

Sakyadhita

International Association of Buddhist Women

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Participants of the 13th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women at the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhgaya, India.

EIGHT DAYS IN THE LAND OF THE BUDDHA

by Judith Macdonald

In all the world's religions, to go on pilgrimage to a sacred site or shrine is considered to be an important part of one's spiritual development. When it was announced that the 13th Sakyadhita Conference was to be held in Vaishali, India, followed by a tour of the Buddhist sites, the opportunity spoke strongly to me. Vaishali, the place where the Buddha ordained Mahapajapati, the founder of the *bhikkuni* order, was a significant draw.

With the company of Helen and Laila from the BSV lay sangha in Australia it was time to test my strength – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual – and journey to the places that are the origins of the teachings and the practice I have been following for 25 years. Inherent in the concept of pilgrimage is some degree of hardship, at all levels. Think of the images we have of Hindu *sadhus* or of the modern-day Hajj. This was not something to be embarked upon lightly.

Shored up with a medical kit for every possibility and my fears tied up in a saffron kerchief, I set off. Boarding my connecting flight in Kuala Lumpur, I received an auspicious omen: I was seated beside a representative of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile and a Buddhist monk. I felt safe and confident and it was the fastest flight I have ever had.

The power of place is a mysterious thing. Countless visits by devoted pilgrims over hundreds of years seem to imbue a place with something special. A numinous quality arises from the sheer power of experiences that have taken place there: birth, enlightenment, teachings, and the death of an enlightened being. I was going to find out for myself. My guide for this was a wise quotation: "See pilgrimage as more than an itinerary – rather, a slow accretion of details."

Solitude is a rare event on pilgrimage, but I found it one afternoon in Vaishali. I skipped the conference program for an afternoon and, in the company of just two other souls, visited the *stupa* where one portion of the Buddha's relics had been excavated. Stillness and a feeling of great peace remained. I lit an incense stick and found my face wet with emotion.

At the Vulture's Peak, I was dragged up the last steep steps by a voice urging me to "Come, come quickly" and a hand that firmly gripped mine. "The Korean nuns are reciting the *Heart of Wisdom*



Judith Macdonald with Kinmauri nuns at Sanghamitra Institute in Bodhgaya.

Sutra,” insisted Karma Lekshe Tsomo, as if she hadn’t already done enough for us all in being a key conference organizer. Space. Light. Emptiness.

Our pilgrimage took us to Nalanda, the wonderfully excavated Buddhist university of the seventh to tenth centuries, the Bamboo Grove, and the Squirrel’s Feeding Place, where squirrels are indeed still feeding. Then on we went to Bodhgaya, the place of Gautama Buddha’s attainment of enlightenment, marked by the Mahabodhi Temple. There is much to visit in Bodhgaya; for instance, the beautiful temples of Thailand, Bhutan, and Japan, each representing the finest of their cultural artistry. A highlight was an audience with the 17th Karmapa – the Dalai Lama’s choice, as opposed to the controversial Chinese selection. Then Karma Lekshe Tsomo invited us for afternoon tea at her Sanghamitra Institute project for young Himalayan nuns. Strong commitment and hard-work is ensuring that young women receive access to education.

Finally, it was time to visit the Mahabodhi Temple. The first impression was of the pressing crowds funneling down toward the entrance to the temple, along with hundreds and hundreds of pilgrims. January is a big pilgrimage month and there had just been a peace ceremony in Bodhgaya. With thousands of others, I circumambulated the temple and the *bodhi* tree. Caught in a sea of humanity, with one consciousness, the individual soon loses her self-consciousness in the repetition of the mantra, the press of bodies, the twirl of the prayer wheel. Three times around and I disengaged from this wheel-in-motion to sit with others at the foot of the *bodhi* tree, slipping easily into a quiet mind and losing all sense of time.

Darkness descended softly. Thousands of tiny lights turned the Mahabodhi Temple and the *bodhi* tree into a fairyland. Across the way on the grass, I saw a dear pilgrim from our group holding a mother dog and her pups. She had joined the group from South India where she works with animal protection and health, and has a natural way with animals. When it was time to go, I paid my respects and left some lotus flowers on the Buddha’s footprints. There was an ambiance of joy, contentment, and, always, peace.

From home, I had brought with me copies of the important *suttas* associated with each place we visited: in Sarnath, the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*; in Savatthi, the *Anapanasati* and *Mangala*

Suttas, and so on. The *Mahaparinibbana Sutta* was a little too long for Kushinagar, so it sufficed to recall the Buddha’s final reminder: “Strive on with diligence!” By bringing to mind and repeating these words of the Buddha in the place they were uttered, I hoped to add one more pebble to the sacredness of each place.

