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The Female Renunciants of Sri Lanka: The *Dasasilmattawa*

by Lowell W. Bloss

Scholars of contemporary Theravāda Buddhism in South and South East Asia have noted the significant changes in lay beliefs and practices as well as monastic reforms that have taken place since the late 19th century.¹ Yet, within their studies of this modern Theravāda reformation very little attention has been paid to the growth in prestige and numbers of Theravāda Buddhist renunciant women. The growth of orders of these robe clad, shaven headed women known as *dasasilmattawa*, *mae chi* and *thela shin* respectively in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma reflect the changes in Theravāda Buddhism and provide an important piece of the puzzle for understanding this reformation. This is particularly true of the *dasasilmattawa* movement of Sri Lanka, the youngest and most rapidly growing and changing of these movements of Buddhist female renunciants.

Initially, this study will document the history of the *dasasilmattawa* movement from its beginnings in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to its impressive growth in the 1950's. Focusing on three key *dasasilmattawas* (= *dsms*), Sisters Sudharmachari, Mawichari and Sudharma, this history shows how this movement has affinities and differences with "Protestant Buddhism" and relates to both the *vipassanā* meditation movement and the growth of the forest dwelling monasteries. After providing a history of this movement the study turns to an assessment of the contemporary status of the *dsms* as seen from the points of view of the members of this movement as well as from monk and lay perspectives. It will be suggested that the laity's respect for a more renunciant style of life than that of the village or

city monks and the increasing popularity of *vipassanā* meditation accounts for the growing prestige of the *dsms*.

I. History of the dasasilmattawa movement

In his book published in 1892 R. S. Copleston describes men and women in white who have taken the ten precepts or *dasasil*. He reports:

. . .there are few men of this profession, but a considerable number of women, generally old, are to be seen about the temples, especially in Kandy, or on the way to Adam's peak. They carry bowls as if for begging, and their shaven heads and dirty dresses give them a pathetic appearance, and one who had read the books would naturally suppose them to be nuns. Female mendicants they are, but they have not been admitted to the Community, and therefore are not called 'bhikkhuṇīs,' but only 'upādikās.' (lay women)²

It is difficult to know the exact origins of such elderly women. Reports and stories suggest that a number of these women *upāsikās* wandered in Sri Lanka in the early 1800s and it is probable that women mendicants were a part of the Sri Lankan scene before that time, perhaps dating back to the collapse of the *bhikkhuṇī* order in the 12th or 13th centuries.³ Their numbers may have increased due to the revival of Buddhism in the late 1800s, especially because of the *poṃa* campaigns which encouraged laity to take the eight precepts (*aṭasil*) and wear white on full moon days, and because of the example of such figures as Anagārika Dhammapāla who took the ten precepts (*dasasil*) permanently.⁴

A small number of aged and seemingly destitute women like those Copleston described can still be seen today congregating at the Sri Mahābodhi in Anuradhapura or at other important Buddhist pilgrimage centers. However, some of these women now wear yellow robes, having taken *dasasil*, and are accompanied by one or two women in white who have taken *aṭasil*. The *aṭasils* in white can handle money and care for the *dasasils* in yellow. Often lacking shelter, these women beg for food and money or subsist on the food prepared by Buddhist charity

organizations. Only the yellow robes of a few differentiate these women from those that Copleston described.

However, today there are many *dsms*, approximately 2500 wearing the yellow robe, who make every effort to disassociate themselves from the few poor older women such as those who beg near the Sri Mahābodhi.⁵ Most of these modern *dsms* live in *ārāmayas* (monastic institutions) with more than three companion *dsms*, were initiated under the tutelage of a teacher in a line of succession of other *dsms*, and about half were given the ten precepts before their twenty-fifth birthday.⁶ These yellow clad *dsms* are coming to see a close connection between themselves and the *bhikkhuni*s of ancient Sri Lanka. The link between the women in white of whom Copleston speaks and the modern day *dsms* in part is provided by Sister Sudharmachari, once Catherine deAlvis.

Catherine deAlvis was the daughter of David deAlvis Coonatillika, Mudaliyar of Raigama Korale, and Leisa deAlvis who was the sister of the famous scholar James deAlvis. Catherine was thus related to some of the most important coastal families of Sri Lanka including that of Sir Don Solomon Dias Bandaranaike, the chief Sri Lankan advisor of the British.⁷ It appears that Catherine's mother died early in her daughter's life and that her father then remarried. He too died before his daughter was 25 and subsequently she converted from Anglican Christianity to Buddhism and journeyed to Burma where she took on the robes of a *dasasil* before returning to Sri Lanka.

There are a number of stories about Catherine's conversion to Buddhism. A version repeated in several articles on Sister Sudharmachari credits Koswathie Nilame, an Ayurvedic physician of her father, with acquainting her with Buddhist texts.⁸ One story, perhaps apocryphal, relates that seven days after her father's death, Catherine invited Buddhist monks to a *dāna* (almsgiving). The chief monk would not accept the *dāna* until someone in the family took the five precepts. Catherine took the precepts despite the objections of her Christian relatives.⁹ Soon after her father's death Catherine settled in Kandy to continue her study of Buddhism. In Kandy she met a large delegation of Burmese renunciant women (*thela shin*), led by the ex-Burmese Queen Sein don, who were on pilgrimage to the Temple of the Tooth. It appears that Catherine and her

servant accompanied the *thela shin* when they returned to Burma. Here she was initiated by Queen Sein don and studied Burmese and Pāli. Catherine remained in Burma until 1905 when she returned to Sri Lanka as Sister Sudharmachari.¹⁰

Without a first-hand account of Catherine deAlvis' conversion to Buddhism any statement concerning her reasons for this change remains speculative. However, it can be recalled that her uncle, James deAlvis, while an Anglican, felt the prejudice of the British and called upon Sinhalese to rediscover their heritage.¹¹ Moreover, the 1880s and 1890s was a time of Buddhist resurgence as well as contact with Burmese monks, especially by the low country *nikāyas* (schools of the *sangha*). A number of Christian families especially in the Panadura area were returning to Buddhism while many of the Sinhalese Buddhist elite were beginning to assert and reform their tradition under the catalytic leadership of Colonel Olcott.¹² These conditions no doubt proved a favorable environment for her conversion.

