

Present

The Voices and Activities of Theravada Buddhist Women | Spring 2010

Buddhist Discrimination Against Women in Modern Burma • Venerable Anālayo • Take It or Leave It and the Ground Between • Saccavadi Bricker • Welcome Good Branch, You are Not Unwelcome • Thea Mohr • Dignity and Discipline • Thanissara Mary Weinberg • Archetyping and the Language of Personhood in the Mātugāmasamyutta • Jampa Tseodren • The Bahudhātuka-sutta and its Parallels On Women's Inabilities • Marica Pimentel • The Four Assemblies and the Foundation of the Order of Nuns •



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Noteworthy

Going Forth!

Samaneri Dipa has lived in the Ozarks with the eight precepts cumulatively now

for more than a decade, leading a local meditation and sutta study group. She ordained as a novice at Bhavana Society in 1999, where

she trained with Bhante Gunaratana for several years. Inspired by the arising of the Theravada Bhikkhuni Sangha in the United States, last summer she visited Bodhi House and Aranya Bodhi Hermitage in Northern California, deciding to go forth again. In December 2009 Samaneri Dipa received the samaneri pabbaja with Venerable Gunasari Bhikkhuni at Ma-hapajapati Women's Monastery in Yucca Valley, Southern California.



Thai Samaneri Nissara was raised and educated abroad and in the USA. She recently returned to Thailand to rediscover her heritage, and while there wrote several articles on Ajahn Brahm that appeared in the Bangkok Post prior to the bhikkhuni ordinations in Australia in October 2009. She was very helpful to the Alliance for Bhikkhunis (AfB) during last year's tour of Thailand, and in the making of the AfB's as-yet-unreleased documentary of the re-arising of the ancient Thai Bhikkhuni Sangha in modern times. While making the documentary, AfB president Susan Pembroke visited respected Thai bhikkhuni Venerable Ajahn Nandayani at Nirodharam, the women's monastery that she founded in Chiang

Mai. It is there that Nissara went forth as a samaneri in 2009, at first planning to stay only for Vassa but now indefinitely.

2011 Sakyadhita Conference in Singapore

Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women is pleased to announce that the 12th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women will be held in Singapore from June 12 to 18, 2011, with a temple tour beginning on June 19. Next year's conference theme is 'Leading to Liberation' and proposed panels and workshops include Leading Buddhist Women, Warming Up: Bud-

dhist Women & Global Sustainability, The Place of Scholarship: Buddhist Women as Intellectuals, The Diversity Question: Are All Western

Buddhists White & Straight?, Buddhist Feminist Leadership Training, Buddhist Women & Hierarchy, Cooperation: Laywomen & Nuns, The Question of Lineage: Women's Perspectives, Buddhist Economics: Strategies for Funding the Dharma, Conflict Transformation, and much more.

2010 Outstanding Women in Buddhism Awards

On March 5, 2010 in Bangkok, Thailand, eleven women from six countries were honored with the Outstanding Women in Buddhism Award. The award

has been held in Thailand annually since 2002. It coincides with the United Nations International Women's Day and is part of an international women's movement calling for change and celebrating the acts of courage and determination by women in the history of Buddhism.

The 2010 recipients include Bhikkhuni Dhamma Vijjani of Thailand, Bhiksuni Dr. Shi Zhiru of Singapore, Bhiksuni Ming Yu of Taiwan, Bhiksuni Dr. Karuna Dharma of the USA, Bhiksuni Dr. Tashi Choedron of Malaysia, Dr. Varaporn Chamsanit of Thailand, Maechee Aree Kieatthubthew of Thailand, Mrs. Sato of Japan, Professor Nartruedee Dendoung of Thailand, Supaporn Asavachaichan of Thailand, and Vanerath Sornprasit of Thailand.

Please visit the Outstanding Women in Buddhism Awards website to learn more about the awards and nomination process, and to read about this year's recipients.

Monastic Steward Sought...

At Great Determination Hermitage, Ohio. This is an excellent opportunity for someone seeking solitude and simplicity. Conditions are primitive: heating with wood or kerosene, water drawn from a cistern or brought from town, minimal electricity for lights, and a small refrigerator and hot plate.

