The 10th Anniversary of the first Theravada Bhikkhuni Ordination in Australia

COMMENORATIVE ISSUE
Program for 10th Anniversary Celebrations In conjunction with Kathina ceremony at Dhammasara Nuns’ Monastery on 27th October 2019

9.15am Arrival of guests
10.00am Taking 3 Refuges and 5 Precepts, followed by auspicious chanting and Dhamma Reflection by Ajahn Hāsapañña Commemorating the 10th Anniversary of Australia's First Theravāda Bhikkhunī Ordination
10.30am Alms round (Pindapat) - offering rice to Nuns
11.10am Lunch for everyone
12.15pm Offering of the Kathina robes and other requisites
12.30am Optional Bush Walk (guided), including visit to Kuti
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Abbreviations used:

AN      Aṅguttara Nikāya
DN      Digha Nikāya
MN      Majjhima Nikāya
SN      Samyutta Nikāya
Thig    Therīgāthā
Vism    Visuddhimagga
Simile of the Heartwood
(Dhammasara)

“…So this Holy Life does not have gain, honour and renown for its benefit, or the attainment of virtue for its benefit, or the attainment of stillness for its benefit, or knowledge and vision for its benefit. But it is this unshakeable deliverance of mind, that is the goal of this Holy Life, its Heartwood and its end.”

Adapted from ‘The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood’
Majjhima Nikāya
Sutta 29
Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to contribute the foreword for this publication celebrating ten years since the higher ordination of our nuns into the Theravadin tradition of Buddhism. This momentous occasion is in many ways one of the Buddhist Society of Western Australia’s (BSWA) greatest achievements. It was not without controversy. There were some very influential monks inside our world-wide Theravadin family who tried to stop it. Such is the nature of power and grasping to keep the status quo. Happily, we were able to hold our ground to see, on 22nd October 2009, at Bodhinyana Monastery, the Abbess at the time Ajahn Vāyāmā, together with Venerables Nirodhā, Serī, and Hāsapañña, being ordained as Bhikkhunīs by a dual Sangha act performed by Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs in full accordance with the Pali Vinaya.

Dhammasara Nuns Monastery was established in 1998 when the Venerable Ajahn Vāyāmā came to live in temporary caravan accommodation on a beautiful 583-acre site. The BSWA had just recently purchased this land in Gidgegannup, a short distance outside of Perth. The energy and goodwill that has flowed into this project is legendary, with financial and ‘support-in-kind’ that has been quite unbelievable. From large anonymous donations through to bequests that have seen this monastery flourish. However, we all know that building a physical place is one thing, but to make a monastery ‘sing’ you need monastics who are dedicated and who practise well. It is this aspect that truly inspires and provides lasting benefit to the wider community. Dhammasara is now well established and is flourishing. We have nuns who live impeccable lives, but most important for this celebration is that we have nuns who have equality in the monastic order. This has been a dream for the BSWA from the
beginning. The Four Pillars of Buddhism, monks, nuns, laywomen, and laymen work beautifully together in our BSWA, just as the Buddha originally instructed.

The BSWA is very proud of our Bhikkhunīs. What they have achieved over the past ten years is nothing short of amazing. I would also like to acknowledge the support of our monks, especially the influential role that the Venerable Ajahn Brahmavamso has played in the establishment of our order of fully ordained nuns. He has received some very unfair criticism from some of his peers, but in characteristic style, he has dug that manure into his ground and his light shines brighter than ever. I would also like to acknowledge the support of all our lay community, the committees and officers of the BSWA. Over the years they have worked tirelessly to bring us to the celebration of this Kathina Ceremony (end of the rains retreat) at Dhammasara in the October of this year, 2019. May our nuns continue to flourish and may our BSWA continue to bring the light of the Dhamma to the world.

Dennis Sheppard
President BSWA
October 2019
Message from Abbot of Dhammasara Monastery

My message is short and simple.

I am taking this opportunity to convey my gratitude to my teacher Ajahn Vāyāmā, Ajahn Brahm, the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhunī Sangha, and the BSWA, who have played relevant and significant roles in boldly re-opening the door for women in Buddhism and enabling the possibility of the revival of Bhikkhunī Sangha in Australia.

Ajahn Vāyāmā was the pioneer nun who started and led Dhammasara Nuns Monastery in 1998. She gave me the opportunity to start my monastic training. I continue to venerate and pay my respect to Ajahn Vāyāmā by carrying on the legacy to grow the nuns’ community in Dhammasara.

I am very thankful for her guidance during the time I lived with her in the monastery. As she has taught me the ropes of monastic life, in return, within my ability and capability, I am committed to support and nurture Dhammasara community and women who wish to take up the monastic path. I hope to pave a sustainable foundation for future monastics so that if your daughter, grand-
daughter or even great grand-daughter wishes to be a nun, she can have this opportunity here in Australia.

In rejoicing with the growth of Dhammasara and the Bhikkhunī Sangha, I share these wonderful merits with Ajahn Vāyāmā, wishing her comfort and peace.

May the Buddha Sasana continue to flourish.

Ayya Hāsapañña

Dhammasara specialises in training nuns for their future roles of carrying out religious responsibilities, providing pastoral care and spiritual guidance to the Australian community in their personal and family lives and serve as a role model to Australian Buddhist women.

Dhammasara is now the largest Nuns training monastery in Australia of Theravāda Forest Tradition. Today in Dhammasara Monastery, there are 11 resident Bhikkhunīs, 3 Novice Nuns and 2 Postulant Trainee nuns, with a waiting list of Australian and Overseas women opting to join the monastic community.
Reflections from Ajahn Brahm AM

It was a hot Thursday evening on 22\textsuperscript{nd} October 2009 in Bodhinyana Sima Hall. Even though the springtime temperature was cool, the atmosphere was on fire as two Sanghas of monks and nuns were about to make history.

One month earlier, on Sunday 20\textsuperscript{th} September 2009, the BSWA committee meeting held at Dhammasara, appropriately, unanimously agreed to support the full ordination of the four ten-precept Nuns, Sisters Vāyāmā, Nirodhā, Serī and Hāsapañña scheduled for October 22\textsuperscript{nd}. With the last formal approval in place, we could move from discussing the possibility of Bhikkhunī ordination to planning it.

After the Kathina ceremony at Bodhinyana, I flew to UK. While there giving talks, I asked to meet with Ajahn Sumedho to inform him that we would soon perform a Bhikkhunī ordination in Perth. He was not amused, as Queen Victoria was apt to say. Nevertheless, I remember him noticing that my robe was torn, and he kindly offered a new one to me.

I was fortunate that I did not possess a mobile phone, and still don’t, because that phone would have melted. I answered as many calls as I could whenever I had access to other people’s phones. There was a growing wave of awareness among the senior monks in UK, and in Wat Pah Pong in Thailand, that a legitimate Bhikkhunī ordination was about to occur in Australia. The wave soon turned into a tsunami of fear and dread. This must be stopped!
There was a very easy way to stop the ordination, but the detractors did not know the Vinaya (monastic rules) well enough. If they had sent a couple of monks to Perth and they had camped out in our Sima Hall, then there would have been no way for us to proceed. The ordination ceremony, as with all formal decisions, can only be done when the Sangha who happen to be in that monastery come together and approve it unanimously. Just a single monk objecting would have prevented the ordination.

