

Dhammadinna

She who has given rise to the wish for freedom
and is set on it, shall be clear in mind.

One whose heart is not caught in the pleasures of the senses,
one who is bound upstream, will be freed.

Therigatha: Poems of the First Buddhist Women, p 13.

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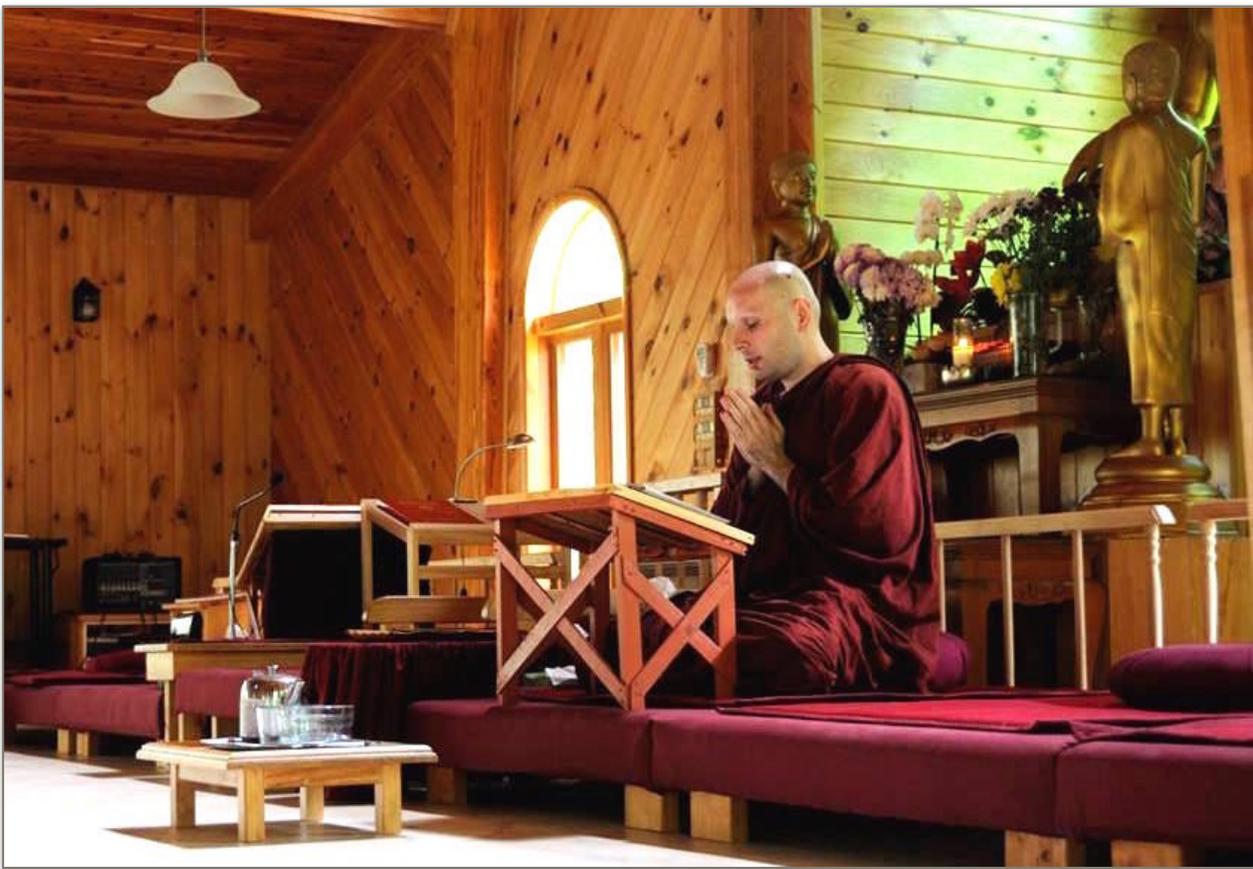
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On Bhavana & Bhikkhunis

Welcome to the second edition of 'The Forest Path', the quarterly newsletter of the Bhavana Society of West Virginia. In this issue we have features by Bhavana residents and friends alike — and thus we are very excited to share them with you. You may also have noticed that in this issue we are talking a lot about bhikkhunis; but, what is a bhikkhuni and why do they matter? A bhikkhuni (or bhikkhunī in Pali) is a Theravada Buddhist nun. The history of the bhikkhuni order will be discussed at length in the article "Ask Bhante G", but for the moment suffice it to say that the bhikkhuni order has only recently reemerged after a long and disheartening absence. The repercussions of this revitalization have been marked both with support and considerable reluctance; most notably in countries where political bureaucracy and traditionalism has resulted in resistance towards ordaining women. However, due to the great kindness of monks such as

Bhante G and many others, the bhikkhuni order is beginning to thrive in the West and throughout the world. It is perhaps apt to observe that through discussion and understanding we can lessen the tendency towards ignorance. This is our intention for this newsletter, to promote discussion from which all beings will benefit. May all women flourish in the Dhamma, and may all beings be well, happy, and peaceful!

