

5 Points for the UK Siladharas

Authored by Ajahn Sumedho and Ajahn Paññasāro, and ratified by the English Council of Elders in August 2009. Authored with no consultation within the wider Thai Forest community, no reference to Vinaya, and delivered to the Siladhara without prior notice or negotiation.

Further, the intention made clear from Ajahn Sumedho and the English Sangha was that without agreement to these 5 Points, no further Siladhara ordination could resume, and no welcome within the Ajahn Chah samvasa would be extended. By October 2009, when the Siladharas – faced with few other options – had decided to accept the Five Points, several had left and several had disrobed.

1. The structural relationship as indicated by the Vinaya of the Bhikkhu Sangha to the Siladhara Sangha is one of seniority, such as the most junior bhikkhu is senior to the most senior siladhara. As this relationship of seniority is defined over time it is not subject to change.

2. In line with this, in ritual situations where both bhikkhu and siladhara - such as giving anumodana and precepts - leading the chanting or giving a talk - is always presumed to rest with the senior bhikkhu present. He may in some cases invite a senior siladhara to lead. Yet if this is a regular invitation it does not imply a new standard of shared leadership.

3. The Bhikkhu sangha will be responsible for the pabbajja (ordination) the way Ajahn Sumedho has been in the past. The siladhara look to the Bhikkhu sangha for ordination and guidance rather than exclusively Ajahn Sumedho. A candidate for siladhara should seek approval from the Siladhara Sangha and then receive acceptance by the Bhikkhu sangha as represented by those Bhikkhus who sit on the elder council

4. The formal ritual of giving pavarana (invitation for feedback) by the Siladhara Sangha to the Bhikkhu Sangha should take place at the end of Vassa as it has in our communities traditionally: according to the structure of the Vinaya (NB - this excludes any possibility of the Bhikkhu sangha inviting feed back from the Siladhara sangha)

5. The Siladhara training is considered to be a vehicle already suitable for the realization for liberation, and is respected as such within our tradition. It is offered as a complete training as it stands, and it is not a step to a different form, such as Bhikkhuni Ordination.