

# TENLIGHTENED TIMES



## *Bhikkunis: Following the Footsteps of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī*

The biggest news at Dhammasara after the Rains Retreat (Kathina) 2009 was that the four nuns - Venerable Ajahn Vayama, Venerable Nirodha, Venerable Seri and Venerable Hasapanna - took the higher ordination and were ordained as bhikkhunis.

On Thursday, 22nd of October 2009, at Bodhinyana Monastery, bhikkhus from Bodhinyana Monastery and an international sangha of Theravada bhikkhunis with Ayya Tathaaloka from USA at its head, conducted the ordination ceremony.

Ayya Tathaaloka was our preceptor, Ayya Sucinta from Melbourne and Ayya Sobhana

from USA were the examining bhikkunis, and Ajahn Brahm and Ajahn Sujato were the announcing monks for the bhikkhu sangha.

The ordination ceremony was carried out in front of over 50 well wishing lay supporters of Dhammasara.

Because of limited space, we could not invite all the supporters to be present, however we knew that all of you would rejoice with us in this historic event.

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely express our gratitude to Venerable Ayya Tathaaloka. Even though she was

physically unwell she agreed to be our preceptor and to travel to be at our ceremony out of compassion and kindness.

We also would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to all the eight participating bhikkhunis from USA, Indonesia, Melbourne, Vietnam and Sri Lanka.

We would also like to express our respect and gratitude to the Bhikkhu Sangha at Bodhinyana Monastery, especially Ajahn Brahm and Ajahn Brahmalī, and to Ajahn Sujato from Santi Forest Monastery, Sydney.

*Continued overleaf*

From front page

We appreciate their compassion and kindness in granting our request to take Upasampada (the rite to become a monk or nun) and become full members of the Sangha.

We enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to be together with the visiting bhikkhunis before the ordination. We had the time to discuss the Vinaya and monastic protocols, and how to live the life of a bhikkhuni.

On 18th of October, the six visiting bhikkhunis present chanted the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha for the first time at Dhammasara.

Most of the bhikkhunis needed to return to their monasteries immediately after the ordination. We were fortunate to have had Ayya Satima spend almost six weeks with us to offer us support and guidance.

After the ordination Dhammasara became the only bhikkhuni monastery outside Asia in the Theravada tradition that has a resident sangha sufficient for chanting the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha each half month and for determining formal sangha acts within the monastery.

We would like to express our gratitude to all of you for your generosity and encouragement over all these years. The ordination became a possibility because of your support.

I know that you are going to tell me that this is no longer a "news" item.

The ordination has generated lots of interest around the globe and even on the internet. However, I am still a tadpole in the bush of Perth hills without internet access.

In addition, this was the biggest event in our lives so far. We appreciated your kindness, good wishes and generosity from around the world.

By Venerable Seri

"They drew a circle that shut me out

Heretic! Rebel! A thing to flout

But love & I have the wit to win

We drew a circle that took them in.

Edwin Markham

# Bodhinyana Monastery Report

## Ajahn Brahm's Travels

In October, Ajahn Brahm travelled to England to visit his elderly mum, taking the opportunity to give a number of talks, both in Singapore (during his stopover) and in several locations in England.

After his England visit, he travelled to Norway, home to a dedicated group of Dhamma followers who were delighted to host Ajahn for a short 2-day visit.

He again gave a Dhamma talk in Singapore on the way home to Australia.

On November 1st, Ajahn flew to Thailand in response to a request to attend an urgent meeting at Wat Pah Pong.

In November, Ajahn also made one of his regular visits to Sydney to teach at Bodhikusuma Centre for 4 days and then led the 9-day Meditation Retreat at Jhana Grove.

Although he was very busy responding to all the issues surrounding the Bhikkhuni ordination at that time, this apparently did not have any effect on the quality of the retreat.

He then flew to Singapore for 4 days for the annual Buddhist Fellowship dinner and to give talks.

## Comings and Goings

There were some pretty major comings and goings in the month of October. On October 22nd, four 10-precept nuns came to Bodhinyana Monastery, together with 8 Bhikkhunis, and 12 Bhikkhunis left Bodhinyana Monastery shortly thereafter to return to their respective abodes.

We also saw the return to lay-life of Venerables Abhaya (after 10 years as a monk) and Venerable Osana (after 5 years as a Bhikkhu). We wish them both well.

Our two very adaptable Korean Mahayana Bhikkhus, He-an and Il-sung, returned to Korea for their Winter retreat. Both hope to return for 12 months sometime in the near future.

Venerable Santutthi is visiting Wat Buddha Dhamma in NSW and will also stay at Santi Forest Monastery. For those who miss his cheerful smile, he will be back around February next year.

In November, Venerable Sangharatana (5 years as monk) from Bhavana Society, Bhante Gunaratana's monastery in Virginia, USA, arrived to spend at least 18 months with us.

Congratulations to our long-serving head-anagarika Kim Chan, who ordained as Samanera Cunda on November 5th.