- The Bhavana Media Team



Into the Future With an Open Heart

A reflection on the European bhikkhuni ordination by Mangala Bhikkhu

Even before I was ordained to the monastic order, I always was very fascinated by the concept of bhikkhunis. Buddhist monasticism has always intrigued me, but I believe I am particularly fascinated by bhikkhunis because they are a marginalized group. Finding out I was going to witness a bhikkhuni ordination, let alone play a part in the process, gave me much happiness and saddha in the future progression of this sāsana.

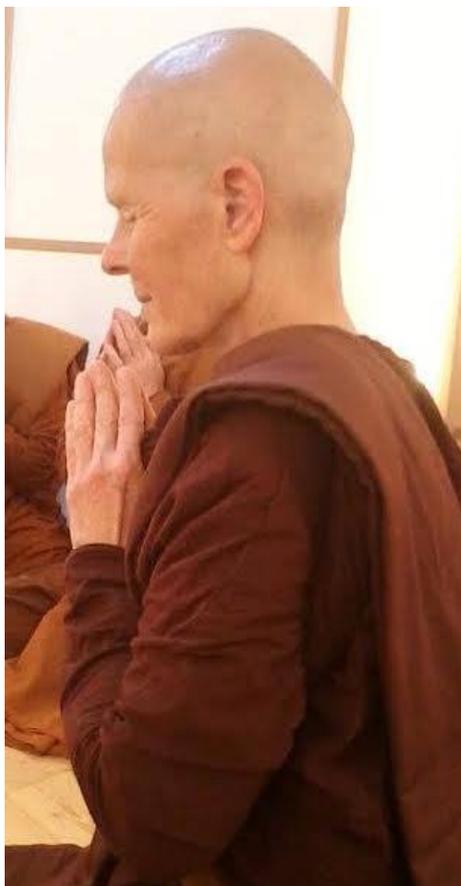
Going to Europe, I had no idea that I was going to take part in the ordination itself; being a newly ordained bhikkhu meant I would just sit on the side lines and watch like everyone else and maybe shed a few tears (or at least that was my thought at the time). We arrived in Germany and as the ordination ceremony grew closer, I came to realize how much I was going to be involved. I understood then I had a front-row seat to the hardships the

bhikkhunis and the monks who support them have to go through.

In planning the ordination, there was much deliberation and prior research regarding how to go about the setting up of a simā for the ordination; we wished to ensure that everything was done according to the Vinaya so there would be no questions about the legitimacy of the ordination. There are those who might seek to exploit "loop holes" in order to prevent recognition of the bhikkhunis' full ordination. This process I found to be not just overly technical but also painful to witness as to how much heartache and anxiety surrounded these considerations. I definitely do not consider myself an expert in these matters, nor in the history of the politics behind the bhikkhuni situation in many Theravada traditions — and I don't wish to appear to pass judgment on my superiors. However, if we expect to inspire those that need to be inspired and

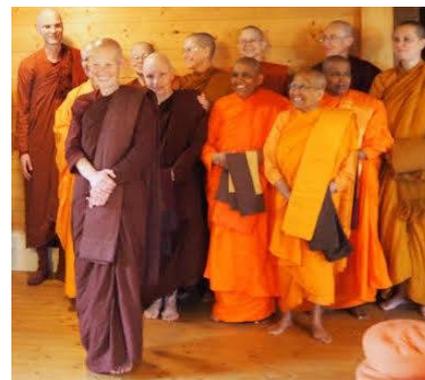
continue to practice the Dhamma in the way the Blessed One taught, then we should seek to follow the path established by the Buddha, who was known as the Teacher of devas and humans.

In the Suttas it's very clear that the Buddha had a strong regard for the bhikkhuni order. In the Dakkhināvibhanga Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya, the Buddha spoke of seven kinds of offerings made to the Sangha; some can make a gift to both the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis, or make a gift to the bhikkhus or to the bhikkhunis. Either way, there is no bias or favoritism shown to the bhikkhus over the bhikkhunis. We also find in the Majjhima Nikāya's Cūḷavedalla Sutta where the householder Visāka asked deep Dhamma questions to his former wife (the Bhikkhuni Dhammadinna), which at the conclusion of the Sutta the Buddha states:



“The Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā is wise, Visākha, the Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā has great wisdom. If you had asked me the meaning of this, I would have explained it to you in the same way that the Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā has explained it. Such is its meaning, and so you should remember it.”

You can also find in the Book of Ones of the Aṅguttara Nikāya where the Buddha proclaims that Ayya Dhammadinnā, foremost of his bhikkhunī disciples, is a speaker of the Dhamma. Keeping this all in mind, we as Dhamma practitioners should continue into the future with an open heart and mind and not let ourselves be bogged down with such things as culturally based discrimination and trivial things like gender, which from my understanding does not play a big roll when it comes cleansing the mind of defilements and hindrances. If we cling to unwholesome traditions and fail to see the transitory nature of gender, we will only continue our attachment to impermanent things — which ultimately leads only to suffering.



Soma

(Spoken by Mara to her)

It is hard to get to the place that sages want to reach,
it's not possible for a woman,
especially not one with only two fingers'
worth of wisdom.

(Soma replied)

What does being a woman have to do with it?
What counts is that the heart is settled
and that one sees what really is.

What you take as pleasures are not for me,
the mass of mental darkness is split open.
Know this, evil one, you are defeated, you are finished.

