to reduce game addiction.

From Monasticism to Modernity: Exploring the Lives of Former Himalayan Buddhist Nuns in Transition

ABSTRACT: This paper is based on part of my PhD research entitled "The Historical Documentation of the Mahayana Nuns in the Himalayan Region." One aspect of my study includes recording the lives and experiences of former nuns of the region, who now reside in Europe and live secular lives. The study aims to record the transition from a monastic to a secular life, the reason for the transition, the duality, and the problems and difficulties they encountered. During my PhD field study, I have visited over 50 nunneries across the Indian Himalayan region and interacted with numerous nuns- young and old. I have observed the longing to leave their homeland and nunneries, to start a new life abroad was a dream for many, making me realize the neglected issue of not properly educating nuns on such a sensitive and important issue that could so seriously impact and change their lives. I was able to travel to Europe recently, with the help of two amazing people, (Sister Dominique and Brother Olivier). Their crucial support helped me to travel abroad to Europe to meet with former nuns. This, in turn, fulfills my long-standing desire to learn more about the lifestyle of nuns who have given back their monastic vows, after they leave the nunnery. I was able to interview them in the context of their "new" lives and to bear first-hand witness to some of the outcomes of this choice. These personal encounters allowed me to observe firsthand the samsaric circumstances in which these former nuns find themselves.

BIO: Venerable Genden Lhamu was born on July 15, 1991, to Dakpa Tsewang and the late Nima Choton in Kralling, Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh. She was ordained as a nun at the young age of 9 at Singsor Ani Gonpa in Lhou, under the guidance of her grand-aunt, Ani Lobsang Pema. Her formal education began relatively late, in 2005, driven by a strong determination to learn. That same year, she was admitted to the Central Institute of Himalayan Culture Studies in Dahung, West Kameng district, an institution founded by her Guru, the late His Eminence 13th Tsona Rinpoche, to provide higher education opportunities to underprivileged students. Currently enrolled in the Ph.D. program in the same department, she is conducting research on ""Historical Documentation on the Mahayana Nuns in the Himalayan Region of India,"" under the supervision of Prof. Indra Narain Singh. As the only active nun and research scholar from the Monpa tribe, her research spans four Himalayan states: Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh, focusing on the relatively underexplored subject of nunneries and the lives of nuns. She has also participated in various national and international conferences and seminars, contributing to the academic understanding of Buddhist monasticism and gender.

Thursday June 19

Paper 6A

Redefining Tradition, Making Transitions, & Expanding Education

12:30-2:00 PM

Moderator: Linda Sun Crowder

Zhi Quan Shi (56)

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The Dharma-Propagating Effort of Post-War Taiwanese Bhikṣuṇīs: Venerable Tian Yi, Tzu Hui, and Tzu Jung

ABSTRACT: During the development of post-war Taiwanese Buddhism, the bhikṣuṇī community demonstrated profound dharma-propagating contributions, playing an indispensable role in the institutionalization and modernization of Buddhism in Taiwan. This study focuses on three prominent bhikṣuṇīs—Venerable Tian Yi, Tzu Hui, and Tzu Jung—examining their contributions in the domains of Conferral of Precepts, education, and dharma propagation. Venerable Tian Yi, born during the Japanese colonial period, witnessed and participated in transforming Taiwanese Buddhism from the colonial era to the post-war revival period. Through her leadership in the Precept Altar, she significantly elevated the religious status of bhikṣuṇīs. Meanwhile, Venerable Tzu Hui and Tzu Jung, starting in 1953 under the guidance of Master Hsing Yun, dedicated over six decades to dharma propagation, achieving remarkable accomplishments in education, culture, charity, and spiritual cultivation. This study examines these three bhikṣuṇīs within the context of post-war Taiwanese Buddhism, exploring how they laid a solid foundation for the development of bhikṣuṇīs community in Taiwan and highlighting their profound contributions to Taiwanese Buddhism.

BIO: Shih Zhi Quan is doctoral student in the Department of Buddhist Studies at Fo Guang University. Ordained under Venerable Master Hsing Yun in 2016. Formerly worked at the Fo Guang Shan Institute of Humanistic Buddhism. Research interests include the development of Buddhist Bhikkhuni communities in Taiwan and the practice of Humanistic Buddhism.