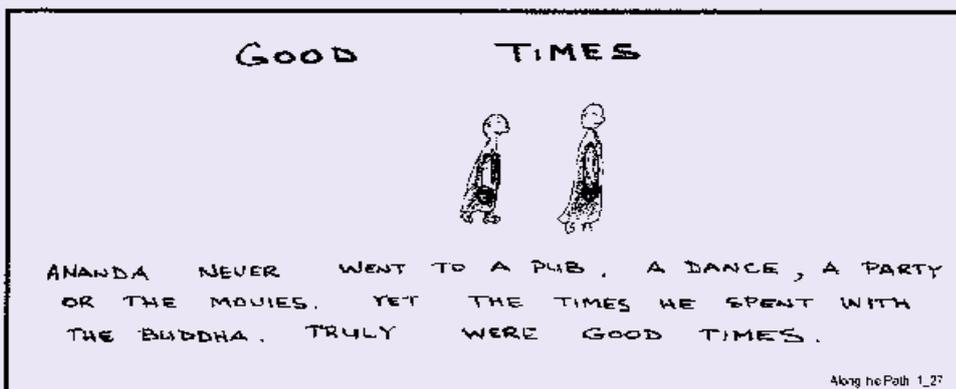
## Building

Roadwork: our invaluable concrete-layer Norm completed the concrete surfacing on a section of the firebreak at Bodhinyana Monastery. Eventually we hope to concrete all the surfaces of the monastery's firebreaks.

The septic system at the monastery's ablution block has been a source of 'odours' for many years. We finally solved this long-standing problem in October.

Paving has been laid to ease access to several monks' huts, including the Retreat Hut.

Work to reduce the fuel-load in the monastery bush is ongoing.



# Dhammasara Monastery Report

## Comings and Goings

The newly ordained bhikkhunis - Ajahn Vayama, Ven. Nirodha, Ven. Seri and Ven. Hasapanna - together with Ayya Satima were delighted to chant the Bhikkhuni Patimokkha at Dhammasara Monastery on the Uposatha, the 2nd of November 2009.

Ajahn Vayama, Ven. Seri and Ven. Hasapanna attended the 9 days meditation retreat at Jhana Grove.

The three trainees, Clare, Upekha and Sally were ordained as anagarikas on 5th of December 2009. The ceremony begun at 10.30am, in place of the usual dana formalities.

## End Of The Rains (Kathina) Ceremony

The ceremony took place on Saturday, 10th of October in bright spring weather. About 120 people attended. Millie Wong, who is a regular supporter of Dhammasara, offered the robe on behalf of Sally Lee and family. Sally Lee was unable to attend because of her son's wedding that day.

The devotees toured the monastery dwellings and surrounding bush. The walk in the bush this year was particularly lovely because many native wild flowers were still in bloom.

## Bushfire Threats to the Monastery

There has already been several bushfires in the vicinity of the monastery (10<sup>th</sup> November and 24<sup>th</sup> November 2009). The bushfire threats gave us the opportunity to practice the bushfire action plan for the monastery. The fires are like our defilements, if unrestrained and out of control, can not only hurt ourselves but also many beings. In the next few months, there will be a number of busy bees to help to clear the leaves and branches around the monastery and to reduce bushfire risks.

## Good Kamma Busy Bee

There was a busy bee at Dhammasara on Sunday, 6th of December. Devotees and friends joined in the fun and made lots of good kamma by helping to look after the monastery and to provide a safer sanctuary to countless beings, especially in case of bushfire. Everyone had a part to contribute, whether doing the outside work or supervising the work party.

There will be a regular busy bee once a month in the next few months. If you are interested, please check the website or contact the monastery.

## Outside The Monastery Activities

Ven. Nirodha and Ven. Hasapanna chanted a blessing and went on Pindapat (Alms-round) at the Fremantle Food Fair organised by the Buddhist Council of WA on Sunday, 8th of November.

## NEW YEARS DAY MONASTERY CLOSED

On Friday, 1st January 2010, Dhammasara will be closed to all visitors as the community will be at Dhammaloka for the dana.

## Jhana Grove Meditation Retreat Centre

Two successful 9-day retreats have been held at the centre - one for the Buddhist Fellowship in Singapore and one for the BSWA. Venerable Cittapalo also lead a well-attended weekend retreat.

