



# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**'The importance of Bhikkhuni Sangha existence.'**

**December 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> 2022**



## Speaker

Ven. Bhikkhunī Tathālokā Mahatherī,  
Founder of Dhammadharini Monastery,  
Theravāda Bhikkhunī Association  
of North America

1997

Bhikkhuni Ordination



Dhamma Program organized by: Maha Bodhi Society of India  
and United Theravada Bhikkhuni Sangha International





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



“The Importance of Bhikkhuni Sangha Existence”

Full Moon December 7th & 8th 2022CE/2566BE

## **SPEAKER**

**Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri**

**Founding Abbess & Preceptor, Dhammadharini**

**UTBSI Coordinator, Bhikkhuni History & Heritage**



Dhamma Program organized by: Maha Bodhi Society of India  
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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



“The Importance of Bhikkhuni Sangha Existence”

Full Moon December 7th & 8th 2022CE/2565BE

**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination”  
25th Anniversary  
(1997-2022)**

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa 3x  
Buddham Dhammam Sangham Namassami

Homage to the Blessed, Noble and Perfectly Enlightened One  
My respect to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Sanghamitta Day Greetings with reverence to our senior Mahatheras and Mahatheris of the Maha Bodhi Society and among our honored guests and viewers; and my warm greetings, with much appreciation, to our leading Bhikkhuni Coordinators of the United Theravada Bhikkhuni Sangha International, and to all our guests and viewers.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

This Talk is Dedicated to the Memory of our Great & Fully Awakened Arahati Bhikkhuni Forebear Sanghamitta Theri and Her Great Company of Dhammaduta Bhikkhunis, to Maha Arahati Anula Tissa Theri, the First Thousand Bhikkhunis of the Island of Lanka to Fully Awaken, and to all the Great Sangha of the Awakened Lineage of the Buddha Throughout Time.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

I will be speaking about the 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination in the Ananda Sima at the International Buddhist Meditation Center in Los Angeles today, as we continue our commemoration of the 25-Year Anniversaries of the Bhikkhuni Ordinations which led to the Resuscitation and Revival of the Theravada Bhikkhuni Sangha.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Last year, at this time, as mentioned, the Maha Bodhi Society of India and our newly-formed United Theravada Bhikkhuni Sangha International celebrated the 25-year Anniversary of the 1996 Bhikkhuni Ordination in Sarnath. And this coming February 2023 we will celebrate and commemorate the 1998 International Bhikkhuni Ordination in Bodhgaya; through both of which the Theravada Bhikkhuni Sangha of Sri Lanka and South Asia were revived.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

In this revival, the early 1988 Bhikkhuni Ordination in Southern California also stands out, in which twelve women renunciates of Theravada traditions received full Dual Bhikkhuni Ordination via the old Savakayana (Early Buddhist) Dharmaguptaka Vinaya lineage which is the basis for most all East Asian Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Ordinations up to this day. Of the 12 bhikkhunis ordained, nine were South Asians from Sri Lanka, Nepal and Burma, and three were westerners—with two from Germany and one from USA.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

This concept of Theravada nuns receiving bhikkhuni ordination in the existing Dharmaguptaka Bhikkhuni lineage was also the *original* or *initial* basis for the Sri Lanka Bhikkhunis’ 1996 Sarnath Bhikkhuni Ordination, as well as the 1998 International Bhikkhuni Ordination in Bodhgaya. That process was to further develop and evolve, in very important ways.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Following the 1996 Bhikkhuni Ordination in Sarnath, the ten newly ordained Sri Lankan bhikkhunis undertook two years of studies in Theravada Buddhist Bhikkhuni Vinaya with the Maha Bodhi Society of India in Sarnath, instructed by the late Most Venerable Andawela Devasiri.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Ven. Walpola Piyananda Thero of Dharma Vijaya had joined with Ven. Dr. Havanpola Ratanasara Thero in Los Angeles in supporting the 1988 Bhikkhuni Ordination. Bhante Piyananda had travelled to India to support the 1996 Ordination in Sarnath and returned to Los Angeles with encouraging news about it.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Back as early as 1994, after more than 5 years of giving Samaneri Pabbajja to mostly Asian-American Buddhist women teachers, these senior Theravada monks, with Bhante Ratanasara’s leadership, were ready to take a further step. IBMC LA, the International Buddhist Meditation Center of Los Angeles, was just across the street from the College of Buddhist Studies that Ven. Dr. Havanpola Ratanasara had founded and where he taught. This partnership between the Bhante Ratanasara at the College of Buddhist Studies, IBMC, and the Theravada monks of the LA area was to be very important.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

When Ven. Bhikkhuni Karuna Dharma wanted to organize ordination for her students in 1994, the plan for the first of the International “Grand Ordinations” at IBMC was hatched, with Ven. Dr. Ratanasara’s support. As the ordinations were planned, soon there were requests to provide higher ordination for nuns in Tibetan/Himalayan traditions as well, and they were included too, as was a Vietnamese-American Theravada applicant. This may have been the first occasion of a Theravada nun receiving full ordination as a bhikkhuni at IBMC.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

We may note that back in 1988 six years earlier, Tibetan traditions’ and Theravada traditions’ nuns had been accepted as well. However, Theravada tradition bhikkhus, while they did give Samaneri Pabbajja and precepts *beforehand* to the Theravada candidates for the 1988 ordination, as likewise Tibetan masters did for their Tibetan traditions students, with a concept of “root lineage vows”; did not participate together in the ordaining Dual Sangha quorums of the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya tradition.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

This changed in 1994. Theravada bhikkhus of the Pali-text Vinaya lineage, and Tibetan/Himalaya-traditions monks of the Mulasarvastivada lineage, having studied and recognized the very close similarities of their mutual Vinaya traditions, were allowed to participate together in the ordination, taking active participatory roles and sitting in together during the ordination as “witnessing masters.”

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

We saw last year in the archival video of the 1996 Sarnath Bhikkhuni Ordination how this “sitting in” was so there as well; ten Sri Lankan and Indian Theravada bhikkhus sat in as witnessing masters on one hand, and ten Tibetan and Himalayan-tradition bhiksus sat in on the other side, while the ordaining Korean Bhikkhu Sangha and their Korean bhikkhuni pavattini and bhikkhuni instructors sat in the center with the ordinees.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

The intention of this participation was a multi-traditional show of support and acceptance—to show that the new Bhikkhunis were fully accepted as Bhikkhunis by monks/bhikkhus of the sanghas all three of these great, still-living Savakayana lineages, not only the East Asian sanghas (Dharmaguptaka vinaya), but also the South and Southeast Asian Theravada (Pali-text, Mahaviharavasin vinaya) and the Tibetan and Himalayan sanghas (Mulasarvastivadan vinaya).