Ayya Yeshe (2)

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Nun of the Slum: Bodhichitta Foundation and its Barefoot Buddhism

ABSTRACT: This is the story of how, as a young nun, I met the Ambedkarite Buddhist community who live in Central India, in Nagpur an industrial city in Central India – the heartland of Dalit activism(people previously assigned “untouchable”) and Hindu fundamentalism. They converted to Buddhism in the 1950s to escape the Indian caste

system. Their leader, Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar was the Martin Luther King Jr of his people. One day I was in Bodhgaya and the difference between the privileged foreigners I saw in air conditioned temples with 6 foot high barbed wire fence out the front vs the poverty stricken Indian women carrying bricks on their head, married at 16 and dead by 50 made me question, if the Buddha was alive today, which side of the fence would he be on. I felt that I should repay the Buddhas kindness and help girls, as I am a survivor of rape, and male violence. I have also seen a lot of emotional and spiritual abuse preventing women from thriving in Buddhism. At first when I went to Nagpur I found people who had faith in the 3 Gems and human rights, but didn't know much about Buddhism. They would ask me to do Pooja and bless babies dying of diarrhea, women would secretly whisper that, like in every community, there were issues with domestic violence. I realized it was patronizing of me to chant for these people when I could do so much more as a Westerner. And so Bodhicitta Foundation started. We have been in Nagpur 16 years and now have a girls home, 4 study centres after school, make 6000 meals per year for Indian children, sponsor 55 children for school, have a women's job training center and offer Buddhist Sunday schools, retreats, and more. The Ambedkarite people have moved me with their joy in the face of oppression, their fierce loyalty to family and community despite the terrible history of oppression they faced, unable to enter temples, get water from wells, ride horses, own fertile land or earn a good wage or get education.

BIO: Ayaa Yeshe is the founder of Bodhicitta Foundation – a charity working with ex “untouchable” Indian Buddhists in Nagpur, Central India (mainly women and children) where she lived for 13 years near a slum. She is also the Abbess of Bodhicitta Dakini Monastery in the snowy climes of Tasmania, Australia - a Theravada/Himalayan Tradition fusion that is woman focused. Ayaa was ordained as a Bhikshuni by Thich Nhat Hanh. Ayaa is the author of Everyday Enlightenment published by Harper Collins, an International Teacher, Bhikshuni, Sacred chants artist, activist and contemplative. Ayaa has trained in the Sakya, Nyingma/Dzogchen, and Theravada traditions. Some of her teachers include HH Dalai Lama, Bhante Sujato, Thich Nhat Hanh and Retired Oxford Professor Lama Martin Boord (a student of CR Lama).

Teena Amrit Gill (67)

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Navigating Change – Himalayan and Tibetan Buddhist Women in Transition

ABSTRACT: Patriarchy in the Indian sub-continent has deep roots, and its presence is thousands of years old. When the Buddha allowed women into the sangha, this was one of the first times, during that era, that women were given the opportunity to opt out of marriage, reproduction and domestic work, undoubtedly a revolutionary step. Further, the acknowledgement that all women were as capable as men of achieving spiritual nirvana, challenged the foundations of not just gender discrimination, but also that of caste and class hierarchies. This presentation will look specifically at what happened over time to Buddhism and Buddhist women practitioners across India's

Himalayan belt, from Ladakh, to Himachal Pradesh, all the way to Tawang in the north-east of India. The struggles, achievements and agency of contemporary nuns from these regions will be examined, as well as the journeys of Buddhist women practitioners from the time of early Buddhism – including their points of similarity and differences. The presentation will also look at how women experienced shifts in the changing Buddhist environment over the centuries, and how the present might have been colored by the past. What emerges, through research and field work, is how important education is today, both a modern and a monastic education, in giving women new opportunities and the confidence (and respect) they didn't have earlier, at least perhaps not since the last millennium. The opening up in 2016, for the first time in the 1000-year history of Tibetan Buddhism, of the Geshe exams to Himalayan women in the Gelugpa tradition, and of the tradition of Lopons (and now possibly Khenmos) in the Sakya, Nyingma and Kagyu sects, have created a possibility for women to become teachers, establish and head nunneries, and record their own histories. The full ordination of nuns in Bhutan in June 2022, the most significant event since the establishment of Tibetan Buddhism in the 7th century, seems to have given a further boost to these opportunities. However, only time will show how women practitioners take this forward, and how the future pans out.

BIO: Teena Amrit Gill is an independent filmmaker, development consultant, artist and writer with a background in gender and development studies, and journalism. Her films include the exploration of the farmer's movement and pesticide poisoning in northern Thailand (Orange Alert), the impact of HIV/AIDS on elderly people (Young Hopes in Elderly Arms), violence against women (Ballo's Tea Shop) and gender, intersectionality and discrimination in Theravada Buddhism in Thailand (White Robes, Saffron Dreams). Her current projects include a film on Buddhism, gender and agency in the Himalayan region of India, and a third visual poetry film, on the theme of Interbeing – through poetry, quantum physics, the natural sciences, and spiritual traditions.