I arrived from UK on the afternoon of the ordination day and was met by Ajahn Brahmāli. It was all systems go! We rehearsed our chanting in the van on the journey from the airport to Bodhinyana. The ordination went smoothly. As I left the Sima Hall and went to my cave jet lagged and exhausted, I may have thought:

“That was a small step for one monk, and a HUGE step for nun-kind.”

The rest, as they say, is history. And we knew that we would be on the right side of history. The Bhikkhunī Sangha in Western Australia have their own monastery now, Dhammasara, which is awesome. Furthermore, by the time that this article is published, I will have received the medal that signifies that I am a member of the Order of Australia, issued in Her Majesty the Queen’s 2019 Birthday Honours list, for services to Buddhism and gender equity. That affirms that it was the right thing to do.

Ajahn Brahm
Nuns exist only in the imagination. When I close my eyes, and focus on what is real, there are no nuns there. Nor, for that matter, are there any monks, or lay people, or anyone else. So, if we are to talk about any of these kinds of people, we are telling a story—a story that has some relation to fact, we hope, but where the facts are filled in with copious amounts of imagination.

We imagine a past and call it “history.” We imagine a future and call it “vision.” We imagine the present and call it “reality.” Or, to be sadder but more accurate, in Buddhism we mostly just imagine a past and say that’s “the way it is,” and we never imagine any future at all.

But if we are to have a future, it will be a future with nuns, and specifically with bhikkhunīs. The alternative is to let Buddhism be owned by the patriarchs, who co-opted the Dhamma, used it to accumulate power, prestige, and real estate, and who hang on to these things even as they fade away into irrelevance. But this is no future at all. There is tremendous vitality and energy within the Buddhist world, we can see it in so many ways everywhere we look. And none of it, none of the spark, the renewal, the creation of possible futures, is happening within the halls of the patriarchs.

I became interested in the bhikkhunī issue when I noticed, as
many people do, that most of the people who come to learn and practise Dhamma are women. Why is this so?

I asked a man at my former monastery in Thailand, and he said, “It’s because the men are working hard and have no time to come to the monastery.” “Funny,” I thought, “I always seem to see women working hard in the villages and men lounging around all day.”

So, I did something very few monks ever seem to think of: I asked a woman for her opinion. She said, “It’s because the men prefer to go gambling, drinking, and whoring while their wives are at the temple.”

Tempting as it is, I don’t think that’s really the answer either. These are just imaginaria: worlds we live in that we build from our own thoughts and ideas. These worlds have some relation to the facts, but that relation is shaped by desire, by fear, and by unknowing, so that it becomes something strange and unfathomable.

In my own imaginaria, the real reason why most spiritual seekers are women is because they are disempowered. It is because the opportunities for them in other spheres of life have been successively blocked or restricted. In addition to the absolute barriers of overtly sexist cultural constructs, there is the more subtle, pervasive, and ultimately more damaging “soft sexism,” which does not actually stop women from doing anything, but adds a grit to whatever women do, slowing them down, and making everything more work than it needs be. Everything is harder for women than it is for men.

So, they end up turning inwards. Let go of the external: you’ll
never change it anyway, right? Change yourself, that’s the real Dhamma anyway.

Last year we had a series of sutta discussions in Sydney and invited a panel of young people to help out. One of the guys was seriously manspacing. You know what I mean: men spreading their legs in an unconscious assertion of male privilege. One of the women politely asked him to restrain himself, as it was quite difficult for them to fit at the table. One of the other women jumped in and said, “Shouldn’t we just take this as a practice and let it go?” This is an example of how patriarchy gets internalised and women become its best defenders. Meanwhile, the guy did shrink his space—by about an inch or two. He was still taking up twice as much space as the women, apparently oblivious to the fact, even when it was pointed out. And the women exhausted their energies on the issue by disagreeing with each other.

This is how the patriarchy wins. As Carol Gilligan said, patriarchy divides men against women, and women against each other.

When we talk about Buddhist history, we talk about what we imagine. A patriarch once said to me that we can’t have bhikkhunīs, because “It’s been like this since the beginning.” Such was his imagining.

When I started working on this issue, I took this attitude as a challenge and investigated the history of bhikkhunīs. Like others before me and since, I found that this simply was not the case. In the beginning, there were bhikkhunīs. There were also bhikkhunīs when Buddhism went to Sri Lanka and, according to our oldest records (the Sri Lankan Vinaya commentaries, found in both Pāli and Chinese), there were bhikkhunīs when Buddhism was founded in Suvarnabhūmi (Myanmar/Thailand). But when I tried
to bring these and many other findings to the attention of monks, I was disappointed to find they were not very interested. Patriarchs are proud of their history and try to maintain everything exactly as they imagine it was. When the facts at our disposal disagree with their imaginations, they are brushed aside. Their past is not a reality; it is just another imaginarium.

I was very naïve. I thought that if the monks could learn about the situation, we would respond in an informed, compassionate manner. How wrong I was! What struck me was how little reason there was in the discussion, and how much energy. Whenever bhikkhunīs were mentioned, otherwise reasonable men came up with all kinds of absurd, irrational statements, pushed by a palpable psychic force: a compulsive need to deny the reality of bhikkhunīs at all costs. Many of the patriarchs are, it seems, quite willing to destroy themselves and their religion in order to deny bhikkhunīs.

I wrote a book about these things called White Bones Red Rot, Black Snakes. It is the longest and most complex thing I have ever written or probably ever will write. I like it, but I think hardly anyone has read it. It’s a book about myth, about magic, about taboo, about bodily fluids, about imagination, and about darkness—all things that do not sit easily with how we like to think about Buddhism. But the gist of the book is simple. I’ll summarise it point by point, so you don’t have to read the whole thing. (But you should; it has very nice pictures!)

1. How we think about bhikkhunīs in the present is conditioned (not determined!) by how Buddhists thought about bhikkhunīs in the past.
2. How bhikkhunīs were thought of in the past is part of how women were thought of in the past.
3. How women were thought of in the past includes dark and bright aspects.

4. All this happens in the minds of men.

If we are to imagine a future, then there are many things it may be, but one thing it must be is fully human. We can no longer let half of humanity arrogate the Dhamma to itself. The future of the Dhamma is human, and that is all of us.

The sight of a monastic is one of humanity’s most recognisable, powerful, and durable symbols. It was the sight of a monastic—the robes, the shaven head, the bowl—that inspired the bodhisatta, Prince Siddhartha, to go forth from home to homelessness, in the hope of putting an end to suffering. Probably each of us has had a similar experience of this symbol. I have a very old, very dim memory—just a half-grasped echo—of a nun, a Buddhist nun, on a television show, probably the Australian ABC, probably a documentary made in the 1970s. That is my earliest image of a Buddhist monastic. I don’t know who she was, but whoever you were, thank you: your image was mysterious, challenging, and haunting. You made a difference.