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

In 1997, after hearing about the 1996 Sarnath Ordination, Venerable Bhikkhuni Karuna Dharma, was inspired to organize another Grand Ordination at IBMC. Venerable Dr. Ratanasara was in support. And they began to take applications. However, compared to 1994, in 1997, the number of applications accepted was small. There were no Tibetan traditions' teachers or Tibetan traditions' candidates involved this time.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

All of the candidates accepted for Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Ordination had strong Theravada connections and leanings. They were mostly from Theravada traditions of Sri Lanka and Nepal. There was also one applicant accepted for bhikkhuni ordination born in the United States, who had been in Europe, and India, and then training with the Korea Bhikkhuni Sangha with a leading bhikkhuni teacher and ordination master, aiming to fully ordain.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

The Sri Lankan candidate had already been a 10-precept nun for more than ten years, and the Nepali candidate had already been an 8-precept anagarika for several years as well. For the American candidate, it was four years since she had undertaken nissaya and pabbajja with her Korean bhikkhuni mentor and two years since Samaneri Ordination; all told it had been nearly ten years as an anagarika, ten-preceptor, and samaneri.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Story telling. While in Korea, shortly after her Samaneri Ordination, the American was sent by her Bhikkhuni mentor to Seoul to study at the Lotus Lantern International Buddhist Center, which was running international Dharma Teacher training programs. Lotus Lantern had a strong connection with Amaravati Monastery in England. While there she had the opportunity to meet teachers of and study the teachings of the Thai forest traditions of Ajahn Chah and Ajahn Maha Bua.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

While she was at Lotus Lantern in Seoul, Kusuma Devendra (late Bhikkhuni Kusuma) and Ranjani de Silva of Sakyadhita Sri Lanka came to Korea to study the Korean Dharmaguptaka tradition Vinaya with a Korean bhikkhuni mentor, who had studied in Sri Lanka. They had connections with the Maha Bodhi Society of India (MBSI), and a plan was developed, with Korean, Sri Lankan and MBSI support, for the 1996 Bhikkhuni Ordination in Sarnath. (We learned about this last year. Please see our UTBSI YouTube to learn more.)

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

In brief, this had emerged out of Korean bhikkhunis’ participation in the Sakyadhita Sri Lanka Conference in 1993 and the following Sakyadhita Conference in 1995 in Ladakh with Sakyadhita Sri Lanka president Ranjani de Silva then serving as president of Sakyadhita International. National Korean Bhikkhuni Association presidents pledged support for the Sri Lankan bhikkhuni revival, together with the Korean bhikkhuni delegate to the World Buddhist Sangha Council.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

With her Bhikkhuni mentor, an executive member of the Korean Bhikkhuni Association, the American samaneri went to visit the Bhikkhuni temple where the Sri Lankan ladies with Sakyadhita were studying Vinaya. The samaneri asked her Korean bhikkhuni mentor if she could join in this Bhikkhuni Ordination in Sarnath, but this was deemed not suitable, as it was organized for Sri Lankans; and because she had already made a training commitment in Korea with her Korean bhikkhuni mentor.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

For context, at that time, the 1998 International Bhikkhuni Ordination in Bodhgaya was still far away, and there had not yet been any international bhikkhuni ordinations in Sri Lanka (those began later in 2002 and 2003). So the American Samaneri planned to keep her training and ordination commitment with her Korean bhikkhuni mentor. But destiny was to intervene.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

For, not long afterwards, her application for Buddhist study visa renewal in Korea was denied, and she was sent back to her home country, losing her Bhikkhuni mentor and community, her plans for bhikkhuni ordination in Korea dashed.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

With the Korean Sangha in the US she found shelter, but there were no opportunities for bhikkhuni training there. Ayya Khema and Ayya Dhamma (ordained in 1988) had returned to Germany. American Bhikkhuni Dharmapali (also ordained in 1988) had disrobed. She had lost her Bhikkhuni teacher and community, and became a lone, lost samaneri, like a refugee in her own home country. What to do?

She took refuge in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Encouraged to attend the Western Buddhist Monastic Conference in Northern California, she met other western Buddhist monastics struggling to make their way in the US, including pioneering bhikkhus of the Ajahn Chah tradition (very encouraging!), and siladharas (also with ordination issues). It was at the end of this Conference that a very special announcement was made—

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

It was announced that applications were to be opened up to those Buddhist monastic women more than five years in robes, who aspired to full Bhikkhuni ordination. Could it be possible? Her Korean senior venerable Bhikkhuni mentor and her abbot gave their letters of recommendation, and the American samaneri’s application for the ordination training program was accepted.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

The program was one month; the training consisting of three weeks of preparatory instruction, practice and examinations, followed by one week of post-ordination training. Theravada Bhikkhu teachers including Venerable Dr Havanpola Ratanasara gave regular teachings, with Venerable Havanpola Shanti giving practice instruction. Bhikkhunis of Vietnamese traditions gave hands-on instruction and examination, with participation from local Korean bhikkhunis as well.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Just as the ordination training program was beginning, word came that Ayya Khema had passed away. She had lived with cancer for eight years.

It was Nov 2, 1997.

Ayya Khema was a Sakyadhita Founder, and with Ven. Karuna Dharma had been active in Sakyadhita USA. She was a great luminary and exemplar. The ordination training teachings and practice were dedicated to her.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Serving as chief organizer Ven Karuna Dharma’s second assistant, day by day, the American samaneri went with Ven. Karuna Dharma for in-person visits to the places of all the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Sangha around LA, to introduce the ordination to them and request and invite their participation. They visited LA’s Sri Lankan and Thai temples, and also the Korean temples. The count of supporting and participating Sangha steadily increased.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Ven. Dr. Havanpola Ratanasara, chief Sangha Nayaka for Syamopalivamsa Malwattu chapter would serve as Bhikkhu Upajjhaya, with Ven. Havanpola Shanti as Kammavacacariya (+2). At Los Angeles Buddhist Vihara, most venerable Ahangama Dhammarama, the Chief Sangha Nayaka for the Sri Lankan Amarapura Nikaya Dhammarakshita chapter, accepted invitation to join as Vice-Upajjhaya/Anusavanacariya with another supporting bhikkhu from the LA Buddhist Vihara (+2 => 4).

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

At the Dharma Vinaya Buddhist Vihara, the Venerable Bhikkhu sangha in residence pledged their attendance (+5 => 9). At Wat Thai LA, the senior abbot, Phra Dhammarajanuwat, known as “Luang Tia,” offered his blessings, and promised four bhikkhus from Wat Thai LA (+4 = 13). Two more bhikkhus from Thai Forest Monastery and Wat Lao Buddha later also promised to join (+2 => 15), totaling 15 members of the Venerable Theravada Bhikkhu Sangha of the Sri Lankan Syamopalivamsa and Amarapuraniyaya, and Thai Siam Upali Vamsa (Mahanikaya) traditions.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Six leading members of the Korean Bhikkhu sangha gave their blessings and promised to join as witnessing masters, as well as 2 bhikkhunis. Five bhikkhunis ordained in the Vietnamese Dharmaguptaka Lam Te tradition also gave their blessings and pledged to join, preparing to be the ordaining Bhikkhuni sangha.

However, (a lesson to all organizers) then one Vietnamese bhikkhuni and one Korean bhikkhuni cancelled. Only five were then confirmed, the bare minimum.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Bhante Ratanasara’s health was failing. He faithfully kept up teaching the candidates, while lying down on a reclining chair, face pale, short of breath. His dedication and care for the Sangha was great. But his diabetes and other aged health conditions were pressing in. All felt the urgency of anicca in the training. It was uncertain whether he would be able to join the ordination or not.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

On the day of the ordination, Bhante Ratanasara was up! The line of the processing Sangha into the Ananda Sima hall was long and radiant. In the hall, the senior leading members of the Theravada Bhikkhu Sangha were seated in front on the viewer’s left side (right hand of the Buddha) with officiants foremost, and the members of Vietnamese Bhikkhuni Sangha front and right. The four bhikkhu-bhikkhuni higher ordination candidates (one bhikkhu and three bhikkhunis) were front and center.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Around 200 assembled members of the Sangha, Buddhist teachers, and attending well wishers were gathered. When all settled, it was noticed there was one empty seat in the front right in the Bhikkhuni Sangha section. The bhikkhunis were counted, and came up one short. The missing bhikkhuni was called on mobile; sick with terrible flu, she apologized, asking to give her blessings (*chanda*) to go ahead without her.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)

Bhante Ratanasara noted to all that the minimum in-person quorum outside the Indian Majjhadesa was five, even though the missing bhikkhuni gave her *chanda* in-person to another bhikkhuni who quickly went to visit her, two blocks away.

