



ROLES OF BHIKKHUNI IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM

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Abstract

This research has the objectives: (1) to study the background of Theravada nuns in Buddhism, (2) to study and analyze the attitude towards the existence of Theravada nuns, and (3) to study the attitude of Thai monastic institutions towards the existence of Theravada nuns. The residence of Thai Theravada nuns Synthesize and interpret information by integrating legal principles related to Thai Theravada nuns. This documentary research collects primary data from the Thai Tripitaka and secondary from documents, academic articles, books, textbooks, and related research. Analyze data using a descriptive inductive method using objectives as a guideline. The research results found that:

Background of Theravada nuns in Buddhism: In ancient Indian society, women were excluded and refused them to participate in religion because of social values and traditions. But the Lord Buddha accepted women from all castes for ordination in Buddhism, without any restrictions. This led to the ordination of the first nun, Prajapati Gotami Theri, in Buddhism. By requesting Phra Ananda's permission after he had attained enlightenment for 5 years, many nuns were ordained in Buddhism. Analyzing the attitudes towards the existence of Theravada nuns, it is evident that Theravada bhikkhunis have disappeared from





the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka. There is no historical evidence of bhikkhunis in Thailand. There are efforts in Theravada Buddhist countries to rehabilitate nuns-especially in Thailand, which is internationally recognized as a center of Buddhism. However, this movement is supported by a small group of people. The general public does not see the need for bhikkhunis because they have never existed since ancient times.

The researcher has concluded that the role of bhikkhunis has five key aspects, consisting of (1) the role of spreading teachings; and announcement of the Buddha's teachings to create knowledge. Understanding the teachings of Buddhism is important to spread to all directions. (2) The role of education and welfare; the women of the ancient Indian subcontinent received microscopic study. There is a traditional law that requires young women to be married before their teenage years, causing them to lack educational opportunities. (3) Governing roles; when there are nuns, it is necessary to have a government of nuns separate from the monks. The nuns ruled each other. It is under the Dhamma and Vinaya. (4) the role of preserving arts and culture; humans must know how to take advantage of nature and how to control the behavior of other people. Arts and culture are therefore the determinants of prosperity and deterioration of life and society. (5) the role of public welfare; participation in making benefits to society and community, promoting careers, and creating benefits for the public.

Keywords: Bhikkhuni in Theravada; Status and Roles; Thai Sangha

Introduction

In the past, women were regarded as a form of property, raised to be sold to men or treated as pets without rights or a voice. Society held the belief that women were fundamentally different from men, with all power vested in men alone. However, when the Lord Buddha emerged, he affirmed that women could pursue the same path as men, without no distinction. He provided guidelines for women to overcome challenges in this world and the next and to reach heaven on an equal footing with men. He also taught that both wives and husbands should fulfill their duties to one another equally. This glorification of women's status is granted them greater rights and opportunities to engage in charitable acts and





pursue education as they wished (Group of Disciples of Wan Lo Ayu, 1996). The Buddha accepted the spiritual rights of women and people of various castes. This recognition is considered a first in the history of religion; no other religious leader is known to have demonstrated such open-mindedness. In the Tripitaka, the Buddha likens the ocean to the Dhamma and Vinaya, saying that just as rivers lose their original names when they flow into the ocean, those who join the monastic order abandon their previous identities and are referred to as the Saṅga Sakyaputra. This shows that Buddhism does not restrict opportunities for study and spiritual practice. Once prepared, anyone can strive to achieve the ultimate goal of arahantship. Buddhism teaches that liberation is achieved through self-effort, and Its recognition of spiritual independence is said to advance women's rights more than any other religion. In that time, Buddhism transcended superficial social values and traditions, accepting women from various castes and occupations without restriction. This inclusivity allowed women in Buddhism to transcend societal obligations (Chatsumal Kabilsingh, 1996). When the Buddha attained enlightenment, he sought disciples from all walks of life, including monks, nuns, upasakas, and upasikas. They were eager to learn, train, and understand the true Dhamma. Under his guidance, the community flourished, becoming well-known and closely united, with both human and deities singing its praises. However, Buddhism later faced destruction at the hands of a violent sect that persecuted monks, nuns, upasakas, and female lay followers, destroying Buddhist texts and teachings. Many nuns, being women, were unable to withstand the violence and either perished or left the monastic order, leading to the disappearance of the nunhood. While Theravada Buddhism lost its nuns, Mahayana Buddhism continues to thrive. In recent times, Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka-, originally the source of Theravada Buddhism in Thailand, has adapted to globalization, but it is regrettable that the Thai monastic institutions have not accept these changes. Referring to certain interpretations of the Vinaya to discourage women from pursuing Buddhist ordination, Bhikkhuni Varamai Kabilsingh is considered as the first nun who, with strong faith, dedicated her life to society and Buddhism. She faced many obstacles, and as the sole nun able to maintain the form and practice, Bhikkhuni Woramai Kabilsingh encountered ongoing opposition from the monastic society (Phonphao Pengwipas, 2018). Let