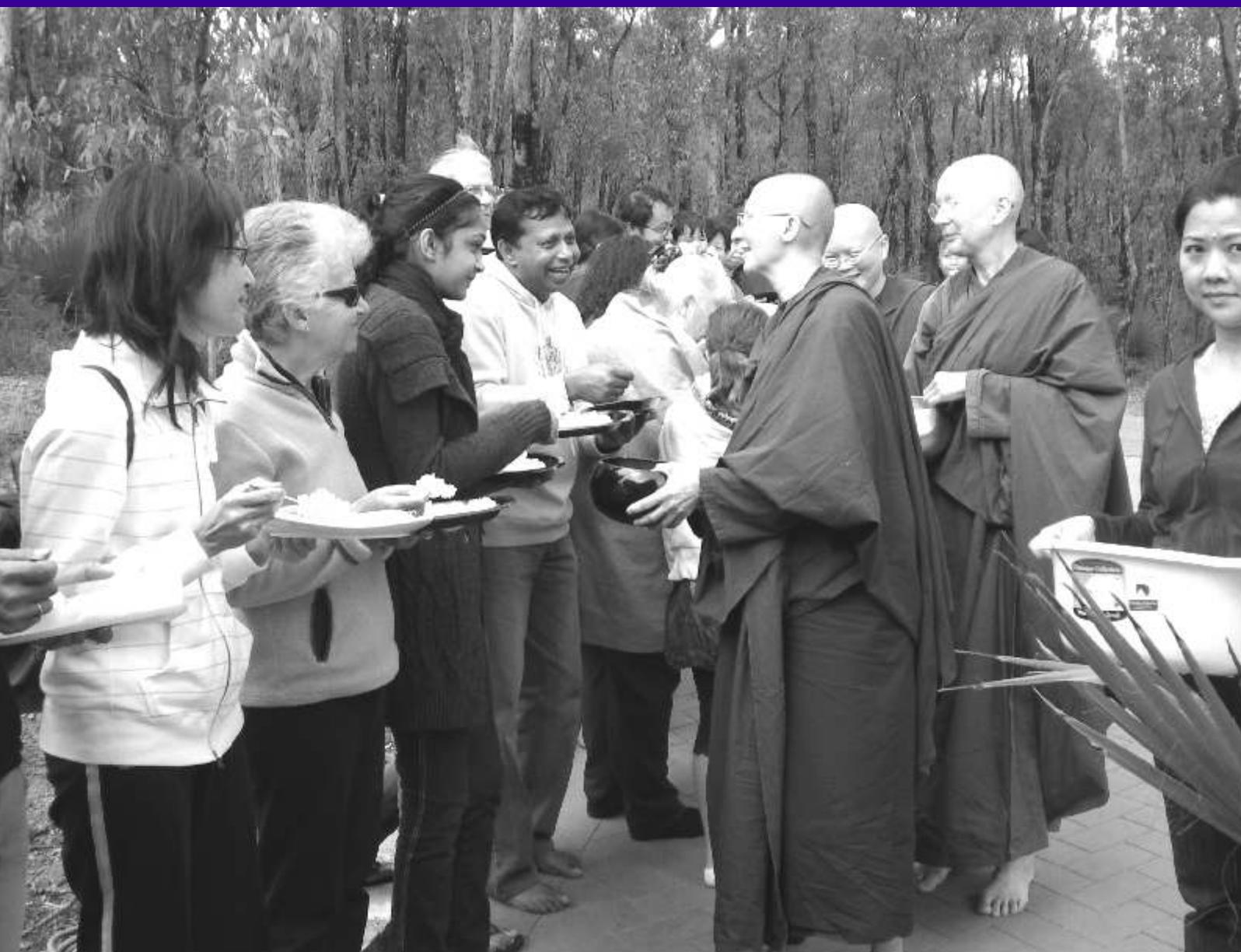
The monks spent the first couple of weeks after the Rains Retreat clearing and burning the large amount of dead wood left from the construction of the Retreat Centre entrance road.

A concrete surface has now been laid on the strategic firebreak that runs from the water tanks on top of the hill (near Kingsbury Drive) down to the retreat centre buildings.

A number of plumbing problems have been discovered. The builder for the retreat centre is doing repairs on the plumbing. While many problems have been resolved; a few are still to be sorted out.

Other repair work, including to the reticulation and electrical systems, are being carried out.

# *Kathina 2009 - Celebration Of The End Of Rains Retreat At Dhammasara*



On an overcast Spring day, around 150 supporters were warmly welcomed to Dhammasara for the celebration of the End of Rains retreat.

It was heartening to have Ajahn Sister Vayama once more sharing her wisdom with us during the opening talk.

Ajahn spoke of how, for lay people in the time of the Buddha, getting access to the teachings was no sure thing - being present to hear one of the discourses would have been largely a matter of chance.

Today, with fast and easy means of communication and travel, we can readily avail ourselves of the precious opportunity to interact with the Sangha and receive the teachings.

Ajahn also pointed out the value of following the path of Dhamma with a like-minded community.

Of topical interest, reference was made to our strong Sangha - a fact that has become increasingly evident to regular visitors to the Monastery during Ajahn's illness.



The Sisters have shared and eased the burden of the Abbess' duties with exemplary competence and goodwill.

Paritta verses were later chanted by the Sangha for the protection and well-being of all those present.

This year, Milly Lee made the traditional offering of robe cloth on behalf of Sally Lee who was unable to be present.

The day continued in festive mode with the offering and sharing of the sumptuous fare.

There was an opportunity to visit one of the nun's kutis (there are now eight in total) followed by a walk through the verdant bush, across the streams - still full with seasonal rain and clicking frogs - and admire the many varieties of Spring flowers unique to Western Australia.

Sisters Seri and Hasapanna impressed us with their wealth of botanical knowledge of these rare and delicate blooms.

