

Dear Johann,

As far as I understand from your email titled “citizenship and hopefully not reasonable sorrows”, you mean that *Bhujisso* 'si? has to do with “giving up citizenship and leaving the rights as well as the duties in regard of [*sic*] the Nation behind”, and by not doing so “Samanera ... fears that such ordinations are actually invalid”; and “Samanera needs to come to the conclusion that the Sangha will be extincted [*sic*] within this very generation”.

I don't know how you got these doom and gloom ideas, but there isn't a single passage in the Pāli canon and its commentaries to support them. *Bhujisso*, which is usually translated as “a freeman or freier Mann”, has a very specific meaning in Pāli, that is: a slave (*dāso*) who is freed, or a person who is not a serf or a slave. Please see the PTS *Pali-English Dictionary* under *bhujissa* and English Dictionaries under **freeman** = not a slave.

Now, in relation to Vinaya, a **slave** (*dāsa*) should not be ordained and it is a dukkaṭa offence for any bhikkhu who ordains him, for it is said, “*Na, bhikkhave, dāso pabbājetabbo. Yo pabbājeyya, āpatti dukkaṭassā'ti.*” (Vin i.72, 76, Mahā-vagga). Conversely, *bhujisso* means, according to the *Sārattha-dīpanī* subcommentary, a non-slave (*adāso*), who is allowed to be ordained, because he is not the property of another person (*para-pariggahit'ābhā-vato*).

In contrast, a **slave** (*dāso*) is a person who is the property of another, is owned by him, bought and sold accordingly, has no citizen rights (keine Bürgerrechte) whatsoever, and whose labour and also whose life often is subject to the owner's volition; who is legally obliged by prior contract (oral or written) to work for another, with contractually limited rights to bargain; who is forced against his/her will to perform, for another person or other persons, acts or services on a regular or continuing basis. Should he flee or try to escape, he risks a severe punishment, or even death.

A **freeman**, on the other hand, is a full citizen (Vollbürger), legally recognized as a member of a state (Staatsbürger), with civil rights (Bürgerrechte) to exercise his own volition in choosing his profession, occupation, labour, employer, political or religious leader, lifestyle, religion, etc. This includes fundamental freedoms and privileges, and legal, social and economic rights. He is thus not dependent on a master for his life, nor does he live depending on another's choice without using his own discretion. An example for his economic freedom, at the least, can be gathered from the Suttanipāta Commentary where a man called Dhaniyo expressed his freemanship (*bhujissa-bhāva*) thus: “I am self-reliant on my earnings and maintenance” (*atta-vetana-bhato hamasmi*).

Now, in the Pāli texts the very antithesis between a slave (*dāso*) and a freeman (*bhujisso*) is described thus:

72. ‘Just as a man might be a **slave** (*dāso*), not self-dependent, not his own master (*an'attādhīno*), dependent on another (*parādhīno*), unable to go where he liked (*na yena kāmaṅgamo*), and after some time he might be freed from slavery (*dāsabyā mucceyya*), be self-dependent (*attādhīno*), be not dependent on another (*aparādhīno*), be a **freeman** (*bhujisso*) and able to go where he liked (*yena kāmaṅgamo*), might think: “Before this I was a **slave** (*dāso*), ... now ... I am a **freeman** (*bhujisso*) ...” And he would rejoice and be glad about that.’ (e.g. DN *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*)

A similar antithesis is described between slavery (*dāsabyaṇ*) and freemanship (*bhujissaṇ*):

74. ‘As long, as a bhikkhu does not perceive the disappearance of the five hindrances in himself, he feels as if **in debt** (*iṇa*), in sickness (*roga*), in jail (*bandhan’āgāra*), in **slavery** (*dāsabyaṇ*), and on a long desert route (*kantār’addhāna-magga*). But when he perceives the disappearance of the five hindrances in himself, it is as if he were **free of debt** (*āṇaṇya*), in good health (*ārogya*), in freedom from jail (*bandhanāmokkha*), in **freemanship** (*bhujissaṇ*), and on a safe ground (*khemanta-bhūmi*).  
(*ibid.*)

