**3rd International Bhikkhuni Day**

(Speaker’s Notes to Accompany the Power Point)

**The Sisterhood of Eminent Bhikkhuni Teachers and Leaders,**

**Past and Present**

**The ‘Seven Sisters’: Spiritual Friendship, Companionship and Sisterhood**

**Then and Now**

**Note:** The presentation tends to run long, so you may want to take a break around about half way, Slide 40, between the past and the present.

**Slide 1**

Welcome to International Bhikkhuni Day. Thank you for coming to share in this celebration. The purpose of this presentation is to ‘enlighten’ people about bhikkhunis, their history and their current situation.

**Slide 2**

This year the Alliance for Bhikkhunis is honoring The Sisterhood of Eminent Bhikkhuni Teachers and Leaders, past and present. We’re looking at how early Buddhist women monastics, like The Seven Sisters, and how their Spiritual Companionship and Friendships laid the foundations for the early Buddhist Sangha and how it relates to the sisterhood of bhikkhunis today.

**Slide 3**

First, what is a *Bhikkhuni*/*Bhikshuni*?

A ***bhikkhun****i* (Pali) or ***bhikshuni*** (Sanskrit) is a fully-ordained female Buddhist monastic.

A ***bhikkhu/bhikshu*** is a fully-ordained male monastic.

Both *bhikkhu*s & *bhikkhuni*s agree to live by the precepts of the Vinaya (monastic discipline). The bhikkhunis Patimokkha has 311 rules. The bhikkhu Patimokkha has 227 rules.

The Alliance for Bhikkhunis was founded in 2007 to help support Buddhist women who have chosen this path, especially Theravada women who take a vow of poverty and are totally dependent on others for their support.

**Slide 4**

At the famous Temple of the Reclining Buddha in Bangkok, Thailand there are wonderful pictures of bhikkhunis in the time of the Buddha. Here a group of bhikkhunis listening to a dhamma talk by the Buddha.

**Slide 5**

And here are pictures of some of today’s bhikkhuni sisters, of several different traditions

These are gatherings of women, many of them friends, often spanning groups and traditions.  The women are drawn together, held together, uplift and support one another, by their companionship and by their practice of the path for common goal together.  This is the meaning of the Story of the Seven Sisters .

**Slide 6**

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**Slide 7**

Of the forty women's sacred biographies in the *Theri Apadana*, the majority are of individuals.  There are also a significant number of collective biographies -- women who had strong association with one another and are often known by the leading woman who drew them together. Their association was strong that they realized stages of awakening together during the same Dhamma teaching and/or declared their enlightenment to the Buddha together, causing their stories to be gathered into one collective voice.

**Slide 8**

Of the individuals, seven of the forty -- a full half of the Thirteen early foremost leading Bhikkhuni Disciples of the Buddha -- are linked in a story-cycle or story-circle of long-term spiritual friendship and companionship known as the stories of the "Seven Sisters".  These Seven Sisters, (earlier womb-sisters, but later sangha sisters in their final lives), formed the backbone of the ancient women's sangha.  They include both the Two Foremost Leading Bhikkhuni Disciples: Khema of Great Wisdom and Uppalavanna of Great Spiritual Power.

**Slide 9**

How were the seven sisters both ‘womb’ sisters in their earlier lives and finally ‘sangha’ sisters in their final lives? The story of the Seven Sisters actually begins 20,000 years ago, in the previous lives of the Seven Sisters, who at that time were actually birth sisters. They were reborn again in the time of Gautama Buddha, unrelated, through their connection with the Buddha, they became Sangha sisters.

**Slide 10**

In that earlier era, a Brahman kinsman of great fame was born named Kassapa. Buddha Kassapa was one of many Brahmins known as buddhas before Gotama Buddha. In the time of this earlier Buddha, in Kasi, in the great spiritual region of Varanasi, India there lived a king named King Kiki.

**Slide 11**

King Kiki had seven daughters, later named Khema, Uppalavanna, Patacara, Bhadda Kundalakesa, Kisagotami, Dhammadinna, and Visakha.