Monastics bear these signs externally. And that, for men anyway, is very easy. You can go to Thailand, show up at any of 1,000 monasteries, and get ordained this weekend. No problems, no questions. You’re a bhikkhu and you are the genuine heir to the Dhamma—or at least that’s how a male monastic’s external image is perceived. Inside, of course, is another matter.

This is an area where women are the experts. Women are used to being judged and judging on appearances. Femininity is a performance, to be behelden and to be criticised, by men and women. If you are a human being who happens to be female, becoming a monastic is a decision to stop the performance of
femininity. For monks, whose monasticism is also a performance, this is not easy to accept.

The great disciple Mahākassapa sometimes doesn’t have such a good reputation when it comes to women’s issues. He comes across as a bit of a grumpy old monk who doesn’t think too much of women. One of the many pleasant surprises I came across while writing White Bones Red Rot Black Snakes was that his story, as imagined by the Buddhist community, reveals a powerful and moving insight into how femininity is performed.

When Mahākassapa was a young man, his family wanted him to marry. But he didn’t want to, so he set an impossible task for himself. He made a beautiful statue of gold of the perfect women and he said he would only marry a woman who looked like that. Well, that was no easy matter, but messengers set out across the country, exhibiting the statue in markets and town squares. Nowhere could they find a woman so beautiful. One day, an old nursemaid came up to the statue and gave it a slap, thinking it was Bhaddā Kāpilānī, the daughter of her family, who apparently matched this ideal image. And so the marriage was arranged. Bhaddā, it turned out, was no more interested in marriage than was the young man. The two exchanged letters, but the letters were intercepted and destroyed by their families. (Notice that both were equally literate.) The two were married, but agreed to live a chaste life, with a garland of flowers laid between them in bed. When the time came, they went forth and both became arahants.

There is an interesting coda to this idealised love story, found, so far as I know, only in a Tibetan source. Even with her shaven head and asexual robes, Bhaddā was so stunning that when she went to the village for alms, she had to endure the catcalls of men. When Mahākassapa heard about this, he offered to help. “Stay,
Bhaddā,” he said. “You shouldn’t have to put up with this. I will collect alms for you.” Here we have, so far as I know, the first time in history that a man helped a woman deal with sexual harassment in the workplace.

Bhaddā Kāpilānī enters our imagination as all image, like a statue. Through her connection with Mahākassapa, in a relation of mutual support and respect, they both found a path to a truer inner reality. She let go of her image and consciously chose the external signs of a renunciant to announce her inward journey. Yet the men making catcalls had not begun their journey; they did not understand her or respect her choice any more than the patriarchs today understand or respect the choices of women.

The patriarchs imagine a past where women’s role was to cook food and wash robes for the monks. And they can imagine no other future than one where this simple, reassuring bit of fantasy is the only reality. Their problem is that the world they imagine has never existed and will never exist; they can only imagine it because they have never paid attention to women’s inner lives or listened to what they say.

In our minds now, the future has the same dreamy haze as the imagined past. The difference is this: in every moment, the dreamy haze of the future collides with the hard reality of the present. We’re tumbling headlong into the future, and our dreams are unraveling in the pitiless light of day. If we imagine a past where women are forever the lesser and the “other”, we’re in for a bumpy ride. But if we imagine a past where humanity is lived, in all its depravity and glory, then maybe we can start to imagine a future for Buddhism that is living and growing and breathing.

History is on our side. We don’t have to do much of anything, just stay the course. The day of the patriarchs is over. But there is one
thing that, more than anything else, can derail the future for nuns. And that is if the nuns start acting like the patriarchs.

We—and here I mean the monks who have supported the nuns—have given everything so that women can live as fully ordained nuns. To do so, we received no support from our peers, and we have had to go against the power structures and hierarchies of our respective orders.

We are happy to do that, because we know that those hierarchies are not the Dhamma. They are not the Vinaya. They are not what the Buddha taught. In large measure, in fact, they are the exact opposite of the Dhamma and the Vinaya. The notion that the Sangha should be governed by a politically appointed hierarchy, authorised by an act of Parliament, and imposing his will on the Sangha, is a feudal system of governance that was reinvented in modern times. Yet recent years have seen monks in Thailand marching on the streets of Bangkok to protect their right to be governed by a feudal hierarchy.

The Vinaya as taught by the Buddha is all about collective ownership, decision making by consensus, and the rule of principle. No monastic has the power of command over any other. All monastics must participate in important decisions. It is the Sangha, and the Sangha alone, that has the power when it comes to making decisions in accordance with the Vinaya. The Vinaya gives nuns the power to choose their own destiny: to make their own decisions, to build their own monasteries, to run their own communities, and to do their own teaching.

Bhikkhunīs now have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to do away with the feudal hierarchies, to choose Vinaya over hierarchy. Hierarchies create dysfunctional, sclerotic, out-of-touch institutions. In countries like Thailand, people talk of the need to
reform the Sangha hierarchies. But reform is what is done to correct something that is basically okay and needs to be improved. What the hierarchies need is not reform, but abolition. They’re dead weight. Get rid of them and Buddhism will be much better off.

This is why the Buddha deliberately set up his Sangha: to undermine hierarchy, by rejecting the preeminence of the brahmins and the nobility, by empowering every single member of his Sangha. Let the Buddha’s Sangha be our Sangha; and let the Buddha’s Vinaya be our Vinaya. Hierarchies serve only the desires of men to control real estate and other worldly assets. In Buddhism, vitality comes from those who reject the hierarchies and work outside them.

It is within our power to imagine an entirely new Buddhism. It is one where the Dhamma is never mal-applied to justify cruelty and discrimination. It is one where we re-imagine our Buddhist past as a source of wisdom, freedom, and perpetual challenge, not as a justification for power and privilege. It is one where our present brims with vitality and potential. And it is one where possible futures grow like forests from the seeds of our imaginings.

Bhante Sujāto
After the Ordination Ceremony

Message from Ajahn Appichato

I would like to give my heartfelt appreciation to the nuns’ community at Dhammasara for the years of physical work and spiritual support they have given the immediate and outlying community.

Building a community is a multiskilled commitment and requires solid team work and dedication from its members over many years. The presence of Bhikkunīs will add a significant contribution to the spread of the Buddha’s teaching here in Australia.

Best Wishes
Ajahn Appicchato
I love visiting Dhammasara Monastery. It is a spiritual sanctuary of peace and seclusion. The atmosphere is one of unlimited wilderness, with a tangible element of stillness and kindness. There is harmony and a shared vision of the spiritual life. You sense a genuine and deep spiritual practice. It is a place where you really do feel that you have left the ordinary world. Who would have thought this when the BSWA purchased the land in 1998?

Clarity of purpose is so important for the prosperity of any community, a spiritual community being no exception. It is one of the areas where Ajahn Brahm and the BSWA have excelled. We have looked to build up Buddhism for the long term, in a manner that has real impact. We have not been afraid of taking risks to achieve our vision, even if at times the details were a bit blurry. Dhammasara Monastery and the full ordination of women as bhikkunīs is an important outcome of this fearless march to the future.
The success of Dhammasara Monastery has in large part depended on the presence of bhikkhunīs. It is my belief that a strong and sustainable monastic community for women must be as independent as possible. And it is difficult to be truly independent if you feel trapped in an inferior position. By supporting the nuns at Dhammasara in obtaining a status that is essentially equivalent to that of the monks, they now have a proper basis for that independence. They live their own lives, with minimal input from the monks. If Bodhinyana Monastery were to disappear overnight, Dhammasara would carry on, barely affected. This is part of the power of bhikkhunī ordination.

