



# Buddhāloka

L I G H T O F T H E B U D D H A

Newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria

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*On 31 August last, the Most Venerable K Sri Dhammananda Maha Nayaka Thera, Chief High Priest of Malaysia and Singapore passed away peacefully in hospital in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.*

## Farewell to Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda

from Azlan of *The Malay Mail*, posted on [www.jeffooi.com](http://www.jeffooi.com)

As a news reporter with *The Malay Mail* between 1994 and 2005, I met Rev. Dhammananda several times - usually during Wesak Day celebrations he led at the Buddhist Maha Vihara (temple) in Brickfields and a few other occasions.

Every time I bumped into him, I only asked a few questions just to get some quotes for my news report. Never did I have a proper conversation with him. I regret that now.

I'd like to share what to me was a very special experience during one of my meetings with him. It was on Christmas Day in 1998 when my Assistant News Editor assigned me to cover a Christmas party for some 200 underprivileged children. It was quite a news-worthy item to cover as it was held at the vihara in Brickfields, organised by a group of Christians, the Santa Claus was a Hindu and the contributor for all the balloons adorning the party area was a Muslim!

But what I will remember of that day forever was what the Reverend said and did.

You see, Dec '98 was also the month of Ramadhan, where (many) Muslims like me were fasting. By the time I arrived at the vihara, it was 6.30 pm and many children were already playing around, taking photos with Santa and being entertained by a clown, among others. At about 15 minutes before 7-something pm (buka puasa time), I was busy thinking of where to go for my dinner - either the nearby Kentucky Fried Chicken or a roadside teh tarik stall, both within walking distances from the vihara.

The Reverend, the vihara's religious advisor back then, must have been observing me. He walked up to me and, as if he had read my mind, calmly said: "Young man, don't think too much. You can buka puasa here. I will accompany you." I agreed in a split second. He solved my problem!

"Please forgive us. We only have vegetarian dishes here," he humbly and smilingly added, while leading me to a dining table somewhere in the vihara's premises. I was speechless. He brought me right down to earth with those few simple words. Even if there were only cookies served with lots of plain water at the vihara, I'll be happy enough. So, there we were, sitting at the dining table, together with a few other priests in their saffron robes and a spread of vegetarian dishes was laid out in front of us. As I was making sure my wristwatch was accurate, the Reverend took out a small pocket radio transistor from somewhere, turned it on and tuned into a Bahasa Malaysia radio station.

As scheduled, the muezzin recited the call for the evening prayer through the little speaker, which also marked the moment to break fast. "Go ahead, Azlan," he told me to start first. Only after I had my first

gulp of water for the day, did he and the other priests start eating. I was honoured and humbled at the same time. The fact that I didn't go to KFC or the the tarik stall wasn't because I didn't know how to turn down the Chief High Priest of Malaysian and Singaporean Theravada Buddhists' dinner invitation. It was buka puasa in a Buddhist temple for me, during a Christmas party! How cool was that, eh? Seriously, the Reverend's humble gestures greatly raised my respect and admiration for him. During that brief encounter with him, my personal tolerance and understanding towards other people's faiths, beliefs and cultures was greatly altered, for the better.

In less than an hour of dining together, his simple acts of humility made me a better person, more open-minded and drastically changed, for the better, my ways of looking at the world I live in. It was a small but very refreshing respite for this one tired reporter near the end of that very colourful and turbulent year – street `Reformasi' protests, KL Commonwealth Games, the horrible smog and the Asian economic crisis, among many others.

To me, the Rev. Dhammananda was a great Buddhist and more importantly, a great human being. Malaysia and its Buddhist community have lost a very special person.

With much sadness, I bid farewell to him.

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Venerable Dhammananda's last book 'Where is the Buddha' was published on the day he died. A commemorative page was quickly inserted. A copy has been donated to the BSV's library.

## Katina Celebrations at the BSV



The end of the Rains retreat was celebrated at the BSV on October 8<sup>th</sup>, the day after the October full moon. It was a very happy occasion beginning at 9.00am with a procession which wound its way out to the street and around the temple three times (*see left*), finally entering the hall and culminating in the offering of flowers, candles and incense at the shrine and a robe to Ajahn Dhammanando. Ajahn accepted the robe from our President, Cora Thomas on behalf of the Sangha (*below left*). The making of the robe had brought great joy to many people, for whom it was the first time such a task had been undertaken.

We felt great gratitude to Ajahn for the most beautiful Parittha chanting which followed the offering and included the Ratana, Mangala and Metta Suttas, which are traditionally chanted at this time and rich with the power of praise and blessings. Ajahn's talk was also a very wise and valuable one as he suggested to us all that we reflect on what has happened within ourselves over the past three months, the period of the Rains Retreat, in terms of our practice of the Teachings both in meditation and our daily lives and in terms of what we set out to



develop and accomplish during that period. In what areas have we learnt, made some progress? Where have we been less successful?