**Slide 12**

In this previous life, his first daughter, Khema, wanted “to go forth”, to begin the path to become a fully-ordained monastic, a Bhikkhuni or Bhikkhu. However, her father denied her request. King Kiki had six more daughters. They too wanted to become monastics but were denied by their father, King Kiki. The Seven Sisters practiced a holy life at home for 20,000 years and countless reincarnations.

 Ayya Tathaaloka compares this with the modern day. “Does this story sound familiar to you?  How many millions of women have lived and are living this story today in South and Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhism?  They are told by the king figures (whether sangha-raja or government) and father figures, that this is all they can do and such a future *in another life* is where they should invest their merit and efforts.

**Slide 13**

They were reborn in the time of Gautama Buddha, where they did become monastics, and attained enlightenment.

**Slide 14**

Now we skip ahead to the time of Gautama Buddha. He seated himself under a bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, India, where he vowed never to arise until he had found the truth. After a reputed 49 days of meditation, at the age of 35, he is said to have attained Enlightenment.

**Slide 15**

What’s commonly told is the story that five years after his enlightenment, the Buddha was in Kapilavatthu at the Banyan Park Monastery. His aunt Maha-pajapati Gotami, who raised him, came to him with 500 women and begged to be admitted to the order of nuns. He at first refused.

Then Maha-pajapati Gotami and her 500 sisters shaved their heads, donned yellow robes and walked several hundred miles to Vesali to implore Sakyamuni Buddha for an "order of women mendicants.“

**Slide 16**

Ananda interceded on their behalf and convinced the Buddha to allow them to ordain, saying to the Buddha:

“Lord, if women were to go forth from the home life into homelessness in the Tathagata’s Dhamma-Vinaya, would they be able to realize the fruit of stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, or arahantship?”

“Yes, Ananda, they would…….” (Cullavagga)

The Buddha agreed that the spiritual potential of women and men is equal, and he recognized the right of women to wear the garb of a mendicant.

**Slide 17**

According to the *Cullavagga,* the Buddha himself ordained the first Bhikkhuni (that is, Mahapajapati.) He also gave permission for Bhikkhus to ordain the remainder of the first several hundred bhikkhunis.

**Slide 18**

Before he died the Buddha said: “I will not pass away…until I have bhikkhu disciples...bhikkhuni disciples...layman disciples… laywoman disciples who are accomplished, disciplined, skilled, learned, expert in the Dhamma.”

This is known as the Four-fold Sangha. With the foundation of the Bhikkhuni Sangha, the foundation of the buddha’s Fourfold Sangha was complete.

**Slide 19**

At one point the Buddha, early in his teaching career, was questioned about the efficacy of his teachings. He affirmed that he had 500 Arahant bhikkhus and 500 Arahant bhikkhunis.

**Slide 20**

The Buddha spoke very positively about having many enlightened bhikkhunis in his Assembly, saying that their presence made his Sasana (teaching) established and his purpose in teaching complete. Among them were our Seven Sisters, having been reborn into this time.

**Slide 21**

These Seven Sisters were not all the same, each one was a unique and special individual unto herself, and they are all praised by the Buddha for different excellent qualities that they bring to their own practice of the Path and to the Sangha.  These are the qualities they became known for.

**Slide 22**

There are many stories of the Seven Sisters, too many to present all of them here, so we’ll just look at a couple of the stories. A new book by Dr. Alice Collett of York University in the UK has details of their lives, and how most of the them became bhikkhunis.

**Slide 23**

The Seven Sisters were highly important and leading figures in early Buddhism and their stories have meaning for us today. All seven became disciples of Gotama Buddha. Not all became bhikkhunis, but all attained arahantship.

Who were some of these Eminent Leading Female Disciples of Gotama Buddha who lived 2,600 years ago and became Bhikkhunis, teachers and prominent leaders?

**Slide 24**

Khema was very beautiful and became “intoxicated” with her own physical beauty. She knew the Buddha found fault with this, as the Buddha taught that it is ignorance to delight in sensory pleasures. Khema's husband, King Bimbasara, was a follower of the Buddha and was rueful of his wife's preoccupation with her beauty. He arranged for Khema to cross paths with the Buddha. The Buddha, sitting in the woods, knows Khema is coming and creates an apparition of a stunningly beautiful woman who was fanning him.