me quote the words she spoke to Mara during the New Times of Enlightenment. It is a clear statement that does not require explanation or interpretation.

The Buddha recounted to Ananda encounter in Uruvela Subdistrict, near the bank of the Neranchara River, where a banyan tree provided summer shade for goat herders. After the Buddha attained enlightenment, Mara, the sinful devil, approached him, standing at his right side, and said, “May the Lord Buddha attain nirvana. Now is the time for the Lord Buddha to pass away.” We said to the Mara, “O sinner! I will not pass away before my disciples (and sisters) have become wise, have received guidance, and have attained courage and knowledge. I will not pass before they become virtuous, practicing the Dhamma as intended, and follow it according to the Dhamma They must first learn from their teacher. Then they will be able to teach, prescribe, reveal, classify, and deepen the true Dhamma, smoothing out and addressing debates fairly. Only when this Brahmacharya (religion) had established itself, prospered, and become widely known, united in harmony, and recognized by many people. Until angels and humans can announce it well. (Bhuttadasa Bhikkhu, 1978).

The Buddha's conversation with Mara when he gained new enlightenment Regarding the existence of four companies, which are monks, nuns, upasakas, upasikas, and disciples (and female disciples), the Lord Buddha had in mind that there would be disciples when he preached the religion, so it is the first evidence that the Lord Buddha spoke of the company. Four clear intentions in having a Dhamma lineage, namely a company. Four clear objectives for creating a strong Dhamma lineage. Complete with excellent quality the fact that the Buddha allowed bhikkhunis is therefore important to Buddhism. Because it completes the Buddhist teachings, namely bhikkhus, nuns, upasakas, upasikas, and disciples (and female disciples), there is no evidence of ordination of bhikkhunis in Thailand. At present, there is a debate about the succession of the Sangha of nuns. That is, is it still possible to be ordained as a nun? That it can no longer be done, and each side cites both reasons and reasons that are Principles of moral discipline and social reasons that come from the concept of women's rights in religion. Women's rights, human rights, rights in the Constitution, and the government of the Kingdom of Thailand support their own views. The other side also raises the





Dhamma and Discipline found in the Tripitaka and claims to support their own view until it becomes a case. The "Bhikkhuni Dispute" is a matter that Thai society and the monastic institution are still unable to find a resolution at this time. However, monastic institutions in Thailand have made it clear that they do not recognize the ordination of nuns.