The Buddha must have laid down the full ordination for women for good reasons. One of those reasons is surely the independence it gives female monastics. But just as important, I believe, is the psychological dimension. If you are treated as inferior, and especially if that treatment affects how you feel, you may well doubt your ability to make the most of the spiritual life. Confidence comes, at least in part, from feeling valued. When women have access to full ordination, they have better access to the full benefits of spiritual development. This is good not just for women, but for the entire Buddhist community.

What the BSWA did in 2009 was no small thing. It had reverberations throughout the Buddhist world, some negative, but mostly positive. The American Buddhist pundit, Danny Fisher claimed it was one of the three most important events in the entire Buddhist world in 2009. It really did shake things up.

We should be proud of this, and especially so those women who took that daring step into the unknown. In retrospect it is clear, that what we did in 2009 has helped move Buddhism forward.
This matters, because we have a shared responsibility for the future of Buddhism.

Without adapting our institutions to get closer to the Buddha’s intentions, we are holding back this beautiful and powerful spiritual practice. If we want this path to be available to as many people as possible, such adaptation is an absolute necessity.

But we should not be satisfied with this. We need to recognise that adapting to circumstances is a never-ending exercise. We should always ask what we need to do to give more people better access to Buddhism. This should be the overarching priority of the BSWA. The ordination of bhikkhunīs was a magnificent step in that direction. But it is only one aspect of a grander vision.

Ajahn Brahmāli
Mettā greetings, dear treasured Bhikkhunī-Therīs, Ajahns, Venerables and Dhamma friends,

I still remember, with awesomeness and deep honour in my heart, Ajahn Brahm and the Dhammasara nuns’ community’s invitation, ten years ago, to serve as the bhikkhunī preceptor (pavāttinī-upajjhāyā) for the first all-Theravāda dual Bhikkhunī Ordination in Australia and in the western world ten years ago.

I had been asked to serve as bhikkhunī preceptor before, in India, in Thailand, in USA, but never accepted. My years in monastic life were more than 20 at that time, but wise advisors’ counsels to wait till, by the letter of the Vinaya, the bhikkhunī preceptor had the recommended number of years —as a Bhikkhunī— and the conditions “ripe,” strong and supportive.

The year before, in 2008, I had visited Australia, at the nuns’ invitation, after the Bhikkhunī Seminar at Santi Forest. For the first time, I visited Dhammasara Nuns’ Monastery, as well as the monks’ Bodhinyana Monastery, and Perth city centre, Dhammaloka. I was highly impressed by what had been

\[1\text{ To liberation: the ending of all needless suffering and hindrances and the realisation of Nibbāna.}\]
developed by the Buddhist Society of Western Australia, and also, by the quality and dedication of the nuns’ and monks’ training, as well as the large number of dedicated members of the BSWA. I loved to see the monastic and lay community was multi-ethnic, a Dhamma haven for all people, after the Buddha’s own heart. I loved the ancient Perth outlying areas’ bush-forest, and to be with a monastic community who also loved much time in silence, simplicity and seclusion practising out in the forest, as my own heart so inclined. A harmony of purpose, intention, and striving.

I had already had connection with the Ajahns and monks, and some nuns, of Thai forest traditions from years back. During my years of meditation and forest walking (tudong) in Thailand, I had somehow been compassionately taken under the wing by our late most venerable kalyāṇamitta Luang Ta Maha Bua Ānāsubbhi, a strong Thai forest master who was a kind of Dhamma cousin of Ajahn Chah. One day at Wat Pah Ban Taad during the public Dhamma talk time, in front of everyone, Luang Ta gave me the challenge of a lifetime: to take my years of Vinaya studies to the next level, not only learning the numbers and letters of Vinaya study in theory (after having participated in an ordination ceremony); but “to the Adhisīla level mentioned in the Ovada that comes with Full Ordination together with and rightly connected to Adhicitta and Adhipañña: to the level of really living the Paṭimokkha Sīlā and whole Vinaya of a Bhikkhu/Bhikkhunī.” As he said: “a Bhikkhu or Bhikkhunī is a recluse, a Samaṇa, and the Buddha’s Rhinoceros Sutta valorises walking alone; but a Bhikkhu or Bhikkhunī is also rightly a member of the Samaṇa Sangha, not just a Bhikkhu or Bhikkhunī alone (I was the lone bhikkhunī there back then, and felt very alone even though Luang Ta asked to sit with him and the Bhikkhu Sangha). The Buddha’s own great Awakening was so excellent and unsurpassed, and yet he did the one and only thing that could surpass it when he taught
successfully, and brought the Third Jewel, the Sangha Jewel, into the world.” So, there was a deep, deep dedication, challenge and call to (Right) Action there that truly went “Straight to the Heart” like Luang Ta’s book by that name that led me to him. He may have shed tears of compassion, but Luang Ta was no wuss. The memory today still lives strong inside me of the Dhamma-tamed, but wild and free untamed courage of this living tiger of the Thai forest. And of the ancient “lions” of the Sakya clan, especially the female lions—ṣīhova pañjaram bhetvā—having broken free of their cages.² the ancient bhikkhunīs.

This morning of writing, the September full moon set clear and bright behind the redwoods and fir trees of the Awakening Forest, lies our Bhikkhunīs’ Aranya Bodhi Hermitage, which also celebrated its tenth anniversary last year. This full moon is remembered in the Sri Lankan Theravada tradition as the anniversary of the lioness Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī Therī—widely known as the first bhikkhunī—and her own going forth and full ordination. She left home at the venerable age of eighty, after a whole lifetime full of royal pampering, and walked barefoot, on foot, with shaven head, in a single robe, more than 120kms, only to be further tested by her foster son, the Buddha. That can’t have been easy. She persevered, and passed the test, not only gaining the Upasampada (Full Ordination as a Bhikkhunī) for herself and her likewise determined kinswomen. She gained the Buddha’s assurance of her/their capability, when having gone forth and being fully accepted into the Samaṇa way of life of the Buddha’s Bhikkhunī Sangha, of realising the full fruits of Arahanta. She became an Arahantī. Sāvikā buddha, lioness of the Sakyas, fully Awake and utterly Free, she roared her lion’s roar, with the Buddha’s Vara, before passing into Parinibbāna, her embers going out like stars at dawn.

All the truly great masters of our Forest and Insight traditions have given rise to such courage; and have not shirked their duty to the Path of Practice, nor their duty in gratitude to the Triple Gem, with compassion for the welfare of the world, with all its beings. I rejoice that there are beings in this world, in Western Australia, who are upholding these Samāṇa duties as the rightful heirs of the Buddha.