 When Khema sees the Buddha and this stunningly beautiful female apparition she says, “Women of such beauty, comparable to heavenly nymphs, stand near the Blessed One. I am not adequate even to be an attendant to her.”

 The Buddha then transforms the apparition into a decrepit old woman, her hair gray and teeth all loose and broken. Khema, upon seeing the shocking transformation, realizes the truth of impermanence, that beauty is only temporary. Khema asks her husband for permission to go forth and he gives it.

**Slide 25**

In her teaching, Khema is said to have passed on to others what she had learned.

**Slide 26**

The Buddha proclaims Khema to be the foremost in wisdom. Khema becomes the first chief female disciple, one of great wisdom, one of the first of the bhikkhunis in a leadership role.

**Slide 27**

He recommended Ayya Khema and Uppalavanna, co-leaders of the Bhikkhuni sangha, as exemplars, for others to emulate. Uppalavanna became known for her ‘Spiritual Power’.

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**Slide 29**

Patacara’s story is often told. She suffered terrible losses, losing her husband, parents and her children. With the death of one of her children, perhaps so overcome with grief that she is unstable, the grieving mother takes the corpse of her dead infant in her arms going around the town seeking medicine for dead child. A friend leads her to the Buddha where she requests him to give her medicine for the child. He sees that she has the potential for significant religious attainment and tells her to fetch a white mustard seed from each house in the town in which no death has occurred. After going from house to house for a number of houses, she realizes that, in truth the dead are more numerous than the living, and that everyone is touched with by death. She is finally able to lay the corpse of her child to rest. She returns to the Buddha and tells him she has learned the nature of impermanence and requests ordination from the Buddha.

**Slide 30**

Patacara goes to live in the nun’s community and quickly attained arahantship. She became a prominent bhikkhuni and was known for her discipline and practice of the Vinaya.

**Slide 31**

Why are the Seven Sisters important to us today? The Story of the Seven Sisters is a story of Spiritual Friendship and Companionship that lays the foundations for the early Buddhist Sangha.  It is a story of the making of Leaders -- specifically Women Leaders -- who offer great benefit to all of Buddhism.  They also serve as models and mentors for current bhikkhuni teachers and leaders.

**Slide 32**

Ayya Tathaaloka writes: “Their stories are inspiring to me because they relate directly to my own experience of spiritual companionship today.  The heroines are both laywomen and monastics, and sometimes (as in the "sisters refrain") something in between. Their stories of companionship bridge the entirety of their time on the path in its many incarnations and many forms of being in their lives.”

**Slide 33**

So how did we get from these earlier sisters in the time of the Buddha to the current Bhikkhuni Order? Here is a quick history of bhikkhunis. (More details can be found on our website www.bhikkhuni.net on, previous power point presentations or in articles on the Library and Present connections.)

**Slide 34**

In India, Emperor Asoka, having been a merciless king, at the intersession of a Buddhist monk, eventually saw the carnage he had wrought and became a Buddhist. He sent his son, Mahinda, and daughter, Sanghamitta, to Sri Lanka in the 3rd century BCE to spread Buddhism.

 Arahanta Bhikkhuni Sanghamitta, Asoka’s daughter, arrived from India with a Bo Tree cutting, welcomed by the King (Devanampiyatissa.) Bhikkhuni Sanghamitta ordained Queen Anula, a woman in the king’s court, among many other women. Emperor Asoka also sent missionary bhikkhus and bhikkhunis into the “Land of Gold”, the region now known as Southeast Asia, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. Centuries ago scholars believe there were many bhikkhunis in Thailand.

**Slide 35**

In 429 CE, Bhikkhuni Devasara, a Sri Lankan bhikkhuni, took a cutting from the Sri Lanka tree grown from a cutting from the Indian Bodhi Tree and traveled to China with a quorum of bhikkhunis to establish a dually-ordained branch of the Bhikkhuni Sangha there. These Sri Lankan bhikkhunis gave higher ordination to more than 300 Chinese nuns at a monastery in Nanjing. Until then, bhikkhunis in China had been ordained by the Bhikkhu Sangha alone or had remained as samaneris. This was a great example of trans-national and trans-sectarian sisterhood and cooperation for the enormous benefit of Buddhism. A second group followed in 433 CE.