Upon her return to Sri Lanka, Sister Sudharmachari used her connections to develop support among the most prestigious low country families such as that of Don Solomon Dias Bandaranaika who seems to have introduced her to Lady Edith Blake, wife of the British Governor Henry Blake. Moreover, her conversion to Buddhism endeared her to many prominent up country families. At a tea party in the Peradeniya gardens in 1906 reported in the *Ceylon Observer*, Sister Sudharmachari, Lady Blake, D. S. Dias Bandaranaika, William Dunawilla Disawa, Mrs. L. B. Nugawela and Mrs. A. Coomaraswamy attended.¹³ With the financial aid of these families Sister Sudharmachari formed the Sudharmadhara Society and built an *upāsikā ārāmaya* in Kaṭukāle on the Kandy-Peradeniya road. This nunnery was officially opened in 1907 by Lady Blake and bore her name.

With the building of Lady Blake's *Ārāmaya*, Sister Sudharmachari took homeless girls under her care and began to educate them. The Sister also took into her *ārāmaya* a number of aged, destitute, and blind women who became *dsms*.¹⁴ In fact, the *ārāmaya* fast became a home for elderly *dsms*. It appears that Sister Sudharmachari had been warned by her teacher in Burma not to ordain women under 40 years of age since the *dsm* tradition was not well established in Sri Lanka and ordaining younger women might prove a disciplinary problem. The name board

in front of Lady Blake's Nunnery thus read "Home for *elderly upāsikās*". In the 1920s this advice was nullified when Sister Sudharmachari needed younger sisters to take care of the older *dsms* that she had initiated.¹⁵

In her lifetime, Sister Sudharmachari, who also built an *ārāmaya* near the Thūpārāmaya in Anuradhapura, came to be called Hamumāniyo or Hāmupāsikā due to her aristocratic connections and bearing. Wearing a white blouse and a yellow robe to differentiate herself on the one hand from *bhikkhunīs* and, on the other hand, from the uninitiated, undisciplined women in white of which Copleston spoke, she was regularly visited by dignitaries from Burma and members of the lay Buddhist elite of Sri Lanka.¹⁶ She died in 1939.

Sister Sudharmachari's example and that of her initiates, coupled with growing Buddhist education and *sil* campaigns directed to the youth stimulated a modest growth of the *dsm* movement from the 1905 through 1935. At least three *ārāmayas* in Panadura were opened between 1910 and 1924 by students of Sister Sudharmachari.¹⁷ However, despite this growth and a tendency to take younger members, *upāsikā* continued to be a term associated with older lay women and was used as a term of derision toward younger girls who took *sil*. One informant related that parents of girls from nearby High School would not allow their daughters to walk past Lady Blake's *Ārāmaya* for fear that they might be influenced to join the order and not fulfill their proper female role as housewife and mother.¹⁸ Such prejudices began to change in the 1930s through 1950s due in part to the influence of Sister Mawichari.

Born in North Burma in 1897, Mawichari became distressed when she witnessed her sister's miscarriage. She cut her own hair in 1912 and her parents put her in the charge of an *ārāmaya* near Sagain Rock where she was initiated as a *thela shin*, learned meditation and became an expert in *abhidhamma*. In 1928 she came with 90 other nuns from Burma to worship at the Temple of the Tooth. In 1929 she returned to Sri Lanka and under the prompting of Vinayalanka Thero, a Burmese monk at Makuṭārāmaya, decided to stay and initiate *dsms* in Sri Lanka.¹⁹

Sister Mawichari created a sensation among the Buddhist women in Colombo and many came to see her and take her blessing. One laywoman, Piyaseeli Jayewardene, a qualified teacher educated at Museaus College was initiated as Sister

Seelawati and by 1958 they had initiated over 50 women, most of them in their teens or early 20s.²⁰ A home often frequented by this pair of *dsms* was “Yamuna” owned by H. Sri Nissanka, who was to play a most important part in the growth of the *dsm* movement.²¹

H. Sri Nissanka, a noted criminal lawyer and Buddhist nationalist, was a key figure in Buddhist affairs in Sri Lanka in the 1930s and 1940s.²² He was not only instrumental in making the *dsm* movement respectable among the urban elite but in bringing *vipassanā* meditation practice to Sri Lanka and popularizing this among the laity.²³ Born in 1899, he was educated first in Ananda College and then transferred to Royal College where he was involved in the YMBA. At 19 he travelled to Burma and was ordained a Buddhist monk. He thereby hoped to set an example for all Sri Lankan Buddhist laymen to become monks for a brief period in their early years. Soon afterward he returned to Sri Lanka to take care of his ailing father and subsequently went to England to train for a law degree. When he returned to Sri Lanka he continued to work for Buddhist causes and became the President of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress in 1931.²⁴

In the early 1930s, influenced by the discipline and learning of the Burmese Sister Mawichari, coupled with a personal experience in which he visited a Buddhist monk in a hospital and was distressed that the monk was nursed by Catholic nuns, H. Sri Nissanka began to galvanize support for an *ārāmaya* for *dsms*. Quoting the verse, *yō gilānan upatthāti, sō upatthāti man iti*, “whoever nurses the sick, nurses me,” he hoped to set up an *ārāmaya* which would educate and discipline the *dsms*, many of whom had taken on the yellow robes of Sister Sudharmachari but were self-initiated and homeless.²⁵ In addition, H. Sri Nissanka hoped to train these *dsms* to be useful members of society. Theirs was to be a life of both renunciation and service.

This plan for the *dsms* as well as a number of H. Sri Nissanka’s activities can be interpreted as strategies of the urban elite, who being divorced from the traditional rural framework tried to bridge the gap between this-worldly pursuits and the other-worldly concerns of Buddhism. Confronted with urban secular activity, influenced by the Western understandings and misunderstandings of Buddhism and sometimes better educated

in textual Buddhism than the monks, this group searched for ways to link daily life to the goal of renunciation or at least bring a Buddhist ethic into everyday life. Here the quest of deliverance could be linked to deliverance from social ills and emerging other Buddhist males suggests one such strategy; while his support of *vipassanā* for the laity is another. In this latter plan the laity take unto themselves a religious virtuosity once the property of the monks. By pushing the *dsms* toward service, and in fact suggesting that they follow the path of a female *anagārika* ("homeless one"), he proposes a third strategy. As Bardwell Smith suggests, these activities show an increase in the relationship between renunciation and present existence, a stress on equanimity that is non-attachment but not non-involvement, and reveal a conviction that Buddhism can speak to the modern world.²⁶