Thích Nữ Liên Hiền (17)

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Vietnamese Bhikkhunis Continuously Innovating Dharma Propagation Methods for Youth

ABSTRACT: Entering the 21st century, Vietnamese Buddhist nuns have many opportunities to develop their talents and learn according to modern trends. With the motto "Buddhism accompanies the nation", Vietnamese nuns have been contributing to promoting Buddhism and propagating the Dharma to save sentient beings, especially educating young people through many different methods: seasonal retreats, summer, student retreats, opening preschools, outdoor retreats and life skills courses, online courses, meditation courses, book writing, and scholarships for youth, and supporting poor students. They offer practical Buddhist works sow the seeds of awakening deeply into the hearts of young people through the spirit of "compassion"

and "wisdom", nurturing moral awareness, orienting a peaceful and good lifestyle, and helping children stay away from social evils.

BIO: Nun and PhD Candidate Thích Nữ Liên Hiền (secular name: Dương Thị Kim Hoa), born on February 27, 1982, is the manager of the Bửu Liên Religious Establishment (Hamlet 4, Mỹ An Commune, Thủ Thừa District, Long An Province, Vietnam). She has graduated from three universities: the University of Social Sciences and Humanities under Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City; the Ho Chi Minh City Buddhist Academy; and the English Language Program at Long An University of Economics and Industry. She is currently pursuing her PhD at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, majoring in Vietnamese Studies.

Madhuri Krishna Kudwalkar (80)

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Changing Roles of Buddhist Women: Empowerment, Feminism and Leadership

ABSTRACT: The ancient Buddhist text like Therigatha focused on the spiritual women during and after The Buddha's life. Gautami Mahapajapati was the first leader of the Bhikkhuni sangha in the History of Buddhism. After the changing Geography, Social norms, politics, Educational policies, patriarchy over matriarchy and so many aspects of anthropology, affect the status of the women in Buddhism all over the Globe. Specifically marginalized Asian Buddhist countries, like India where Buddhism was born and flourished with a random pace by the time of The Ashoka with his daughter Sanghamitra. We all know the history of the Foundation of Bhikkhuni sangha and later the decline of Buddhism for so many centuries. Today the status of Buddhist women is empowered by Social egalitarianism and feminism both as a lay woman and monastic woman. Bhikkhuni Dhammananda, Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Bhikkhuni Suniti, Bhikkhuni Vijaya Maitreya, Ayya Dhammadina are the contemporary monastic women who are trying to question and criticize the ancient Buddhist texts for the gender inequality in monastic ordination process as well as the other issues. The young lay women who are breaking the barricades of ancient patriarchal rituals and social boxes. The monastic institutes like Gautami Mahapajapati Foundation, Bodhipakkhiya foundation, Trailokya Bauddha mahasangha, Bauddhajan panchayat samiti, Bauddha mahasabha are the Buddhist social institutions where lay women enthusiastically participate to aware the importance of Buddhist philosophy and practices of Buddha's teachings for peaceful life.

BIO: Pursuing Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from Somaiya Vidyavihar University, Vidyavihar. Mumbai. She has an M.A. in Buddhist Studies from K.J. Somaiya Centre for Buddhist studies, vidyavihar, Mumbai. and is currently working as Research Assistant In K.J.Somaiya Institute for Dharma Studies, Somaiya Vidyavihar University, Mumbai.

Coming Together in Dialogue with the Broader World: Logics, Metaphysics, Cultures, and Practices of Gender

ABSTRACT: This paper considers how the fourfold sangha might come together in dialogue with the broader world concerning logics, metaphysics, cultures, and practices of gender to open possibilities for soteriological transformation for both practitioners and the global community. This approach is concerned with (1) how a bridge between Buddhist and academic institutions can facilitate public discussions on the complex topic of gender, from its abstract formulations to the impact of gender and gendered designations upon daily lives, pursuits, and envisionable possibilities; (2) what concrete actions were necessary historically and might be required in future to generate supportive, meaningful, and respectful change for those for whom gender-designations have imposed institutional obstacles to soteriological pursuits and horizon-opening living conditions. With this paper, I respond to perceived invitations from Buddhist womxn concerning ordination, education, and livable practices, and in intersection with philosophies of gender and feminism in academia that become increasingly relevant in a changing political atmosphere. I seek to understand and facilitate how bringing these arenas into discourse might transform contemporary collective thinking about gender, bringing philosophy and Buddhism further into conversation in Euro-American academia where they are commonly kept apart.

BIO: Alicehank Winham is a PhD Student in the Divinity School, University of Chicago, USA — studies philosophies and practices of liberation and transformation, exploring how we perceive and conceive affect how we act particularly through the approaches of philosophy of language. She received an MSt in Asian & Middle Eastern Studies and BA in Philosophy & Theology from University of Oxford, and furthermore is dedicated to building community and bridges through education and liberation, such as opp (oxfordpublicphilosophy.com), two APA Blog Series, and organizing a 2023 'Anātman and Philosophy' conference.