**Slide 36**

China’s bhikkhuni lineage has continued to the present day in an unbroken upasampada (ordination) lineage. The bhikkhuni tradition also spread to Vietnam, Korea , Japan and finally Taiwan. There are now thousands of Taiwanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese bhikkhunis. This unbroken lineage became very important about 1500 years later, as we shall see, when the Mahayana bhikkhunis from these orders were able to help their Theravada sisters revive their Sangha.

**Slide 37**

The bhikshuni lineage was also not established in Tibet due to the difficulty in crossing the Himalayas. While there are a few historical records of a few *bhikshunis* in Tibet receiving their ordination from the bhikshu sangha alone, it never took hold in Tibet, because a sufficient number of Indian bhikshunis did not go to Tibet, nor did sufficient number of Tibetan women go to India to take ordination and return to Tibet to be able to pass it on to others.

**Slide 38**

Because of political upheavals and religious persecution, both the Bhikku and Bhikkhuni Sanghas died out in India and Sri Lanka. The last records we have of bhikkhunis in South India are from the 15th century, right up to the beginnings of colonialization.

**Slide 39**

While the Bhikkhu Sanghas of South, Southeast and East Asia have been revived multiple times, the Theravada Bhikkhuni Sangha was never revived, at that time. In fact, in 1928, the Thai Bhikkhu Sangha decreed that the bhikkhuni lineage had died out and could not be revived. Thai bhikkhus to this day are prohibited from ordaining women. As recently as the late 1990’s, there were no bhikkhunis in Sri Lanka or Thailand.

Similar laws were also passed in Burma. As recently as 2005 a Burmese bhikkhuni, Ayya Saccavadi, who had ordained in Sri Lanka with Ayya Gunasari, went back to Burma to visit her dying father. She was arrested and jailed for “impersonating a monk”, jailed in harsh conditions (including threats or rape) and sentenced to five years in jail. She was released through the intervention of her family and after her story was carried on BBC, if she agreed to leave their country. She came to the US and lived with Ayya Gunasari at Mahapajapati. Suffering from her traumatic experiences she disrobed in 2008 and has settled near Mahapajapati Monastery in Joshua Tree. *(You can read her story online if you Google her name.)*

**Slide 40**

A little bhikkhuni humor.

**(You may want to take a break here.)**

**Slide 41**

So how did the Theravada bhikkhuni order revive.

**Slide 42**

Following is a chronological history of the revival of the current bhikkhuni/bhikksuni sanghas and some of the outstanding and courageous women who are part of that history.

**Slide 43**

In part bhikkhuni and bhiksuni orders around the world owe a debt of gratitude to their Mahayana sisters. You remember that 1500 years ago Sri Lankan bhikkhunis carried the bhikkhuni order to China, and hence to Korea and Taiwan. Over the centuries Bhikkhuni orders thrived in these countries.

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When this began some Theravadin monks questioned the validity of this ordination. However, Ajahn Brahm’s, who has been a great supporter of bhikkhunis, says that his research shows that they are almost identical.

*He said, "One of the biggest myths is that bhikkhunis under the Mahayana tradition is somehow separated from the Theravada.  But the truth of the matter is, there is no such thing as a Mahayana Vinaya.  In all the Mahayana schools whether in Tibet, China, Korea, or Vietnam, they follow mostly a Dharmagupta Vinaya.  Dharmagupta is one of the Theravada sects.  If you see an ordination ceremony in Taiwan – I saw a video of one that was recently conducted - you’d see the similarity.   I had a copy of the chanting.  It was almost identical with the ordination ceremony which is done say in Wat Bovorn here in Bangkok. ”*

**Slide 45**

Voramai Kabilsingh Shatsena, a Thai wife and mother, who had been married to member of parliament, began her monastic life by receiving the ‘Eight Precepts’ and lived as a maechee for 15 years.

-She was then ordained as a samaneri with the 10 precepts by an eminent Thai bhikkhu in a Wat in the royal residence.

-Since she could not be fully ordained in Thailand, **she traveled to Taiwan to ordain as Venerable Ta Tao Fa Tzu.**

-She established Sondhammakalyani Temple outside of Bangkok on land purchased by the Queen, published a Buddhist monthly magazine for 32 years and was very involved with social welfare.