During the last part of the formal celebration Ajahn offered his thanks to the community for its “excellent” support during the period he spent with us. The community also opened its heart in asking for forgiveness in response to Ajahn, and in the expression of deeply felt gratitude to Ajahn for enabling us to



practice dana during the period of the Rains. Furthermore, his very generous and wise teaching program and his kind-hearted support of us with our individual Dhamma questions had enriched our lives during this period. We extended a very warm and heart-felt invitation to Ajahn to return for a longer stay if this should become possible.

We then offered and shared in a beautiful lunch dana, as you can see to the left!!

### Sangha

**Ajahn Ariyasilo** plans to arrive at the Society on 20 October this year and leave on 1 December, a little over a month later.

Ajahn Ariyasilo ordained with Ajahn Jagaro at Bodhinyanarama Monastery, Western Australia in 1986. After five years with Ajahn Jagaro he went to live in Wellington monastery with Ajahn Viradhammo. In 1994 he returned to England after a long absence and took up residence in Amaravati Monastery where Ajahn Sumedho was the spiritual director and Ajahn Viradhammo was Abbot. He lived at Amaravati until 2005 with a short visit to Australia in the late 1990s. He is now living at the Wellington Monastery again with Ajahn Thiradhammo. He has spent time at various other monasteries of our small western tradition. He has mostly been influenced by Ajahn Sumedho’s teachings because of his time at Amaravati monastery in England.

**Sister Thanasanti** hopes to arrive with **Sister Taniya** in November next year for a short stay, including a retreat.

**Ayya Sucinta** is due to arrive on 10 January next year. Her (unpaid religious worker) visa is now approved.



*Sewing this year’s Kathina robe, at the BSV*

### Nuns’ Monastery

As suggested by Ayya Sucinta, the nuns' monastery will be named Sanghamitta (friend of the Sangha). The fund-raising garage sale was a decided success – approximately \$2000 was raised. Further fund-raising activities include:

- An ongoing project to compose a **vegetarian cook book** for sale at the BSV. Members and friends are invited to email their favourite, tested recipes to Russell Dunne. Email address: [angulimalo@gmail.com](mailto:angulimalo@gmail.com)
- A stall in Koonang Road, Carnegie on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October from 9:00 am until 2.00 pm. We require members and friends to contribute homemade jams, marmalades, cakes, savouries, confectionary, desserts, pickles, chutneys and other saleable but not meat or other “fresh food” items by Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm to the BSV. To comply with regulations all food must be carefully wrapped in cellophane or plastic wrap and the ingredients clearly listed. There will be no cooking at the stall site. Cakes left over at closing time will be reduced to half price but no further and any then left over will be taken and frozen. Containers of jams etc. will be returned to the BSV for later sale as they have a much longer shelf life. Contact persons for this stall are Padmini Perera (tel. 98037170) and Catherine Lavas (tel. 94863942).

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## Dalai Lama to Visit Australia

### *Without Inner Peace how can we make real peace?*

His Holiness the Dalai Lama will be touring Australia in June next year. It will be five years since he was last here. The tour's theme is *Open Arms*: ‘Open Arms’ to the many Australians who are willing to adopt a philosophy embracing compassion and kindness to others; ‘Open Arms’ embracing religious tolerance and the important

rôle each of the great world religions has to play in achieving global peace; and ‘Open Arms’ to China because His Holiness wishes to embrace a relationship with China enabling him to make a pilgrimage to the holy sites in China.

His Holiness' schedule in Victoria is –

**8 June** Buddhist Teaching, Melbourne – Open Arms for Peace, a multi-faith youth forum for schools,

**9 June** Buddhist teaching, Melbourne – ATC Conflict Resolution Conference, free public talk,

**10 June** Buddhist Initiation & Buddhist teaching, Melbourne, and

**11 June** Free public talk, Geelong.

From the Organising Committee for the Dalai Lama's visit tel. (03) 94286292 or [www.dalailama.org.au](http://www.dalailama.org.au)

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## Forthcoming Retreat Sayadaw U Pandita's November Retreat

Sayadaw U Pandita will be leading a meditation retreat at the *Maitreya Contemplative Centre*, 528 Myers Rd, Healesville 3777. The retreat schedule is –

3 days, 2 nights: Saturday 11 November to Monday 13 November 2006 - \$160

4 days, 3 nights: Saturday 11 November to Tuesday 14 November 2006 - \$210

9 days, 8 nights: Saturday 11 November to Sunday 19 November 2006 - \$460

BSV members receive a discount (\$150, \$200 and \$440 respectively).