This beautiful and special day brought to mind the words of the Buddha:



**"Householders and homeless alike,  
Each supporting the other,  
Both accomplishing the true Dhamma."**

- Sonia Albahari

# A trip to Thailand

It was a hastily arranged trip. Ajahn Brahm had been summoned to explain his actions in supporting the full ordination of nuns to the senior monks at Wat Pah Pong. As the president of BSWA and a friend of Ajahn Brahm, I readily agreed to travel with him.

The Saturday morning before our afternoon flight, both of us attended the opening of the “Jade Buddha Statue” at the Museum in Perth. Ajahn was giving the main address on behalf of the Perth Buddhist community.

We take for granted just how accomplished Ajahn is as an advocate for Buddhism, irrespective of the tradition. His speech was humorous, all encompassing, and peppered with wisdom.

He, once again, deepened his friendship with the leaders of the other religions and the scattering of politicians that were present. A full day already for most people, yet it had only started.

The first leg of our flight to Singapore was uneventful. The members of the Singapore Buddhist Fellowship booked Ajahn into a transit hotel for a few hours, to be ready for the morning's onward flight to Bangkok.

As the transit hotels were fully booked at that time, Ajahn arranged for some of the Singapore Buddhist Fellowship members to look after me.

I am so glad it worked out this way because it gave me a wonderful insight into the Singapore Buddhist Fellowship and its members. Ajahn Brahm is the Spiritual Director of the Singapore Buddhist Fellowship.

Three members were waiting for us at the gate. I knew I was going to be well taken care of when I met them.

They told me they had strict instructions from the Fellowship to look after me, because Ajahn Brahm was “worried I might get lost!”

Ong Eng Hin and his wonderful wife Tusita, along with our driver Goh Keng Heng drove us back to the Ong's apartment where I met their daughter Li Jie.

It was a good night's sleep and breakfast with a fast trip back to the airport for our early morning flight to Bangkok.

It was a short flight to Bangkok, where we were met by some of Ajahn Brahm's friends.

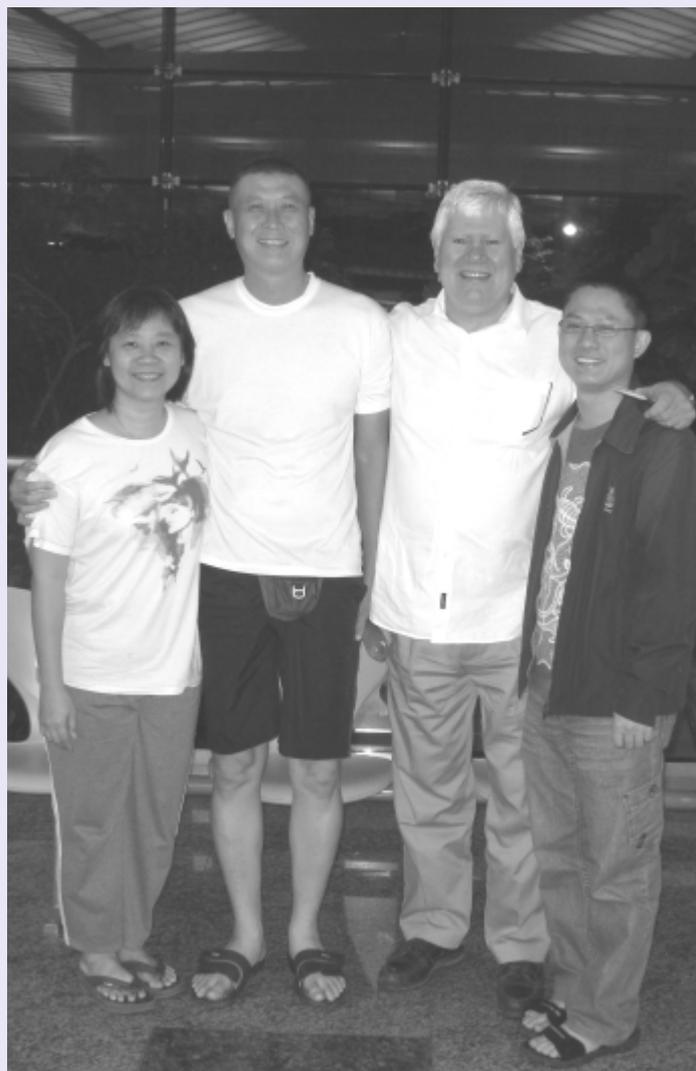
They took us for a meal. It is quite a treat to share a meal that was served to Ajahn Brahm. No wonder he complains about getting fat!

An afternoon flight to Ubon followed where Phalinee (from our centre) had arranged a taxi van to be at our disposal.

We travelled straight to Wat Pah Pong where we paid our respects to the senior monks and Ajahn Brahm took me on a tour of the monastery.

The tour was also a trip back into Ajahn Brahm's early life as a monk. All of the wonderful stories that have kept us enthralled was coming to life before my eyes as Ajahn Brahm relived his past at Ajahn Chah's kuti, and the rock he used to sit on.