  Her daughter, Ven. Bhikkhuni Dhamananda, was the first Thai bhikkhuni ordained in the Theravada tradition. “Venerable Grandma”, as she was known died in 2003.

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Bhiksuni Tenzin Palmo was one of the first Westerners ordained as a bhiksuni. She received full ordination in Hong Kong in 1972. She lived for 12 years in a remote cave in the Himalayas, recounted in her book, “Cave in the Snow”. She established a Nunnery in the Himalayas to train women.

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Bhiksuni Pema Chodron was fully ordained in 1981 fully in Chinese lineage also in Hong Kong. She is currently abbess of Gampo Abbey in rural Cape Breton, Nova Scotia and it the author of many books on Buddhism.

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Raised in Hawaii, a surfing competition led her to Japan, which then took her to India. Compelled by the Tibetan culture & spirituality in Dharamsala, she stayed for a year. When money ran out, she sold her guitar back at home & stayed another year.

She was fully ordained in Mahayana tradition in South Korea in 1982.

She went on to co-found, with Ayya Khema, Sakyadhita (Daughters of the Buddha) International Association of Buddhist Women. Through her Jamyang Foundation in the Himalayas she has started a number of schools to educate Indian women. She also helped to establish the Sanghamitra Institute in Delhi. Most recently she was instrumental in orchestrating the visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to San Diego.

**Slide 49**

Bhiksuni Thubten Chodrun was full ordained in 1987 in Taiwan and went on to establish the Sravastri Abbey in Washington State.

**Slide 50**

Like Sanghamitta, the women who ordained earlier taught and ordained other women. In 1998, Bhiksunis Thubten Chodron and Karma Lekshe Tsomo ordained new bhiksunis at Bodhgaya, India.

**Slide 51**

In 1988 a group of Sri Lankan ten-precept nuns ordained at Hsi Lai Monastery in Hacienda Heights, Southern California. That group included Ayya Khema, Ven. Dharmapali (the first American bhikkhuni - now disrobed) and the first Nepalese Theravada bhikkhuni in modern times, Ven Dhammawati.

**Slide 52**

In 1979 Ayya Khema first ordained as a 10 precept nun in Sri Lanka, where she was active in restoring full ordination for women and setting up many training centers for nuns. Ayya Khema was fully ordained in a Taiwanese temple in Los Angles in 1988. Along with Bhiksuni Lekse Tsomo, she co-founded Sakyadhita. In 1987 she was the first Buddhist nun to address the UN.

**Slide 53**

In 1996, Sakyadhita, along with South Korea & Sri Lankan monks organized and sponsored the first International higher ordination in Sarnath, India. At that time 10 Sri Lankan nuns received full ordination as bhikkhuni. **Although it did not occur in Sri Lanka it reestablished the Bhikkhuni sangha in Sri Lanka**

**Slide 54**

One of those Sri Lankan women was Ven. Bhikkhuni Kusuma MA. PhD. She has pioneered the re-establishmenttheTheravada Bhikkhuni Sangha in Sri Lanka and has taken upon herself the task of carrying on the efforts of her mentor, Ayya Khema, in establishing the 'Ayya Khema International Buddhist Mandir.

**Slide 55**

**In 2003, Sri Lanka came full circle from the time the Sanghamitta first brought the bhikkhuni sangha to the island. The first bhikkhuni higher ordinations in modern times were held on Sri Lankan soil.** Ordained at that time were American Ayya Sudhamma, and Burmese Ayya Gunasari and Ayya Saccavadi, as well as Thailand’s Venerable Dhammananda. Ayya Gunasari was the first Burmese and Ven. Dhammananda the first Thai woman to be fully ordained as a Theravada bhikkhuni in modern times. Ayya Sudhamma has the distinction of being the first American woman to be fully ordained in Sri Lanka. *In this same year, Vietnamese Bhikkhuni Dhammananda also ordained but at Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka.*

Many of the bhikkhunis went on to build the bhikkhuni sangha. Ven. Sudhamma became the first resident bhikkhuni teacher at the Carolina Buddhist Vihara, a Theravada Buddhist center in a small house in the suburbs of Greenville, SC.  Ayya Gunasari is now the abbess of Mahapajapati Monastery near Joshua Tree, California. And Ven. Dhammananda is abbess of a monastery in Thailand (and the sculptor of the clay Sanghamitta image we saw earlier.)