It is worth noting here that a candidate for higher ordination should also be debtless (*aṇaṇo*), healthy in respect to serious sicknesses or afflictions (*roga* or *ābādha*, such as leprosy, boils, epilepsy, etc.), not condemned in jail or prison (*kārā* in Vin i. 75), and not be a slave (*dāso*) but a freeman (*bhujissa*). Moreover, in Vin i. 76, 77 the prohibitions of ordaining a candidate **in debt** (*iṇāyiko*) and a **slave** (*dāso*) occur together, one after the other, i.e. § 96, “*Na, bhikkhave, iṇāyiko pabbājetabbo*”, and § 97, “*Na, bhikkhave, dāso pabbājetabbo.*” Similarly, the allowance of ordaining a candidate who is a **freeman** (*bhujisso*) and **free of debt** (*aṇaṇo*) occur together in the questionnaire of the higher ordination when teachers ask: “Are you a **freeman**? (*bhujisso’si?*); are you **free of debt** (*aṇaṇo’si?*)” Thus, all these correlations shows that *bhujisso* means the opposite of a slave (*dāso*), and has nothing to do with given up citizenship.

In regard to a slave, the Vinaya Commentary on Vin i. 77, § 97 says that if he is freed from slavery in line with the country’s customs and law, he may go forth or ordain. It explicitly employs the synonyms, “*Adāsaṇ katvā ... bhujisse katvā pabbājetuṇ vaṭṭati*” (After making him non-slave ...after making him freeman it is fitting to ordain him).

Therefore, a slave (*dāsa*) has to become a freeman (*bhujissa*), a regular, free and full citizen (Vollbürger) before getting ordained. It is not the other way round you say that a freeman (*bhujissa*) has to “give up citizenship and leave the rights as well as the duties in regard of the Nation behind”.

Two other noteworthy points to be mentioned are:

### 1. The similarity between a slave and a government servant (*rājabhaṭa*) and their difference to a freeman

Just as there is the prohibition in Vinaya not to ordain a slave, so there is a prohibition not to ordain a government servant, such a soldier, police officer, or other uniformed professional. The latter is called *rājabhaṭa* in Pāli, which literally means “hired (*bhaṭa*) by the king, ruler or government (*rāja*)”, and he is thus bound to government or military services, not free to desert or flee at will. Should he desert, he can be severely punished or even killed. Thus, he is basically the property of the ruler, is owned by him, and his labour and also life often is subject to the ruler's volition. In a sense, he is a part-time paid slave, who for convenience is called “servant”, as long as in service. He should thus not be ordained, for it is said, “*Na, bhikkhave, rājabhaṭo pabbājetabbo. Yo pabbājeyya, āpatti dukkaṭassā’ti.*” (Vin i.74).

Now, in order to get ordained, he needs to be free from government service by getting official permission to relinquish his duties, and thus become a civilian, a free and full citizen (Vollbürger), or in a sense a freeman (*bhujissa*). Therefore both, a slave (*dāsa*) and a *rājabhaṭa*, have to become regular citizens and free civilians before getting ordained, and not the other way round that they have to “give up citizenship and leave the rights as well as the duties in regard of the Nation behind”.

## 2. Disqualifications and Invalid Ordinations

The other noteworthy point is about disqualifications, i.e. the factors that would bar an applicant from receiving ordination—either the going-forth (*pabbajjā*) or the higher ordination (*upasampadā*)—or make the ordination invalid if already received. These fall into three categories:

- *absolute disqualification barring him for life* — even if the applicant receives ordination, the ordination is invalid and he does not count as ordained; and the bhikkhus who ordain him incur a dukkaṭa offence.
- *disqualification as an undesirable member of the Community* — if he happens to be ordained, he counts as ordained, but the bhikkhus participating in the ordination incur a dukkaṭa; and
- *disqualification as being formally unprepared for higher ordination* (for instance, he lacks robes and an alms-bowl)—usually classified as the same class as the undesirable, above.