At the same time, more quick calls were made; no other bhikkhunis were available in the area. Once again, it seemed for a moment like everything was going to fall apart, hopes and dreams, all the effort, training and preparations... Samsara is so unreliable.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)

Then Bhante Ratanasara begin to speak out strongly and clearly to the assembly. This was noteworthy, as his health had recently been terribly poor, and his voice had not been strong.

“**Anujanami Bhikkhave, Bhikkhuhi bhikkhuniyo upasampadetun’ti,**” —

“Bhikkhus, I allow you to ordain Bhikkhunis.”

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Bhante Ratanasara then explained to the assembly that these canonical words were originally the Buddha’s injunction to the Bhikkhu Sangha, and that Bhikkhuni teachers were later called upon to give aspirants examination in sensitive matters; so “Dual Ordination” arose. He noted that the Bhikkhuni sangha over the past weeks had already given full instruction and exam to the female candidates; now it was merely a formality to confirm.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

He asked the assembled Bhikkhunis to formally confirm; and said then that the Bhikkhuni ordination candidates would also go through the full ordination procedure after that, with the Bhikkhu Sangha—together with and just like the Bhikkhu ordination candidate.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

The three Bhikkhuni candidates were asked to learn the correct answers to the Pali-text exam very quickly, immediately, in one instruction.

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Bhante Ratanasara then also noted and asked to consider that some of the most eminent and bright of well-educated masters and scholars, both in Sri Lanka and in Burma, had already recommended from years ago this method he was proposing now being perhaps the best and soundest method to revive the Theravada Bhikkhuni Sangha. Only there was also a wish to respect the existent Bhikkhunis. And the East Asian Sanghas, in gratitude, wished to return the gift of the lineage they had received from Sri Lanka.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Bhante Ratanasara then explained and proposed his understanding that there would be just one Sanghakamma by the Bhikkhu Sangha; because, while 4 bhikkhus, or 4 bhikkhunis together could not be ordained together with one Kamma (3 is the limit); this would be 1 bhikkhu and 3 bhikkhunis, not surpassing the limit, not ordaining a bhikkhu sangha, nor ordaining a bhikkhuni sangha. Such was Bhante’s deep, vast and quick Vinaya knowledge. The American samaneri felt such admiration arise in her heart, she aspired to learn and gain such ready knowledge herself.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Six of the Theravada Bhikkhus present were Mahatheras, and another six were Theras. The numbers allowed to be ordained together was familiar to them. They nodded, considered, discussed briefly, and then agreed. The procedure now agreed upon was further clarified: first there would be Pabbajja and Samanera/Samaneri Sikkha again, per the Sri Lankan method. Then exam with the Bhikkhunis for the women candidates; then the full procedure of Upasampada for all four candidates with the Bhikkhu Sangha.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

There was consensus. It was agreed.  
It was announced: “the Sangha is in Harmony.”

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

During the Sanghakamma and the Admonition it seemed as if the whole hall was thundering and roaring, resounding with good energy, as if deva drums and trumpets were sounding.

And so it came to be that—

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Fully Ordained on 22 November 1997 in the Ananda Sima Hall at International Buddhist Meditation Center were:

- Ven. Bhikkhu Parakande Ariya Prabuddhi from Sri Lanka
- Ven. Bhikkhuni Mahagoda Sumettha from Sri Lanka
- Ven. Bhikkhuni Sakiyani Tathaloka from USA
- Ven. Bhikkhuni Ruja Karuna from Nepal

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)

Name given by Korean venerable Bhikkhuni mentor:

釋如光 => Sākiyāṇī Tathā-ālokā => Bhikkhunī Tathālokā

釋如光 Korean pronunciation: Sok Yeo Kwang -> Yeokwang

釋如光 Vietnamese pronunciation: Thich-nu Nhu Quang

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

The instructing and examining Bhikkhunis (*sans quorum*) were:

- Ven. Bhiksuni Myeong Seong Sunim (*not present, recommending master*)
- Ven. Bhiksuni Dr. Thich An Tu Karuna Dharma (principle organizer)
- Ven. Bhiksuni Thich-nu Ayya Chan Nhu (Bhikkhuni Vinaya trainer and lead Vinaya instructor)
- Ven. Bhiksuni Gesshin Myoko Thich Minh Phap Prabhasa Dharma (bhikkhuni examiner)
- Ven. Bhiksuni Thich-nu Dieu Ngoc
- Ven. Bhiksuni Sok In-Kwong Sunim (*not present, joined in pre-ordination training and examination, and gave chanda*)

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

The Ordaining Bhikkhu Sangha were:

- Ven. Havanapola Ratanasara Nayaka Mahathero, as Upajjhaya
  - Ven. Rajkeeya Pandita Ahangama Dhammarama Nayaka Mahathero, as Vice-Upajjhaya/Anusavanacariya
  - Ven. Havanpola Shanti Thero as Kammacariya/Kammavacacariya
- Ven. Phra Raj Dhamma Videsa Mahathero, Ven. Pallewela Rahula Mahathero, Ven. Phrakru Settakic Samahito Mahathero, Ven. Walpola Piyananda Mahathero, Ven. Phramaha Boonleu Vachiramedi Thero, Ven. Alawala Subhuthi Thero, Ven. Nawala Lakkhana Thero, Ven. Koppakande Sumanajothi Thero, Ven. Phramaha San Sudtamedi Thero, plus several more...

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

The Witnessing Korean Bhikkhu Sangha were:

- Ven. Sok Do An Sunim
- Ven. Sok Mun Su Sunim
- Ven. Sok Ji Hwan Sunim
- Ven. Sok Seong Mu Sunim
- Ven. Sok Hyun Cheol Sunim
- Ven. Sok Ji Eom Sunim

Witnessing Vietnamese-tradition Bhikkhus:

- Ven. Thich Tam-Tue Tri Ratna Priya Karuna
- Ven. Thich Tam-Thien Kusala Ratna Karuna

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Because what happened on the day was somewhat different than what was planned, the printed programs, and the ordination certificates printed at the printer beforehand, could not accurately reflect what occurred. So, later corrected certificates were made to serve in lieu of the originals.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage

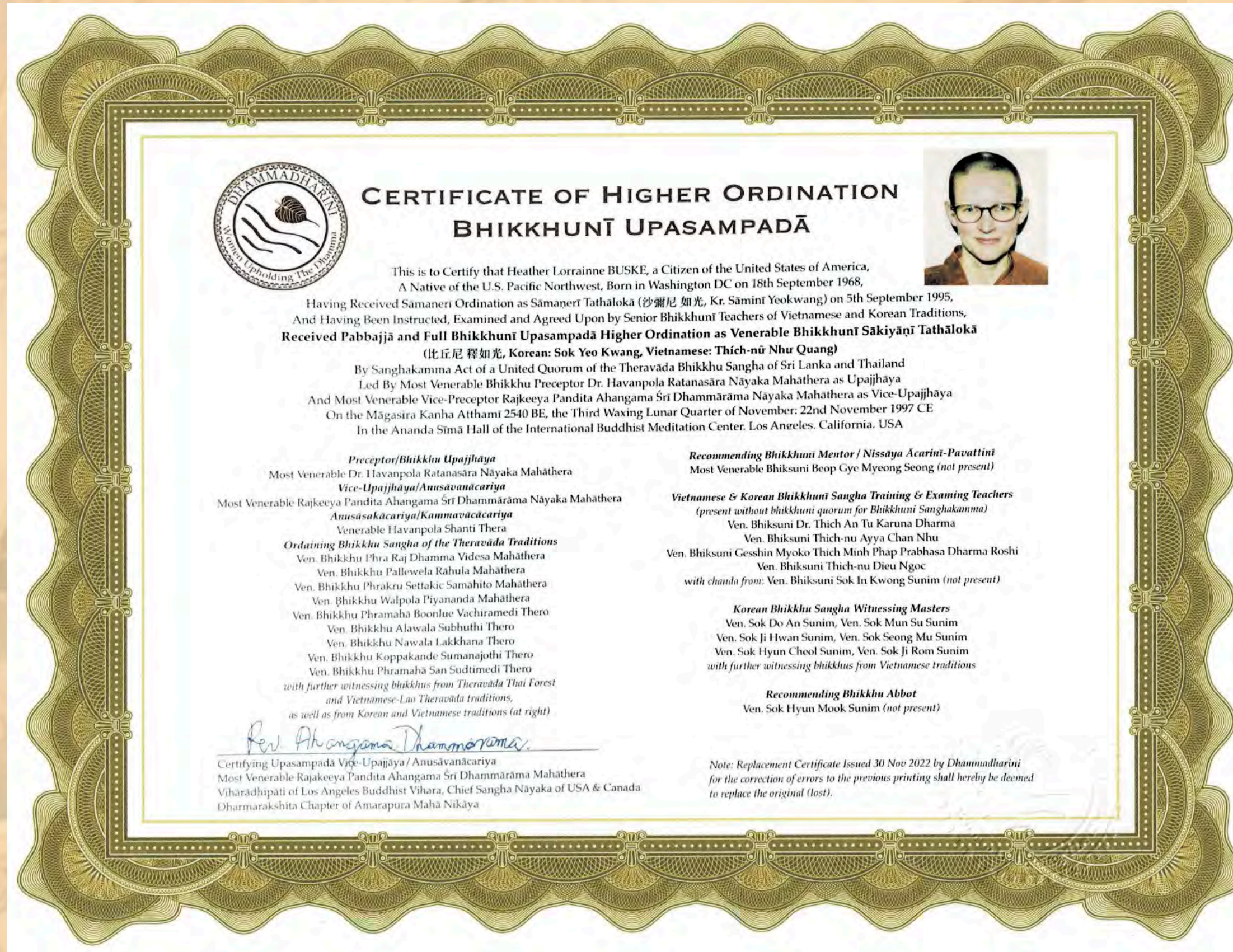




# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)



Example:  
Reissued Corrected  
Ordination Certificate  
for Nov 22, 1997  
Bhikkhuni Ordination  
at International  
Buddhist Meditation  
Center LA

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

As far as it is known to the speaker, this was the first contemporary recorded occasion where the Theravada Bhikkhu Sangha used the ancient injunction of the Buddha, recommended by highly-knowledgeable great masters of the twentieth century\* to give Theravada Bhikkhuni Ordination by the Theravada Bhikkhu Sangha.

\*A prominent example noted by Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi was the Mingun Jetawan Sayadawgyi, the teacher of Mindfulness and Vipassana Master Mahasi Sayadaw

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# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

## PHOTOS

Noting, when I returned to Asia after completing my basic post-upasampada training, I travelled light, and left my big album of ordination photos behind at the hermitage where I'd stayed for 3 years retreat. All that now remains are scans of a few very poor quality photocopies of photocopies, which were included in the photo copy of a visa application. These are shared here as noted, together with similar equivalent representative photos from other year's IBMC ordinations to be able to see and understand more easefully.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage



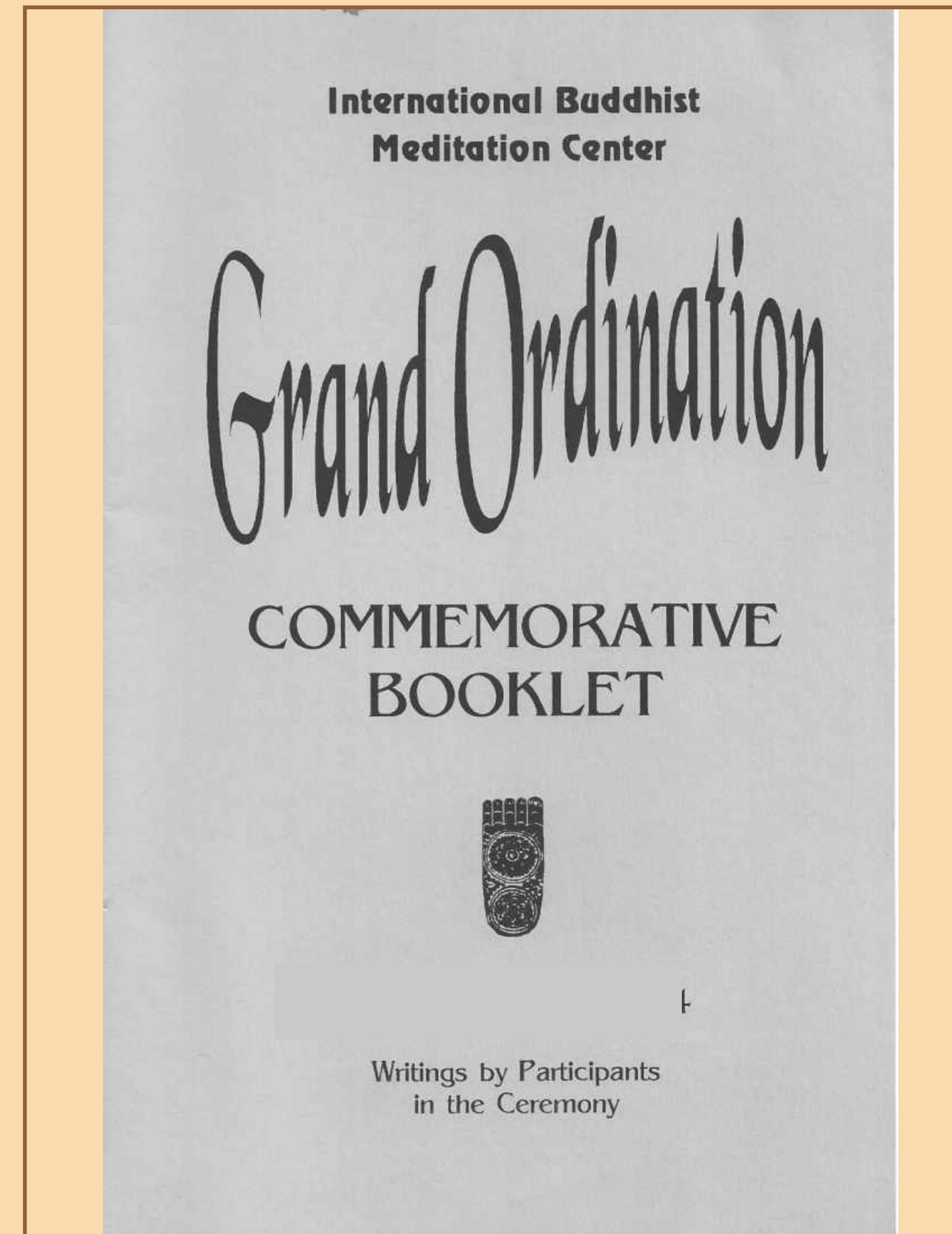


# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

International Buddhist  
Meditation Center  
Grand Ordination (different date)  
**COMMEMORATIVE BOOKLET**  
[Buddha footprint]  
Writings by Participants  
In The Ceremony



Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Welcome To The  
**GRAND ORDINATION**  
International Buddhist  
Meditation Center  
Los Angeles  
(different date)



Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage



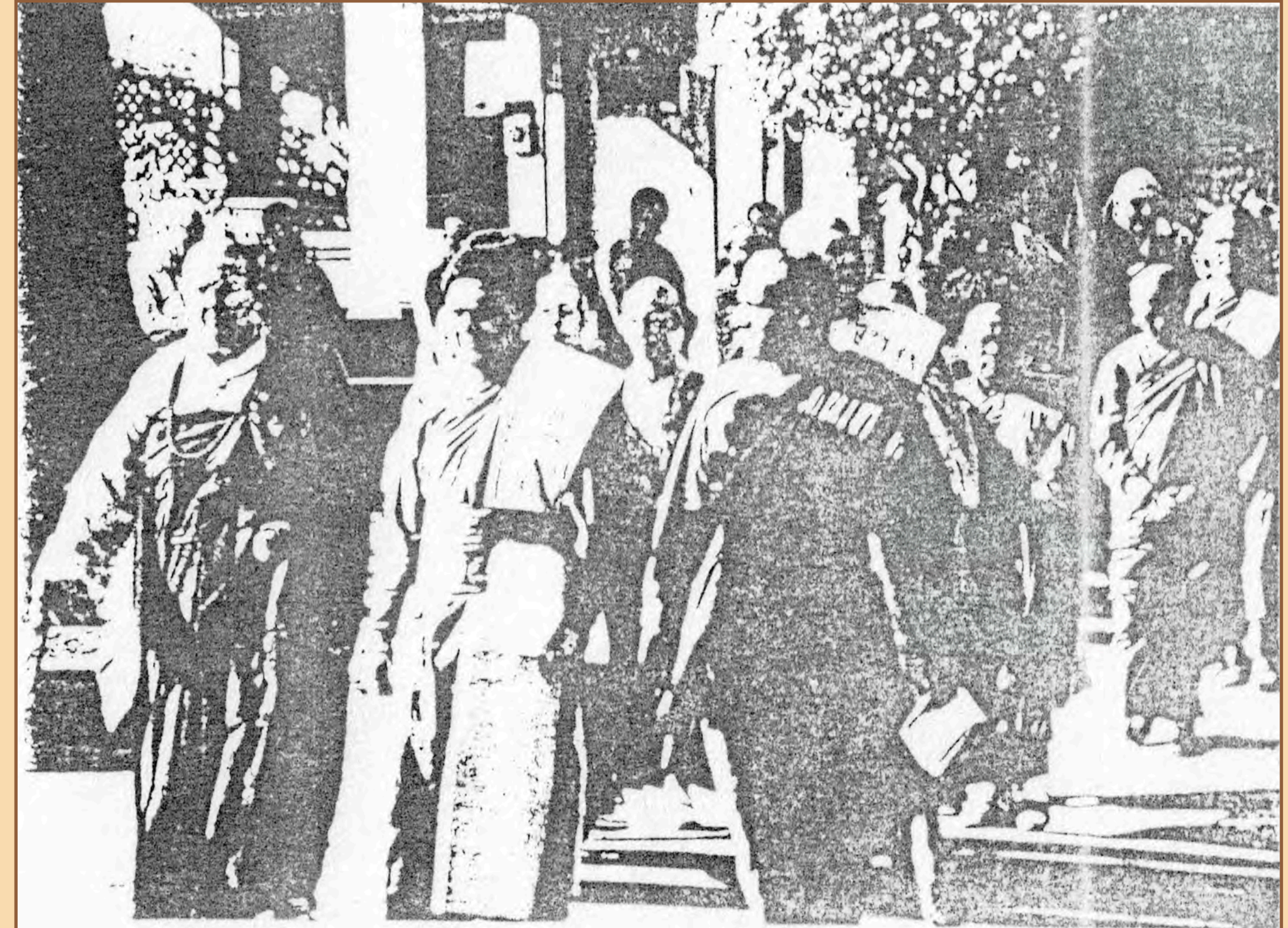


# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Sangha Procession at IBMC  
to the Ananda Sima Hall  
Nov 22nd 1997 (2540 BE)  
Center: Ven. Havanpola  
Ratanasara Sangha Nayaka Thero  
Left: Ven. Karuna Dharma  
Right: Ven Havanpola Shanti  
Behind/Right: Theravada Sangha



Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Grand Ordination (different date)