**Slide 56**

Ven. Dhammananda was the first Thai woman to ordain as a Theravada bhikkhuni. Her renowned mother Venerable Voramai ordained in a Taiwanese temple when Ven. Dhammananda was ten years old. She is now abbess of the first of a growing number of *bhikkhuni* temples in Thailand. In 2013 she spearheaded the foundation of the Asian Bhikkhuni Association, established a sima for ordination in Southern Thailand and began construction of an international bhikkhuni conference center at her temple.

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Several prominent bhikkhunis in the United States are now ordaining other women worldwide. Among them are preceptor Ayya Tathaaloka and teachers, Ayya Sudhamma and Ayya Sobhana.

Ayya Tathaaloka was ordained in Los Angeles in 1997 and founded Dhammadharini Vihara and Aranya Bodhi Hermitage, both in Northern California.

**Slide 59**

Ayya Sobhana, trained by Bhante Gunarantana and ordained in Sri Lanka, has also been a prominent leader on the American bhikkhuni scene. She is the Prioress of Aranya Bodhi Hermitage in Northern California.

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**Slide 61**

Called by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, The Hamburg Congress in 2007, called, “The First International Congress of Buddhist Women’s Role in the Sangha” brought the issue of full ordination for women into world attention. Leading Buddhist monastics met to discuss the history and legitimacy of the ordination of women.

**Slide 62**

As we mentioned the Thai Theravada tradition had forbid the ordination of bhikkhunis. In 2009, Ajahn Brahm took a very bold step. With Ayya Tathaaloka as the preceptor, supported by Ayyas Sobhana and Sucinta, four nuns were ordained as bhikkhunis at Bodhinyana Monastery in Serpentine, Australia. Ajahn Brahm was a confirming bhikkhu. Since Ajahn Brahm was in the Ajahn Chah Thai lineage, which does not allow full ordination for women, Ajahn Brahm was ordered to Wat Pah Pong in Thailand. He was asked to recant and declare the ceremony was invalid and that these women were not bhikkhunis. He refused, and he and his monastery were “delisted” from the lineage he’d been part of for about 35 years.

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**In 2005, the North America Bhikkhuni Association was established with five bhikkhunis. Since then it has more than doubled in size.**

**In Aug. 2010 four women were ordained by Ayya Tathaaloka at Aranya Bodhi. After being ordained by the Bhikkhuni Sangha on one side, the bhikkhunis then went over to the assembled Bhikkhu Sangha for the confirmation of their ordination, which completed the bhikkhuni ordination.** (Don’t need to read all the names if short of time.) *The four samaneri ordained as bhikkhunis: Ven. Thanasanti Bhikkhuni (United States), Ven. Adhimutta Bhikkhuni (New Zealand), Ven. Suvijjana Bhikkhuni (United States), and Ven. Phalanani  Bhikkhuni (Germany) were ordained as bhikkhunis (fully ordained nuns) in the Theravada Buddhist tradition.*

**The following month five women were fully ordained at Dharma Vijaya in Los Angeles.**

*Three ceremonies were held on the same day. The first was for a Canadian-born woman, Brenda Batke-Hirschmann, who became an anagarika by taking Eight Precepts; the second was for two American-born anagarikas who received ordination as samaneris; and the third was for five samaneris who took full upasampada, or higher ordination, as bhikkhunis. The new samaneris are Santussika and Dhammapali; the new bhikkhunis are Lakshapathiye Samadhi (born in Sri Lanka), Cariyapanna, Susila, Sammasati (all three born in Vietnam), and Uttamanyana (born in Myanmar).*

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The next year three more bhikkhunis were ordained on Oct. 17, 2011 at Spirit Rock Meditation Hall. It was significant is that it was very much ‘mainstream’ and widely attended by bhikkhus and bhikkhunis from around the world. –L-R: Ayya Nimmala, Sati Saraniya Hermitage, Ontario, Canada; Ayya Santacitta and Ayya Anandabodhi, Aloka Vihara, San Francisco, California.