The list of lay supporters that H. Sri Nissanka involved in this effort to build an *ārāmaya* for educated and disciplined *dsms* reads like a catalogue of the Colombo Buddhist elite. They agreed with his effort to reform the *dsms*, "who were seen to be wandering from place to place without guidance and bring them under control and educate them to lead useful lives."²⁷ When the nunnery, named Vihāra MahāDevi Upāsikā Ārāmaya, was finally built at Biyagama and opened in 1936, under headlines reading "Life of Work and Service" and "Others Before Self," the newspapers reported that, "The society wishes to discourage the idea that this *ārāmaya* is meant to be an asylum for the aged and the decrepit."²⁸ Rather the *dsms* will conduct classes for 75 neighborhood girls. Service was emphasized for:

Strange as it may seem even pious Buddhists seem to forget that the Buddha himself after attaining perfection served mankind for 40 long years. Nowadays, while everybody strives to attain self-perfection, the spirit of service is non-existent.²⁹

The report continues that:

The Upāsikās will in addition to spiritual instruction, be trained in first aid, hygiene and social work. They will be equipped to go out into the neighboring villages on missions of mercy.³⁰

D. S. Senanayaka, the Minister of Agriculture, helped to open

the *ārāmaya* with these words:

Buddhists who speak so much of Ahimsa had not taken steps to educate women in the art of succoring the sick. Such work is done by Christian Sisters and it is high time women of the country work for the welfare of fellow human beings in a selfless way.³¹

The laity were clear in their goals for the inhabitants of this new *ārāmaya*—renunciation and service. Only in the former were they to achieve success. The laity brought Sisters Mawichari and Seelavathi to the Biyagama *Ārāmaya* in 1938 and 1939 to teach the *dsms* meditation, *abhidhamma*, and discipline.³² While such Buddhist education proved to be successful, in the three yearly reports published in July, 1938, 1939 and 1940, the *dāyakas*, or “donors”, express concern with the lack of public service displayed by the *dsms*. In 1938, the laity report that while their duty of meditation is being done, no work of value to the residents of the vicinity is completed. In the 1939 report the hopes of the laity begin to rest on a younger *dsm*, Sister Sudharma, whom they were educating at Musaeus College and who becomes the most important figure in the history of the *dsm* movement.³³

This important episode reveals a conflict between two strategies for redemption within Buddhism. On the one hand, there is an urban educated elite influenced by the examples of Christian service organizations including Catholic nuns who taught in schools and nursed in hospitals. Attempting to assert their pride in Buddhism these members of the elite, whose predecessors had built Buddhist higher education, started Buddhist Sunday schools, began the YMBA, and supported similar organizations parallel to those of the Christians, continued to assert what has come to be called “Protestant Buddhism”: a Buddhism that stressed an ethic of involvement, a rational and pragmatic interpretation of Buddhist ideals and a this-worldly asceticism. On the other hand there is the *dsms* drawn mostly from rural backgrounds and steeped in the practice of monks who gave spiritual and ritual gifts to the laity and not social service. Added to the monks’ example was the female *aṭasil* who gained purity and merit by worship and contemplation on *poya* days and whose calm behavior was felt to be particularly befitting a woman. Following this example the *dsms* were willing to practice meditation—and as will be seen below, wholeheartedly ac-

cepted the *vipassanā* techniques brought to Sri Lanka with the help of H. Sri Nissanka—but were unwilling to use the tranquility taught in meditation in social service. Another factor that led to a rejection of the service ethic of the urban laity might have been the class background of the *dsms*. Many seem to have been drawn from the rural small landholding class whose female members realistically only could aspire to becoming teachers in the lower grades in village schools. They had rejected this goal and taken the unpopular step of renouncing the role of housewife when they became *dsms*. Instead of service, they saw their life as one of renunciation.

At first glance Sister Sudharma seems to have realized the service oriented dream of H. Sri Nissanka, as this Sister became a teacher at Museaus College. She also gave numerous talks on the Buddhist Dhamma throughout Sri Lanka as well as radio and newspaper interviews. It is to Sister Sudharma that much of the credit can be given to elevating the status of *dsms* in the eyes of the laity as well as the rapid growth of the movement from the 1950s which marked an upsurge of Buddhist nationalistic feeling, in part due to the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's birth. However, Sister Sudharma has given up her teaching position at Museaus College which she held from 1955 to 1977 and now speaks strongly of the need for a strict renunciation on the part of *dsms*. A brief biography of Sister Sudharma might point to the fact that the life of renunciation and retreat that she now observes was a major factor in her ambition to become a *dsm*. This same motivation characterizes most *dsms* today.⁵⁴

Born in 1919 into a farming family with small plantation ownings, Sister Sudharma became a nun when she was 13 years and 4 months of age in 1933. The motivations for such a step can never be fathomed adequately but a number of reasons are readily recalled by Sister Sudharma. As a very young girl she was upset by the graphic portrayals of the numerous Buddhist hells at the temple at Botale and vowed to follow a path that would preclude such an end. Thinking of the numerous Buddhist hells, she was told the story of a man who heard the words of the Buddha and decided to observe the ten precepts despite the fact that he was starving. Due to his weakened condition when he began to observe the precepts, he died and became a

tree deity. Thinking that such a divine state was obtained by only half a day of observing ten precepts Sister Sudharma vowed to take the precepts as often as she could. She took the five precepts every night and when she did not she dreamed of punishments. The taking of the precepts also came to be linked with good health. When she began to suffer from malaria with frequent chills, her mother advised her to take the eight precepts daily at the temple. She followed this advice from July through November of 1932 and she subsequently lost the symptoms. After this experience she asked her uncles to build her a very small shrine and meditation room where she spent more and more of her time. Here she worshipped the Buddha and, while not formally taught meditation, she reflected on the 32 impurities of the body. Once while contemplating the impurities her austerities brought her a sense of tranquility that lasted for a number of days.