I visited a fabulous museum on the site that contains all sorts of Ajahn Chah memorabilia. An enormous stupa houses Ajahn Chah's relics displayed in a glass urn on top of the shrine.



*Photo: From left to right - Tusita, Ong Eng Hin, Dennis Sheppard and Goh Keng Heng*

The meeting was timed for 6:00pm so there was just a bit of time for me to walk around by myself. The monastery was full because the Kathina ceremony was scheduled the following day.

There were hundreds of lay people all getting ready to spend the night in the forest. The smells of delicious food being cooked on the impromptu fires and stoves set out everywhere through the forest. There was food for everyone.

I managed to talk to a few of the western monks who hailed from Europe and USA. They were all concerned for what was about to happen.

They said they were supportive of the Nuns but also felt allegiance to the opposing conservatism of the Thai tradition in that part of the world.

I also met with an old friend, a senior monk, just before the meeting and felt the portent of things to come.

# *A trip to Thailand*

It was from this meeting that I realised some senior monks were not all that enamoured with what they see as Ajahn Brahm's high flying status.

I was even asked to consider if we at BSWA were turning into a cult!! Talk about a red herring across the path of the Nuns.

It goes without saying that it was a shock for me, and I will discuss this matter again later. For the moment though, I want write about the issues arising from the Nun's ordination.

There was a great assembly of monks, and the meeting was conducted in Thai.

I could hear Ajahn Brahm explaining himself along with what his role was in the Ordination Ceremony.

Some monks thought he was the preceptor, not realising the trouble and effort our Nuns went to find five suitable Nuns to do their "side" of the ceremony with a female preceptor.

There were many misunderstandings and perceptions of Ajahn Brahm that were very clearly wrong and we were just unable to address them.

I do not know if Ajahn Brahm was able to successfully explain his role, or the effort that went into making our ceremony legal, acceptable and in accordance with the Buddha's Vinaya.

I do think that the monks that did vote ended up voting in the belief that what the BSWA had done was illegal. This is clearly not the case.

The voting was not secret and Ajahn Brahm was condemned on only a few voices that I could hear. It would have been a brave monk to go against the momentum of that meeting, although we knew that there were some monks that did not want it to turn out that way.

In a very poignant part of the meeting Ajahn Brahm offered an apology and said he would promise not to ordain any more nuns.

The meeting hushed and time passed. It looked as if it may be enough for a reconciliation.

Unfortunately three monks in particular seemed to have decided the outcome beforehand and jumped in saying that the compromise was not good enough.

They gave Ajahn Brahm an ultimatum that he must recant and say that the Ordination he had participated in was illegal. He of course declined.

Very clearly the conservative Thai tradition is not ready yet to allow Nuns to continue the lineage. In time, they may come to see that our ordination is legal and is beyond doubt.

In subsequent news coming out of Thailand and the UK, we have heard that the Ordination of Nuns would not have been tolerated if we had waited for approvals, so from our perspective, the timing and planning was probably right.

We do have to wear the criticism of not being completely open with our planning. However, at the time, given the meticulous timing that was required to get five, suitably qualified Nuns in Perth at the same time, we could leave nothing to chance.

The particular Thursday night in October was the only night all their paths could intersect. The planning was kept under wraps for just over 3 weeks from the September committee meeting to the time Ajahn Brahm informed Ajahn Sumedho during his trip to the UK.

There is an upside to all this trouble and intrigue, and that is the joy of us all now having four fully ordained Nuns, right here in Perth. No one can dispute this fact.

I must say that I was sad to leave Ajahn Brahm at Wat Pah Pong that night. I wanted to take him to my hotel.

He told me he was happy to stay and the Abbot, Ajahn Liem said he could stay as long as he liked. Ajahn Brahm seems resigned to his fate, but we hope that the relationship between Ajahn Brahm and Wat Pah Pong will be mended again soon.

It is a shame and very sad that we are no longer seen as part of the Ajahn Chah group of monasteries, however it will always remain true that we are all part of the container that Ajahn Chah has conditioned.

I find it hard to believe that by fully ordaining Nuns, we have transgressed that far from what Ajahn Chah would sanction.

We were the second group to receive monks from Ajahn Chah's monasteries and he sent them on a personal request from a group headed by our own "first lady" Lynne Jackson.

I was told of a photo of Ajani Chah beaming with joy following the request from Lynne and her group. Let's hope it does not take too much time to heal our differences.

The trip home was happy and joyful. We had a great time together. Ajahn Brahm truly does not let anyone take away his inner happiness!

As I have said in my address to the members when we returned home, Ajahn Brahm is a congruent monk. He is what he says.

You do not see any conceit or deceit in what he says and what he does. As I have mentioned, some people may find it unusual to see a person celebrating his goodness - bringing all that he sees good in himself out to celebrate.

To those that think he is flying too high and think he needs his wings to be clipped, I ask you to come and be with him, and you will see that he is congruent. He does like himself. It's plain to see. There is a lot in him to like!