The meditation method taught during the retreat will be in the tradition of Mahasi Sayadaw (Burmese satipatthana method). This involves using a primary object of the rising and the falling of the abdomen or the movements of the feet during walking meditation. The days will be divided into alternating periods of walking and sitting meditation.

The meditation retreat is suitable for beginners and experienced meditators.

Accommodation is in single rooms with communal ablution facilities. The rooms are basic and clean. Vegetarian food will be provided throughout the retreat.

For further information please refer to the BSV web page or contact the retreat organiser (Committee member Gary Dellora) on tel. (03)95704854.

Other retreats planned for the future include –

- March 2007/2550, with Ajahn Dtun
- November 2007/2550, with Sister Thanasanti and Ajahn Taniya

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## Special General Meeting

A Special General Meeting has been called for **Sunday 26 November** this year., starting at **12:30 pm**, at the Buddhāloka centre in East Malvern. This meeting has been called to discuss the proposal to extend the library upwards, to create a second storey on the meditation hall.

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## New Members

The following new members are welcomed to the Society –

Harini De Silva  
 Robyn Fletcher  
 Saliya Jawawardena  
 Harsha & Ruchira Jayaratne  
 Prema Kodikarage  
 David Moloney  
 Josephine Tan  
 Renuka & Rohan Vidyaratne  
 Champika Wetasinghe  
 Mrs. Kusum Wijeyasinghe

We hope they find that the Society is of real assistance in aiding their understanding of the

Dhamma and of the value in permitting the Dhamma to guide our daily lives.

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## Obituary

The members and friends of the BSV would like to extend their condolences to the Dellora family upon the death of Gary's father, Geoffrey, at the age of 92. Gary has been a committed member of the BSV for over 20 years and is presently a Dhamma school teacher and Committee member and Peggy, his mother, is known to many members of the community. We hope the family finds peace in their hearts.

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## From the Committee

A new **2-panel internally opening door** will replace the existing door to the audio room, off the main meditation hall, to minimize any obstruction to the adjacent emergency exit.

**Floors of the vihara** The vihara is showing its age. A structural engineer will be consulted regarding the condition of the floors throughout the vihara and the possibility of constructing an upper floor to the meditation hall-library.

The **lay teaching program** has started once again (first night was Wednesday 5 July). For information contact Committee member Bala Mudaly.

**Subscription renewals** may now be made online. Just access the membership renewal page, on the BSV's web page, and follow the prompts.

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## Youth Group

The youth group, convened by Dilky Perera, has been meeting on a fortnightly basis at 6:00 pm, on Sundays. The group members are by no means all Buddhists – all feel the need to discuss youth issues, as so many problems are held in common. The 'serious' part of the evenings is followed by good food to share and just catching up with each other.

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## Email bulletins

The Society's email bulletins provide updates on forthcoming activities. To be placed on the

circulation list please send an email message, requesting the bulletins, to *The Secretary, Buddhist Society of Victoria*, via the contact listed in the web page. Please provide full contact details – telephone number, postal address.

## Library

The books received from the Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation are currently stacked in the vihara small room and at the back of the meditation hall. Altho' the books are supplied without charge from Taiwan, the freight and local clearing charges came to around \$1800. Many of these books are quite valuable and donations are invited to cover these costs of shipping and delivery.

*Heedfulness is the path to the deathless,  
heedlessness is the path to death. The heedful  
do not die, the heedless are like the dead.*

Dhammapada 21

The *Dhammapada* ('Words of Truth') is a collection of 423 verses in Pali, uttered by the Buddha on some 305 occasions for the benefit of all. The stories about the circumstances in which the verses were uttered were added by the

commentator Buddhagosa in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE. It is generally believed that most of these stories associated with each *Dhammapada* verse have been handed down orally for generations since the days of the Buddha. The Buddha's teachings were not committed to writing until more than 400 years after his *Mahā Parinibbāna* (passing away).

Copies of the *Dhammapada* are available for loan or purchase from the library. We have also received many boxes of books for free distribution from *The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation* of Taiwan, including the *Dhammapada*. Contact our librarian, Yasmin, if you'd like a copy.