Photography: (Top) Bhante Mangala participating in a water pouring ceremony. (Clockwise from left) Ayya Dhira during her higher (upasampada) ordination. Ayya Dhira with the ordaining bhikkhuni Sangha and Ven. Analayo. Bhante G participating in Ayya Dhira's ordination. (Bottom) The bhikkhuni Sangha.

All photography taken at the bhikkhuni ordination in is used with permission.

Therigatha: Poems of the First Buddhist Women (Harvard University Press, 2015), p 45.



Ask Bhante G

A View From Germany and the first European Theravada Bhikkhuni Ordination

By the Media Team

The revival of the ordination of bhikkhunis or Buddhist nuns in Theravada Buddhism has been a contentious issue for many years. Officially sanctioned bhikkhuni ordination originally disappeared from the Theravada Buddhist tradition in 11th century Sri Lanka, as Bhikkhu Bodhi notes in his paper, "The Revival of Bhikkhuni Ordination in the Theravada Tradition," written for the "First International Congress on Buddhist Women's Role in the Sangha," held at the University of Hamburg in Germany in 2007.

Yet a measure of how far things have come since then in the revival of the bhikkhuni Theravada order can also be found in Germany. On June 21, 2015, Samaneri Dhira received full ordination at Anenja Vihara in Bavaria. This was the first Theravada bhikkhuni ordination in Germany and in Europe in history, according to Bhante Gunaratana, abbot of the Bhavana Society in West Virginia,

who took part in the ordination and who has long been a proponent of reviving the bhikkhuni order.

The ordination is part of a growing number of Theravadan bhikkhuni ordinations in recent years in Australia, California, Sri Lanka, Thailand and elsewhere. These also include the ordination of nine samaneris in Indonesia on June 21, 2015, the first Theravadan bhikkhuni ordinations there in more

than 1,000 years, according to an article reprinted at www.bhikkhuni.net.

Some conservative Theravadan monks continue to oppose bhikkhuni ordination even as the number of Theravadan bhikkhuni nunneries and ordinations continues to rise around world. (Bhikkhu Bodhi's paper lays out the arguments against reviving the order and then proceeds to take them on one by one.)

The German ordination was done in the traditional "dual-Sangha" format, as explained by Bhante G below and called for in the Pali Vinaya Pitaka, devoted to monastic rules for monks and nuns.

Samaneri Dhira -- who became Ayya Dhira bhikkhuni after the ordination -- was trained by Ayya Sucinta bhikkhuni, the abbess of Anenja Vihara. Ayya Sucinta received her novice (samaneri) ordination from Bhante G at the Bhavana Society, where she trained under his guidance from 1994 to 1998, before receiving her own full ordination in Bodhgaya, India, in 1998.

The revival of the bhikkhuni order has been aided by historical events. As the German scholar-monk Bhikkhu Analayo (who attended the ordination in Bavaria) noted in a 2015 article for the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies' "Insight Journal": "... In the early fifth century the bhikkhuni ordination lineage had been transmitted from Sri Lanka to China. In

the eighth century, however, the Chinese emperor apparently imposed the use of the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya on all monastics in his realm. The Dharmaguptaka Vinaya is the legal code of one of the different Buddhist traditions that developed after the Buddha's demise, similar in this respect to the Theravāda tradition and its legal code, the Pāli Vinaya."

The existence of this bhikkhuni lineage addressed the dual-Sangha ordination process to the satisfaction of some bhikkhus.

In an interview at the Bhavana Society with Douglas Imbrogno, Bhante G talked about the ordination in Germany, which was attended by a number of other monks, nuns, novices and observers. Simas -- the defined spaces within which a monastic Sangha's formal acts must be performed in order to be valid -- were established in both ordination locales.

Q: How did the ordinations unfold?

BHANTE G: We were observers in the bhikkhuni ordination. So, first they established a sima for bhikkhunis and then within the sima they did the ordination in the morning on June 21. Then after the ordination, we had a dana lunch there. We all came back to Metta Vihara where we had also established a sima the day before that. In that sima, we gave this newly ordained bhikkhuni a second ordination. This is the tradition. The first ordination is given by bhikkhunis, the second ordination is given by bhikkhus.

Q: Monks who object to bhikkhuni ordination say that since the Theravada bhikkhuni order died out in the 11th century, and dual-Sangha ordination is required, it is not possible to revive the order.

BHANTE G: This is controversial. There is an unbroken tradition in the Dharmaguptaka sect. Sri Lankan monks went and established this in China. And they continued this tradition and from there went to Korea and from there to Japan. Chinese tradition, even in spite of

the country's political turmoil—communism and so forth – bhikkhuni ordination continued to stay in China.

In Sri Lanka, bhikkhuni ordination came to an end in the 11th century. But its other branch started in China continued to exist. And therefore the continuation is there in the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya.

So, then some Sri Lankan bhikkhus and samaneris went to Taiwan and received ordination from there in the 1980s. And then some came to Bodhgaya in India. There they gave ordination. I went to Taiwan in 2004 to participate in one of the ordinations of both bhikkhus and bhikkhunis. I went there to teach a course for two weeks and also I was invited to participate in the ordination ceremony as preceptor.

Q: You were an early proponent of ordaining bhikkhunis here at the Bhavana Society in West Virginia, Can you talk about that?