A winter storm can make the roads impassable for 2-3 days. A monthly dona-

Photo © Brenda Batte-Hirschmann



Photo © Sakyadhita International



Photo © Ven. Madika



tion is requested to cover maintenance. Preference will be given to those seeking spiritual development, who are wishing to abide by the 5 precepts. The Hermitage will be available from October 2010 thru to mid-April, 2011. Longer or shorter stays are negotiable. For more information please visit [Great Determination Hermitage](#). *Text contributed by Ven. Madika Bhikkhuni.*

AfB Seeking Volunteers

The [Alliance for Bhikkhunis](#) (AfB) is entering into an exciting period of change. Positive development and increased volunteer involvement is helping us to move towards growth and expansion. We are currently seeking an Intermediate Web Developer and a Grant Writer. If you'd like to benefit your own career development and work with other dedicated people in supporting and nourishing the worldwide Theravada Bhikkhuni Sangha and the fourfold sangha, then please [click here](#) to learn more about the positions or to apply for them.

Ven. Sobhana Bhikkhuni Moves West

[Aranya Bodhi Awakening Forest Hermitage](#) is on the way to becoming a comfortable year-round setting for Buddhist monastic women to live in a quiet forest environment... to practice solitary meditation... to receive alms food offered in faith... to discuss the Dhamma... and to be part of a democratically organized sangha

in accord with the ancient monastic code. Effective July 1, 2010 Ayya Sobhana will become the first full-time resident (and prioress) of Aranya Bodhi, and a full-time co-leader of the hermitage project. She has been a student of Bhante Gunaratana

since 1989, served on the Board of Directors of the [Bhavana Society](#) during the 1990s, and took novice ordination at the Bhavana Society in 2003; her full ordination was at Dambulla, Sri Lanka, in 2006.

Graciously, Ayya Sobhana's mentor, Bhante Gunaratana, has fully blessed and encouraged

Ven. Sobhana Bhikkhuni's participation

in Aranya Bodhi Hermitage, and has given her formal independence—meaning that she is competent to independently practice and to serve the Dhamma. The Bhikkhuni Sangha is very appreciative of Bhante Gunaratana's unstinting outreach to women over many years. He has announced his support for bhikkhunis to establish their own independent centers, and Bhavana Society will donate a starter library of Dhamma books to the Aranya Bodhi Hermitage. Bhante Gunaratana has pledged his ongoing support: to participate in women's full ordination when invited to do so; to visit Aranya Bodhi to teach or lead retreats; to continue as an Senior Advisor to the North American Bhikkhuni Association; and to invite qualified monastic women to lead public retreats at the Bhavana Society.



Photo © Bhavana Society

Sakyadhita Flourishes in North America

Sakyadhita Canada is the Canadian branch of Sakyadhita International. It was established in fall 2009 and offers a way to connect Buddhist women and men across the country and around the world for the purpose of mutual support, networking, and sharing of information. To learn more or to get involved, visit the [Sakyadhita Canada website](#), or email president Shirley Jayanta Johannesen (sakyadhitacanada@gmail.com).

You are welcomed and invited to join in the founding of Sakyadhita USA, the North American branch of Sakyadhita ('Daughters of the Buddha') International, the international Buddhist women's organization. If you'd like to contribute or be involved, please visit the [Sakyadhita USA website](#), or email Charlotte Collins (charlottecollins@linkline.com) of the organizing committee.

Lumbini at Risk

The rapid and uncontrolled growth of heavy industry along the Lumbini Road Corridor is currently threatening the existence of Lumbini—the birth place of the Buddha and a UNESCO World Heritage site. The Lumbini Environment Protection Alliance is working towards removing all industrial activity within a 15km radius of Lumbini by petitioning the Nepalese Prime Minister and Environment Officer, and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Nepal. If you wish to learn more or sign the petition, please [visit this website](#).



UN Day of Vesak

The International Council of United Nations Day of Vesak (ICUNDV) has decided that the 2010 7th United Nations Day of Vesak celebrations will be held in Thailand from May 23 – 25, 2010. The event, an international conference of Buddhist leaders, scholars, and organizations, will be co-hosted by Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU) of Thailand and Inner Trip Reiyukai International (ITRI) of Japan.



Photo © Ven. Sobhana

2010 Vassa in California

During the 2010 Vassa (annual rains retreat) a small group of bhikkhunis, samaneris, and sincere monastic life aspirants will gather together as Sangha on the land at Aranya Bodhi Awakening Forest Hermitage near Jenner, California.

There is still a great deal of work that needs to be done in order to prepare the site for inhabitation, including building two outhouses and outdoor shower enclosures, and continuing work on the road, waterworks, kitchen, trailers and yurt. If you would like to help get the Hermitage ready for the upcoming Vassa by offering labor or dana, please contact Jill Rayna (dharmacreeksangha@gmail.com) or Sara Sacksteder (saraca@earthlink.net).