The researcher is interested in "The status and role of bhikkhunis in Thai monastic institutions" in the present era. Thailand has developed into a center of prosperity in Southeast Asia and must live in a globalized society. Today, Thailand is a country that the world regards as a center of Buddhist education and propagation. Buddhism has become more popular in Western countries, namely America, Europe, and Australia, which uphold freedom of life, gender equality, and religious practice. There are high-level educators, including professors at prestigious universities, have taken a serious interest in Buddhism, resulting in numerous Western monks. What we like to call foreigners come to be ordained as monks in large numbers. Moreover, in these Westerners, there are still many women interested in becoming nuns. But cannot be ordained in the Theravada branch. As a result, they have sought ordination in the Mahayana branch. Observing the practices of Western monks who are ordained in Thailand, they demonstrate strong proficiency in the Thai language and bring knowledge of Theravada Buddhism, which they enthusiastically promote. Their reverence for Buddhism and admiration for Thai cultural traditions is notable. They are excellent tour guides to Thailand. Therefore, it is considered a pity that we do not have the opportunity to have women perform the same duties. The world is now aware of the modern inscription of Buddhism in granting women's rights. Equal treatment of women alongside men in access to education and ordination rights. This inclusivity marks a notable development, as it was unprecedented in the Indian subcontinent and world society.





Research Objectives

- 1.To study the background of Bhikkhuni in Theravada Buddhism.
- 2.To examine the status and role of Bhikkhuni in Theravada Buddhism.

Research Methodology

This research is documentary-based and involves studying information from primary sources, including the Thai Tipitaka, as well as secondary sources such as documents, academic articles, books, manuals, and related research. The scope of the content is divided into four main parts: The background of Bhikkhuni in Theravada Buddhism. The status and role of Bhikkhuni in Theravada Buddhism within Thai society. The global perspective on Bhikkhuni in Theravada Buddhism, considering Thailand's recognition as a global center for Buddhism. An analysis of the status of Bhikkhuni within Thai Buddhist institutions, examining the role of these institutions in the existence of Bhikkhuni in Theravada Buddhism. The research was conducted over six months, from September 2021 to February 2022, a total of 6 months. It involves analyzing and synthesizing documentary data to produce a descriptive narrative based on the integration of relevant legal principles concerning Bhikkhuni in Theravada Buddhism.

Results

The Background of Bhikkhunis in Theravada Buddhism: The history of Bhikkhunis in Theravada Buddhism reveals that in the fifth year after the Buddha's enlightenment, Queen Mahapajapati Gotami requested permission from the Buddha at Nigrodharama, Kapilavatthu, to be ordained as a Bhikkhuni, but was denied. Later, Queen Mahapajapati, along with 500 Sakyan women, followed and requested ordination again. Initially, the Buddha refused but eventually permitted it with eight specific conditions known as the Garudhammas. Queen Mahapajapati accepted these conditions gladly. After granting ordination to Queen Mahapajapati, the Buddha allowed the Bhikkhu Sangha to ordain Bhikkhunis as well.





Women wishing to become Bhikkhunis must first be ordained as Samaneri when they turn 18 years old and then request the six Precepts (Sikkhapada) from the Bhikkhuni Sangha, to be observed for two years, known as Sikkhamana or Upasampadapekha. This is considered a preliminary stage before full ordination as a Bhikkhuni at the age of 20. The preceptor (Pavattini) presenting the Sikkhamana to the Sangha must be a senior Bhikkhuni with at least 12 years of ordination, knowledgeable in Dhamma and Vinaya, and appointed by the Sangha. Bhikkhuni ordination can occur every other year through a dual-Sangha ordination process, involving both the Bhikkhuni Sangha and the Bhikkhu Sangha, culminating in complete ordination as a Bhikkhuni. Even though Bhikkhunis may have been ordained before Bhikkhus, they must still pay respect to Bhikkhus who were ordained later. The first group of ordained Bhikkhunis was composed entirely of women from the Sakya clan. Later, women from various regions and castes were also ordained, such as Bhikkhuni Uppalavanna, Bhikkhuni Patacara, Bhikkhuni Kisagotami from Kosala, Bhikkhuni Ambapali from Vajji, and Bhikkhuni Dhammadinna from Magadha. During the Buddha's lifetime, Bhikkhunis were widespread and played significant roles alongside Bhikkhus.