Thursday June 19
Paper 6B
Handbook on Buddhist Women
2:00-3:00 PM
Moderator: Emma Tomalin

Emma Tomalin, Sharon A. Suh, Eunsu Cho, Amy Langenberg, Sarah Jacoby, & Darcie Price-Wallace (55)

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Women and Buddhism: Decolonizing the Field and Amplifying Voices

ABSTRACT: The Handbook of Women and Buddhism, to be published by Bloomsbury in 2026, offers a pioneering exploration of the diverse roles, experiences, and representations of women in Buddhism, focusing on both historical contexts and contemporary issues. In up to 40 chapters, the volume will critically examine how Buddhist women navigate and shape their religious, social, and political lives across global settings through a decolonial and intersectional lens. It uniquely integrates co-produced dialogues between scholars and Buddhist women whose voices have been historically marginalized, enriching its analysis with lived experiences. Organized into three parts, the handbook begins with personal narratives and dialogues that highlight diverse Buddhist women's perspectives, followed by critical essays on methodologies, theories, and debates in the field. The final section delves into key themes such as leadership, ordination, activism, and gender identity.

This volume challenges dominant epistemologies that have traditionally shaped Buddhist studies, emphasizing the need to deconstruct colonial legacies while incorporating insights from feminist theory and race studies. The handbook, which brings together a multiethnic and interdisciplinary team of contributors, provides a comprehensive and nuanced perspective on Buddhist women's lives and experiences. This text is essential for academics, practitioners, and students engaged in Buddhist studies, gender studies, sociology, and decolonial scholarship.

BIO:

Emma Tomalin is a sociologist of religion/religious studies scholar at the University of Leeds. Her work is focused on the broad area of religion and public life. I have a long standing interest in religions and global development, including the gender dimensions of this relationship. More recently, I have been involved in projects that also engage with the role of faith actors in humanitarian action, peacebuilding and health. I have mainly worked in South and South East Asia, and more recently East Africa. Closer to home, I have carried out research on the role of faith actors in public

life in the UK, in terms of the anti-trafficking and modern slavery domain as well as the relevance of local faith communities to public health.

Sharon A. Suh is professor and scholar of Buddhism who teaches courses in the University Core Curriculum and in the Theology and Religious Studies B.A. program. She received her BA from Trinity College in Asian Studies, M.T.S. from Harvard Divinity School, and Ph.D. from Harvard University from the Committee on the Study of Religion. She specializes in Buddhism, race, and gender and the intersections of trauma and mindfulness. She is President of Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women and serves on the board of directors of The Center for Mindful Eating and most recently served on the board of directors of Yoga Behind Bars. She is a certified Mindful Eating-Conscious Living teacher through the UCSD Center for Mindfulness. She received her 200-hour Registered Yoga Teacher training and is trained in trauma-informed yoga with Yoga Behind Bars and Y4T (Yoga for Trauma)

Eunsu Cho is Professor Emeritus of Buddhist Philosophy at Seoul National University. She earned her Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from the University of California, Berkeley, and has written extensively on Indian Abhidharma Buddhism, Korean Buddhist thought, and women in Buddhism. She is the author of **Language and Meaning: Buddhist Interpretations of "The Buddha's Word" in Indian and East Asian Perspectives** and numerous book chapters and journal articles. Her Korean-language work **Buddhism, Modernity, and the Discovery of Women** was named an Outstanding Book by Korea's National Academy of Sciences in 2023. In 2024, SUNY Press published her English translation of the memoir **From Eternity to Eternity** by Korean nun Bulpil Sunim.

Sarah H. Jacoby is a professor in the Religious Studies Department at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She specializes in Tibetan Buddhist studies, with research interests in Buddhist revelation, religious auto/biography, Tibetan literature, gender and sexuality, translation studies, and the history of eastern Tibet. She is the author of *Love and Liberation: Autobiographical Writings of the Tibetan Buddhist Visionary Sera Khandro* (Columbia University Press, 2014), co-author of *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2025), and co-editor of *Buddhism Beyond the Monastery: Tantric Practices and their Performers in Tibet and the Himalayas* (Brill, 2009). She has recently written articles on Buddhism and motherhood as well as the history of Vajrayāna sexuality, and she is currently finishing a complete Tibetan-English translation of the autobiography of Sera Khandro Dawai Dorje (1892-1940).