Sangha Procession to the Ananda Sima Hall

Right: Ven. Havanpola Ratanasara Sangha

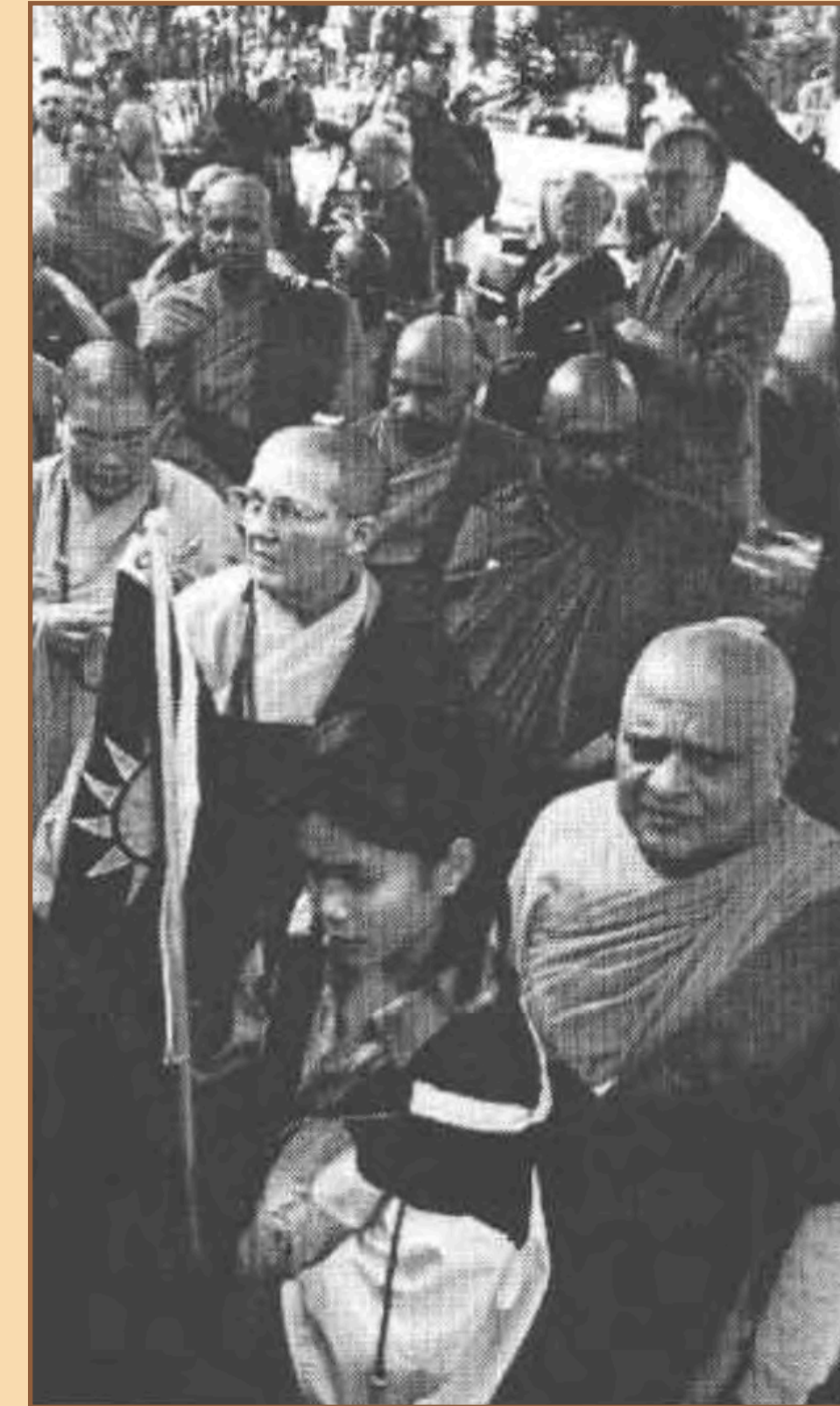
Nayaka Thero

Left: Ven. Karuna Dharma

Center/behind: Ven. Ahangama Dhammarama

Sangha Nayaka Thero, followed by

Theravada Bhikkhu Sangha



Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Ananda Sima Hall Nov 22, 1997/2540  
—with Bhikkhuni Instructors  
Candidates receiving instruction in  
the Requisites from Bhikkhuni Vinaya  
Instructor Ven. Bhiksuni Ayya Thich-nu  
Chan Nhu (center), Ven. Bhiksuni  
Karuna Dharma watching (left).  
Venerable Bhikkhu Sangha observing  
(behind, left)



Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**



Grand Ordination (different date)

Ananda Sima Hall

Bhikkhuni Teachers

& Instructors

Left: (late) Ven. Karuna Dharma

Center: Vietnamese Bhikkhuni

Right: Korean Bhikkhuni Sok In-Kwong

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Ananda Sima Hall Nov 22, 1997  
Ven. Havanpola Shanti giving  
instruction in the requisites, with  
assistance from bhikkhuni  
instructors (left), Ven. Tathaloka  
(center behind), Ven. Mahagoda  
Sumettha (center right), Ven. Ruja  
Karuna (right)



Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**



*Ven. Havanpola Shanti guiding the ordainees' participation in the ceremony.*

IBMC Ananda Sima Hall  
“Ven. Havanpola Shanti  
Guiding the ordinees  
participation in the ceremony”  
as Kammacariya/  
Kammavacacariya  
(different date)

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Ananda Sima Hall Nov 22nd 1997

—with Bhikkhu Sangha

Left side/center right front:

Ven. Havanpola Ratanasara Mahathero

Left side/center:

Ven. Ahangama Dhammarama Mahathero

Left side front left:

Phra Raj Dhamma Videsa Mahathero

Front/center: Ven. Bhikkhuni Mahagoda

Sumettha from Sri Lanka



Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage

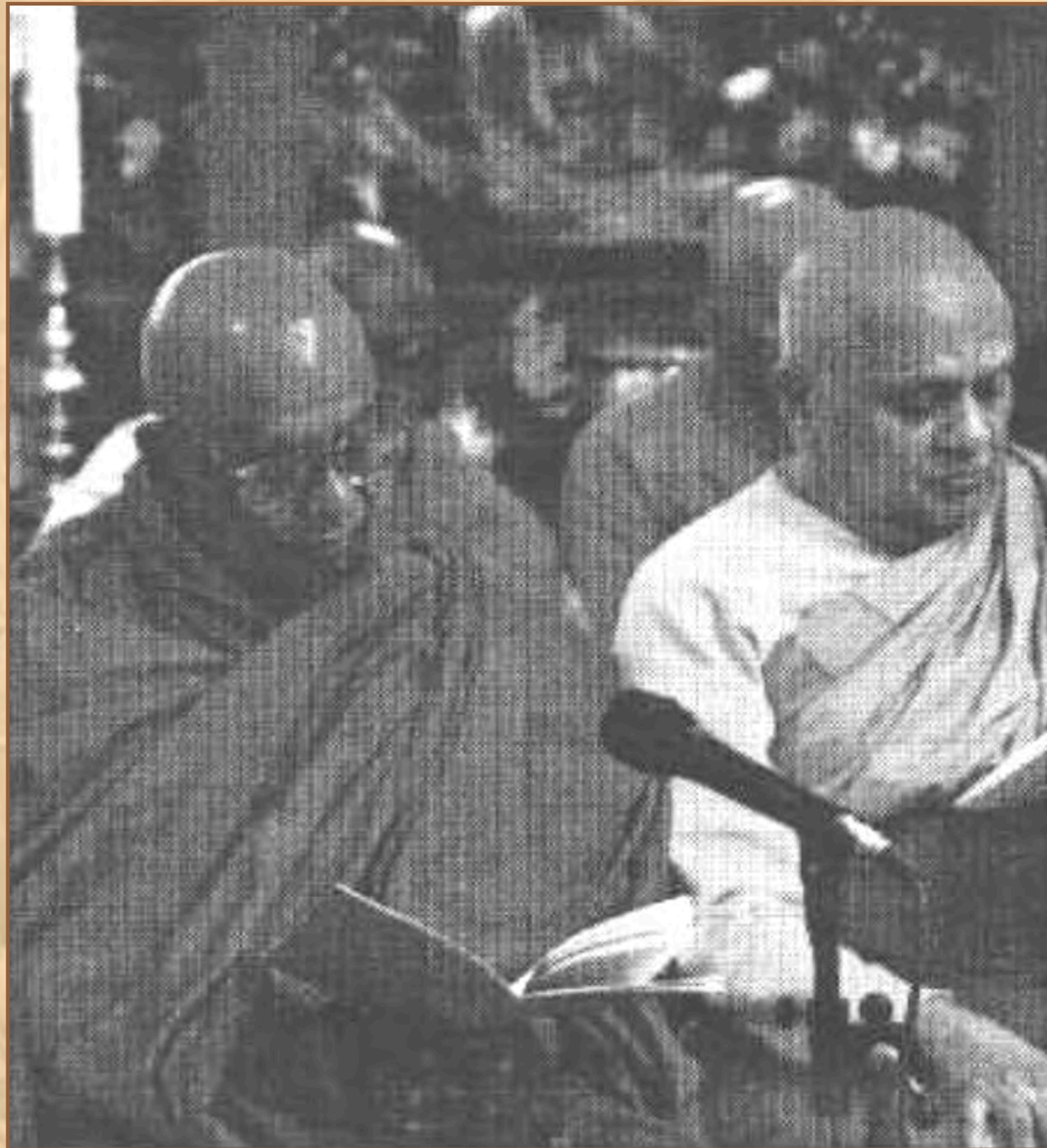




# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**



Grand Ordination (different date)