Talk of a cult is so far from the truth. Whether you are here in Perth or Singapore or Thailand or Malaysia, you can see the joy, happiness and confidence Ajahn Brahm has helped create in people. He inspires people to achieve their best. It is truly beautiful to see.

As I have described, I started off my weekend with Ajahn Brahm in Perth at the Jade Buddha Opening. I ended the weekend with all sorts of people coming to make themselves known in the departure lounges of airports.

Ajahn Brahm is a friendly courteous and humorous monk. But most of all he is a great example for the Buddhist tradition both here in Australia, Singapore and all over the world.

- Dennis Sheppard

# President's Report



The big news for this edition of the Enlightened Times has to be the story about the full ordination of our nuns, thereby making them full fledged Bhikkunis!

The joy and happiness of our four new Bhikkunis is obvious to anyone that meets with them.

It was and will continue to be a momentous and joyful blessing to the world to have reintroduced the Bhikkuni order back into our particular tradition of Buddhism.

The move has turned out to more controversial than any of us anticipated.

It is now very clear that the time for the reintroduction of Bhikkunis into our tradition was ripe and there is no doubt in my mind that we have done the right thing.

The BSWA has had a fully operational dedicated Nuns Monastery since 1998. Our Nuns (now Bhikkunis) have operated autonomously since then.

This situation is quite unique amongst Buddhist groups from our tradition, in that our Nuns have always been able to shape their own destiny.

How fortunate for us and the Nuns to have Ajahn Brahm as a Spiritual Director.

Ajahn has supported our Nuns over many years and did participate in the ordination, but not as the preceptor, as some critics of our actions still seem to think.

We were fortunate to have Ayya Tathaaloka from the USA to act as the qualified female preceptor during.

Ajahn Brahm's wise and expert advice has ensured a good legal foundation in the Vinaya for our ordination.

The complete story can be read elsewhere. However it is important for our critics to realise that Ajahn Brahm did not drive this event.

While he has certainly supported it, the planning and timing was something that just grew organically. May the whole world reap the benefits of this great event.

It is a great pleasure to be part of a committee that operates as well as ours. We have dedicated members who bring a vast array of skills and expertise to their positions.

Peter Smith is our Secretary. Peter has the unusual day job of teaching Bridge.

It obviously keeps his mind sharp, because he is always on top of things as they arise in his portfolio.

He has been working to future proof our society by setting up our office inside the "Google cloud".

All of our past minutes and reports along with all the society's protocols and standard documents will be available for future committees to access.

They are all searchable and bit by bit we can assemble all of the society's records there. Due to the privacy laws, they are currently kept private but can easily be made available.

Carol Chan is in charge of our Treasury. This job is a big one and needs constant daily attention.

Carol has 14 different accounts to operate the various arms of our

Buddhist Society. Some accounts are tax deductible and some are not.

Carol needs to be on top of all the society's financial affairs to make sure that money coming in ends up in the correct accounts and that all our liability's are met.

It is a great pleasure to see her comprehensive reports at each committee meeting.

Ming Cassin along with Peter, Carol and myself make up the Buddhist Society's executive committee.

We are in touch with each other via email and phone on a daily basis if need be.

Ming is a dedicated committee member and acts a little like the chief whip (I am borrowing the term from politics).

Ming follows up on everything that needs to be done. She along with her team from Internal Publicity keep the Internet news up to date.

She helps the editor of this publication to keep to his deadlines and helps to organise the mail outs.

Ming is involved in many of the society's fundraising activities. She organised the very successful calendar sales this year with all funds going to the Nuns monastery.

None of the above is by any means a comprehensive list of what the people mentioned earlier do.

I am just writing to give you a flavour of the great jobs being done on behalf of your Buddhist Society.

Next time I will tell you about the rest of the committee. We also have a lot of volunteers that help out for various events.

The Buddhist Society with its dedicated membership and Sangha is truly an inspirational body.

By Dennis Sheppard

President BSWA

# Letters to the Editor

BSWA recognises that its members come from different backgrounds and have a lot of experiences, both in their spiritual practise as well as in mundane matters.

The Enlightened Times encourages the readerships to use the "Letters to the Editor" column to comment, share, provide feedback and suggestions, as well as ask questions on issues that are important to you.

In writing to us, we ask that you provide your full name, address and a means of contact (preferably e-mail). This information will be used to verify the writer and to reduce abuse of this column. We will not disclose any personal information in the printed article except for the name and suburb of the writer, unless the writer explicitly gives us permission in writing to include other contact information. By submitting your article for publication, you agree that it may be edited for clarification, space or other reasonable reasons.

Please note that the views expressed are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia (Inc).

As this column will be as much your column as ours, we would like you to suggest a better name for it.

Please send your letters to:

Letters to the Editor,  
The Enlightened Times,  
The Buddhist Society of WA (Inc),  
Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre,  
18-20 Nanson Way Nollamara  
Western Australia 6061,  
or E-mail: [Enlightened.Times@gmail.com](mailto:Enlightened.Times@gmail.com)



*Thank you.*

## New Year Aspirations

This is the time of year when people celebrate the coming of the new year, and what it may bring. At the start of the year, we sometimes make a new resolution for the year, to undertake a new project or reform a habit for our advantage.