This youthful piety led Sister Sudharma to a decision to become a *bhikkhuni*. While she had never seen a nun she had studied about the arrival of the *bhikkhuni* order in Sri Lanka and appeared to believe it still existed.³⁵ When she was 10 or 11 she did see a *dsm* and in the next several years she cut her hair a number of times and took on yellow robes, much to the dismay of her family. Finally, a *dsm* came to her village to learn Pāli from a local pundit and she slipped away to her, donned the robes and returned to her family for their blessing. After difficult negotiations, her family gave into her request with the promise that she would stay in the village. Even though her preceptor moved from the village in several months, Sister Sudharma stayed with her family for three years and then heard of the opening of the Biyagama Ārāmaya by H. Sri Nissanka. Taking a servant she went to the house of H. Sri Nissanka and he promised to negotiate with her family and gain their approval for her entrance into the new *ārāmaya*. After entering the *ārāmaya* at Biyagama she was chosen by Mrs. J. R. Jayewardene to be educated at Museaus. Subsequently, she went on to Colombo University, from which she graduated in 1951. Under the urging of Professor G. P. Malalasekera she then travelled to Penang to teach the *dhamma*, but returned when her mother fell ill. She then taught at a girls school in Ambalangoda until

she was asked to come to Museaus in 1955. At the same time she began to run the *ārāmayā* at Biyagama and to establish other nunneries. After quitting Museaus in 1977 Sister Sudharma retired to the forest where she remained for some five years at Kutumbigala under Ven. Jinavaṃsa Ānandasiri. She is now the head of a group of 13 *ārāmayas* and is supervising the building of a nursing home for aged nuns.

In reflecting on her life, Sister Sudharma tends to depreciate the service period suggesting that very few can have such a worldly position and remain dedicated to renunciation. She sees her teaching as a debt owed to her sponsors, but now dedicates her life to renunciation. She soon hopes to return to the forest where she expects to remain until death or sickness ends this career. The disciplined and meditative life is certainly what she expects of her students. All novices that she accepts at her nunneries must spend at least three months at the *vipassanā* meditation center at Kunduboda. The blending of veneration and emulation of the forest monks, the training in *vipassanā* meditation and the renunciation of the worldly affairs that marks Sister Sudharma's present practice is characteristic of the hopes of the majority of the *dsms* today and accounts for the growing prestige of this movement, as will be shown below.³⁶

The *dsm* movement which Sisters Sudharmachari, Mawichari and Sudharma have helped to stimulate now numbers approximately 2500 and is growing rapidly. The *dsms* in yellow who live in *ārāmayas* and are initiated only after a period of novicehood, far outnumber the women of which Copleston spoke or those wandering *upāsikās* whom H. Sri Nissanka wished to reform and put into social service. These *dsms* are beginning to gain the respect of the laity and the attention of the monks. We turn now to an analysis of where the new *dsms* place themselves in the Buddhist *sāsana* (religion) and how the laity and monks characterize the life-style of the *dsms*.

II. Views of the Dsm Movement

A. The Dsms' View of Themselves: Between Lay and Bhikkhūṇī Status

The majority of *dsms* today are attempting to make a place for themselves between lay and *bhikkhuṇī* status. Sister Sudharma, for instance, suggests that the *dsm* movement is not a part of the *sangha*. Yet, it is not a lay order. She explains that according to Ven. Kadavādduvē Jinavaṃsa, who heads a number of forest hermitages in Sri Lanka, there are three ways of taking the ten precepts. The lay person can take *dasasil* for a day, when *sil* is administered by a monk, who uses the word *gahapati* ("householder"). The *dsm* begs for the *dasasil* without the use of this term, thus rejecting the lay or *upāsikā* status, while the novice monk takes *pabbajjā dasasil*, which collapses the ten precepts into one rule and prepares the way for full ordination into the *sangha* (*upasampadā*). The fact that the word for householder is not used during the initiation places the *dsm* at a mid-point between the laity and *sangha*.³⁷ Other *dsms* who are leaders of important *dsm* organizations were unable to explain their place so fully but noted that the *dsms* are in a special category, and one said that definitely the *dsms* were *sāmanerī*: female novices but not officially a part of the *sangha*.³⁸ As further evidence that the *dsms* do not consider themselves a lay order, the *dsms* call Sanghamitra who brought the Sri Mahābodhi to Sri Lanka and established the *bhikkhuṇī* order, their mother. They also read the *Therīgāthā* which contains life histories of early *bhikkhuṇīs* as an important reference for the reasons a woman might wish to become a *dsm*. Also of interest in pointing to the position of the *dsms* in their own eyes is the answer to the question as to whether they would soon pass away if they were to attain arahantship. According to the Buddhist canon if they were lay Buddhists who did not join the *sangha* immediately after attaining arahantship, they would die in a short time. Unanimously, the *dsms* asserted that as they were not a lay order and had renounced the household they would continue to live after attaining arahantship. Another clue to the fact that they do not see themselves as *upāsikās* is, of course, the "yellow robe," in various shades from almost red to brown, the *dsms* have adopted. This is in contrast to the white of the *aṭasil* and the white and yellow of the first *dsm*, Sister Sudharmachari. It should be noted that their dress is not technically a robe which must be made according to strict *Vinaya* rules and which only the monks can wear, but this difference is not often cited by the *dsms* and

certainly is not understood by most laity as will be shown below.

This view of their own status between the laity and monk is also affirmed by the response of the majority of *dsms* to the possibility of *upasampadā* or full ordination into the *sangha*. This question of full ordination of women into the *sangha* is often debated in the contemporary Sri Lankan press. The possibility of such an ordination is suggested by the fact that Sri Lankan *bhikkhuni*s travelled to China in the fifth century A.D. to ordain Chinese women.³⁹ It is argued that if the line of nuns still exists in China, these nuns could reintroduce the *bhikkhuni* order into Sri Lanka. However, while there are some outspoken *dsms* on both sides of this issue, most *dsms* say that if *upasampadā* were possible—which they doubted due to the Mahāyāna character of the Chinese *bhikkhuni* order—they would not accept this ordination. A number suggested that ordination would limit their freedom from the monks and that the close relationship between *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhuni*s might bring the downfall of a *sangha* which they view as in decline.

Whichever way is chosen to explain their mid-position, the *dsms* often imply that their position is based on their *sil*. They explain that if their *sil* or the moral purity of their conduct and thought is good, the laity will see their status as close to the *sangha*. They quietly assert that with exceptions, their *sil*, based on careful observation of the rules, is purer than that of the village or city monks, leading to the conclusion that they are indeed worthy of the respect often given the monks. The *dsms* decry the monks' involvement in politics, their luxuries and their education in coed institutions as not living up to the monastic rules. As a number of *dsms* remark, it is better to follow 10 rules well, than 227 rules poorly. In contrast the *dsms* note that their education is exclusively in the *dhamma* and within the confines of an *ārāma*. In criticizing the behavior of village and city monks the *dsms* are echoing the opinion of most laity and they are placing themselves in close relationship with the forest dwelling monks who like the *dsms* stress renunciation of daily life and meditation.