In the Ananda Sima Hall at IBMC

Right: Ven. Havanpola Ratanasara Sangha  
Nayaka Thero

Left: Ven. Ahangama Dhammarama Sangha  
Nayaka Thero, giving the Anusavana

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage

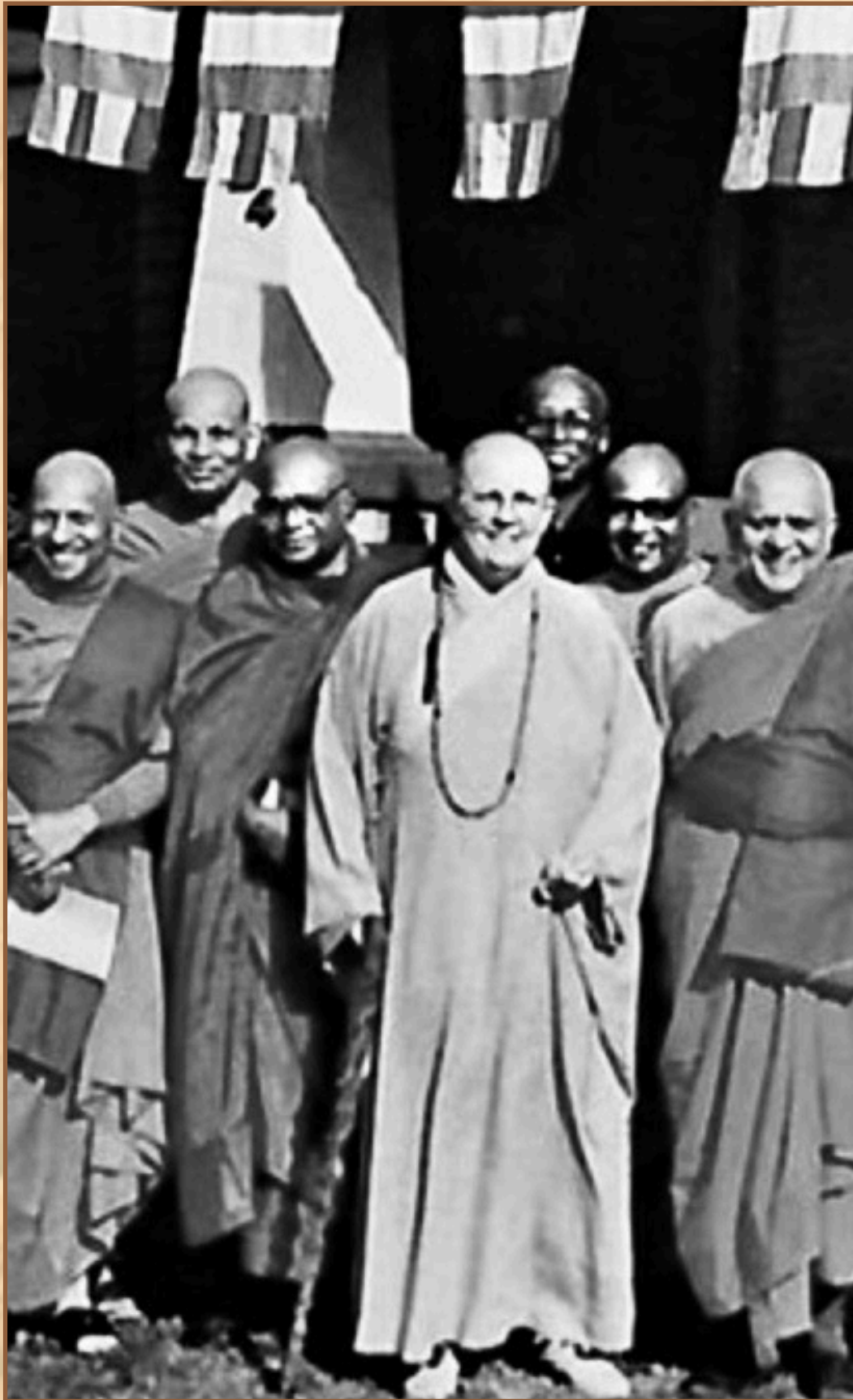




# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**



After Grand Ordination (different date)  
Right: Ven. Havanpola Ratanasara Sangha  
Nayaka Thero  
Left: Ven. Ahangama Dhammarama Sangha  
Nayaka Thero  
Center: Ven. Karuna Dharma  
Behind and All Around: Bhikkhu Sangha

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022

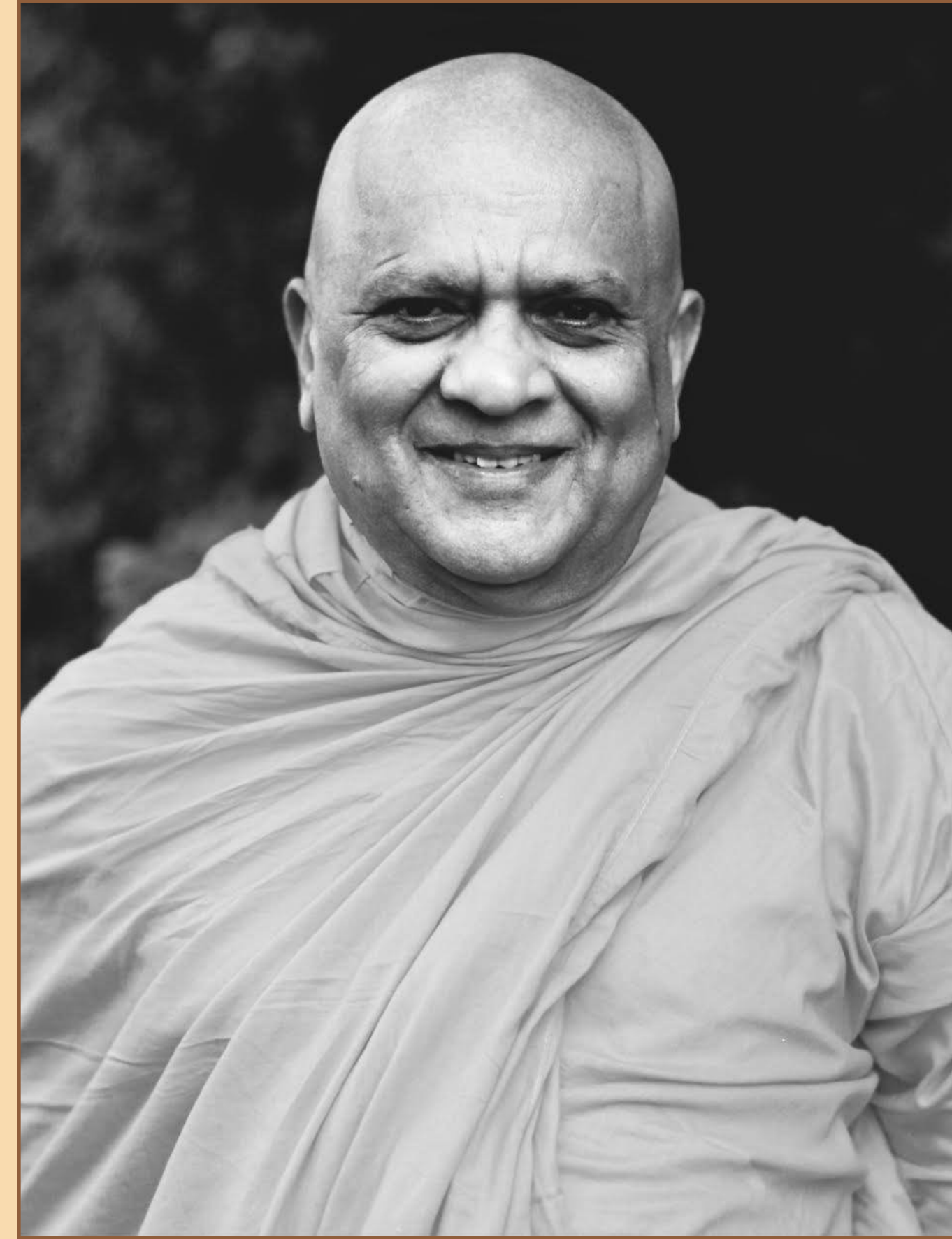


“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)