These categories are to be understood as follows:

**i. absolute disqualification**—In Vinaya there are all-in-all thirteen persons who are absolutely disqualified (*abhabba-puggalā*), and even they receive ordination, it is totally invalid, they should be disrobed and expelled (*nāsetabba*), and the bhikkhus who ordain them incur a dukkaṭa offence. The thirteen persons are:

1. *paṇḍako* (a eunuch),
2. *theyyasaṅvāsako* (one taken affiliation by theft, i.e. putting on robes without the authorization of the Sangha, and/or claiming rights of samanerahood or bhikkhuhood, such as seniority, etc. without an ordination according to the Vinaya standards),
3. *titthiyapakkantako* (one gone over to another religion while still a bhikkhu),
4. *tiracchānagato* (an animal),
5. *mātughātako* (a matricide),
6. *pitughātako* (a patricide),
7. *arahantaghātako* (a killer of an arahant),
8. *bhikkhunidūsako* (a molester of a bhikkhunī),
9. *saṅghabhedako* (one successfully creating a schism in the Sangha),
10. *lohituppādako* (one maliciously injuring the Tathāgata to the point of drawing blood), and
11. *ubhatobyañjanako* (a hermaphrodite). — (Vin. i. 86)
12. *pārājiko* (one who committed a *parājika* offence while previously a bhikkhu and becomes thus *asaṅvāso* (no longer in communion)) — (Vin. iii. 23, Pārājika), and
13. *ūnavīsativasso puggalo* (a person of less than twenty years of age in the case of higher ordination). — (Vin. iv. 130, Pācittiya 65)

**ii. disqualification as an undesirable member** —An applicant, such as a slave (*dāsa*), a government servant (*rājabhaṭa*), a person in debt (*iṅāyika*), etc. should not be given the Going-forth (*na pabbājetabbo*). As Going-forth is the customary first step in higher ordination, this means that they should not receive higher ordination, either. Any bhikkhu who gives any of these applicants the Going-forth incurs a dukkaṭa (*yo pabbājeyya, āpatti dukkaṭassa*). However, since these applicants do not have the absolute disqualification as a *paṇḍaka*, *theyyasaṅvāsaka*, etc. and since this

prohibition does not include the clause “should be disrobed or expelled” (*nāsetabbā*), they do count as having properly gone forth if they get ordained. And if they receive the higher ordination, it is valid and they should not be expelled (*na nāsetabbā*). The bhikkhus who ordain them, however, incur a dukkaṭa offence. Hence scrupulous bhikkhus do not ordain them without making sure that they are freemen (*bhujissa*), not government servants (*rājabhaṭa*), not debtors (*ināyika*), etc. To do so especially nowadays, legal documents, such as certificates, identity cards, passports, and so on, which officially verify their civil status, etc. are necessary.

- iii. *disqualification as being formally unprepared* —As explained above, this category is usually classified under the second one and refers to applicants without an alms bowl or a full set of robes, with a borrowed alms bowl or a borrowed set of robes, and without a proper preceptor. Anyone who participates in ordaining them incurs a dukkaṭa. However, if they happen to receive ordination, their ordination is valid.

(Please see also Ven. Thanissaro’s Buddhist Monastic Code II, [CHAPTER 14: Ordination](#) , 2007–2011)

Here now, none of these categories mentions anything about **ordinations becoming actually invalid** by not giving up citizenship and leaving the rights as well as the duties in regard of the Nation behind, as you publicly state, and that the Sangha will be extinct within this very generation because of such “invalid ordinations”. Such statements are utterly untenable in Vinaya terms and look over exaggerated.

Regarding the Sutta-piṭaka, there is the *Pahārāda Sutta* in Aṅguttara Nikāya that refers to members of the four main classes (*vaṇṇas*) of Indian society who, after going forth in the Tathāgata’s Dhamma Vinaya, ‘give up their former names and clans’ (*jahanti purimāni nāma-gottāni*), and are simply designated as “ascetics following the Sakyan son” (“*samaṇā sakyaputtiyā*” *tveva saṅkhaṃ gacchanti*); that is, they follow the Buddha, they are designated as Buddhists. But even here there is no mention about giving up citizenship and leaving the rights as well as the duties in regard of the Nation behind, but only about being called Buddha’s followers. Besides, it is probably due to the *Pahārāda Sutta* and other places in the canon which repeat the same passage, that there is the tradition in Buddhist communities to change one’s lay name after going forth and adopt a Buddhist or Pāli name (Buddharakkhita, Dhammarakkhita, etc.) as a designation that one is no more a layman, a Christian, Muslim, Hindu, etc. But again, this is done as an outward religious designation and has nothing to do about giving up citizenship, and the rest.

As I will not have time to further discuss this or other topic, I hope that you will investigate the Pāli texts, reconsider your position and come to a reasonable conclusion.

With Mettā and best wishes in Dhamma Vinaya,

Ñāṇadassana.