Amy Paris Langenberg is Professor of Religious Studies at Eckerd College in Florida, USA. She specializes in South Asian Buddhism, with a focus on gender, sexuality, and female monasticisms. She is author of *Birth in Buddhism: The Suffering Fetus and Female Freedom* (Routledge, 2017) and has published articles in *History of Religions*,

the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Religion Compass*, *Religious Studies Review*, and the *Journal of Global Buddhism*. Her most recent project is a study of sexual abuse in North American and transnational Buddhism, co-written with Ann Gleig, to be published in 2026 by Yale University Press.

Darcie Price-Wallace is Visiting Faculty at Tergar Institute in Kathmandu, Nepal. She received her Ph.D. in Religious Studies at Northwestern University. She is completing her first book on oral histories and textual narratives of Himalayan and Tibetan nuns' lives, ordination rituals, and communities of care. She serves as interim Vice President of Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women and volunteers on the conference Program Committee. She also teaches Asian Religions at DePaul University and Loyola University.

Friday June 20

Paper 7

Locating Buddhist Women in Inscriptions & Literature

9:00-11:30 AM

Moderator: Aurapin Pochanapring

Sarah Harding (28)

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Women Translating the Dharma

ABSTRACT: The art of translation has finally become a field of study in itself in academic and literary circles. Translation of Buddhist texts has also garnered much attention lately, with a number of devoted conferences and publications on theory and practice. Women have been represented in these discussions, though still as a noticeable minority. As translators, women face double trouble: (1) Translators in general are supposed to be invisible and easy to ignore, and (2) women in general are...well, same. The earliest translation of Buddhist texts into a foreign language took place in China, even as early as the Buddha's lifetime. But, as Jan Nattier notes, "[N]ot a single female translator is attested in the entire history of Chinese Buddhism." (Or were they just invisible?) So how are we doing now? In this paper, I hope to honor those women who have ventured into these troubled waters, and explore some of the challenges of invisibility, such as the lack of credit, status, and compensation for their work. Many other issues come into play as well, such as the widely-held belief that the Dharma in general, and translations of it even more so, should be free and anonymous. Or that spiritual ideas and practices either cannot or should not even be translated (i.e. "holy untranslatable"). Then there are concerns of gendered voices, male claims to women's work, men translating women authors and visa-versa, as well as issues of cultural and religious appropriation or "extractionism." Separate from textual translation, female oral interpreters often face the privileged ecclesiastical patriarchy of many Buddhist countries, which is enabled and supported as the Dharma spreads around the globe, creating the power imbalance that fosters scandals. And, finally, will this all become moot as the excellent translation capability of nongendered artificial intelligence (AI) replaces human efforts altogether?

BIO: Sarah Harding is a lama in the Shangpa Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. She became a student of H.E. Kalu Rinpoche in 1972 and completed the first traditional three-year retreat for westerners under his guidance in 1980. She works as a teacher and translator, and was associate professor at Naropa University in Boulder from 1992 to 2018. She has been a fellow of the Tsadra Foundation since 2000, and is currently working on translations. Her publications include *Creation and Completion*; *Machik's Complete Explanation*; *Nigma, Lady of Illusion*; *The Life and Revelations of Pema Lingpa*; *The Treasury of Knowledge: Esoteric Instructions*; *The Treasury of Precious*

Instructions: Volumes 11-14; Four Tibetan Lineages; Ornament of Dakpo Kagyu Thought; and most recently Severance: The Early Practice of Chö.

Arun Kumar Yadav (18)

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Tracing Yaśodharā: Unfolding Her Identity in Buddhist Literature

ABSTRACT: Yaśodharā, the wife of Prince Siddhārtha and mother of Rāhula, holds an important but often overlooked role in Buddhist stories. Her name, which symbolizes honour and devotion, has gone through many changes across Buddhist texts, traditions, and time periods. This study explores how Yaśodharā's name evolved, looking at its variations in Pāli, Sanskrit, and other Buddhist writings, while examining the social and historical factors behind these changes. This research studies the timeline of these changes, exploring how and why these names emerged and how they relate to the changing ideas in Buddhism. The spread of Buddhism through oral traditions, its adaptation in new regions, and the translation of Buddhist texts into languages like Chinese and Tibetan played major roles in shaping Yaśodharā's identity. By analysing Buddhist scriptures, commentaries, and inscriptions, this study shows how her name represents the interaction between religion, language, and culture. By following the journey of Yaśodharā's name through time and across traditions, this research sheds light on her presence in Buddhist texts and helps us better understand her role in Buddhist history and cultural memory.

BIO: Dr. Arun Kumar Yadav currently holds the position of Associate Professor in the Department of Pali Language at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India. He has completed his bachelor, master and Ph.D. degree from Banaras Hindu University. Notably, he was the recipient of the prestigious Indo-China fellowship in 2011 by M.H.R.D., Govt of India, which allowed him to study the Chinese language in China for a year. In 2015, he received a research grant jointly awarded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to conduct research at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. Dr. Yadav also served as a Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies in Taipei, Taiwan. His primary areas of interest encompass Theravada Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism especially historical aspect of Buddhism. Presently he is also Visiting Associate Professor, Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, Guangzhou, China.