*Distinctly understanding this (difference,) the  
wise (intent) on heedfulness rejoice in  
heedfulness, delighting in the realms of the  
Ariyas*

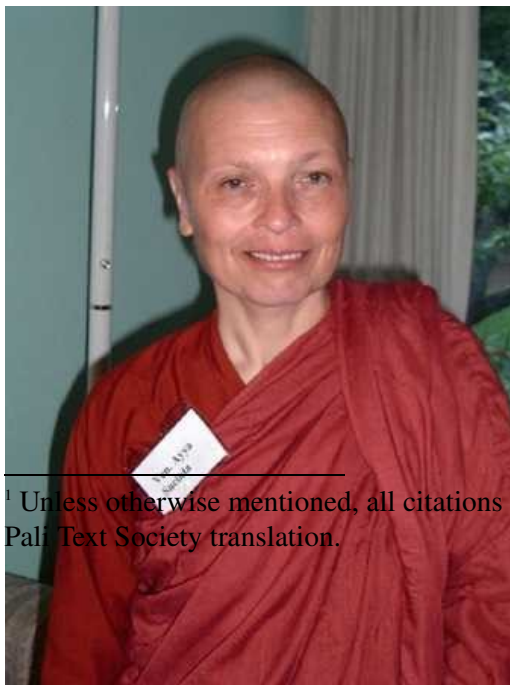
Dhammapada 22

This edition of *Buddhāloka* was edited by David Cheal (contact via the BSV). The views contained within do not necessarily reflect those of the Buddhist Society of Victoria. Contributions and news are welcome, particularly from members.

## History and Revival of the Bhikkhuni Order

### Beginnings<sup>1</sup>

Maha Pajapati Gotami, the Buddha's foster mother, became the mother of all bhikkhunis. She opened the path for women to ordain, and all bhikkhunis are her descendants. As most of you know, Maha Pajapati Gotami and about 500 other women from noble families requested acceptance into the Buddha's order, when the Buddha was staying in Kapilavatthu. At first, the



<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise mentioned, all citations in this article are from the Vinaya chapter on bhikkhunis, Cullavagga X, Pali Text Society translation.

Buddha did not agree to what would become a revolutionary step in India at that time. But Maha Pajapati and her followers did not give up. Barefoot, they followed the Buddha 150 miles to Vesali. They arrived with swollen feet, limbs covered with dust.

Out of compassion for those women, Venerable Ananda, Maha Pajapati's nephew, advocated on their behalf with the Buddha. He asked the crucial question of whether women, “*having gone forth from home into homelessness in the dhamma and discipline proclaimed by the Truth-finder are able to realize the fruit of stream-attainment or the fruit of once-returning or the fruit of non-returning or perfection*”. The Buddha confirmed that they were able to “realize perfection”. Then Ananda also reminded the Buddha of what Maha Pajapati as his foster mother had done for him after the untimely death of Maha Maya, his birth mother. When Ananda requested a third time that women be allowed to join the order, the Buddha finally agreed. However, the Buddha's permission was contingent on eight requirements called the garudhammas.

Ayya Sucinta

Venerable Gotami was filled with joy about being allowed to become a bhikkhuni. As we read in the Vinaya, she answered Ven. Ananda that she accepted the eight garudhammas like a garland of flowers. However, it was not easy to follow those eight duties.

In the same chapter, we find her request to change the first of these rules, that all bhikkhunis, no matter how long ordained, must “greet, stand up for and salute” every bhikkhu, even one just ordained that very day. Again, Ven. Ananda acted as her advocate, but the Buddha refused on the grounds that a change would have conflicted with social conventions, as we would say, of the times:

*“This is impossible, Ananda, it cannot come to pass, that the Truth-finder should allow greeting, standing up for, salutation and the proper duties between monks and nuns according to seniority. Ananda, these followers of other sects, although liable to poor guardianship, will not carry out greeting, standing up for, salutation and proper duties towards women, so how should the Truth-finder allow greeting... and proper duties towards women?”*

By accepting the eight garudhammas, Maha Pajapati was ordained. But she did not become a social activist and did not succeed in changing society. She followed the Buddha's “Dhamma in brief” (guidelines, also eight in number, see Cullavagga X or A.N. VIII,53) for practising diligently alone and in seclusion. In this way she fulfilled the goal of bhikkhuni life, which is a much deeper emancipation than the merely social.

A bhikkhuni frames her conduct according to the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha, in which most of the garudhammas appear, but only as pacittiya (minor) rules. The Patimokkha decrees that pacittiya offenses don't require an assembly of the Sangha or a penalty; they need only be confessed to another bhikkhuni who has not committed the same offence herself. The garudhammas remain controversial. Some logical inconsistencies support the theory that they are a later addition to the Canon.

The chapter on bhikkhunis in the Vinaya is a great resource on the early Bhikkhuni Order. Women at that time had hardly any experience in establishing an order, of course, and on several occasions the Buddha appointed bhikkhus to support and instruct the nuns. However, new problems then developed. People gossiped about the monks. “...*these are their wives, these are their mistresses; now they will take their pleasure together*”. The Buddha sometimes had to deal with childish behavior among bhikkhus and bhikkhunis. So, for example, he had to find a “penalty” for monks sprinkling muddy water on the nuns: Bhikkhunis did not have to greet them. On another occasion the Buddha had to prevent nuns from sprinkling muddy water on the monks: The bhikkhus could suspend their teaching for those nuns. In time, the bhikkhunis became more and more responsible for many matters, including reciting the Patimokkha together. Bhikkhuni ordination became a dual procedure, given by bhikkhunis as well as bhikkhus.