BHANTE G: I did not give full ordination – I cannot do it alone. But I gave novice ordination to several women. The first one was called Sama in 1989. I always felt it was unfair not to ordain very enthusiastic women. In Buddhist countries, women are maybe 90 percent of the people going to the monasteries—in any monastery in Sri Lanka, women are 90 percent. This is my guestimate by looking at the audience. (Laughs.) You can see there are always more women than men. There may be many reasons, I don't know.

Out of them, some are very, very devout. They learn Dhamma. They want to be ordained. So I started here. I don't know who else ordained before me in America, but I started here in 1989.

Q: For many years, you tried having monks and nuns living at the same monastery here. What are your view on whether bhikkhus and bhikkhunis should reside together or should there be separate facilities?

BHANTE G: There must be totally completely separate facilities. Even in the Buddha's time, bhikkhus and bhikkhunis never lived in the same monastery. I tried for 22 years. I have done a very unwise thing by having all of them here in one place. So, finally I came to my senses to separate them.

As matter of principle, I am still supporting bhikkhuni ordination. That is why I went to Germany. I give my full support for them to have their own monasteries. When they live here, they're always under the shadow of bhikkhus—they don't like that. And bhikkhus don't like to be under the shadow of bhikkhunis. That never works.

Every full moon day I give a Dhamma talk to bhikkhunis in the United States over Skype. I continue to do that. But I decided to never ordain here again. Because if I ordain, they have to stay here under my guidance for them to receive good training. So that is our policy now.

Q: So there will not be a bhikkhuni monastery here at Bhavana?

BHANTE G: They can visit. But they don't live here.

Q: The traditional version of the story of the establishment of the bhikkhuni order recounts that the Buddha's stepmother and aunt, Mahapajapati Gotami, sought ordination for herself and 500 women of the Sakyan clan. The Buddha is said to have turned her down three times and then his attendant, Ananda, interceded and was also turned down three times. Finally, the Buddha relented when Ananda asked if women were capable of attaining full enlightenment and the Buddha said they were. What are your thoughts on this?

BHANTE G: Buddha did not need any invitation from anybody to ordain bhikkhunis. Four times, Mara, the Evil One, came to the Buddha and asked him to pass away. The Buddha said he would not pass away until after he had well established the bhikkhu order, the bhikkhuni order and had taught accomplished lay men and lay women. He would not pass away until all four classes would be able to attain the stages of sotapanna, sakadagami, anagami and arahant – stream entry, once returner, never returner and arahant. Until they became very powerful and educated in the Dhamma and were able to face their opponents, to answer their questions very diligently to the satisfaction of those who questioned them, the Buddha told Mara that until such time 'I will not pass away.'

So, you can see Buddha's intention was there all the time to ordain bhikkhunis.

You must also remember we are talking about Indian culture 2,600 years ago. In Indian society, women were treated like dirt. A woman's place always was in the kitchen, taking care of babies and her husband. She had to bow down to the husband, to follow behind him. The Buddha came to the scene at that time. If all of a sudden, he elevated women to the equal status of bhikkhus there would be a great hullabaloo and controversy. In order to temper that, to reduce that very great volcanic eruption, the Buddha himself delayed ordaining bhikkhunis. He might have delayed deliberately until the society was ready.

So, anyway in this brief history you can see Buddha's intention was there always to ordain bhikkhunis. It is not something new. It was not that Ven. Ananda totally completely persuaded him to ordain bhikkhunis. It is not totally his idea. Buddha already had the idea of ordaining them.

Q: And here we are, 2,600 years later, with the first Theravada ordination of a bhikkhuni in European history.

BHANTE G: It was very impressive.

For news and resources on Theravada bhikkhunis worldwide, visit www.bhikkhuni.net.

On Resident Life

By Anagarika Jayantha

With the release of this newsletter it will be a year that I have lived here at Bhavana. In this article I'll discuss the experience of residency, what someone can expect upon becoming a resident, and what is expected of them.

So what is a resident? A resident is a lay person (with intent to renounce, or without) who comes to live at Bhavana Society and becomes part of the community. In exchange for free room and board, they will work hard in support of the monastery and have the opportunity to deepen their practice in a friendly communal atmosphere that can jump from quiet to hectic in short order.

A person can come as a short-term resident (9 days to 3 months) or a long-term resident (3+ months). Those who are applying for residency can also choose whether they are applying to be a resident, or a "resident with intent to renounce". This is a resident who wishes to pursue the monastic path.

The monastic path here at Bhavana is split into four sections. The first six months you live here as a lay resident. Then, if Bhante G feels you are ready to move forward you become an Anagarika for six months, a homeless lay person who wears white robes. An Anagarika has begun the process of leaving the lay life and therefore straddles both worlds. If you are

accepted and ready to move forward you then take the Pabbajja (going forth) to become a Samanera (novice monastic) for a year, at the end of which, if accepted by the monastic community, you take full bhikkhu ordination.

Bhavana Society is a quiet monastery in the woods of West Virginia, but it is also a retreat center, a place of learning and practice of the Dhamma for all, completely dana based. On any given week you can expect a handful of visitors and at least once a month as many as 50 people come to Bhavana for a week to attend silent retreats, to practice and learn Dhamma.

Hard Work

It takes a lot of hard work, dedication, metta, and karuna (compassion) to keep Bhavana going for the good of all.