Ursula Manandhar (57)

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The Role of Female Deities in Shaping Nepal Mandala Buddhist Traditions

ABSTRACT: Current female deities in Nepal are derived from the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions, including tantras, sutras, and rituals. The historical origin of anthropomorphic representations of Buddhist deities can be traced to the 1st century C.E. throughout the Kushan Empire. Nepalese artisans, priests, and academics played

a crucial role in establishing the intellectual basis of Buddhist art, integrating methodologies from institutions like as Nalanda, Takshashila, and Vikramshila. The primary focus in the creation of artworks, idols, or symbols was on philosophy, ethics, meditation techniques, and doctrinal study. The oldest representations of a female divinity include Prajnaparamita, the embodiment of perfected wisdom. The Vajrayana sutras encompass various female goddesses, such as Vajrayogini, Tara, Pancha Rakshya, Ushnishavijaya, and Vasudhara. These deities are mentioned in several texts, including the Niṣpannayogāvalī, Hevajra Tantra, Guhyasamāja Tantra, and Sādhnamālā. Mahasiddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Acharyas conceptualized female goddesses as a technique for visualization. Kumari, the living deity and embodiment of Vajradevi, is seen as the manifestation of Vajrayogini, representing supreme wisdom. The notion of "Ajima," the safeguarding maternal deity, is also crucial in the genesis and evolution of this civilization. The essence of various female deities is profoundly embedded in Nepal's modern culture, with benevolent goddesses such as Tara, Vasudhara, and Prajnaparamita, alongside fierce deities like Vajrayogini, Nairatmya, and Pancha Rakshas, affirming the region's status as one of the oldest and most venerated. We revere them, visualize them, and meditate upon them, thereby establishing the Nepal Mandala as one of the oldest, graced by their inherent auras.

BIO: Ursula Manandhar is the Head of Research at the Museum of Nepali Art (MoNA) and a passionate advocate for the preservation and promotion of Nepal's cultural heritage. She holds a Master's Degree in Museology and Buddhist Art Collection and has amassed over four years of experience in the field. Her expertise centers on Buddhist art and iconography, and she has authored several books showcasing the works of renowned living artists from Nepal. In addition to her role at MoNA, Ursula serves as a faculty member at Lotus Academic College and Aksheswar Traditional Art College, where she teaches Buddhist Art History. Her academic contributions help inspire and educate the next generation of art enthusiasts and scholars. Ursula is also the Secretary of Sampada - The Heritage, a non-governmental organization dedicated to preserving Nepal's rich cultural legacy. Through her work with Sampada, she organizes workshops on art documentation, museums, and cultural awareness, fostering a deeper appreciation for the nation's artistic traditions and heritage.

Kathy Uno (61)

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Buddhist Japanese Women: Facing Centuries of Challenges

ABSTRACT: Japanese Buddhist women have navigated the challenges of change for centuries. Although evidence is scarcer for women in ancient Japan, when Buddhism entered Japan in the sixth and seventh centuries, as nuns, noblewomen, commoners, empresses and emperors, they helped Buddhism take root in Japan from overseas. Then and in later centuries, they negotiated differences between Buddhism and native religious beliefs and practices as they participated in private and public rites, taught, studied, healed; and established temples and convents. In the classical age, from the

eighth into the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, they sustained their beliefs amid personal hardships and social changes; composed elegant diaries, poems and tales that reflected their faith; and renounced the world in the face of individual and familial hardships. Then in the warrior age from around the thirteenth to nineteenth centuries, common and elite women maintained their faith in troubled times of the greed, lawlessness, and violence of bandits, soldiers, and warlords. Although space limitations allow only a brief mention, in modern times which began in the late nineteenth century, their grounding in Buddhism enabled two of Japan's most renowned twentieth-century feminists to break with established patterns of womanhood in their lives and visions of society. Social customs favorable to women, centrality in native religion, and at times their own ideas and ones influenced Japanese women's Buddhist challenges and beliefs.

BIO: Kathy Uno (a.k.a. Dekilhamo, 'Happiness Goddess,' or Dr. Kathleen Uno), taught and researched Japanese history, especially women's and children's history, at Temple University in Philadelphia, USA for over thirty years. She has written *Passages to Modernity: Motherhood, Childhood, and Social Reform in Early Twentieth-Century Japan*, 1999 and co-edited *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, 2006. She also has taught yoga, Pilates, and do-it-yourself wellness for busy people.