While the Bhikkhu Patimokkha consists of 217 rules in Theravada tradition, the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha has 311. Of these, 181 are the same as the bhikkhus' and 130 are special rules for the bhikkhunis. People often ask why bhikkhunis have more rules than bhikkhus. Since the Bhikkhu Order was established earlier, bhikkhunis inherited rules established to correct the bhikkhus' misbehavior, but bhikkhunis also gave the Buddha reason to promulgate new ones especially for them. Specifically, bhikkhunis have more and stricter rules regarding erotic behavior. Since women literally bear the consequences of such misconduct, these rules can be understood as a support for more (self-) protection.

Additional or stricter rules do not necessarily indicate that bhikkhunis engaged in more misconduct than the bhikkhus. Once they were admitted into the Buddha's order, he took them very seriously and protected them from behavior that could lead them away from the goal of liberation. While some Theravada countries maintain the practice of temporary bhikkhu ordination, for example, bhikkhunis usually don't step in and out of their robes. In Taiwan, bhikkhuni ordination is regarded as a lifetime commitment. Once she has disrobed, a woman ordained in that tradition cannot become a bhikkhuni again.

### Branching out

Most likely all contemporary bhikkhunis are also descendants of Sanghamitta, the arahat bhikkhuni who transmitted the bhikkhuni lineage from India to Sri Lanka. Her father, Emperor Asoka, reigned in India from 270-232 BCE. and became a great follower and supporter of the Buddha's teaching. Mahinda, Venerable Sanghamitta's brother and like her an arahat, was sent by their father to Sri Lanka and introduced the Buddha's teachings to King Devanampiyatissa and his people. When Queen Anula and her 500 or so women followers also requested admittance into the order of the Buddha, Venerable Sanghamitta ordained them. Her arrival in Sri Lanka with a branch of the original Bodhi tree from Bodhgaya, where the Buddha attained enlightenment, is depicted in a beautiful and famous mural at the Kelaniya temple near Colombo. That sapling was planted at Anuradhapura, where the bhikkhuni ordination took place, and it is still alive and venerated.

The memory of Sanghamitta is also still alive in Sri Lanka. "Unduvap", the full moon day of December, is dedicated to her and celebrated as "Sanghamitta Day". Sri Lanka continues to play a major role in the revival of the bhikkhuni order at our time and age. The "Mahavamsa", the great chronicle of that country, mentions bhikkhunis as late as the reign of Kassapa IV (898-914 CE). It is thought that the bhikkhuni order died out in Sri Lanka along with the bhikkhu order after the invasion of the Cholas from South India in 1017. While the bhikkhu order was revived when the country was freed 50 years later, the bhikkhuni order was not.

The bhikkhuni lineage also died out in India, although we don't know when, and we don't have reliable evidence of whether the lineage ever reached Thailand or Burma. However, it is well documented that bhikkhunis from Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, traveled to China to ordain Chinese nuns, who had until then received ordination only by bhikkhus. In 429 C.E. the proper "dual ordination" was given in China for the first time. Later the Bhikkhuni Order spread from there to Korea, Vietnam and Taiwan.

### Returning the lineage out of gratitude

In the late nineteenth century, the daughter of a wealthy Sri Lankan Catholic family, Catherine de Alwis, decided to follow the Buddha's path and to ordain. After ordination and training in Burma as a 10-precepts nun, she returned to her native country in 1903. Thereafter other Sri Lankan women began living the life as "dasa-sil-mata" (lit. ten precepts mother), shaving their heads and wearing robes of the monks' color. Although they did not receive the samaneri's (novice's) ordination, which includes



“pabajja” or “going forth”, the growing number and strength of dasa-sil-matas has been conducive to the revival of the Bhikkhuni Order. Many women observe eight or ten precepts in Thailand as well, where they are called “mae chees”, and in Myanmar, where they are called “thilashins” or “sayalays”.