In Commemoration  
Most Venerable Bhikkhu Upajjhaya  
Dr. Havanpola Ratanasara Nayaka  
Maha Thero

d. May 26, 2000, age 80 



Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage

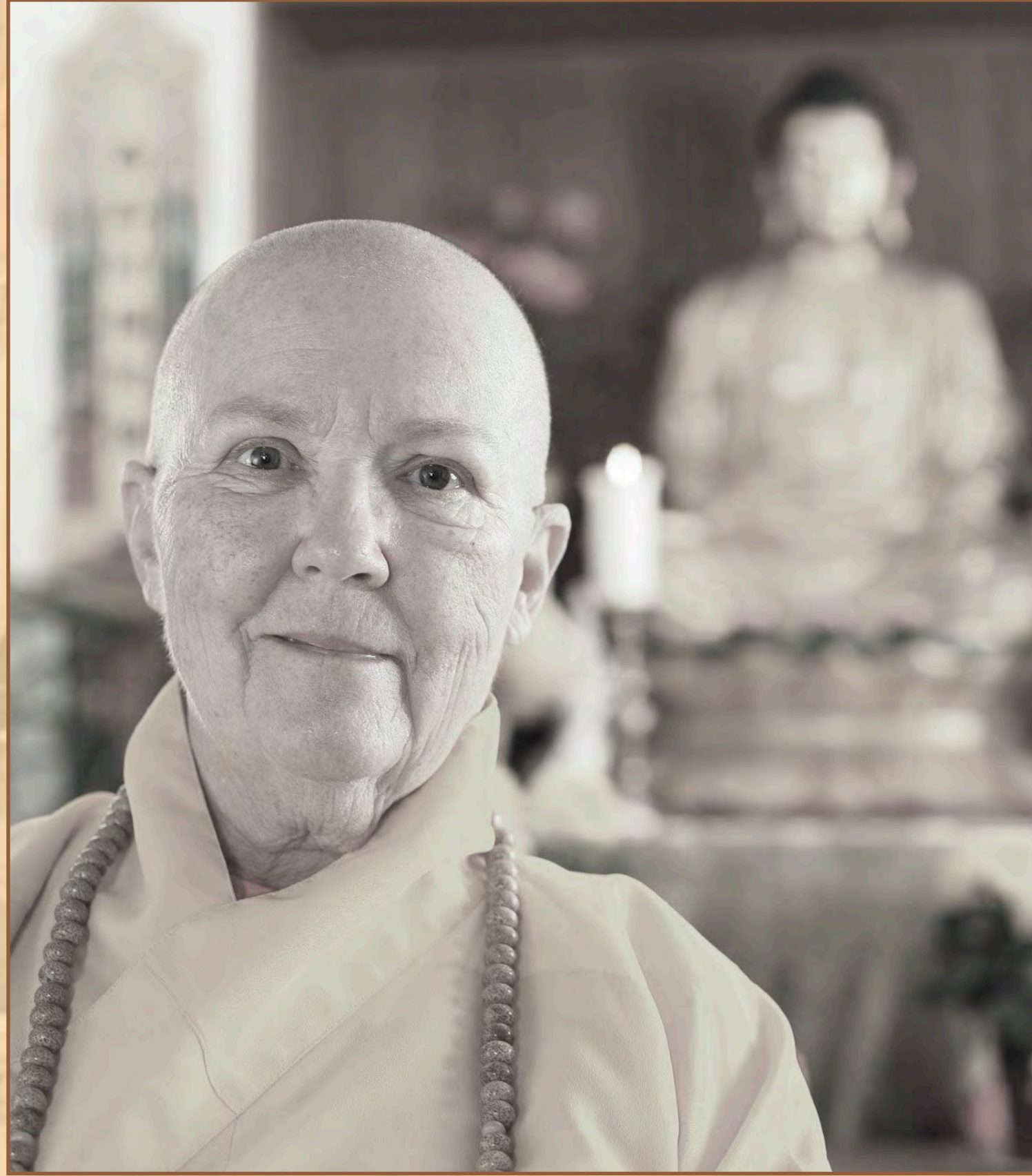




# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**



In Commemoration  
1997 Bhikkhu-Bhikkhuni  
Upasampada Ordination  
Chief Organizer  
Ven. Thich-nu An Tu Karuna Dharma  
d. Feb 22, 2014, age 73



Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**



Gratitude to Vice-Upajjhaya Most Ven Ahangama Dhammarama (now age 97, oldest Theravada monk in North America), IBMC and all my venerable ordaining Sangha

~

Photos paying respects to Bhante Dhammarama and with Ven Shanti at Ven Karuna Dharma's Memorial in 2014



Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)



🌸 Gratitude to late “Luang Tia”  
Phra Dhammarajanuwat 🌸

and to Phra Raj Dhamma Vides,  
now Phra Thepmongkolvides (now  
age 90, senior most Thai monk in  
America), and to the monks from  
Wat Thai LA

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

Historical Review. Only 3 months later, the 1998 Bodhgaya Bhikkhuni Ordination would be held. During the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya tradition dual ordination, numerous leading international Theravada bhikkhus served as teaching and training instructors and also joined as witnessing masters. Directly afterwards, international Theravada bhikkhu sangha used the dalhikamma method for 31 of the 1996 Sarnath- and 1998 Bodhgaya-ordained Sri Lankan bhikkhunis, formally converting them to the Theravada Pali-text communion.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

It would only be a few months later in 1998 that the ancient practice of all Theravada Dual Bhikkhuni Ordination would be revived in Sri Lanka, now practiced regularly once again for the past —*nearly as of this presentation*—25 years since then.

We will learn more about this with UTBSI during the 25-year anniversary in 2023.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

I hope this talk has been educational and informative. It is my opinion that the resurrected Theravada Bhikkhuni Sangha is well founded, when we see how the means evolved step by step leading up to the contemporary traditional method of all-Theravada Dual Ordination.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**

For discussion. If interested and keen-minded individuals have access to clear and proper information to be able to discuss, study, contemplate and consider, worthy discussions may be had, and greater understanding reached.

This will be a boon and merit for the regeneration of the Sangha structure envisioned and established by the Buddha, to be optimally conducive, all working together fully empowered and enabled, with the best supports the Sangha is meant for and able to offer.

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination” 25th Anniversary (1997-2022)**



Gratitude first and last to the Buddha and the Dhamma, to Sanghamitta Theri, Anula Tissa Theri and all the Arahant Sangha, to all noble Kalyanamittas, and to all benefactors who have supported practicing in this noble way.





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



“The Importance of Bhikkhuni Sangha Existence”

Full Moon December 7th & 8th 2022CE/2565BE

**THE END**

**“The 1997 Bhikkhuni Ordination”**

**25th Anniversary**

**(1997-2022)**



Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage





# Sanghamitta Day 2566 BE/2022



“The Importance of Bhikkhuni Sangha Existence”

Full Moon December 7th & 8th 2022CE/2565BE

Thank you for your patient listening!

**Ciram Tittthatu Buddha Sasana**

May the Dhamma wheel long turn  
and the Buddha Sasana last long

Speaker: Ven. Bhikkhuni Tathaloka Mahatheri, UTBSI Coordinator of Bhikkhuni History & Heritage