It’s not an easy path. But as in the Sutta on refining gold—such a strong image in my mind and heart before that fateful phone call from Ajahn Brahm—the defilements, the dross, are burned off through the heating. And things sure heated up. Fortunately, we have the Blessed Buddha’s teaching on the high, cool and ever-so-fresh mountain lake, bathing our bodies and hearts with the freshness, coolness and purity to go jump in. We have confidence that through practising the Buddha’s teachings rightly, it is only the dross that gets burned away, never the pure gold.

So, after the first Bhikkhunī Ordination in Perth, we turned right back around, came back across the great waters, and had the first all-Theravāda dual Bhikkhunī Ordination in North America as well, here at our Aranya Bodhi Awakening Forest Hermitage. And we didn’t stop there. After all, the Dhamma Wheel, according to the Sutta, is meant to keep rolling, as long as possible, when turned by the Sīla, Samādhi, Paññā and mutual kindness and respect of all four of the four assemblies of the Buddha’s disciples together.

What an incredible ten years! I cannot but see, all the more lucidly, that everything that Buddhism is and does—in the

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3 Paṁsudhovaka Sutta AN 3.101; this analogy was strong in my mind in my paper and presentation to the First International Congress on Buddhist Women in Hamburg, Germany in 2007, “Mining for Gold”.

BSWA publication
Buddha’s own Right Intention—is truly meant for nothing but to offer and provide the very best opportunity and conditions possible in this world, for as many people as possible, as long as possible, to cut off ignorance, end all delusions and afflictions, and experience for themselves the most excellent and highest peace and happiness of Nibbāna.

“Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!” to these four courageous groundbreaking Bhikkhunīs, now truly Therīs: Ajahn Vāyāmā, Venerables Nirodhā, Serī and Hāsapañña. To Luang Por Ajahn Brahm, Bhante Sujāto, Ajahn Brahmāli and all the venerable Bhikkhu Sangha at Bodhinyana that day ten years ago; and to all the amazingly dedicated and groundbreaking Theravada Bhikkhunīs who joined me in the Ordaining Bhikkhunī Sangha: Venerables Sucintā Therī from Germany, Santīnī Therī and the late Venerable Sīlavātī Therī from Indonesia, Venerables Dhammanandā Therī from Vietnam, Sobhanā Therī from USA, and Satimā Therī from Sri Lanka.

Ten years later, the door opened, I’ve served as preceptor for more than 50 of the (literally) more than 500 women who have contacted me and our Dhammadharini bhikkhunīs’ community in California interested in Bhikkhunī Ordination. Dhammasara is well supported and has developed so excellently during this time, for which I greatly rejoice with “Awesome! Anumodana!” to the whole BSWA, including its spiritual directors, and the resident Bhikkhunī Sangha. Elsewhere, our Bhikkhunīs around the world still struggle for recognition and legitimacy in South and Southeast Asia, and for enough requisite support to live and grow sanghas in the West. But our numbers are slowly growing, and the depth of practice, of wisdom and of teaching is also slowly growing and moving towards and into a kind of critical mass at which the Dhamma wheel turns at a whole other level. The number of Therīs and Mahātherīs in the world is increasing, both
in number of years, and in the deep meaning in Dhamma, causing the Sāsana to shine.

I rejoice and wish that by the mighty power of these truly extraordinary merits, that we do the truly extraordinary: cut off all delusion and ignorance, complete the Path, and enjoy all of its fruits, sharing them with our dear humanity, so much in need—as our excellent teachers and exemplars have so kindly shown us, as they’ve lifted up the lamp of Dhamma to light the way. My own heart lights, unhindered and set free, respond in kind, like the moon freed from clouds.

Ayya Tathālokā

Full Moon of September, Aranya Bodhi Awakening Forest Hermitage on the Sonoma Coast for the 22nd October 2019 Ten-year Anniversary of Theravāda Bhikkhunī Ordination in Australia
Reflections on Ten Years as a Bhikkunī by Ayya Vāyāmā Bhikkhunī

It is lovely to see the bhikkunī sangha flourish. From our efforts of ten years ago to now, many changes have happened. The main thing that I think would be useful for the bhikkunī sangha is to be established in its own right; and be able to act independently. I send my best wishes to everyone involved in this momentous movement.

I would like to share with you, the verses of Arahant Bhikkhunī Patacara from the Verses of the Elder Nuns:

\[
\text{PLOUGHING THE FIELDS WITH THEIR PLOUGHS,}
\text{SOWING SEEDS UPON THE GROUND,}
\text{MAINTAINING THEIR WIVES AND CHILDREN,}
\text{YOUNG MEN ACQUIRE WEALTH.}
\]

\[
\text{THEN, WHY, WHEN I AM PURE IN VIRTURE,}
\text{PRACTISING THE MASTER'S TEACHING,}
\text{HAVE I NOT ATTAINED NIBBANA-----}
\text{FOR I AM NOT LAZY NOR PUFFED UP?}
\]
HAVING WASHED MY FEET, I REFLECTED UPON THE WATERS.
WHEN I SAW THE FOOT WATER FLOW FROM THE HIGH GROUND DOWN THE SLOPE
MY MIND BECAME CONCENTRATED LIKE AN EXCELLENT THOROUGHBRED STEED.

HAVING TAKEN A LAMP, I ENTERED MY CELL.
I INSPECTED THE BED AND SAT DOWN ON THE COUCH.
THEN, HAVING TAKEN A NEEDLE,
I PULLED DOWN THE WICK.
THE LIBERATION OF THE MIND WAS LIKE THE QUENCHING OF THE LAMP.

THIG 112-116

Ayya Vāyāmā
It is with much gratitude and honour to be able to contribute to the 10\textsuperscript{th} year anniversary of the First Higher Ordination of Theravadin Nuns which took place at Bodhinyana Monastery in Serpentine, outside of Perth, Western Australia on 22\textsuperscript{nd} October 2009. I was one of the first four nuns who received the Higher Ordination that day. There could not have been a better place and time for this auspicious moment to take place.

Ajahn Brahmavamso's leadership and vision inspired his Sangha to make this event take place. Ajahn Sujāto made significant contributions through tremendous work and research together with others who contributed tirelessly behind the scenes. The support from the local Sangha who were fearless and well informed was incredible to witness, together with the overwhelming support from the wonderful lay community.

There were many obstacles that were overcome for the merit to be born to make this event occur. This was really a significant event in my mind. At Dhammasara Nuns Monastery there was much feedback that took place around this topic. After intensive discussion, everyone voted unanimously to go ahead and make it happen. I remember feeling great responsibility at the time and a deep profound awareness about the significance of this event. There was so much energy behind this movement, it really was an unstoppable event. There was no doubt, this was true to me,
this was to impact my own life, but most importantly the lives of all in a positive way.

This event was not simply a ceremony, it was indeed a profoundly deeper experience. We would be truly connecting, becoming one, and accepted by the Maha Sangha. As I mentioned earlier, there was a profound awareness of the responsibility. This was not only the Bhikkhunī Standard entering into the Maha Sangha, but this is also a powerful public statement of the inner urge to end suffering for all, and for all to realise Nibbāna.