Both the lay and monastic community work together to ensure this continued success. In my year of residency at Bhavana I've learned how to do everything from making stairs to cooking vegetarian meals, from repairing kutis to working the Crown Royal, the giant wood stove that heats large parts of the main building. Lay residents might find themselves taking up carpentry, lumberjacking, painting, construction, sewing, and much more.

I've also had the opportunity many times to use the skills I learned in my lay life for Bhavana, from public speaking and event organization (running retreats), to landscape architecture. Each resident not only will learn a wide skill set to bring back out into the world with them when they leave, but will come to Bhavana with a wide variety of

skills that will be put to good use here as well.

When I first started visiting Bhavana almost four years ago, I was struck by the realization of how important Bhavana was, a rare gem in America, and as such I was determined to do all I could whenever I could to support it, physically, monetarily, and socially.



I was a lone practitioner, the only Buddhist I knew in my daily life, so coming to Bhavana was like coming home. Every visit I did as much as I could in support of Bhavana, from chopping wood to completing whatever task was needed, going above and beyond, as I now see many visitors who come here doing. This is the mindset needed in a resident who wants to be a help to the community. Bhavana is a small community of 10 monastic and lay residents, and there will always be more work than the few of us could ever complete, which is why we deeply appreciate all the help visitors and residents give.

What you do for Bhavana, you do not only for those who live there, but for the thousands of people from all over the world who cherish this place and visit it every year. Bhavana has existed for over 30 years now, running completely on donations and dedication. It has proven itself worthy of continued existence by those who give of themselves to ensure that happens.

Every little bit you do is of more benefit to more people than you'll ever know.

That being said however I would like to end the section on work with a short section on balance. When I first came to Bhavana I was told of the infamous "Bhavana Dragon." This was the name for becoming overly involved in trying to accomplish everything, even with my above statement of there being way too much work to ever be fully completed by any number of residents. You get the mindset of 'I can't believe the monastery doesn't have this', or 'it shouldn't be this way the monastery deserves better!' and that drives you on. The good intentions of doing anything you can for Bhavana should be tempered with the realization that you are only one person and only have the energy and will to do so much.

I was enraptured by the Bhavana Dragon when I first came, which was a very busy time of working more than the normal four hours a day as we wended down the construction of the Asoka male dorm. It took me almost half a year before I realized I needed to find a balance. Thankfully, I had some fellow residents who were able to help me realize that I was taking on too much. This is why it is important that all residents fully participate in life here at Bhavana and be supportive of each other. It's been my experience that this is indeed the case for the most part.

Residents are also expected to set a good example for visitors and retreatants to follow in regards to both meditation and general behavior. When someone comes to a place like Bhavana they are searching for a warm, welcoming, friendly and meditative community. Residents are the face of Bhavana. We are the ones who welcome people with open arms to come and practice the Dhamma.

So in summation, if you thought everyone at Bhavana does nothing but sit around meditating for 12 hours a day while dozens of lay people do everything for us, you were mistaken! Hard work and dedication is needed, but within the framework of the correct balance and with the support

and friendship of the whole community working together towards a common goal.

Dedicated Practice



As stated above, I was a lone practitioner, the only Buddhist I knew in my daily life, with no English speaking Theravada Sangha within hours of me. Much of my learning was from Dhamma talks and the Suttas online. In the 3 years after I found out about Bhavana I visited 14 times, 5 of those being week long retreats and the rest being personal four day weekend visits that I tried to make every other month or at least quarterly. The lessons I learned during those retreats and visits were invaluable to my practice and were well worth the 5 hour drive.

Now I live here! And I am able to attend every retreat and record every Dhamma talk and Q&A to put on the YouTube channel, something I wish I could have had in the last half decade of lone practice. However, I would not expect for your practice to dramatically improve JUST because you have come to live at a monastery, as all the mental baggage you thought you left behind stowed away with you and a monastery is no sanctuary from greed, hatred, and delusion.

Wherever there are beings with the three roots, no place is free of them. The residents in many ways become like a family, and with any family comes disagreements. This gives you plenty of practice in right intention (metta, karuna, patience), right speech and right action!

The schedule for Bhavana allows for three hours of group meditation daily: 5am, 5pm, and 6:45 pm. During your free time you can also choose to meditate or go for a walk or study etc. Every morning after chanting and announcements we are given a short "Dhamma thought of the day" to contemplate on.

On Saturday, there is usually a 3 p.m. Pali class and a 4 p.m. Sutta discussion. On Uposatha (full and new moon) days the monastery forgoes all work and meditates throughout the day and up to 11 p.m. for those who choose to do so; there is a lay person's discussion, a Dhamma talk, and a chance to ask questions. There is also a weekly resident's meeting that brings the community together to discuss the issues of the day.

It's been my experience that just being around the monastics, in a place of Dhamma learning and practice, is of immense value. Driving the various monastics to talks, doctors' appointments, to the airport, have been great times to ask questions, talk Dhamma, and to get to know them on a personal level, and they you. There are also interview periods offered by senior monastics on a regular basis for residents to speak about their practice and ask questions.