Contemporary *dsms* see their chief task as that of attaining arahantship. Unlike the monks interviewed by Richard Gombrich who doubted arahantship was a possibility in this degraded age, the *dsms* believe that they might attain such a state.⁴⁰ In this

effort they continue worship and recitations of the *dhamma* in addition to various types of meditation. The meditation technique that is gaining attention is *vipassanā*. Many of the younger *dsms* have taken some training in *vipassanā* in one of the *vipassanā* meditation centers, a number are skilled teachers of this technique and some have set up their own *vipassanā* training centers.⁴¹ Perhaps this technique and the teaching surrounding it, taught by Burmese monks who are used to the help of their *thela shin*, has helped to lead to the belief in the possibility of arahantship.⁴² In addition to the *ārāmayas* being places of meditation, worship and renunciation for the *dsms*, they have become places of retreat and help to lay women. Many of the *dsms* with whom I spoke mentioned that they allow lay women with family problems to stay at the *ārāmayas* and try to counsel the wife and husband or daughter in actions that might heal the difficulties.⁴³

The relationship which the *dsms* wish to have with monks is best summarized by one Sister who suggested that the monks are, like chancellors of universities, only to be called in for formal events such as an initiation.⁴⁴ When Sister Sudharma was asked when monks were needed other than at times of initiation, she recalled only one instance, in which the parents of a novice who believed their daughter should be initiated after a normal two-year novitiatehood protested when Sister Sudharma told them that their daughter was not yet ready. Sister Sudharma then called for the help of a monk from Kelaniya who is on the *ārāmaya* committee to speak with the family. A leader of one of the largest organizations of *dsms*, Sister Khemachari, suggested that the ten precepts should be given by monks once or twice a month, but was very unwilling to appeal to monks concerning the running of her nunneries other than in rare cases. This was particularly interesting as Sister Khemachari belongs to an organization of *dsms* begun by a monk who carried out the desire of his preceptor to start an order of *dsms*. In this endeavor the monk—considered by the laity to be a forest dweller—advertised in a newspaper for a *dsm* to initiate a number of pious women. Mawichari responded, taught Khemachari and others and then withdrew. Subsequently, this organization has grown with the help of one particularly generous *dāyaka*, who echoes H. Sri Nissanka's belief that Buddhist *dsms* should be as well cared for

as the Catholic nuns, but believes their task should be meditation and not social service. This perspective reveals a shift of the lay view of the *dsm* which will be shown below. Despite this growth of her order and the decisions involved, Sister Khemachari, now the head of 14 *ārāmayas*, rarely seeks the advice of the head monk of the *dsm* organization.⁴⁵ The rule seems to be to honor the monks and supply *dāna* and robes for them on occasion but not to allow them to become too involved in the running of the *ārāmaya*.⁴⁶

Dsms of the more financially secure institutions tend to distrust the government interference. Many of those interviewed, in fact, have not returned a government questionnaire that would have led to the issuing of *dsm* identity cards. This action seems to be due to a general distrust of urban lay involvement in *ārāmaya* affairs and the fear of being pressed into social service. However, there are many *ārāmayas* which are suffering from insufficient funds. Here, supported by their own family or a few *dāyakas*, the *dsm*s' attempt to live disciplined lives is less than successful. In responses to questionnaires sent out by the Commissioner of Buddhist affairs, many of these *dsm*s hoped that the government could intervene and supply funds for reconstruction. Moreover, the *dsm*s do not often benefit from traditional ownership of property which the monks possess and in some circumstances this leads to their eviction from their *ārāmayas*. They hoped the government could help to solve this problem.⁴⁷

The better run organizations of the *dsm*s remain quite parochial in their attitude toward the *dsm*s in trouble and toward other groups of *dsm*s in general. This attitude seems to arise from the character of the chief *dsm*s, who joined the order when it was very unpopular and had to fight long battles with their families. The strength of character that allowed them to persevere, has led them to a rather uncompromising view of how their *ārāmayas* should be administered and their novices taught. This lack of cooperation between *dsm*s and their organizations might soon disappear. The women who are now entering the order are having a somewhat less difficult time convincing their families to allow them to be initiated. At the established *ārāmayas* the family can be assured of the protection of their daughters and the purity of the *dsm*s' *sil*. Moreover, the reasons for joining

the order now seem to echo those given by young monks. The young *dsms* often state that they took a liking to the robe: to the calm demeanor of the Sisters. Perhaps, with the growing acceptability of this way of life, the Sisters will have to struggle less to preserve their identity and more easily will join together. Sister Khemachari, age 44, who joined the order in 1958, for instance, seems willing to associate with *dsms* from other organizations and contemplate an all Sri Lankan association of *dsms* if it is led by the *dsms* themselves and not the laity.⁴⁸

B. The Monastic View of the Dsms: A Need for Discipline

Many monks began their assessment of the *dsm* movement by pointing out that the *bhikkhus* have no responsibility for the *dsms* since these women do not belong to the *bhikkhuni* order. A number went on to say that there is no *bhikkhuni* order in Theravāda Buddhism, that there cannot be such an order and that the laity are wrong in their acceptance of the *dsms* as *bhikkhunis*. Some suggested that in actuality these women were masquerading as part of the *sangha*. In several conversations the initial refusal of the Buddha to ordain women was mentioned, as well as the canonical statement that due to their ordination the *sangha* would not endure as long as it would have if women were not ordained. Lessons that were to be learned from this are that women are physically and mentally weaker than men and cannot endure crisis, and that problems of discipline arise when the sexes are mixed too closely.⁴⁹

These initial responses of the majority were most often followed by assertions that the *dsms* should be trained by the government and put to some useful social service. Health care for village women, staffing hospitals and teaching the *dhamma* to women and children were mentioned as possibilities.