This is an immensely great implementation, not to be underestimated. This is confirming the great wisdom and compassion of our Lord Buddha to install the Bhikkhunī Sangha in the first place. Words of gratitude cannot express it all. The Lord Buddha set up the Vinaya for the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhunī Sangha to co-exist in the future; and now with the great support from the lay people, the time was ripe for this event to take place. Of course, patience and time is needed as well, to see past the initial flowering. carefully nurtured, it is not only for the individual benefit, but the accompanying benefit for all sentient beings.

In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt gratitude and congratulations to all involved, locally, interstate and overseas to have allowed this to happen, especially Ayya Tathālokā, my preceptor. May we go from strength to strength, firstly in an inner way and truly show once again the benefit and results of walking this holy path, in its full measure, and to be of benefit to many along the way as well.

Bhikkhunī Nirodhā
Presently residing at Santi Forest Monastery
Bundanoon, NSW, NSW, Australia
Reflections on Ten Years as a Bhikkhunī
by Ayya Serī Bhikkhunī

I found it important for my journey in monastic life to be accepted fully into the sangha. I made the commitment to leave the home life, to leave behind career, family, material possessions and make the leap into monastic life, to be a bhikkhunī. As a full member of the sangha, I feel I am no longer on the fringe or an outcast. I feel I have the possibility, the potential to practise to reach the highest goal, Nibbāna. It is up to me to continue to put in the effort to practise on the Eightfold path; and take my steps to be a true daughter of the Buddha.

Now ten years later, I am a more confident Bhikkhunī. I am contented and full of gratitude with my journey on the path. The joy and happiness experienced are not elation or jubilation, but quiet contentment, a feeling of steadiness and peace in the heart. One of my non-Buddhist friends asked me "What is next? What is your next step in the monastic life?" I told her, 'This is it'. There is no more 'NEXT'. I am already 'HERE'. I am not going anywhere.

I would like to end my reflections by sharing the merits of my journey with all of you who have contributed and supported me as a nun, especially to my Grandma and mum, and most importantly to my teacher Ayya Vāyāmā Bhikkhunī and my preceptor Ayya Tathālokā Bhikkhunī.

May all beings be well, at peace and at ease.

Ayya Serī
Ayya Sucintā Bhikkunī is a German-born member of the Bhikkunī Sangha. Ayya received her full ordination at the historic International Gathering of the Sangha in Bodhgaya, India in 1998.

Wishing the Bhikkunīs at Dhammasara Monastery and other places in Australia well, also the Bhikkhu Sangha at Bodhinyana and all members of BSWA.

Sucintā Bhikkunī
My dear Dhamma Sisters,

Time does fly so fast! The Buddhist Society of Western Australia will soon commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the First Higher Ordination of Theravāda Nuns in Australia. Ten years’ period has passed … *Anicca* …

Herewith I would like to congratulate the Buddhist Society of Western Australia for this great event. Since then, Australia has continuously been holding Higher Ordinations of Theravāda Nuns. Each time, the Theravāda Buddhists around the world are happy to know that more and more women have decided to be Nuns. The world has been shown how powerful Dhamma is! No matter how much darkness spreads to infiltrate human minds, it cannot prevent Dhamma light from shining brightly through the Teachings of the Buddha. This shows clearly through YOU, through US – the Theravāda Nuns. We have lived an “unusual” way of life compared to what is considered “normal” in everyday life. In general, it is considered “normal” to chase pleasures, to gratify sensual pleasures, to crave for worldly things. What is considered as “success” is always “having lots and lots of material things” – things which are left behind when the owners pass away. Funny, but ironically that is what often happens … Pathetic.
“What is not given is lost” – wise words say. When we decide to choose a life as nuns, we have actually given something to life. We have given our life to Dhamma. As nuns, we are conditioned to live the Dhamma way, to do our best in practising what our Great Teacher instructs: to avoid bad \textit{kamma}, to do good \textit{kamma}, to purify our mind. By being nuns, we are forced to develop our spiritual attainment. Aren’t we lucky?

I have heard some people complain: “Why are there not many Buddhists in my area? Why does the number of Buddhists in my town keep decreasing? Why can’t Dhamma be propagated fast? In no time there will be no Buddhists in my area. Dhamma has no future. Many Buddhists converted to other religions etc. etc. The bottom line is: lots of worries about the future of Buddhism.

I explain to them that Dhamma is not a religion. Dhamma does not need followers. It is people who need Dhamma. And although it is true that Dhamma is maybe “not interesting” as it does not contain threats and punishment and rewards and wonderful promises –like hell or heaven– we can be sure there are people who are lucky to come in contact with Dhamma. There are people who are lucky to have the determination to live the Dhamma way. \textit{Dhammo Bhave Rakkhati Dhammachari} – One who lives with Dhamma is protected by Dhamma. My dear Dhamma Sisters, we are among those lucky people! Isn’t that wonderful??

And then I can happily show another evidence. Maybe Dhamma is not heard in some regions, or towns, or even provinces. But Dhamma spreads and lives very well in developed countries, such as Australia. We must understand that Buddhists should be smart enough to understand the Teaching, should be strong enough to endure attacks from here and there, should be responsible enough to experience actions and fruits of the actions. It is not easy to be a Buddhist, and certainly not easy at all to be a Buddhist Nun!
But who is scared? I am not, as I am sure you are not, either! This life is so short, so let us live it meaningfully. Let us live and die smiling! Let us be the light in darkness, showing the way to the cessation of suffering. No matter how difficult our struggles to be liberated, let us keep trying our best to purify our Sīla, Samādhi, and Pañña so that one day, we attain NIBBĀNA! Sadhu …

May all beings be well, happy, and peaceful; and may the best come to us all.

Ayya Santīnī
Collective Consciousness – The story of the First Bhikkhunī Ordination in Perth Australia
By Ayya Dhammanandā

A few days after the higher ordination of the four Bhikkhunīs in Perth, a friend asked me what I thought of the event, where I was one of the participants who “made things happen;” I spontaneously said that it is the ‘collective consciousnesses.’ Yes, till this day, ten years after the event, I confirm it again, it is a collective consciousness. It ought to happen to change the perception of women going forth in Theravāda Buddhism. And it happened at the right time and right place with the right people!

It was a windy winter day at Santi Forest Monastery when Bhante Sujāto informed me of the date and set up for the Bhikkhunī ordination in Perth. The wind blew so hard that we talked like a whisper with joy, tense and wonder in our serious looking eyes. I checked on the Sima (boundary) and participants – which are the place and people that are considered as qualifications for a higher ordination according to the Vinaya. Bhante said the ordination will be held in Bodhinyana Sima Hall with the international Bhikkhunī Sangha and Bodhinyana Bhikkhu Sangha collaborating in the rites and procedures to confer the Upasampada for the four candidates who had practised as ten precepts nuns for a long time.

There has been an unspoken kind of ‘itching’ in the Theravāda Buddhist world about the unequal status of monks and nuns who both are aspirants for liberation through practice of the noble path of renunciation in the Dhamma and Vinaya as they had been
taught by the Buddha himself. This inequality existed for a thousand or more years, the world has changed a lot, but the perception of conservative people had not changed, insisting that female aspirants are less valuable than the counterpart males. Hence, they have not given enough support and dignity for nuns, which has made renunciation more difficult for female aspirants in the Theravāda tradition.