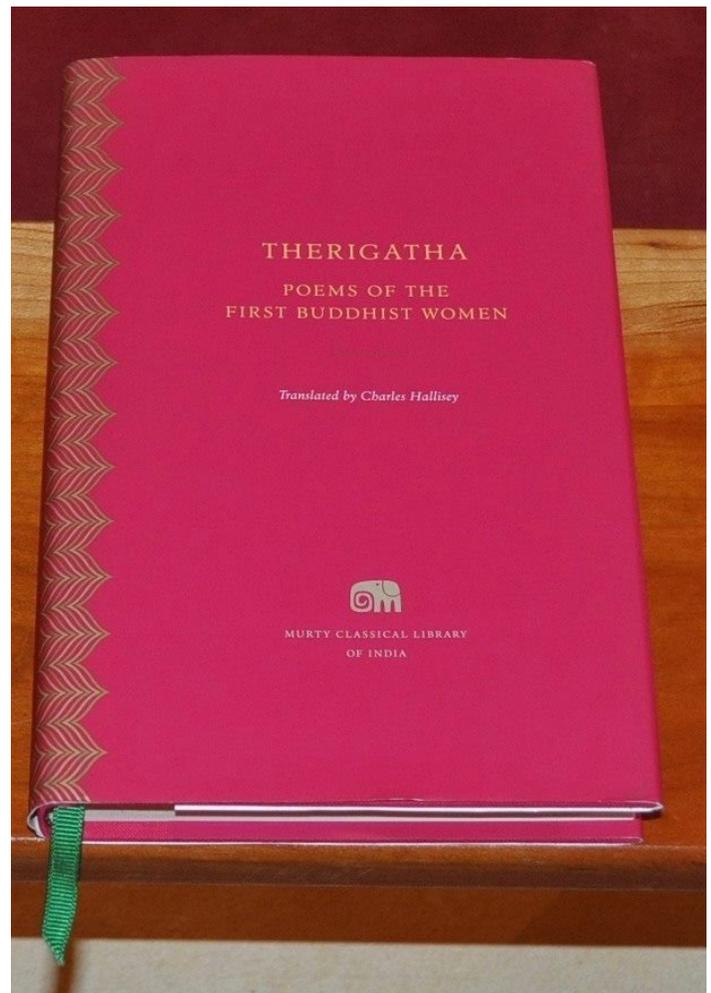
I've come to find that often times the best teachers teach more profoundly through their actions rather than their words, and this is certainly true for Bhante G, who is perhaps the most humble person I've ever met and who has encouraged and instilled in me the same practice, which is a lot harder for an Italian from New Jersey with a loud mouth!

Bhante G is not a guru, master, or even a teacher; he will flatly reject such things and point to the Buddha. He follows the ideal of the *kalyāṇamitta* (the spiritual friend). As Bhante says our greatest spiritual friend is the Buddha, as he proclaimed the Dhamma for the good of the many folk. That being said I don't know of another living person who is a better *kalyāṇamitta* than Bhante G. Bhante G doesn't tell you how to practice, he doesn't control your practice, he won't hit you with a ruler if you are not meditating enough, but he is always there to guide if you have questions along your path and be an example to follow.

I actually don't speak much with Bhante G about my practice, I've never felt much of a need to, but I know that he is there if I need him, and that is to my great benefit. I feel grateful to him and all the monastics here at Bhavana, as well as the residents. Bhavana is a rare jewel. To be in a place centered on Dhamma is worth its weight in platinum, let alone gold.

So in closing I'd like to say that coming to Bhavana and following the path towards renunciation is the best choice I ever made. My year as a resident here has been quite the experience. While there is a large demand to come here and limited space for residents, a residency here is well worth it.

While Anagarika Jayantha is not to be contacted regarding retreats and may not respond immediately, feel free to contact him through his email, jayantha@protonmail.com or follow his journey into homelessness at Bhavana through his blog at jayantha.tumblr.com.



Listening In On the Lives of the First Buddhist Women

By the Media Team

The Therigatha, poems by female monastics, is part of the Khuddaka Nikaya of the Pali Canon of Theravada Buddhism. The poems, considered to be among the first literature written by women in history, were probably composed from about the 6th century to the 3rd century B.C. A new English and Pali version was published this year, "Therigatha: Poems of the First Buddhist Women" (Harvard University Press, 2015), translated by Charles Hallisey.

The book presents the Pali text, in Roman script, on the left page with the English translation on the right page. Arranged traditionally by length of verse, the modern reader will find the expressions compelling. The prose includes the voices of well-known and beloved individuals: Kisagotami, Patachara and Subha.



The verses also represent women from a wide variety of circumstances discussing everything from old age to arranged marriage; from those born into wealth and privilege to those who are destitute; those struggling with desire and those suffering with grief. Several Theris, or senior nuns, restate passages spoken as guidance or instruction by the Buddha.

Also included are verse from Venerable Sariputta's younger sisters, Chala, Upachala and Sisupachala. The "Notes To The Translation" at the end of the book are every bit as interesting as the main text, providing biographical information about the writers. These poems show that samsara presents humans with the same timeless struggles.

Vira

(Addressing herself, repeating what was spoken by the Buddha to her)

The name you are called by means hero, Vira,
it's a good name for you because of your heroic
qualities,
you are a nun who knows how to know well.
Take care of the body, it's your last,
just make sure it doesn't become a vehicle for
death after this.