Queen Mahapajapati attained parinibbana before the Buddha. She served as the leader of the Bhikkhuni Sangha, which, according to the Apadana scriptures, consisted of 130,036 Bhikkhunis, most of whom were from the Sakya region. Thirteen Bhikkhunis were recognized as foremost disciples, with Bhikkhuni Khema as the chief female disciple on the right and Bhikkhuni Uppalavanna on the left. It is noteworthy that there is no evidence in the Pali Canon of Bhikkhunis participating in significant events such as the Buddha's parinibbana, the cremation and the distribution of his relics, or the First Buddhist Council held three months after the Buddha's parinibbana. The Vinaya recitations concerning Bhikkhuni rules were conducted solely by Bhikkhus, namely Elder Upali and Elder Mahakassapa. Evidence of Bhikkhunis has been found in stone inscriptions from the time of King Asoka's, which later continued in Sri Lanka until the 16th century. However, during the Tamil rule in Sri Lanka, Theravada Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis were killed, leading to their extinction from the island.





Status and Role of Bhikkhunis in Theravada Buddhism: After the Buddha promulgated his teachings, many lay followers, including women, became inspired and sought ordination, leading to the establishment of the fourfold community: Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, laymen (Upasakas), and laywomen (Upasikas). Women who were ordained as Bhikkhunis gained societal acceptance and were held in high esteem by the Buddha, who appointed several Bhikkhunis to the esteemed status of foremost disciples (Etadagga) in various capacities. Historical records reveal that thirteen Bhikkhunis were prominently recognized by the Buddha for their excellence in different roles.

The researcher has synthesized the status and roles of Bhikkhunis in Buddhism into five areas:

1. Role in Disseminating Buddhist Teachings: Bhikkhunis have played a crucial role in spreading the Buddha's teachings, ensuring that the understanding and knowledge of Buddhism reached all corners of society. They engaged in various forms of teaching, such as sermons and Dhamma talks, to make the teachings accessible to the public. Prominent Bhikkhunis in this role include:

Bhikkhuni Rupananda: Praised by the Buddha as the foremost among Bhikkhunis in meditative concentration (Samadhi). **Bhikkhuni Dhammadinna:** Renowned for her wisdom, she was appointed by the Buddha as the foremost Dhamma teacher, excelling in preaching with comprehensive insight. **Bhikkhuni Bhaddakaccana:** Formerly Yasodhara, the wife of Prince Siddhartha, after her ordination and attainment of enlightenment, she significantly contributed to the dissemination of the Dhamma and was recognized as the foremost in great knowledge of past lives (Maha Abhinna).

2. Role in Educational Support: In ancient India, women had very limited access to education due to societal norms that required girls to marry before reaching puberty, with fathers obligated to marry off their daughters before their first menstruation. Consequently, Indian women had limited educational opportunities due to societal norms that dictated early marriage, which clearly restricted their chances for education.



After marriage, a woman's life revolved around caring for her husband and raising children, confining her to domestic duties and further limiting her educational opportunities. Even participation in social or religious activities required the husband's permission. The advent of Buddhism provided women with the opportunity to be ordained as Bhikkhunis, offering an alternative path that allowed women to feel equal to men. In Buddhism, the equality of wisdom is evident, with the intelligence of men and women considered equal. Prominent Bhikkhunis who played significant roles in education and provided knowledge to women during the Buddha's time include:

Bhikkhuni Bhadda Kundalakesa: After her ordination, she practiced mindfulness by observing the water used to wash her feet and contemplating the arising and passing away of the five aggregates, which led to her liberation from defilements. She was appointed by the Buddha as the foremost Bhikkhuni in quick realization (Khippabhinna). **Bhikkhuni Singalaka Mata:** Shortly after ordination, she practiced mindfulness of the Buddha and attained Arahantship, complete with the six supernormal knowledges. The Buddha recognized her as the foremost Bhikkhuni in faith-based liberation (Saddhvimutta), excelling in freeing herself from defilements through faith.