We know that the Buddha never ordained women as Thilashin (Pali: Sīlacariya, Eight Precept Nuns in Burma) or Sīlamata (Ten Precept Nuns in Sri Lanka) or Maechi (white robed nuns with eight precepts in Thailand). He gave full ordination to female aspirants, gave them the dignity of being a bhikkhunī who truly fears the dukkha of samsara. The code of conduct for Bhikkhunīs is still available along with the code of conduct for Bhikkhus, and the social conditions are suitable to sustain both Sanghas. Why have the Buddha’s followers not acted like Him, but found many excuses for preventing women from obtaining what they deserve as their inheritance on the Noble Path? This was a question on my mind for many years while I studied and practised in Theravāda countries as a nun. This is a serious question for many learned people who are familiar and feel concerned about the social division in the Buddhist world, especially in Theravāda countries.

The Bhikkhunī ordination in Perth made a big impact on the Theravāda Buddhist world, especially in Thai Forest tradition. People involved, divided into two camps: rejoicing and blaming. As an observer, I remembered the teaching of a meditation teacher who taught me about how a meditator should view all dhammas impartially. Good and bad are just values imposed on current dhammas (conditions/phenomena) by ego-based consciousness. When phenomena are in agreement with the ego, it labels that as good thing/experience/event/person; when phenomena are not in agreement with the ego, it labels the
event/experience as bad. Good or bad virtually do not exist, but people criticise and argue based on the premises of their attached views. And all will pass. It passed, and now there are many more Bhikkhunī ordinations, making full ordination for women accessible in different countries, both East and West.

What ought to happen, happened. Good intentions brought us together in that ordination, to make a change that changed people’s lives, and changed the perception of the world with regards to Buddhist values and practices. The rest of the ‘Actions That Need To Be Done’ (Sanghakamma) were well prepared and performed by our respected candidates, Bhikkhunī preceptor Venerable Ayya Tathālokā Therī and a knowledgeable senior Bhikkhu teacher Venerable Ajahn Brahmavamso Mahathero, the assembled Dual Sangha of Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs and the Buddhist society of Western Australia. We came from different rivers of culture and nationality, but all merged in the same great sea – the Buddha’s teachings, and tested the same test – the test of liberation.

Ayya Dhammanandā
Dhammadharini
Sonoma Mountain
Bhikkhunī Monastery,
Northern California USA
Aug. 13th, Vassa 2019
Ayya Sudhammā Bhikkhunī was born in 1963 in Charlotte, North Carolina and is currently the abbess of Charlotte Buddhist Vihara. The first American woman ordained in Sri Lanka, Ayya Sudhammā has been recognised at the United Nations in Bangkok as an "Outstanding Woman in Buddhism".

My warmest congratulations and high regards to our four now 10-year bhikkunīs. In 2009 when I first heard the rumour of their impending upasampada my heart rejoiced. I made urgent efforts (from the exact opposite side of our planet!) to assist in the ceremony; but did not have sufficient good kamma for that honour.

More than 20 years ago, in late 1997, when I prepared to set out from lay life to find a monastery that would let a woman ordain, my friends threw a party for me in the staff residence at Spirit Rock. (I was told that I would be the first Spirit Rock student to ordain.) Jack Kornfield gave a brief speech, during which he said:

“*In lay life there is suffering. In monastic life there is suffering as well. The difference is that the suffering in lay life is suffering that builds up more suffering; the suffering of monastic life is suffering-to-end-all-suffering.*”

Then he looked into my eyes, intensely and advised solemnly:

“*Suffer well.*”
I held onto his words after ordaining. Sometimes they helped me keep going despite the most difficult situations.

Not much has been easy for today’s Western bhikkunī pioneers. We have seen countless women, our peers seeking the same path, fall along the wayside - making each of us who do succeed (and stay) valuable as one in a million. My sister Therīs and I have gone through great difficulties requiring extraordinary endurance in our path towards higher ordination and also in the years since gaining it.

Somehow, we don’t get to sign up to experience difficulties that we would find easy; we don’t get to choose our suffering. Instead, the sociable falls into isolation, the fiercely independent becomes frail and dependent, the shy must take a leadership role, the self-assured gets brutally humbled repeatedly... It hits where it really hurts.

From what I’ve seen and heard of the Dhammasara nuns who fully ordained ten years ago, I have faith that these four sages know how to make the best use of their suffering to dismantle every obstacle to liberation. No matter what is thrown at them, they do their practice, and continue to truly beautify and strengthen our Sangha. May they continue to meet any suffering with skill, until all suffering ceases.

Ayya Sudhammā Therī
The Power of the Fourfold Sangha

Ven. Sobhanā Therī
Vice Abbess, Dhammadharini Sangha
Dhammadharini Monastery
Penngrove, California, USA

‘Wicked One, I will not become fully extinguished until I have monk disciples … nun disciples … layman disciples … laywoman disciples who are competent, educated, assured, learned, have memorised the teachings, and practise in line with the teachings. Not until they practise properly, living in line with the teaching. Not until they’ve learned their tradition, and explain, teach, assert, establish, disclose, analyse, and make it clear. Not until they can legitimately and completely refute the doctrines of others that come up, and teach with a demonstrable basis… I will not become fully extinguished until my spiritual life is successful and prosperous, extensive, popular, widespread, and well proclaimed wherever there are gods and humans.’

Mahāparinibbānasutta,
DN16, Bhante Sujāto tr.  
www.suttacentral.net
I can well remember Dhammasara monastery as it was ten years ago, on the eve of the upasampada for Ajahn Vāyāmā, and the Venerables Nirodhā, Serī and Hāsapaṇṇa.

The community already had a maturity of monastic practice as ten precept nuns, a clear and well considered relationship with the Bhikkhu Sangha led by Ajahn Brahmavamso, and physical accommodations that were safe, solid and built to last. The support of local householders was lively and joyful, and the nuns were regularly bringing Dhamma to the city through programs at the BSWA. The rhythm of daily practice was settled and supportive.

Over the ten years since undertaking Bhikkhunī form, the Dhammasara Sangha has continued to flourish, growing from strength to strength. There is a power arising when we manifest the Buddha’s intention for the fourfold sangha, with fully ordained male and female monastics as well as male and female householders, all competent, learned and practising well. Beyond individual personalities, beyond the problems and successes that arise along the way, this form is the most likely to support individual liberation and the long life of the Buddha’s teachings.

I am grateful for my small part in the 2009 ordination.

Ayya Sobhanā
Ayya Satimā was born in Sri Lanka and moved to the USA. She was an educator and retired in the 1990’s. She then trained and lived as a Zen monastic. In 2006, she became a fully-ordained Theravāda Bhikkhunī in Sri Lanka. She is now famously called ‘Achie’ (Grandmother) Satimā. She now lives in USA.

Theruvan Saranai!

I am very happy and am very honoured to have been a participant in the first Bhikkhunī Ordination in Australia. That was a great event!