A minority of monks believed that the *bhikkhuni* order could be reestablished and were prepared to work for this possibility. They stated that if an unbroken line of ordination in China from Sri Lanka could be proved they would propose that selected *dsms* be given *upasampadā*. However, they acknowledge that the majority of monks would not support this move. They believed that *upasampadā* would assure disciplined and educated women

to carry on the Buddha's word. The aim of *upasampadā* seems, therefore, little different from the aim of the majority of monks: to assure that these women undergo training and discipline.

C. The Lay View of the Dsms: A Search for Purity in Motivation, Discipline and Renunciation

In a survey of laity taken in various areas of Sri Lanka, it was found that an overwhelming number knew about the *dsm* movement and almost all could name a *dsm* or an *ārāmaya* in their area. More than half of those interviewed had helped the *dsms* at one time and ten percent regularly supplied food or money to the *dsm* movement. While there was mention of the *dsms* who wander and beg, the respondents still said they must respect these women because of the robe. Many made a differentiation between the wandering *dsms* and those associated with *ārāmayas*. When asked how they would characterize the life of the *dsms*, most responded that the *dsms*' life was full of *sil* or very pious, *silavanta*. They were also felt by many to be good meditators. While these views were held by men and women alike, a number of women added that the *dsms* understood their problems and they went to them for advice.⁵⁰

In comparing the life of a *dsm* with that of a monk, a few laity mentioned that the *dsms* were not *bhikkhuni*s, but agreed with the vast majority of respondents that the life of the *dsms* is more disciplined and less pompous than that of the monks. In fact, there was some sense that women are more disciplined in religious matters than men and that when they take the robe this difference continues. Again and again the laity readily criticized the monks' life as too luxurious or having too many material comforts. This was contrasted to the austere life of the *dsms* who do not have the traditional supports that the monks have come to expect. A number of laity went on to explain that the motives for becoming a *dsm* are more pure than those for becoming a monk. The monks, it was explained, might join the order due to family pressure or the promise of prestige, the possibility of education or a comfortable life. The *dsms* could not expect such supports nor would their families give approval to such a move. A number of laity remarked that a woman only

has a home and when she has given this up she has given up everything, implying that a man has opportunities outside the home. Some remarked that the *dsms* had more discipline and that they never heard of a *dsm* giving up the robes but this was a frequent occurrence among monks. Some laity, when pressed added that, of course, there were very good monks in the forest.

While more research needs to be completed on lay attitudes, the questionnaires suggest some interesting factors in the lay views of the *dsms* and the monks. The laity seem ready to accept the *dsms* as part of the *sangha*. Even those who recognized that the *dsms* were not strictly *bhikkhunīs* said that they still needed to respect the robe. Moreover, the laity showed an impressive tolerance of even the most undisciplined *dsms* in this regard. The almost desperate situation of some *dsms* and the lack of traditional and governmental supports for these women, helps the laity to see the *dsms* on a higher level than the ordinary monks. The majority of monks who receive far more lay support and have a much more secure position than the *dsms* are disparaged. The purity of their life-style and motivations are questioned. Often willing to downgrade those they support financially and praise those they don't, some laity seem ready to place the *dsms* on a level of *sil*, meditation and discipline above the village monks and below the forest monks. In this hierarchy the laity is searching for a group that meets its very high standard of purity of motives and renunciation.

In addition to the laity's acknowledgement of the purity of *dsms*' discipline and renunciation another important element that is leading to a growing prestige of the *dsms* is the support they have received from the middle and upper class laity who are interested in meditation. Many of the *dsms* have studied *vipassanā* meditation techniques, some taking a leading role in centers of such meditation and others teaching this type of meditation at their *ārāmayas*. This meditation, apparently brought to Sri Lanka by H. Sri Nissanka, while wide-spread in appeal has sparked particular interest among the women of the upper and middle class of Colombo. Here it provides the elite with a method of religious virtuosity: a way of taking to themselves the renunciation at one time seen as the prerequisite of the monks. It also enables the meditators to accept their daily life in the light of the Buddhist doctrine of transitoriness.⁵¹ Into this situation has

stepped a German-born American *dsm*, Sister Khema, who is having a significant impact on the status of the *dsms* at least among the educated elite.

Sister Khema, who has been interested in meditation since 1963 and studied *vipassanā* at a training center in Rangoon, has travelled extensively in South and Southeast Asia, established a Buddhist monastery and lay community in Australia and requested Khantipalo Thera to be an abbot there in 1978. She was ordained as a *dsm* in 1979 by Narada Thera at Vajirarama temple in Colombo and started travelling world wide to teach the *dhamma* and meditation. In 1981 she returned to Sri Lanka to attempt to build an International Buddhist Women's Center where women from all over the world might come to meditate and learn the *dhamma*.⁵² This hope was mentioned in a news report and she was subsequently contacted by Mrs. Irene Nanayakkara who was then president of a group which had established the Sri Lanka Buddhist Nuns Association in hopes of training and educating *dsms* and forming all the *dsms* in the country into a coherent organization. Mrs. Nanayakkara's society had acquired a small plot of land in Madiwala-Kotte and had begun to build an *ārāmayā* in hopes that *dsms* could receive education there and subsequently return to their respective *ārāmayas* to teach their fellow *dsms*.⁵³ Mrs. Nanayakkara convinced Sister Khema that this land could also house the International Women's Buddhist Center and Sister Khema has been raising funds for this center ever since.

Sister Khema has created quite a stir among the English speaking elite of Colombo and she has made the growth and education of the *dsms* a cause for many of the women of this class. Preaching in halls and on television and holding *vipassanā* meditation retreats, she lends prestige to the *dsm* movement in the eyes of the elite. Her importance is evidenced by the fact that an Island on Rajgama Lake near Dodunduwā has been readied for her and other female meditators by the laity in that area. This site has long been used by learned forest dwelling monks and as the center for the European monks.⁵⁴

Sister Khema, however, remains an outsider to the *dsm* movement of Sri Lanka. She is willing to consider *upasampadā* for the *dsms*. This is partially to guarantee reform of the wandering *dsms*, but more importantly she hopes that this would give

the *dsms* status equal to that of the monks. This thinking is not supported by most *dsms*, who seem to enjoy the freedom from monks and monastic rules that their present in-between status guarantees. The *dsms* also seem to realize that such a move would not be supported by the monks and they might lose the support they receive from some monks they now have as advisors. Moreover, Sister Khema seems eager to sponsor an all Sri Lanka organization of *dsms* led by laity. Such an organization is feared by most *dsms* who believe that they might be forced into social service by some of the urban elite. In fact, Sister Khema speaks of *dsms* as taking part in development of the country: as holding *dhamma* classes for women and children and providing classes in hygiene. She says "Do not eat the rice of the country in vain."⁵⁵ Certainly, recalling the hopes of H. Sri Nissanka, the push among some laity for *dsms* dedicated to social service continues but this is now tempered by the growing acceptance of the *dsms*' role in *vipassanā* meditation.