In 1987 nuns and laywomen from all over the world convened for the first time in Bodhgaya, India. There the nuns founded the International Buddhist Women's Association, “Sakyadhita”, or “Daughters of the Buddha”. Among those who initiated this first conference of women were Ayya Khema and Ven. Jampa Tsedrön (of Germany), Ven. Karma Lekshe Tsomo (of the USA), Kusuma Devendra (later Ven. Bhikkhuni Kusuma, of Sri Lanka), and Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh (later Ven. Bhikkhuni Dhammananda, of Thailand). The unsatisfactory situation of nuns at that time, apparent to all present, was corroborated by Ven. Nyanaponika's message to the conference participants:

*“This conference is very timely. In the present situation in the world, we cannot afford to be left without the great power for good that exists in Buddhist womanhood, and even more so in the renunciation of Buddhist nuns. This potential has too often been neglected or ignored due to indifference or prejudice. The great and laudable objective is to deliberate on ways and means for improving the situation of Buddhist nuns everywhere, their education, and their spiritual progress.*

*As a Theravadin monk, I wish to express my full support of these important aims and offer my best wishes for the success of this undertaking. It is my hope that you will not be content with just listening to lectures and formulating declarations, but that you will also decide on action.*

*These are not leisurely times, and we cannot allow ourselves delays, but must be determined.”*

(from *Daughters of the Buddha*, edited by Karma Lekshe Tsomo)

Sakyadhita supported full ordination for women from its inception. In 1988, Ayya Khema, Ven. Jampa Tsedrön and Ayya Dhamma from Germany received full ordination from the Fo Kuang Shan order at Hsi Lai Temple near Los Angeles. Many Sri Lankan nuns came for bhikkhuni ordination as well, but unfortunately the whole procedure—it lasted for 6-8 weeks and the Chinese food, language and protocols were very unfamiliar—presented too much of a challenge for them. A few stayed to the end, but when they returned to their country, they were not acknowledged and supported as bhikkhunis and very little changed in their lives.

Other attempts to re-establish bhikkhuni life for nuns from Theravada and Tibetan tradition followed. In 1994, Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh and some Vietnamese bhikkhunis ordained a group of Tibetan nuns from Gendün Rinpoche's monastery in France. Before that in Tibet there had never been a large enough number of bhikkhunis to establish dual ordination; occasionally monks had given “full ordination” to nuns, but their ordination was not widely acknowledged.

In 1996, a group of Sri Lankan nuns headed by Kusuma Devendra were ordained in Sarnath, India, by bhikkhunis from Korea. This time the Sri Lankans had a chance to study at this holy site, where the Buddha gave his first sermon, and were prepared for their return to Sri Lanka as fully ordained nuns.

A year earlier, Ven. Master Hsing Yun, founder of the Fo Kuang Shan Order, had suggested ordaining nuns from Theravada countries in Bodhgaya, India. It was an excellent idea, and in fact this “miracle” happened in February 1998 in this very poor area of India, with 135 female candidates. A large poster before the entrance of the Chinese temple in Bodhgaya where the ordination took place proclaimed that the Taiwanese bhikkhunis who acted as preceptors and “witnessing achariyas” were returning the lineage “out of gratitude for once having received it from Sri Lanka” more than 1500 years ago.

The ordination process in Bodhgaya emphasized translation and understanding of the procedures and the commitments undertaken. The ceremony followed the Chinese Dharmagupta school of Buddhism, generally considered the closest to the Theravada school. The Dharmagupta version of the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha consists of 348 rules; 37 more than the Theravada version. Candidates could choose to receive robe and bowl either from the Fo Kuang Shan Order or from their respective tradition. Thus each

Theravada or Tibetan Bhikkhuni could receive the traditional robe and bowl of her lineage as part of the ceremony.

In March 1998, bhikkhuni ordination was given in Sri Lanka for the first time since the order died out about a thousand years earlier. There are now about 400 Sri Lankan bhikkhunis, and the number of fully ordained nuns around the world is growing year by year. Bhikkhuni ordination has also been given several times at the International Meditation Center in Los Angeles, in cooperation with Vietnamese bhikkhus and bhikkhunis. A few years ago a group of Tibetan nuns was ordained as bhikkhunis in Australia.

### Where are the nuns?

In the 1990s, the newsletter of Bodhinyana Monastery carried an article entitled “A Nuns Monastery in Australia?” In this article, the author called the invisibility of the “monk's counterpart” a remarkable weakness of Theravada tradition and raised the question, “Where are the nuns?”

Nuns in the Theravada tradition generally, and bhikkhunis in particular, encounter challenges unknown to most bhikkhus. Many bhikkhunis don't receive adequate acknowledgement and support, and some still face blatant resistance. In 2005, a bhikkhuni of Burmese nationality, who had studied in Sri Lanka and received her full ordination there, was imprisoned on return to her home country Myanmar. She is now back in Sri Lanka, working on her dissertation. In most places in Myanmar, nuns, including bhikkhunis, are not considered part of the ordained Sangha. They not only walk or sit behind the monks, but also behind laymen. When the lives of bhikkhunis are beset with adverse conditions and disrespect, ordination is not so attractive for other women to follow. The happiness of feeling welcomed is still too rare an experience.

I think Maha Pajapati Gotami would be pleased that at the Bhavana Society in West Virginia, bhikkhus and bhikkhunis walk in one line according to seniority. But even in Western countries, where their situation is relatively better, seniority among women is not well understood or respected generally. Great challenges and tasks await fully ordained nuns before we can rightly talk about the “Bhikkhuni Sangha” or “Order of Bhikkhunis”.