Presenters Who Were Unable to Attend

Thich Nu Hue Quang (47)

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Vietnam Buddhist Nuns: Bridging Tradition and Modernity

ABSTRACT: Vietnamese Buddhist nuns have played a pivotal role as a dynamic bridge between tradition and modernity within Vietnamese Buddhism, especially in the modern period. Tracing their historical evolution from the first century CE to the present highlights their enduring contributions to spiritual practice, societal engagement, and national development. From overcoming socio-cultural constraints during feudal times to actively participating in national liberation movements and post-war reconstruction, Vietnamese nuns have consistently demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability. Exemplary figures such as Venerable Dieu Nhan, a recognized Zen patriarch, and others who contributed to national independence embody this spirit. This study examines the multifaceted roles of contemporary Vietnamese Buddhist nuns, encompassing religious cultivation through precept observance and traditional ceremonies like Ullambana. It further investigates their dedication to education, including pursuing advanced degrees and conducting scholarly research, and their innovative utilization of information technology and social media for Dharma dissemination, reaching wider audiences. The study also explores their exemplary commitment to social welfare through active engagement in community healthcare, counseling, disaster relief, and other charitable endeavors,

embodying engaged Buddhism. Addressing contemporary challenges faced by young nuns, particularly in integrating advanced academic training with practical monastic life, this paper identifies key areas for improvement: enhanced mentorship, better integration of specialized skills within monastic structures, and expanded networking. Proposed solutions include fostering foreign language proficiency, establishing international exchange programs, leveraging online platforms for global connectivity, supporting translation projects, and facilitating participation in international volunteer programs. These initiatives aim to strengthen connections between Vietnamese nuns and the global Buddhist community, fostering mutual learning and contributing to the global advancement of Buddhist studies and practice. Ultimately, the dynamic interplay between tradition and adaptation is essential for the continued flourishing of Vietnamese Buddhist nuns in the contemporary world.

BIO: Bikkhuni Thich Nu Hue Quang, was born in 1989. She has a Master's Degree in Buddhist Studies, specializing in Theravāda Philosophy, from the Vietnam Buddhist Academy in Ho Chi Minh City. She is a lecturer at the Intermediate School of Buddhist Studies, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She studies and practices at Phuoc Thien Monastery, Binh Chanh District, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

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The Sravasti Varsa 2023: Leadership and Feminism

ABSTRACT: How are leadership skills being incorporated into Buddhist nuns' communities in the twenty-first century, and what are the implications of these changes for nuns and other women across the Buddhist world? This paper specifically reflects on the momentous and historic International Bhikshuni Varsa 2023 in Shravasti, India. The gathering was wholly organized by Buddhist nuns. The Shravasti Varsa event reflects two layers of leadership, both imbued with ideals of women's leadership. First, the Varsa planning committee was organized by Khenmo Drolma and an international team of senior nuns from Dharma Drum and Sravasti Abbey. While the gathering was supported under the auspices of the Drikung Kagyu denomination, the nuns' leadership was international and interdenominational. They incorporated these approaches in their organizational scheme and transferred leadership responsibilities in multiple innovative ways during the Varsa. Throughout the gathering, nuns from nine countries and speaking five languages (and numerous dialects) lived together in a dynamic community of learning, exchanging ideas, developing cross-cultural and inter-denominational understanding. In this paper, we look at how the leadership honored the necessary senior leadership in the Monastic Rituals and Vinaya teachings while elevating representatives from each of the countries and junior nuns in shared leadership. This collaborative Varsa offers a new view on nuns' empowerment. The event, five years in the making, saw a series of challenges and successes. We reflect on these, and the implications that such an event has for twenty-first-century nuns.

BIO: Khenmo Konchog Nyima Drolma is the Abbess of Vajra Dakini Nunnery, a Dharma community in the Drikung Kagyu Tibetan Buddhist tradition based in Maine, USA. Since 1995 she has received extensive transmissions and training in the Drikung Kagyu tradition from H.H. Chetsang Rinpoche. She attended the Gampo Abbey Shedra for Dharma philosophy. A former Professor of Sculpture at the Maine College of Art, Khenmo was the Director of the Arts for the construction of Songsten Library in Dehradun, India from 2002-2003. From 2018-2023, Khenmo chaired the international committee for the Shravasti Varsa Retreat in Shravasti, India which hosted over 130 nuns from around the world. She has been teaching the Dharma internationally for more than twenty years.

Alison Melnick Dyer is a lay practitioner in the Drikung Kagyu tradition, and an Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Bates College. She has a B.A in Asian Studies from the University of Michigan, and an M.A and Ph.D in Tibetan Buddhism from the University of Virginia. Her research focuses on the role of gender and privilege in Tibetan Buddhist contexts, both historical and contemporary. Her work seeks to highlight the lives of Buddhist women historically, and in the present day, in order to support nuns and lay practitioners worldwide. Her most recent book is *The Tibetan Nun Mingyur Peldrön: A Woman of Power and Privilege*, and her current research focuses on Drikung Kagyu communities in Ladakh and Uttarakhand, India.