3. Role in Governance: The nuns who had a clear role were (1) Queen Mahapajapati Gotami was the senior of all the nuns and had much experience. She took care of the nuns, offering guidance and advice. Her governance and responsibility towards the nuns are similar to the way the Buddha governed the nuns. The Buddha declared Queen Mahapajapati Gotami Theri to be the most excellent among the nuns, the foremost in the knowledge of the night, and the one who knew the longest. That is, she was the oldest and knew the Dhamma before the nuns. (2) The nun Patavara, after being ordained as a nun, returned from meditation and washed her feet before entering her bedroom. She saw the water used to wash her feet flowing near and far. She considered it with the lives of living beings. After developing insight meditation, the nun Patavara attained Arahantship after extinguishing the lamp. At that time, it appeared that Theri was a person who had a profound knowledge of the Vinaya. The Buddha therefore praised her as the foremost among the nuns in terms of the Vinaya. (3) Even





though the nun Sona was ordained at an older age, she was able to maintain Arahantship in a short period of time because of her diligence and never being lazy. Therefore, the Buddha appointed the nun Sona to the position of the foremost among the nuns in terms of diligence.

4. Role in the conservation of arts and culture: Bhikkhunis have played an important role in preserving arts and culture. Culture is a tool invented by humans to help humans survive. Because in order to survive in this world, humans must know how to use nature and must know how to control the behavior of other humans. In addition, arts and culture are the determinants of the prosperity or decline of society and the determinants of the lives of people in society. The culture of respect for individual rights has become a good tradition in the present world.

5. Role in public welfare: Bhikkhunis also participate in public welfare activities, such as providing education to underprivileged children, assisting with community utilities, and promoting various careers. Their involvement in public welfare initiatives allow Buddhist organizations to drive societal progress, engaging in projects that benefit the public, such as building hospitals, roads, pavilions, school buildings, etc. In addition, they help procure materials, equipment, and appliances for educational institutions and other public facilities, emphasizing the important of contributing to the community.

The Status and Role of Bhikkhunis in Theravada Buddhism: Gender studies related to Buddhism have been widely conducted in many Buddhist countries, highlighting the efforts of movements that advocate for women's rights to ordination in Thailand. Although there are no nuns who have been legally ordained, women have demonstrated their efforts to ordain as Buddhist nuns and practice the same as male nuns or monks. The fact that Buddhist women in Thailand are not accepted to be ordained as Bhikkhunis in Buddhism, even though they were ordained in other countries, reflects the gender inequality influenced by Buddhist beliefs. Buddhism plays a significant role in determining the roles of the sexes in Thai society. The classist perspective that men have a higher status than women, who have a lower status, leads to inequality between men and men. The role of the Bhikkhuni movement has shown the value of women's contributions, emphasizing the ongoing efforts to achieve gender and social equality. There has





been an attempt to revive the ordination of Bhikkhunis in the Theravada school, often involving ordination from Mahayana bhikkhunis who claim lineage from the Theravada Bhikkhuni Sangha. Some critics argue that Mahayana bhikkhunis do not adhere to the Theravada Vinaya Pitaka and that their precepts differ significantly, leading to rejection of the validity of their ordinations under the Theravada tradition (Kanchana Suthikun, 2017).

Discussions

Background of Theravada nuns in Buddhism: In the ancient Indian subcontinent, women were excluded and rejected from ordaining in Buddhism due to social values and traditions. However, the Buddha made a significant shift by allowing women from all castes to ordain without restrictions. This led to the ordination of the first nun, Phra Pajapati Gotami Theri, who became a Bhikkhuni five years after the Buddha attained enlightenment, through the intercession of Phra Ananda. Following this, many more nuns were ordained in Buddhism. The Lord Buddha envisioned these four groups of people-Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, male devotees, and female devotees- working together to sustain Buddhism. He stated that the religion's stability and flourishing depend on the participation of all four groups, likening them to the four pillars of a house. If one pillar is removed, the house loses its stability. Therefore, each of the four Buddhist groups has a vital role in preserving the religion. In the ordination process for nuns, both male and female monastic orders are involved: Bhikkhunis must first be ordained by other nuns and then receive ordination from Bhikkhus. In Thailand, however, there is no official Bhikkhuni Sangha, making it impossible to ordain Bhikkhunis or officially recognize them. This lack of recognition has been highlighted in Aphinya Chatchofafa's research on the political communication surrounding Bhikkhuni status in Thailand, specially, in the case of Bhikkhuni Dhammananda. The research notes that Bhikkhuni Khemanantha became the first Thai woman to be ordained as a Theravada Bhikkhuni in Sri Lanka in 2001, where she later served as the abbot of Wat Songthamkalyani. Despite her qualifications, including a PhD in Buddhism, the Supreme Sangha Council in Thailand has resolved to prohibit the ordination of Bhikkhunis within the country. The researcher also