Some typical resolutions include exercising more or giving up a bad habit such as smoking. Some of us might make more socially centric resolutions like donating to the poor or being more environmentally responsible.

A study of 3000 participants showed that while 52% of people were confident of success with their new year's resolution, only 12% actually achieved their goals.<sup>1</sup>

With such a low success rate, perhaps we should make a New Year Aspiration instead! What is aspiration? Is it the same as resolution?

We make resolutions based on mundane needs, to improve ourselves materially or to fulfil our desires. However, such motivations are not sustained since our mind is never satisfied and will be attracted to something new.

On the other hand, aspiration is a gentle but firm determination to achieve something. It is related to the Latin 'spiritus', breath, and comes from the French 'aspirare' meaning 'to breathe out'.<sup>2</sup>

Aspiration is a form of desire tempered by thoughtfulness, integrity and a self-interest that takes into account the interests of others too. It never loses sight of either the goal or the means used to attain it.

Aspiration allows us to 'breathe freely' (assasa, M.I,64) after we have achieved our goal, because we know we have done it without compromising our values or disadvantaging others.

While mundane goals may be useful in this life, spiritual goals benefit us in both this and the next life. For a Buddhist, the highest aspiration is to attain Enlightenment (Nibbana).

We should aspire to achieve the ten perfections (Parami) of virtues, as a way of purification, and helping us (the aspirant) to live an unobstructed life, while reaching the goal of Enlightenment. These perfections are:

1. Generosity (Dana)
2. Morality (Sila)
3. Renunciation (Nekkhamma)
4. Wisdom (Panna)
5. Energy (Viriya)

<sup>1</sup> Richard Wiseman, New Year's Resolutions Experiment, Quirkology: The curious science of everyday lives, [Online: [http://www.quirkology.com/UK/Experiment\\_resolution.shtml](http://www.quirkology.com/UK/Experiment_resolution.shtml)]

<sup>2</sup> Ven. S. Dhammika, 2008, "A Guide to Buddhism A to Z".

## Buddhism, a Solution to World Crises

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the number of crises in the world today. Issues like peak oil, global warming (climate change), terrorism and financial collapse paint a bleak picture of our future.

These crises are a result of our modern lifestyle, where our economy is based on mass consumption. While we value our freedom and modern comfortable lifestyles, Ajahn Brahm noted that "this is the freedom to desire not the freedom from desire".

Our desires leads to industrialised greed, where our capitalist system feeds this desire and reflects an unenlightened mindset, one that believes and advertises that true happiness can be found only through the consumption of worldly goods.

A lifestyle such as this is akin to living in the realm of Samsara - the realm of greed, hatred and delusion. So how is Buddhism the solution to help us overcome these crises?

From a Buddhist perspective, these "crises" are a great opportunity for people to live a simpler lifestyle, one that consumes no more than is required to sustain one's existence and renounces the rest. This is particularly important if the world is running out of oil and without a viable alternative fuel that can sustain today's modern oil-based world.

Our governments are right now trying to establish a new financial system in response to the financial crisis. However, it is still rooted in the current model of freedom to desire, i.e. consumption of material goods. Albert Einstein said, "One cannot alter a condition with the same mindset that created it in the first place."

Fortunately, with the introduction of Buddhism and other eastern teachings, the west is now learning to think in a new way, to be dispassionate about the sensory realm.

It's important at this time to be radical and revolutionary in nature, being sustainable is simply not enough. What EXACTLY are we trying to sustain?

The consumerist lifestyle must fall away and be replaced with an enlightened lifestyle. and it is only when we make such changes that we have a real chance to survive as a species.

Even environmental and sustainability initiatives now recognised the importance of spiritual growth, for if people don't care, then they will not care for the environment and will not take any action.

In fact, meditation is one of the most environmentally friendly activities a person can do, while learning to care at the same time.

A utopia may not be possible within Samsara but what is possible is a very real and practical restructuring of our civilisation, refocused on helping us transcend Samsara and not encourage us to revel and decay in it.

The practise of the Dhamma will help us remove the veil of deception that has kept us deluded for so long, and we can start to see a path toward an enlightened world.

Recognising this as a very real alternative existence, and one that is preferred because it brings true happiness, finally awakens the practitioner and cuts at the very root of the problem.

Lastly, following the Buddhist teachings means we should be both spiritually awakened and socially engaged. We must act appropriately, at the right moment and the right place so that our actions will have a strong impact.

Could it be that we have reach a moment in time that requires appropriate action? Is there a need here to protect or most precious resource, the Triple Gem? If anyone would like to discuss these matters, then feel free to contact me.

Lincoln Mitchell

0414 286 433 - [lincolnmitchell@me.com](mailto:lincolnmitchell@me.com)

## NOT THE BUDDHA'S TEACHING



TWO FEMALE ARAHANTS COULD SEE THE PRIVATE JOKE, BUT POLITENESS PREVENTED THEM FROM LAUGHING OUT ALOUD.