Ancient Buddhist Treasure Rediscovered

After being lost for many years, then languishing buried under a mound of earth, the Sanghamitta Stupa has been found and re-opened. This stupa is the very first place in the world to be rediscovered where the remains of our enlightened Buddhist foremothers are enshrined.

The stupa of the venerable Mahapajapati Gotami, Theri in Vesali as



Photo © Ven. Tathaalo,ka, Theri

mentioned in Buddhist texts has yet to be identified. *Text contributed by Ven. Tathaalo-ka Bhikkhuni, Theri.*

Ven. Kusuma Bhikkhuni Currently on USA Tour

During the month of May, Ven. Kusuma Bhikkhuni is traveling throughout the USA teaching meditation and giving Dhamma talks. Recently she spent a week at Mahapajapati Monastery with Ven. Gunasari Bhikkhuni in Yucca Valley, California. From there, she travelled to

Colorado to teach at Rocky Mountain Insight in Colorado Springs, and on to Minnesota.

Ayya Kusuma, MA, Ph.D, is a fully ordained Sri Lankan bhikkhuni who has pioneered the re-establishment of the Theravada Bhikkhuni Sangha in her country. In 1996, she became the first woman in nearly 1,000 years of Sri Lankan history to don the robes of a bhikkhuni.

Recalling the struggle to gain recognition for the bhikkhuni movement, she has said, “The bhikkhuni higher ordination was taboo. Women who entered the dasa sil matha (ten precept nun) movement had no income, no education, no sanghika dana, and no sanghika property; they lead a hard life and were not well regarded by a society that had long lost the tradition of Bhikkhuni Order.” Today, there are over 1,000 bhikkhunis and more than 4,000 dasa sil matha iun Sri Lanka. There are over 40 bhikkhunis with university degrees, and several have completed MA’s.

To read an interview with Ven. Kusuma Bhikkhuni, and to learn more about the Ayya Khema International Buddhist Meditation Center in Sri Lanka (named in honor of the late Ayya Khema, and which can accommodate up to twenty meditators at a time—lay women and men are welcome), please [click here](#).

Ven. Madika Bhikkhuni Facilitating Rebirth of Dhamma Dena

Ruth Denison, founder of [Dhamma Dena Retreat Center](#) in Joshua Tree, California, began reaching out to the Bhikkhuni Sangha ten years ago with a vision of creating a combined lay and monastic community for women. In May of 2007, Ruth Denison donated Samadhi House (a 7-bedroom retreat house) to the Bhikk-



Photo © Nisansala Karunaratne

huni Sangha. Ven. Madika Bhikkhuni, abbess of Great Determination Hermitage in Ohio, has now been appointed as the new director of Dhamma Dena and Samadhi House, and will assist Ruth Denison as she transitions into retirement. The Bhikkhuni Sangha, and the lay community at Dhamma Dena, have endorsed the new leadership. In addition, a proposal for female monastics to informally rotate (on long or short visits) between Dhamma Dena and other North American bhikkhuni centers was greeted with enthusiasm by both lay and monastic sanghas alike.

With this appointment, Ruth Denison continues to make history. Dhamma Dena will be primarily—but not exclusively—for women, and training at the center will emphasize practical Buddha-Dhamma. Individualized and personal training will be available to all female lay and monastic visitors who come for retreat or residency.

Ven. Madika Bhikkhuni and Samaneri Dhammatara will reside at Dhamma Dena during the fall, and in Ohio during the summer months. A land steward is currently being sought for Great Determination during the winter months—for more details please see page 6 in this issue.



Photo © Brenda Batke-Hirschmann

Online Resources for Buddhist Studies and Readings

Wondering what that Pali word means? Scribd.com has a new site with free access to scholarly Buddhist texts and the Pali-English dictionary in digital format. The site is called Evam Me Sutam (‘Thus Have I Heard’) and can be [accessed here](#). ❖

Present

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Once, while Mahánāga was begging alms at Nakulanagara, he saw a nun and offered her a meal. As she had no bowl, he gave her his, with the food ready in it. After she had eaten and washed the bowl, she gave it back to him saying, “Henceforth there will be no fatigue for you when begging for alms.” Thereafter the Elder was never given alms worth less than a kahāpana. The nun was an arahant.

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