III. Conclusion

We have seen a gradual growth of the *dsm* movement. The growth can be said to be symbolized by the change of colors of the robe from white, to white and yellow, to all yellow. It is doubtful that the wandering women in white of whom Copleston spoke in the 1890s were held in high respect. They were mainly older women stimulated by piety to spend their last years in worship. Certainly such action on the part of a young woman would not have gained wide acceptance. Into this situation came the first modern *dsm*, Sister Sudharmachari with her white blouse and yellow robe. This signified that she was not a member of the *sangha* but neither was she a wandering, undisciplined and uneducated *dsm*. Nevertheless, her rule of initiating only women over 40 continued the characterization of *dsms* as elderly lay women. In the 1930s and 1940s with the influence of Sister Mawichari and Sister Sudharma, who initiated young women, the yellow robe began to be seen by the *dsms* as a sign of a new status. They began to break away from the *upāsikā* label and to see themselves and to be seen by others as occupying a level between the laity and *bhikkhunīs*.

The *dsms* have gradually gained the respect of the Buddhist laity of Sri Lanka. This elevation of status is due to a number of factors. The *dsms* benefit from the ambivalent attitude of the laity toward the village and city monks. Unlike monks who are often faulted for participating in secular affairs and being surrounded by worldly goods, the *dsms* are seen as truly renouncing society. The traditional piety of women coupled with the fairly poor circumstances of most of the *dsms* have reinforced the laity's view of their piety. Moreover, the *dsms* who have rejected the avenue of social service and stressed renunciation, have increasingly related themselves to the forest dwelling monks and thus tapped into the prestige which the laity attribute to this group. Furthermore, the *dsms* have embraced *vipassanā* meditation as practitioners and teachers more than have the Sri Lankan monks.⁵⁶ This has further elevated this meditation as a method which allows the laity to perceive the transitoriness of their day to day existence with calm Buddhist understanding. Finally, the *dsms* have offered to women in difficult situations a place of retreat and advice, as well as providing many other women with a hope of recapturing in contemporary Buddhism the elevated place of the female renunciate in ancient Sri Lanka. While tapping these sources of prestige, the *dsms* have remained conservative. They have not challenged the existing *sangha* nor do they see themselves as a reform movement. Rather, they have quietly begun to fit into the Sri Lanka Buddhist scene.

There are, however, some important stumbling blocks to the continued slow growth of prestige of the *dsm* movement among the laity. *Upasampadā* is becoming an emotional issue for a few *dsm* and for many urban lay women. This issue could cause a confrontation between the *dsm* movement and the *sangha*. Most recently, as the result of the efforts of Sister Khema and some Colombo Buddhist women, a number of moves that might raise this issue have been made. Responding to a letter written by Mrs. Devendra, a close associate to Sister Khema and a leading Buddhist lay woman, Mrs. J. R. Jayewardene has created a separate *dsm* division under the Commission of Buddhist Affairs. This unit continues to try to issue identity cards to the *dsms* as well as providing minimum food and shelter to destitute *dsms*. The Colombo Buddhist elite have also asked the Education Department to establish a training center for *dsms*

similar to the *pariveṇas* for monks. Finally, it has been suggested that the *dsms* be given the *pabbajjā dasasil* administered to novice monks and that the *Vinaya* rules for *sāmanēris* be formally accepted.⁵⁷ This could be viewed as bringing the *dsms* closer to full ordination in the *sangha* and might bring about a confrontation between the monks—the majority of whose views are conservative on the subject of *upasampadā* for *dsms*—and the supporters of the *dsms*. However good intentioned the hopes of the urban elite supporters of full ordination for the *dsms*, this will certainly test the gradual rise of prestige of the *dsm* movement. The *dsm* movement successfully fought the attempt of the urban Buddhist elite to place them into social service positions; the drive for *upasampadā* forecasts another struggle between the majority of *dsms* and the *laity*.

The late 19th and the 20th centuries have brought many changes to Sri Lankan Buddhism. The history and contemporary status of the *dsms* supplies one more piece to the puzzle of this complex reformation. Since it relates to the growth of the numbers of monks who have retreated to the forest, the questions concerning the purity of the village and city monks among the laity, the laity's appropriation of the traditional roles of these monks, the popularity of *vipassanā* meditation, the growing role of women, and the response to their needs within a Buddhist context, the study of the *dsm* movement provides clues to major changes in Sri Lankan Buddhism, and it should be an interesting tool for analysis of the continuities and changes of Sri Lankan Buddhism in the future.

NOTES

1. This study is based on field research in Sri Lanka completed in 1982–83 and the summer of 1984 under a Fulbright-Hays grant and a Mellon Foundation grant administered by Hobart and William Smith Colleges. Special thanks go to Mrs. Kusuma Devendra who is completing her PhD. dissertation on the *dsms*. We travelled many miles together seeking *dsms* to interview and she proved a wonderful translator and research companion. Walter Perera of Peradeniya University also translated many documents pertaining to the *dsm* movement and Ms. Lakmali Gunawardena conducted interviews on lay attitudes at the Temple of the Tooth.

2. R. S. Copleston, *Buddhism: Primitive and Present in Magadha and in*

Ceylon. (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1892), p. 279.

3. *Notes on Some Sinhalese Families*, Part VI. (From the Diaries of E. R. Gooneratne). ed. P. E. Pieris (Colombo, 1911).

4. A person taking the Three Refuges in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha and the Five Precepts is considered a Buddhist. The Five Precepts (*pansil*) include not taking life, not stealing, abstaining from wrong sexual practices, not telling lies and abstaining from intoxicants. An *atasil* takes three more precepts: not to take solid foods after noon, not dancing and adorning oneself, and not using comfortable beds and chairs. For *dasasil* the seventh precept is broken into two and the tenth precept involves not touching gold or silver. This precept is often interpreted as not holding money.