An urgent need is the creation of a network for communication. The few bhikkhunis in each country may not even know about each other's existence. When they do, they often live far away from each other. Bhikkhunis rarely have a senior or even junior for confession, let alone a Sangha (at least four bhikkhunis) for reciting the Patimokkha together on Uposatha days. They are fortunate if there is an elder bhikkhu whom they can approach for advice. When a bhikkhu is living too far away for the bhikkhunis to visit on Uposatha days, the only access to life Dhamma advice may be by telephone.

Women want to follow in the footsteps of Maha Pajapati Gotami and other great arahat bhikkhunis like Sanghamitta. The day is coming when Theravada bhikkhunis will have completed twelve Vassa (rainy seasons) and can transmit the lineage in full accordance with the Theravada Bhikkhuni Patimokkha by themselves. We assume that bhikkhunis nowadays have a better general education, but in some regards they are as much beginners as the first bhikkhunis at the time of the Buddha. The path does not end with taking ordination, and the necessary education and training of novices and newly ordained bhikkhunis presents another challenge.

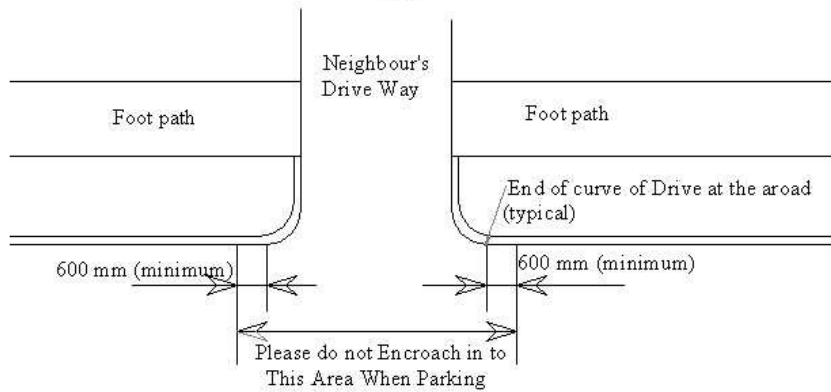
Yet there are encouraging developments. In 2005 “Dhammadharini Bhikkhuni Vihara” was inaugurated in Fremont, California. A small monastery close to Mettavihara, which was founded by Ayya Khema in southern Germany, will open at the end of this year (2006) with a bhikkhuni in residence. The establishment of additional places for bhikkhunis to live is crucial. Such places need to be conducive to

the bhikkhunis’ growth in the Dhamma. They must also be organized to benefit lay people looking for spiritual guidance and for an opportunity to offer support to the bhikkhunis.

Just as under the right conditions the Bodhi tree grows in many places in the world, the ancient tradition of “pindapata” (going for alms) has been taken up in Australia, USA and Europe with great benefit. There is a good chance that before long bhikkhunis will become more visible and more numerous in the west.

*from Ayya Sucinta*

**Be Mindful When Parking on the Streets Around  
Buddhaloka Centre  
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# An interview with Ajahn Dhammanando



*Ajahn.*

*Your biography was covered in the last news letter. So I'm going to concentrate more on your experiences in Wellington and your feelings on Sanghamitta (Ayya Sucinta's monastery). Insert your answers between my questions. Also feel free to insert any questions you feel I should be asking you. Ajahn you've spent about 18 months in Bodhinyanarama Monastery near Wellington, New Zealand, which a number of BSV members have visited, there has been some major changes in the monastery during your stay, could you tell us a little about them?*

Yes, that's right, I've spent about 15 months there and in that time the resident Sangha has grown and prospered and we have also seen the arrival of a new Abbot, Ajahn Thiradhammo, who for many years was the Abbot at Dhammapala Monastery in Switzerland. When I first arrived there March 2005 there were only two monks in residence, Bhante Jinalankara and Ajahn Sucinno plus a female lay upasika.

Nowadays there are seven monks (once I'm back there) plus an eight precept Anagarika called Dan, although it looks as though he will be going forth as a Samanera (10 precept novice) at some point in the near future. Our Abbot, Ajahn Thiradhammo, who arrived July 2005, has brought a much-needed breath of fresh air to the place, with his plans to improve or to re-build some of the most frequently used buildings such as the House and the Kitchen. He has also brought a greater feeling of harmony, with his "wise" cracks and outgoing sense of humour. A larger Sangha has also made for an atmosphere of greater communality and open-endedness, so personality issues have consequently become less important.