 In 2012 there two further full ordinations, one in Northern California and one in Southern California.

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For an ordination, or any monastic ceremony, a sima, or sacred circle is established within which only the monastics are allowed. At monasteries in Thailand old large dark stone markers are often used by monks to tie the string around. At this ordination the sima markers had been built into the building itself below ground. The were marked above ground with tall plant stands bearing sima marker stones, with flowers cascading down from the pots. A very feminine touch!

**Slide 66**

So today there are bhikkhunis and bhikshunis worldwide. In order to continue to thrive they need our support.

**Slide 67**

So, now a little about Alliance for Bhikkhunis (AFB) and what they do. It was founded in 2007 as a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization to help support the creation of a Bhikkhuni Sangha in the U.S. and its revival overseas.

As we mentioned, Theravada bhikkhunis and bhikkhus take vows comparable to Christian vows of poverty. Their only possessions are their robes and their eating bowls. They cannot drive, handle money, hold jobs, cook their food, nor many other things. Try to imagine how you would exist if you lived like this. They are totally dependent of others for everything in their lives. Could you live like that? Give up all your attachments??!!

**Slide 68**

Probably the two most important undertakings of the Alliance for Bhikkhunis are:

1) To educate lay practitioners about the essential role bhikkhunis play in preserving the dharma.

2) AFB raises money so that it can offer financial assistance to provide monastics, not only with their four requisites: food, clothing, shelter and medicine/health care, but also other expenses that may arise.

**Slide 69**

In addition, Alliance for Bhikkhunis, through its online magazine Present and its digital Library, provides information on bhikkhuni news, activities, challenges, achievements and history. Through its Face Book page, it creates a virtual community.

*So much of the work of the Alliance for Bhikkhunis is the dispelling of misconceptions about bhikkhunis and their history, and the empowering of women through a recovery of their spiritual legacy and education about the attainments and achievements of past and current bhikkhunis. Vital to these tasks is the additional activity of educating lay practitioners about why it is essential to have women monastics in the modern world*.

**Slide 70**

Alliance for Bhikkhunis’ Annual International Bhikkhuni Day is a critical component of AfB’s mission to educate and honor and celebrate bhikkhuni history. This annual event is one of the primary ways the AfB protects the inspiring stories of women monastics as well as enlightened laywomen.

**Slide 71**

Alliance for Bhikkhunis is the steward by a very generous anonymous donor which pays for medical and dental health care as well as insurance premiums for some bhikkhunis.

*According to Ayya Tathaaloka: Several women who thought about ‘going forth’ had to reconsider when confronted with the fact that there were not funds for health care coverage. She has also not been able to accept other women from other countries who are bhikkhuni candidates as they cannot provide health coverage. They have joked that they are only able to accept women who are ‘DNR’ ‘Do Not Resuscitate’! The Dhammadharini Board does not want to accept any new candidates under these conditions.*

**Slide 72**

Alliance for Bhikkhunis contributed to transportation and conference costs so bhikkhunis could attend the International Sakyadhita Conference in India this year. Some of the funds went to support the participation of Indian former ‘Dalit’ or ‘untouchable’ bhikkhunis.

**Slide 73**

The AfB also pays for travel so bhikkhunis can come together during Vassa and attend retreats**.**

**Slide 74**

Go through the slide.

**Slide 75**

Since bhikkhunis can’t ask directly for their needs without a Pavarana (an invitation) we have posted Our Pavarana on our website and invite them to let us know of their needs. People are able to make donations directly on our website through Pay Pal, or by mailing a check. As we get requests we post them on our website www.bhikkhuni.net. Please visit our website and please consider a donation on our website, Pay Pal or by-mail.

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**Slide 77**

By protecting bhikkhunis, we protect ourselves and future generations.

**Slide 78**

The Bhikkhuni Sangha thanks you for your support!

Thank you again for coming and sharing in this celebration.

**Slide 79**

May all beings be happy.

**Slide 80**

Alliance for Bhikkhunis wishes to thank the following people for their contributions toward this presentation: Ayya Tathaaloka, Dr. Alice Collette and Mary Watt.