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Exploring the Tenet of feminism in Early pali literature

ABSTRACT: This paper summarizes my book which critically examines several significant issues concerning women in Buddhism. It provides a historical overview of the status of women from the pre-Buddhist era, spanning from the Stone Age to the time of the Buddha, and explores how social, economic, political, and religious factors led to changes in their status, culminating in a decline by the time of the Buddha. In response to the adverse social conditions, the Buddha established the Bhikkhuni Sangha, offering many distressed women an opportunity to escape patriarchy, which is detailed in the second chapter. The third chapter discusses the Buddha's own daughters and their contributions. The fourth chapter addresses the role of Buddhism in women's empowerment. The fifth chapter describes facts related to women as presented in Pali literature. The sixth chapter explores both positive and negative aspects of women from the Buddha's perspective. The seventh chapter highlights the social attitudes of Buddhist nuns as a marginalized discourse.

BIO: Praveen Kumar is an Associate Professor in the Department of Buddhist Studies at the Samrat Ashok Subharti School, Swami Vivekananda Subharti University. He has authored three books on Buddhism: *Buddhism in Odisha* (2015), *Nuns in Early Buddhism* (2019), and *बौद्ध-धर्म में नारी* (2023). He has also published over ten research papers. He holds an M.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from Delhi University. With 15 years of experience in studying and researching Buddhist studies, he has served as an Assistant Professor and Associate Professor in the Department of

Buddhist Studies at the National Institute of Social Work and Social Sciences, Bhubaneswar. He has presented his research papers at several national and international platforms. Numerous research articles by him have been published in various national research journals.

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Voices of Healing: How Self-Talk Bridges Modern Women's Psychology and Buddhist Principles

ABSTRACT: Modern women often navigate complex lives, juggling societal expectations, demanding careers, and familial responsibilities. These pressures can significantly impact mental health, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and depression. To address these challenges, many women are turning to practices that promote self-care and emotional well-being. This paper explores how modern women's psychology connects with Buddhist philosophy in the journey of self-healing through self-talk. Today, many women face pressures from society, work, and family, which can impact their mental health. Buddhist ideas about mindfulness, compassion, and self-awareness offer helpful ways to cope with these challenges. This study looks at how self-talk can be a powerful tool for women to change negative thoughts into positive ones, encouraging self-love and resilience. By combining psychological insights with Buddhist teachings, the paper shows how effective self-talk can be in improving emotional well-being and personal growth. Real-life examples and case studies illustrate the profound impact of self-talk on individuals' lives, demonstrating how this simple yet powerful practice can lead to increased resilience, improved self-esteem, and greater overall well-being.

BIO: Venerable Le Thi Kim Ngan has an MA in Psychology and a PhD in Research Psychology. She is a Counselor, Buddhist Philosophy Teacher, Meditation Trainer, and she teaches Vietnamese and Chinese language to students.

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Bhikkunis' Role at Sakyadhita Meditation Center for Empowering Women

ABSTRACT: This is a personal reflection on navigating the intersecting identities of researcher and pilgrim, inspired by my PhD research on Buddhist pilgrim experiences — a journey that catalyzed personal and professional transformation. Using Ray and McFadden's notions of the web (2001, p. 203) and the quilt (2001, p. 205), I explore how they illuminate my research process and lived experience as both researcher and pilgrim. Just as my interviewees' journeys unfolded as acts of meaning-making, my own candidature also became a pilgrimage: a transformative dharma path shaped by uncertainties, insights, and changes. This turning point prompted deeper and intentional engagement with Buddhist wisdoms. Amidst the pressures of academia, I

turned to creative practices, like painting and journalling, as tools for mental health and resilience. These practices became vital threads in my “quilt” of coping mechanisms, cultivating spaces for self reflection and compassion. While I was not yet a certified coach, my mindfulness practice and growing interest in coaching philosophies were already shaping how I approached and navigated change, challenge and the support of myself and others. These perspectives, coupled with Buddhist wisdoms, deepened my appreciation of the processual nature of pilgrimage, where the journey itself is the destination. By centering personal experiences as a lens for broader themes of mental health and resilience, this essay seeks to highlight the transformative power of slow, deliberate practice as an antidote to the fast-paced demands of modern life, thereby bridging scholarship and lived experiences, and offering personal realization, acceptance and nurturance.

BIO: Venerable Madulle Vijithananda Bhikkuni is from Sakyadhita Sri Lanka.