Ibid, p 7.



Sakula

I was living at home when I heard the Buddha's teaching from a monk,
and I saw the dhamma perfectly, knew freedom, the eternal state.

Who I was then left behind son and daughter, wealth and grain,
after cutting off my hair, I went forth to homelessness.

I trained myself, I developed the straight path,
I gave up excitement and anger
together with all that fouls the heart.

I ordained as a nun, I remembered former lives,
the eye that sees the invisible was clear, spotless, developed.

I saw my experiences as if they were not my own,
born from a cause, destined to disappear.
I got rid of all that fouls the heart,
I am cool, free.

Ibid, p 61.

A Day of Great Joy

By Lushani Kodituwakku

I first heard about the bhikkhuni higher ordination ceremony in Germany from Bhante Henepola Gunaratana (Bhante G), when he accepted our invitation to visit us in London.

Inviting him to UK and wanting to share my wonderful experience of meeting him, a while back in USA, with all my friends and the wider Dhamma community in the UK had been a long held wish of mine. When he mentioned his intention to attend the higher ordination ceremony, all my focus was on arranging his travels to London and Germany and making sure of his well-being and the ability to fulfill both these commitments.

The bhikkhuni ordination was scheduled for June 21st at the Anenja Vihara where Bhikkhuni Dhira, who had been a samaneri under the tutelage of Ayya Sucinta, would receive higher ordination.

With all my efforts focussed on planning and organizing the trip, I did not envisage attending the event until Bhante G suggested that it would be great if we could also be present. I remember putting the phone down contemplating on his words and slowly it all sank in to me; this was the very first bhikkhuni higher ordination taking place in Europe; to be part of a phenomenally historical day; to be there with Bhante G; an opportunity to witness something I have never seen before and also my intrigue to

see the Anenja Vihara and meet Ayya Sucinta who I had been communicating with since I started planning Bhante G's visit.



That same evening I spoke to my husband and it was agreed I will attend the event and I decided to take my 11 year old daughter, Sanuji along to witness this unique event (as it turned out she was the youngest person present at the event). I sent an email to my friends in Dhamma and to my great delight my good friends Lakshman and Chintha Yatawara and

their daughter Dinusha said they would join us.

It was tremendously exciting and challenging amidst the daily routine of work to wake up at 4.30 am the day before with my daughter and friends to catch our 7am flight to Munich. From the very start of our journey all of us felt in our hearts that this was a trip with a difference. Lakshman with his amazing planning skills had taken steps to ensure our travels were meticulously planned and executed. But nothing could explain what we experienced thereafter when we arrived in beautiful Kempton and Rettenberg where the Anenja Vihara is. We first met with our landlady Irmi, the most kind hearted and caring lady and her delightful 10 year old little son.

Our first appointment was at 3pm at the Anenja Vihara, where Ayya Sucinta had invited us for a presentation given by Bhikkhu Analayo on the history of bhikkhuni ordination, exploring the legal aspects posed by dual ordinations. It was surprising to learn that over the centuries the bhikkhuni ordination lineage had vanished and had only been re-established very recently in Sri Lanka (1998). It was at this point that it dawned on me and my friends the importance and significance of the day ahead.

During the next couple of hours we began to meet the most amazing people at Anenja Vihara. They radiated so much loving friendliness and we were all rapped and bathed in this 'metta', and it immediately elevated us to a happy plane of existence.

There were bhikkhus and bhikkhunis from USA, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and people from USA, Brazil and distant towns in Germany that had gathered, strangers in one sense, but we felt this sense of recognition and connection which made the conversation so easy and extremely pleasant. That familiarity certainly suggested that we have met them all before!

I also got the opportunity to see Bhante G, who was looking well and relaxed after his rather eventful week before in London. Then I met Ayya Sucinta, who I had been communicating with for the past six months. We learnt what an amazing place the Anenja Vihara was, nestled away in the most beautiful scenery ebbed with tranquillity, it was a haven for people like us who could completely forget the daily mundane chores of life.

But nothing could put in to words the actual day as it dawned on June 21st. All five of us were in high spirits, laughing and enjoying being amongst such wonderful people, generating so much positive vibes and lifting our spirits to a state of sublime bliss. We had arrived early and waited for the bhikkhus looking in the direction of the road leading to the car park just ahead of us. Suddenly a convoy of vehicles signaled the arrival of the bhikkhus. Seeing Bhante G and his acknowledgement at seeing us made me extremely happy. I silently thanked him for making me, my daughter and my friends a part of this day. I was also reminded of the immense sense of responsibility I had to ensure his well-being and seeing

him smiling and looking so happy and content filled me with joy.

Ayya Dhira was the happiest bhikkhuni I have seen, she had the biggest smile which stayed with her the entire day. She also looked so serene and truly happy to have



received the higher ordination. The entire ceremony within the sima, the chanting and the ordination amongst the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis lasted probably an hour but I felt like it was only 15 minutes. We were allowed to witness this moving ceremony as we sat right outside the sima. Witnessing this monumental event, I felt truly blessed and moved beyond

comprehension. It was fascinating to see how each part of the ordination was done with such mindfulness and how Ayya Dhira was accepted to the higher ordination state. Sharing this moment with my daughter, Sanuji and my friends made it complete. In

the edge of my mind there was a craving for my husband and son, if only they could have also joined us to witness such a great day and atmosphere!