5. Interviews conducted June, 1983.

6. Analysis of questionnaires of *dsms* from the Commissioner of Buddhist Affairs, Colombo.

7. Personal communication of the geneology of the Duwewatta Walawwa family. I would like to thank Mr. K. Dharmawickrama of Kandy for pointing out Catherine deAlvis' relationship to James deAlvis.

8. *Short Biography of Sister Sudharmachari published on the occasion of her death*. No date or author given. See T. S. Dharmabandu, *Sinhala Virayo*, (Ceylon: S. B. Pranandu, 1949).

9. Interview with Sister Ampitiye Anula, a student of Sister Sudharmachari.

10. *Ibid.* Chaung Oo Manug Sandar, "The Monastery of Queen Seindon," *Ngwe-dar-yi* (1980). This article was translated by Dr. U Kyaw Than who with Director Htun Hmat Win of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Burma and his Deputy Director, Daw Khin Khin Su was of immense help in developing material on the *thela shin*.

11. M. Ames, "Westernization or Modernization: The Case of Sinhalese Buddhism," *Social Compass*, XX, (1973/2), p. 155.

12. K. Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society 1750-1900*, (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1976), pp. 205-255.

13. *Ceylon Observer*, Tuesday, September 25, 1906.

14. B. S. Woolf (Mrs. W. T. Southorn), *How to See Ceylon*. (Colombo: Times of Ceylon), 1914), pp. 91-92.

15. Interviews with Sisters A. K. Somawathi and W. M. Seelawathi, two of the first of the younger *dsms* to be ordained by Sister Sudharmachari.

16. Interviews with Sisters Ampitiye Anula and Kotmale Sudharma.

17. Sri Nanada Upāsikārāmaya, Tanthirinullārāmasya, and Seelawathi Ārāmaya.

18. Interview with Sister Nawala Dhammika of Anuradhapura.

19. Interview with Sister Kotmale Sudharma to whom Sister Mawichari had given her biography. "Ma" and "Daw" are terms of respect designating age in Burma. These terms were grafted to the names of the Sisters by the Sri Lankans.

20. Interview with Sister Khemachari of Badalgama.

21. Interview with Ranjit Sri Nissanka, son of H. Sri Nissanka.

22. J. Jiggins, *Caste and Family in the Politics of the Sinhalese: 1947-1976*,

(Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), p. 90.

23. Personal communication from Professor George Bond.

24. P. G. Gunatillika, *Sri Nissanka*. (Wellawatta, Sri Lanka: Helaviva Press, 1947).

25. *Ibid.*

26. B. Smith, "Sinhalese Buddhism and the dilemmas of Reinterpretation," in B. Smith (ed.) *Two Wheels of the Dharma*, (Chambersburg, PA: American Academy of Religion, 1972) p. 86.

27. I would like to thank President J. R. Jayewardene for allowing the use of the Presidential Archives where I found much of the following information on the founding of the Biyagama Ārāmaya. *Report on the Vihāra MahāDevi Samitiya*. (1936).

28. *Ceylon Times*. February 6, 1936.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Daily News* October 26, 1936.

32. *Report of the Vihāra MahāDevi Samitiya*. (1939). Also an interview with Sister Sudharma who was taught by Sister Mawichari.

33. *Report of the Vihāra MahāDevi Samitiya*. (1938, 1939, 1940).

34. Interview with Sister Sudharma.

35. Interview with Sister Sudharma and a letter from her grade school teacher, Mrs. M. Kulasekere.

36. Interview with Sister Sudharma.

37. Interview with Sister Sudharma. The material in this section comes from interviews with *dsms* throughout the Sinhalese areas of Sri Lanka. As a rule interviews were held with the head of the nunneries and as these women tended to be the most educated and most orthodox in their beliefs, the study is slanted toward their understandings of the present situation. A fine study of the *dsms* primarily in the Anuradhapura region but having implications for the *dsm* movement as a whole has just been completed by E. Nissan. "Recovering Practice: Buddhist Nuns in Sri Lanka," *South Asian Research*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (May, 1984), pp. 32-49.

38. Interview with Sister N. Dhammika.

39. K. A. Chissell, "Legacy of the Sinhalese Nuns in China," *World Buddhism Vesak Annual*, (1972), pp. 20-23.

40. R. Gombrich, *Precept and Practice*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 285-286. The monks to whom I spoke also expressed the belief that arahantship was not obtainable in this degraded time.

41. Interview with Sister Shantilata who was the head *dsm* at Kundupoda and letters from Sisters Mahgoda Sumedha and Maitree of Nugegoda.

42. See W. L. King, *Theravada Meditation: The Buddhist Transformation of Yoga*, (University Park, Penna.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980).

43. The *dsms* reported that they are often called upon by women who are experiencing family problems. They did not hesitate to confront the husband when they felt this was necessary.

44. Interview with Sister N. Dhammika.

45. Interview and correspondence with Sister Khemachari.

46. This is similar to the view of monks mentioned below.
47. Questionnaires returned to the Commissioner of Buddhist Affairs.
48. Interviews with Sisters Khemachari, Sudharma and Dhammika.
49. The material in this section is based on interviews with leading monks and 15 responses to a questionnaire sent to 49 Mahānāyakas in various parts of Sri Lanka.
50. In addition to speaking to many early lay supporters of the *dsm* movement, I surveyed lay attitudes at three sacred complexes: the Sri Mahābodhi at Anuradhapura, the Temple of the Tooth at Kandy, and the shrine at Bellanewila.
51. M. Ames, "Ideological and Social Change in Ceylon," *Human Organization*, Vol. 33. No. 1. (Spring, 1963) pp. 49–53 mentions that *vipassanā* was believed to bring health and happiness to the meditator.
52. Interview with Sister Khema and biographical note supplied by Sister Khema.
53. Interviews with Mrs. Irene Nanayakkara.
54. Sister Khema was invited to speak at the Island Hermitage but was prevented by the chief monk of the *nikāya*. She spoke to the laity on the mainland instead and they donated an island to her cause.
55. See *Daily News*, Saturday, Oct. 2, 1982, p. 9. In another article in the *Daily News*, Sister Khema calls for a women's peace corps in Sri Lanka while speaking to the *dsms* at Madiwala. She goes on to say that the *dsms* must be trained in teaching, social service and hospital work.
56. Letter from Mrs. Kusuma Devendra, January, 1984.