found that Dhammananda's efforts to raise awareness about the low status of Bhikkhunis align with communication theories by David K. Berlo and Brian McNair. She is fully qualified as a "messenger" because she has a Ph.D. in Buddhism, is a former university lecturer with experience in researching Buddhism, and was also nurtured by her mother who was ordained as a Bhikkhuni in the Mahayana sect in Taiwan in 1971. Therefore, the "message" she conveyed was aimed at making the public aware of the low status of Bhikkhunis.

Status and Role of Bhikkhuni in Theravada Buddhism: In the Buddhist community, women who are ordained as Bhikkhunis are part of the Four Communities: Bhikkhu, Bhikkhuni, Male devotees, and Female devotees. Bhikkhunis have long been accepted by society and were praised by the Buddha who appointed some to the role of Ettakka, meaning those who are excellent in various aspects of Buddhist practice. Historical records indicate that there were 13 Bhikkhunis during the Buddha's time who performed their duties so prominently that they were praised by the Buddha. The status and roles of Bhikkhuni in Buddhism, as synthesized by the researcher, can be divided into 5 aspects as follows: 1) The role in spreading Buddhist teachings, the proclamation of the Buddha's teachings to create knowledge and understanding of Buddhist teachings to spread in all directions. An analysis of attitudes toward the existence of Theravada Bhikkhunis Theravada nuns have disappeared from the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka. There is no evidence of nuns in Thailand. There are attempts in Theravada Buddhist countries to revive nuns, especially in Thailand, which is internationally recognized as the center of Buddhism today. However, the movement is a minority. The general public does not see the need for nuns because they have never existed since ancient times. This is consistent with Prapit Boranmun's research on "Politics of the Social Movement of Nuns", which stated that Thailand had contacted and accepted Buddhism from Sri Lanka during the Sukhothai period around the 18th Buddhist century. Since then, Thailand and Sri Lanka have had continuous contact in terms of religion. The first Thai monks to receive ordination from Sri Lanka were called "Lanka Wong". When Buddhism in Sri Lanka has swept away in 1570, the King of Sri Lanka wanted to revive Buddhism, so he sent Sri Lankan's sons to receive ordination from the Thai monks, establishing the "Siam Nikaya". It can be seen that Thailand and Sri Lanka have a relationship in terms of Buddhism. Unfortunately, the revival of Buddhism





in Sri Lanka was only for monks, there was no ordination of nuns. Ordination in Thai Buddhism has legal principles regarding ordination are often biased against women. It is based on the idea that women cause defilements in men, which is a major obstacle for men to enter the practice of liberation. The general public does not see the need for nuns because they have never existed. The role of Bhikkhunis has gradually diminished, and other solutions have arisen for women outside of ordination as nuns.