This was the first part of the dual ordination conducted by the bhikkhunis at Anenja Vihara. After lunch we were all transported to the Metta Vihara some distance away through the scenic countryside for the second half of the ordination by the bhikkhus. The ordination took place at a magnificent octagonal wooden pagoda, which we later learnt is also the shrine of Buddhist relics brought over from Burma. Although we were not allowed to enter inside to witness the ceremony, they had installed a microphone system so we could hear the ordination. Standing outside listening to the ordination and the moving talk by Ayya Sucinta and Bhante G, I was engulfed by a mixture of emotions; I felt an inner peace; a stillness, complete bliss at being there; the opportunity to witness this phenomenal occasion; the happiness that arose from

knowing how important it was to make it possible for Bhante G to be there to attend this ceremony. This is something Bhante G had envisioned when Ayya Sucinta became a bhikkhuni; to spread and strengthen the Dhamma and the order of bhikkhunis in Europe.

Holding my daughter Sanuji's hand, standing next to my friends Lakshman, Chintha and Dinusha, I felt so lucky and blessed and realised a deep sense of gratitude towards Bhante G and Ayya Sucinta and my family who made it possible for me to witness this treasured moment.

Looking back, such a phenomenal day was made extra special because of everyone who was present to share the day; people who shared so much loving kindness and generosity; the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis who took time to listen and speak to us and radiated so much compassion; Bhante

G's presence at the event despite his 87 years, giving the day a sense of strength and depth; and being able to share this happiness with my two friends and their daughter who showered me and my daughter with care, joy, kindness and laughter; all this made the journey to the bhikkhuni ordination an extraordinary adventure and instilled a sense of inner peace and happiness in me that I would be able to tap in to and cherish forever.

The atmosphere was immensely blissful, tranquil, peaceful yet exhilarating and you could almost

pluck the joy and rapture from the air. The supreme loving kindness radiated from all the people who had gathered and the only way I could explain to my friends and family back home how I felt was, "that it felt like I had visited a higher realm".

"It was and will be a day I will carry in my mind till I end samsara...!"

By Lushani Kodituwakku with reflections from Lakshman Yatawara, Chintha Yatawara, Dinusha Yatawara and Sanuji Kodituwakku who attended the Bhikkhuni Higher Ordination from London, UK.



Vimala

Intoxicated by my good looks,
by my body, my beauty,
and my reputation,
haughty because of my youth, I looked down on other women.

I decorated this body, decked out it made fools mutter,
a prostitute at the door, like a hunter spreading out the snare.

I flashed my ornaments as if I was showing my hidden parts,
I created illusions for people, all the while sneering at them.

Today I collected alms,
head shaved, covered with the outer robe,
now seated at the foot of the tree.
what I get has nothing to do with schemes.

All ties are cut, whether divine or human,
I have thrown away all that fouls the heart,
I have become cool, free.

Ibid, p 51.

Uttama

Four times, five times, I
went out from the
monastery,
heart without peace,
heart out of control.

I approached the nun,
she seemed like someone I could trust.
She taught me the dhamma
about what makes a person
about the senses and their objects
and about the basic elements that make up
everything.

I listened to what she taught,
did exactly as she said,
for seven days I sat in one position, legs
crossed,
given over to joy and happiness,
On the eighth day I stretched out my feet,
after splitting open the mass of mental
darkness.

Ibid, p 33.



Punna

(Spoken by the Buddha to her)

The name you are called by means full, Punna,
so be filled with good things, like the moon when it is full,
break through all that is dark with wisdom made full.

Ibid, p 5.

As a monastery and mediation center, Bhavana is a place that relies entirely on the generosity of others. It is through dana that Bhavana is able to thrive and provide retreats to those who visit.

Any contribution is welcome and greatly appreciated. If you're interested in providing dana to the Bhavana Society please visit:

http://bhavanasociety.org/page/what_is_dana/

News

- ✿ On October 31st, 2015 at 9am Anagarika Jayantha will receive novice (samanera) ordination at Bhavana Society. All are invited to attend his going forth ceremony and to share the blessings of this auspicious occasion.
- ✿ On November 1st, 2015, Bhavana will hold its annual Kathina ceremony.

Resources

- ✿ Works by Bhante G can be found at <http://www.wisdompubs.org/author/bhante-gunaratana>.
- ✿ The Bhavana Society website offers many older Dhamma Articles & Talks as well as a Recommended Reading list. They can be found at <http://bhavanasociety.org/resources/>. For more recent Dhamma Talks please visit our Youtube Channel.
- ✿ Sutta Central is a fantastic resource for accessing the various canons of the Tipitaka and their many translations: <https://suttacentral.net/>.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the residents of The Bhavana Society of West Virginia for their ongoing support and commitment to the Dhamma.

To those who support The Bhavana Society by any means they can, whether through dana, attending meditation retreats, or simply by being a part of our community: Thank you.

May all living beings be well!

The Bhavana Society Media Team is currently comprised of: Anagarika Jayantha, Brenna Artinger, Douglas Imbrogno, Karen Warnaka, Mangala Bhikkhu, Michael Summers, & Paola H. Victoria.