Along the Path 5\_D6

# The issue regarding ordination of Bhikkunis

By Jaipal Singh

**W**hen we mention nuns, we think of women wearing black habits as depicted in the movies (e.g. The Sound of Music) or from school days in convents.

The Buddhist tradition also has nuns (or bhikkunis). In the recent months, the bhikkuni ordination here in Perth has caused a lot of controversy among the Buddhist communities, both here and overseas.

Below is a concise explanation on the Buddhist order of nuns taken from "A Guide to Buddhism A to Z" (Ven. S. Dhammika).

A nun (bhikkhuni) is a woman who has renounced ordinary society to live a celibate monastic life. Nuns are the second of the four members of the Buddhist community (parisā), the others being monks, lay men and lay women. To be properly ordained, a nun must be ordained first by a quorum of monks and then a second time by a quorum of nuns. Some nuns in the scriptures are described as being learned (bahussuta), eloquent (bhānika), confident (visārada) and outstanding at teaching the Dhamma (pattha dhammam kattam katum, Vinaya IV, 290). In Theravāda lands, the nun's lineage died out around the turn of the first millennium and traditionalists do not believe that it can or should be revived because there are no nuns to ordain new nuns. However, the nuns' lineage continues in most Mahāyāna countries, and in places like Taiwan, nuns are a dynamic and respected presence within the Buddhist community.

There has been a lot of praise and criticisms levelled against BSWA and its Spiritual Director, Ajahn Brahm for the support provided to the newly ordained Bhikkunis in Perth.

The effects of the ordination of the four Bhikkunis will be felt, both here in Perth and internationally, for a long time to come.

Whatever our feelings regarding this matter, we should be mindful on how we handle this issue. Perhaps we should follow the advice given by the Buddha when we are the target of criticism or the recipient of praise.

In the Buddhist scriptures, the Buddha himself was not immune to both praise and criticism by others. He was sometimes the target of insulting comments and unfair criticism.

When the Buddha was informed by his disciples that a man named Suppiya was 'finding fault in all sorts of ways with the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha', he said to them: 'Should anyone speak disparagingly of me, of the Dhamma or of the Sangha, you should not get angry, resentful or upset because of that.

For if you did you would not be able to recognise if what they said was true or not. Therefore, if others speak disparagingly of me, of the Dhamma or of the Sangha, you should explain whatever is incorrect saying: 'This is not correct, that is not true, we do not do this, that is not our way.'

The Buddha did not end there, he told his disciples: 'Should anyone speak in praise of me, of the Dhamma or of the Sangha, you should not be pleased, happy or elated because of that. For if you did that would become a hindrance to you.

Therefore, if others speak in praise of me, of the Dhamma or of the Sangha you should simply acknowledge what is true as true saying: "This is correct, that is true, we do this, that is our way." (Brahmajala Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya)

After his discussion with the Buddha, the Jain teacher Saccaka commented, "When Master Gotama is addressed rudely again and again, is assailed by presumptuous courses of speech, the colour of his skin brightens, the colour of his face clears, as would be the case with one who is worthy and rightly self-awakened." (Maha-Saccaka Sutta, M I, 237).

The Buddha's advice on handling both praise and criticism is something that we all should strive for. It will help us to reflect on our deeds, to recognise that which was skillfully done and to acknowledge that which is unskillful.





## *My personal reflections*

**Ajahn Vayama**

It wasn't until recent times, until after I had spent over twenty years as a ten precept nun, that bhikkhuni ordination in Australia became feasible.

Women have had enough faith and fortitude to survive on the fringes of the Sangha for generations. They did not need further assistance to do just that.

What they did need though was for the monks, as the ones who hold the legal authority, to realise the opportunity they have in the contemporary world, to transform the situation and again open up full membership of the Sangha to the other half of the Buddha's disciples.

I am humbly grateful to Ajahn Brahm, Ajahn Sujato and the Sangha at Bodhinyana Monastery for acting with wisdom and compassion to courageously use their authority for the benefit of countless beings.

I bow with respect and gratitude to Ayya Tathaaloka and the other Bhikkhunis who took part in the ordination ceremony out of faith and kindness, and at some disadvantage to themselves.

I feel appreciation and gratitude for the support and encouragement of our lay friends. We couldn't have done it without your help either.

May you all share in my happiness.



## *Children's Sunday Morning Dhamma Class for 2010*

In 2010, BSWA will conduct a Children's Sunday Morning Dhamma class every **Sunday morning** for children aged between 3 and 16 years.

It will be conducted in the shrine rooms next to the Dhammaloka meditation hall between 9:15 and 10:15 am.

All children are welcome. Parents/guardians who would like their children to grow up learning the wise and compassionate teachings of The Lord Buddha are encouraged to take this opportunity to enrol their children.

For more information, please contact Lee Chan (organiser/teacher) on 08-93853239 between 8am and 6:30pm.

By Lee Chan

## ENLIGHTENED TIMES

### Summer 2009

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