

The Declaration of the Candidate

**WOMEN'S POSITION IN BUDDHISM:**  
**WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON BHIKKHUNĪ ATTHA GARUDHAMMĀ**

24.03.11

Rev. Zheng Kong

Date

Candidate's signature

The dissertation submitted to the Postgraduate Institute of Pāli and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The Declaration of the Supervisors

By

Rev. Zheng Kong

*Recommended after  
correctors made  
C.D. - Sunil  
3/2/12*

25/11/2010

25.03.11

Rev. Zheng Kong

Date

Supervisor's signature

## Abstract

Buddhism used to be considered as a religion of equality; recent years, however, some people influenced by the movement of woman's right of the west put forward that, like in other religions, there also exists gender discrimination in Buddhism, and therefore caused a fierce debate. This paper studies women's position in Buddhism with an especial examination from a Buddhist point of view on Bhikkhunī AG, the most crucial issue for the debate.

Logical and philosophical analysis, comparison, and historical approaches are the main methods used in this work; sociological, ethical, and psychological approaches are also to some extent applied. To get an authentic view, the attention has mainly focused on the original scriptures, especially the Vinaya Piṭaka in Pāli and Chinese. And to get real-time and practical information, questionnaires and interviews are made.

In the first chapter, women's position in Brahmanism and Jainism and the Buddha's relevant teaching, activities and attitude towards women are compared, showing that before the time of the Buddha, women were suffering from serious discrimination, yet the Buddha not only revealed the equality of all beings in nature with his penetrating wisdom, but also paid deep sympathy to women. The actual social influence of the Buddha-Dhamma and the improvement on women's position in primitive Buddhism is examined in the second chapter, showing that women's position was much, much improved in Buddhist society. The establishment of the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha and AG shows: a) the establishment of the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha and AG was a prudent decision, after the Buddha's deliberate consideration and attempt to balance the benefit of women and the purity of the community; b) similar descriptions found in almost all existing versions of Buddhist Vinaya of different schools shows that AG must have been

given by the Buddha, not by later monks. The relevant aspects of AG are examined in the third chapter by analyzing and comparing different versions in different scriptures, showing that AG has no much connection with political and economic rights. The nature of AG and the relation of it with women's position are examined in the fourth chapter, showing that AG, as precaution, protection, and ethical principle between the two parts of the Saṅgha and an administrative regulation of the community, has nothing to do with gender discrimination. The practice on AG, the development of AG, and the attitude towards women of different schools are examined in the seventh chapter, showing that, AG was practiced more strictly in Theravada Buddhism and in some Theravada schools there was an attempt to take the nuns under control by altering certain items of AG; while in Mahayana Buddhism it was not observed so seriously and there was a tendency to rise the position of women. In the last chapter, women's position and AG in modern time are examined by analyzing the western women's right movement, the reestablishment of nuns order in Theravada Buddhist countries, and the debate within some Mahayana Buddhist communities, showing that western culture has given a fierce impact to Buddhism and some Buddhists have surrendered themselves to feminism; some suggestions are also given for the problems that modern Buddhist women are facing.