The existence of nuns in Theravada Buddhism: the rule for monks to inquire about the 24 dangers of women who request to be ordained as nuns still exists in all respects. Likewise, there is no mention anywhere in the Tipitaka that the Buddha has ruled to revoke it. This implies that monks, if they so choose, could ordain women as nuns, as it was originally permitted by the Buddha. As for the argument that the Buddha allowed the nuns to be questioned about the 24 dangers, it does not establish a fully independent ordination process for Bhikkhunis. In that case, what is the meaning or scope of the ordination of nuns? The researcher honestly believes that having nuns as a benefit to Buddhism is a fulfillment of the Buddhist community established by the Buddha. The Sangha is a powerful organization to make the ordination of nuns successful. Buddhism belongs to the Buddha. The Buddha initiated the creation of the Fourfold Community of Buddhists, all of whom are sons and daughters of the Buddha, have faith, accept, and practice the Buddha's teachings with confidence. Buddhists are determined to preserve and propagate Buddhism to be sustainable and stable. With the disappearance of Bhikkhunis, there is a gap in the Buddhist community. Many believe that all Buddhists should unite to restore the missing part of the Fourfold Community and, in doing so, honor the Buddha's teachings by supporting and empowering all groups to preserve and propagate Buddhism.





New Knowledges

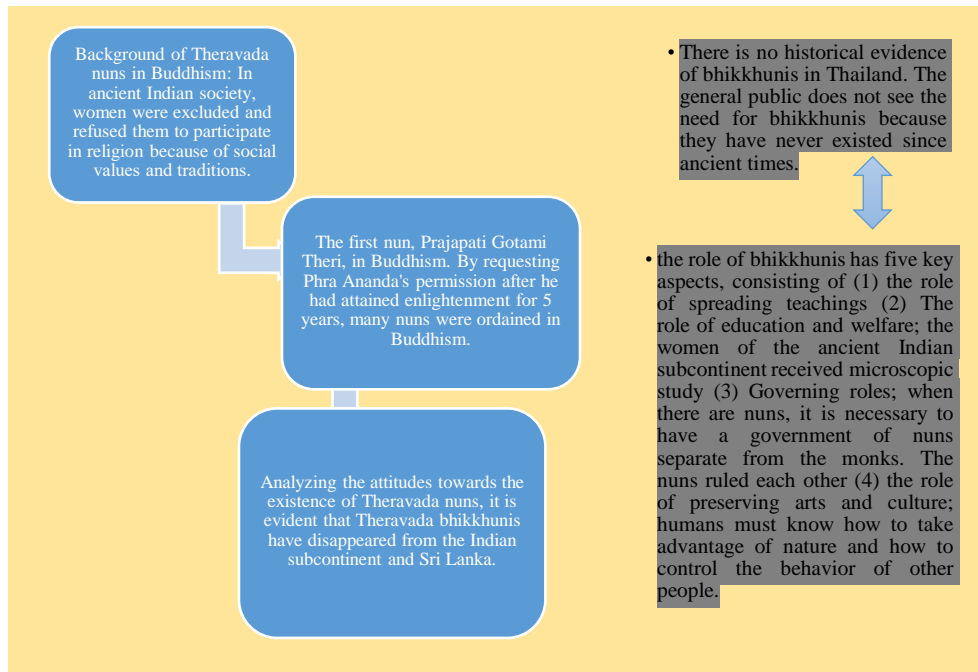


Figure 1: New Knowledge Diagram of Roles of Bhikkhuni in Theravada Buddhism

Conclusions

In Thai society, Theravada nuns hold a very low status and limited roles. As a result, many Theravada nuns have actively sought to fulfill their roles and gain acceptance, advocating for the recognition of all four groups of Buddhists within the religion. Data analysis reveals numerous challenges, including the lack of societal acceptance and evidence of respect for the status and role of Theravada nuns in Thailand. While Upasikas are recognized as women who play important roles within Thai Buddhist organizations, the status and role of Theravada nuns remain largely unacknowledged and neglected. Furthermore, current laws do not recognize the right of women to ordain as Theravada nuns. Although Thai women can participate in national politics, they lack the opportunity to become nuns, highlighting deep-seated inequalities in Thai social and cultural systems. As a result, Thai women hold the status of practitioners without the opportunity to



continue the religion in the same way as men, despite the Buddha's designation of nuns as an essential Buddhist group.



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