Congratulations and blessings to all the wonderful Bhikkhunīs and everyone who participated in the auspicious event. May you all be blessed with good health, long life, peace, joy and happiness. May you also find inner peace, joy and contentment. Ultimately realising the Four Noble Truths May you all attain the bliss of Nibbāna.

Metta,

Achie Satimā Bhikkhunī 😊
I remember the day Ajahn Brahm went around asking the monks their opinion on whether "we" as a Sangha should ordain Bhikkhunīs. I was in the workshop at the time, probably making something or joking around with the other monks. At that time, I had been living with Ajahn Brahm for about seven years and this was the moment where he decided to ask the monks what they thought. As most of us know, Ajahn Brahm is an individual capable of making decisions on his own. I was touched by his request, as it made us feel part of the decision-making process. Of course, I said "Yes" but I knew that some of the monks Ajahn Brahm grew up with would not be pleased with the ordination. But that's life and not everybody is going to agree with what you do or say.

After all the dramas leading up to the ordination and the dramas that followed, it was the drama-less Dhamma that settled things. After the dust had settled and on a visit to Perth (at the time I was living in Wat Buddha Dhamma in Sydney), the negative effects of the ordination could still be felt. I was at Jhana Grove just outside the kitchen and Ajahn Brahm walked out and we started to chat. We talked about the ordination. The advice he gave me
was, when making a decision "follow your heart", I think that is what he learnt from the whole experience. FAST FORWARD. A decade later we have the Dhammasara nuns' monastery led by Ajahn Hāsapañana with the support of the other nuns and the countless numbers of lay people who support them. Without these collective acts of giving, Dhammasara and Bodhinyana would not have the monasteries and monastics they have today.

I don't really know Bhante Sujāto, but I personally think that he was one of the main reasons the Bhikkhunī ordination became a success. Years prior to the ordination, Bhante Sujāto, with his smart brain, spent a lot of time doing research, talking to other monastics and basically gathering information to bring a dream into reality. So not taking anything away from Ajahn Brahm, because he is also a very smart man, but the way I look at it, Bhante Sujāto was the brains behind the Bhikkhunī ordination and Ajahn had the respect and authority. Without these two monks, having Bhikkhunīs would still be a dream.

Now the dream is a reality, let's smile and carry on.

Ajahn Santutthi
Dhammayanaram
Monastery
Message from Ayya Atapi

With the Blessings of the Noble Triple Gem
Commemoration of 10th Anniversary of Bhikkhunī Ordination in Australia

Bhikkhave appamādena sampādetha
Bhikkhus! Strive on with diligence

Dullabho Buddhuppādo lokasmiṁ
Rare it is the emergence of a Buddha in the world

Dullabho manussattapatilābho
Rare it is to be born as a human

Dullabhā khaṇasampattī
Rare it is the window of opportunity

Dullabhā pabbajjā
Rare it is to be ordained

Dullabham saddhammassavanam
Rare it is to hear sublime dhamma

Dullabho sappurisa saṁsīvo
Rare it is to have good companions (kalyāṇamittas)
I wish to thank Venerable Ajahn Brahm and all the Sangha whose
tireless efforts made it possible to have Bhikkhunī ordinations
here in Australia. It is indeed an honourable gift, to have cleared
the way, to allow the nuns of Australia to taste Dhamma as fully
ordained bhikkhunīs, following the footsteps of Arahants
Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, Khema and Uppalavanna Therīs, guided
by the Bhikkhunī Vinaya.

On this very special commemoration of Bhikkhuni Ordination, let
us remember The Lord Buddha’s words, "Vinayo nama
sasanassa ayu" (Vinaya is the lifeline of the Buddha Sasana). So,
by practising the Dhamma Vinaya accordingly by ourselves,
within this rare and precious opportunity that has been bestowed
upon us, we can contribute to the continuity and existence of the
Buddha Sasana as well.

Let us diligently follow the path that is clearly laid out by The
Lord Buddha and taste the sublime freedom Nibbāna!!!

With metta
Ayya Atapi
J.R.'s take
I remember visiting Dhammasara in 2005. At that time, I was still a layman and had started attending the weekend activities at Dhammaloka.

One morning Lynne Jackson took me and a few others out for dana at Dhammasara. At that time, Ayya Vāyāmā was a very senior 10 precept nun and as we gathered in the cottage before the meal, Ayya Vāyāmā noted that I had made an effort to dress up for the visit. To be fair, my usual attire at Dhammaloka was tracksuit pants and a t-shirt.

Four years later I took higher ordination, just before the rains of 2009. In that same year, as a freshly minted Bhikkhu I had the chance to participate in the Sangha elevating the nuns to their current incarnations as fully ordained Bhikkhunīs. I now consider the nuns great kalyāṇamittas and appreciate their help as we build up a new branch monastery here in Kelmscott/Roleystone.

With metta,
Ajahn Jhanarato
Dhammayanaram
Monastery
Pictorial History of the First Theravāda Bhikkhunī Ordination in Australia
Ordination Ceremony in the presence of both the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhunī Sangha
Ordination Ceremony in the presence of the Bhikkhuni Sangha
Post Ordination Ceremony
Congratulations and Welcome to our First Theravada Bhikkunis
Our Pioneer Nuns at Dhammasara Monastery with the Bhikkunī Sangha prior to the ordination ceremony

Our Pioneer Nuns with their Preceptor, Ayya Tathaloka (above) and with the Bhikkunī Sangha (below)
From Early Days to Bhikkhunīs

Ajahn Vāyāmā – from humble beginnings

As an Anagarika (seated on the left) on Parappaduwa Nuns’ Island 1984

Living in a caravan

Founding Abbot Dhammasara Nuns’ Monastery

Outdoor Altar

Early Days

Currently at Patacara Bhikkhuni Hermitage
Ayya Nirodhā

As an Anagarika with Teacher

Sister Nirodhā (First Ordination)

Venerables Nirodhā and Hāsapañña as past co-Abbots of Dhammasara Nuns Monastery

Currently at Santi Forest Monastery
Ayya Serī

Before her first ordination

As an Anagarika

At Dhammasara

Currently at Patacara Bhikkhunī Hermitage
Ayya Hāsapañña

Early Days

After Higher Ordination

Currently as Abbot of Dhammasara Nuns Monastery
The Growth of the Bhikkhunī Sangha at Dhammasara Nuns Monastery
“...The one who's mind, both day and night Takes delight in harmlessness, Who has loving kindness for all beings - for them there is enmity with no one.”

Ajahn Brahm at GCB11 quoting the Buddha, Maṇibhadda Sutta (Connected Discourses of the Buddha SN 10.4)
Yassa sabbamahorattaṃ ahiṃsāya rato mano;
Mettamso sabbabhūtesu veram tassa na kenacī ti.
Gotami, those qualities of which you would know:

“These qualities lead to dispassion, not passion;
to being unfettered, not fettered;
to getting rid of, not heaping up;
to few wishes, not many wishes;
to contentment, not discontentment;
to seclusion, not socialising;
to arousal of energy, not laziness;
to being easy to support, not hard to support,”

You may definitely hold:
“This is the Dhamma.
This is the Vinaya.
This is the teaching of the Buddha.”

AN 8.53 Gotami Sutta