As a result of these changes we have been able to increase our level of teaching, with Saturday afternoon workshops once a month in addition to the regular Introductions to Meditation. We visit the group in New Plymouth more frequently than before and continue to support the group in Palmerston North. Ajahn Thiradhammo has also made one or two extended journeys both in the North and South Islands and given talks in venues long denied the presence of a monk from our Sangha, as well as set up new links with some of our sister monasteries in Australia. We've also been able to give support to Ajahn Chandako at Vimutti Monastery and the Auckland group on an occasional basis, for the first time in a long while. This is all good news.

*You last visited the BSV about two years ago, what changes both positive and negative have you observed in the BSV?*

I enjoyed my stay at the BSV two years ago in spite of falling ill during the time I was in Melbourne. Apart from teaching a half day retreat, I talked and walked with Ajahn Titinyano and enjoyed his company but I also used the occasion of my stay to visit old friends in Ballarat and to call in on Bodhivana Monastery for 3 nights and Sanghaloka hermitage (as it then was) for one. In consequence, my periods of residence here were brief and lacked continuity. To be frank my impressions of the place were fleeting but I found the members extremely kind and supportive and I was grateful for their assistance in a number of ways. I was not a party to the deeper goings-on in the BSV at that time. My current impressions are good ones and I sense that the Society having come through one or two major crises, has re-evaluated and is now moving on and has set a new and clearer direction ahead. It had the courage and will to make new

investment such as that put into the radically improved new bathroom for the Sangha's use. It has also become more outward-looking.

*The next step for the BSV is the Sanghamitta project. I understand that you knew Ayya Sucinta when she was an Anagarika at Amaravati. What are your feelings about Sanghamitta and the advice you would like to give the BSV concerning this project?*

Ajahn Dhammanando: I admire both the Society and Ayya Sucinta for taking such a brave step and I wish you all very well in the development of this project. You will be incurring new expenses and new responsibilities but I detect an underlying sense of realistic optimism. People here understand that it will be a learning curve for all concerned and I believe it has the potential to do a lot of good. Don't forget that such projects are never problem-free in their day to day aspect but that, in spite of all difficulties and disappointments, major ground work can be achieved in the setting up and support of a new venue for training female Sangha in Australia. My brief stay in Australia in 2004 convinced me there is strong and continuing demand for such a place to exist in Eastern Australia, as well as in WA. I'd just like to mention that in the UK our nuns at Amaravati and Chithurst are much respected and highly valued, so there is a clear interest from western society in such possibilities. I got to know Ayya Sucinta for a short while at Amaravati in the early nineties and I was always impressed by her calm sense of being grounded and realistic in her aspirations. She also has a sense of humour, which is very important.

*Ajahn, where are you going to after the Rains and when are you likely to return to the BSV?*

Ajahn Dhammanando: Once the Rains Retreat is over I'll pack my bags and head for NSW where I plan to spend a few nights at Santi Forest Monastery, where I had the good fortune to stay for four months in 2004. I'll be touching in once again with Ajahn Sujato and other old friends before boarding a freighter at Port Botany in Sydney and returning to New Zealand. I've had a good time at the BSV and much enjoyed meeting you all. I'd like to thank everyone for their consistent support and for so much kindness shown on so many occasions. I'd love to return here some day but I doubt whether it will be in the immediate future. I wish the Society well and I trust that it continues to grow and to thrive. It does perform a vital role here in Victoria.

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*from member Russell Dunne and Ajahn Dhammanando*

# Buddhist Society of Victoria

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**Buddhāloka Centre**  
**71-73 Darling Road, East Malvern 3145**  
**tel: (03) 9571-6409**  
***www.bsv.net.au***

## REGULAR PROGRAM

(check on the web page for recent updates)

- Tuesday 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm      Meditation for beginners & experienced meditators  
with  
Ajahn Ariyasilo (Library open 7:00 to 9:00 pm)
- Thursday 7:30 pm – 8:30 pm      Meditation for beginners by Sayadaw U Pandita  
8:30 pm – 9:00 pm      Dhamma talk for all by Sayadaw U Pandita  
(Library open 7:00 to 9:00 pm)
- Sunday 8:30 am – 9:30 am      Silent Meditation.  
9:30 am- 10:30 am      Dhamma talk by Ajahn Ariyasilo  
11.00 am Offering of dana to the Sangha followed by a shared meal.  
All are welcome to enjoy the food brought by members and friends.  
You may bring some food, as you wish.  
(Library open 8:30 to 11:00 am)

**Dhamma School** is held on Sunday from 9.30 am – 10.30 am during the school term.

For enquiries contact Suzanne Palmer –Holton on 9776 4425.

All regular activities of the Buddhist Society are free and open to the general public.  
Non-members may not borrow from the library and do not have voting rights.



**Buddhāloka**  
LIGHT OF THE BUDDHA  
Newsletter of the Buddhist Society of Victoria

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