The distances between most of the Buddhist sacred sites are long, entailing many hours in buses bumping over Indian roads, or waiting for hours for visas to Nepal to be processed. One is not in control of what is happening. It is a good time to examine the mind, watch the habitual patterns and negativities that arise, and to look *dukkha* straight in the eye. There are few means to escape or distract oneself, but much to be grateful for: hot running water, clean drinking water, a bed at night, food on our plates. It was good to be reminded that the things we take for granted back home are not the everyday experience of most people in Bihar. The hardships of pilgrimage travel are small and of short duration compared to the lives of those whose lands we passed through.

For me, the Jeta Grove at Savatthi was on a par with Bodhgaya in significance. This was the last stop of our tour. It is often left off pilgrimage itineraries, but the growing number of monasteries being built there attests to a change afoot. The Jeta Grove is a well-kept, large, and pleasant area. The remains of numerous monasteries and artifacts have been excavated there. Ananda’s *bodhi* tree receives much attention, but it is the site of the Gandhakuti, where the Buddha stayed for more than 20 rainy season retreats (*vassa*) and frequently taught that created the deepest impression. We recited the *Mangala Sutta*: “This is the greatest of blessings” – indeed, to have walked in the footsteps of the Buddha, to have seen those places, to have felt their power.

The next time I pick up a *sutta* to read and it begins “When the Blessed One was residing in the Jeta Grove at Savatthi...,” it will no longer be words on a page, but an image, a feeling, a sense of confidence that only having been there myself can produce.



BUDDHIST WOMEN CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORLD 14th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women Yogyakarta, Indonesia, July, 2015

Buddhist women have made many contributions to the spiritual and material well-being of human society. Now they are poised to play an even greater role in shaping a just and peaceful world. The next Sakyadhita conference will highlight the connections between spiritual cultivation, social transformation, and gender justice.

Indonesia is home to some of Asia’s oldest Buddhist cultural monuments, dating back as early as the seventh century. Today, Buddhist communities are found in central Java, Sumatra, Bali, and islands throughout the archipelago. Buddhist cultural elements mix freely with indigenous cultural forms to create a colorful tapestry of sounds, images, and ideas.

We warmly invite you to join this rich Dharma festival in July 2015. Gather together with like-minded friends to celebrate Buddhist women’s potential and envision a more just and

compassionate world. Learn and practice the skills we all need to change ourselves, change the world, and create a healthy future. Visit Borobudur and other stunning cultural legacies – Indonesia's spectacular contributions to our shared Buddhist heritage!



BUDDHISM AND AGEING: IN PRAISE OF AGEING

by Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo

The Lord Buddha described birth, sickness, old age, and death as *dukkha*, or suffering. If we do not die young, we are all going to experience old age and death. Therefore, ageing is a topic that concerns everyone.

In contemporary society, we find a cult of youth and a denial of the natural course of life towards decay and death. Most people hope to keep looking young and beautiful forever. Indeed, beauty is usually associated with youthfulness. So we find countless books and articles on how to keep old age at a distance and stay young forever. But no matter how many facelifts we undergo or how many exercise and diet regimes we submit to, eventually the body will deteriorate and the likelihood of illness will increase. Deterioration is the nature of all conditioned things. Buddhism faces up to the unpalatable facts of life and death. Buddhism even uses these facts as the path itself, as a means to transcend birth and death.

In more traditional societies, the advent of ageing is seen as natural and is not regarded as something to be avoided or denied for as long as possible. Rather, there is an appreciation that having lived for so long there should likewise be a growth of knowledge and understanding. Old age is often equated with wisdom and experience. The older members of the family are accorded respect and often assume roles as councilors and guides. They have an important role to play in society.

Even in the West, there is the archetypal character of the wise old woman (as well as the witch) and most storybook wizards are elderly. In fact, old wrinkled faces with shining eyes full of love and intelligence often display real beauty.

Unfortunately, even though nowadays women over the age of 50 make up the majority of the population, in the modern social order the elderly are increasingly shunted aside, isolated among their senior contemporaries, and ignored by the world around them. Many feel that their useful days are finished and they have no further contribution to make to society. As a result, old age is something to be dreaded and evaded for as long as possible.

So the question is, how do we deal with our inevitable ageing in a way that makes sense of our life? In traditional Buddhist countries, it is the custom that as our children grow up and leave home, as our professional lives wind down, and as our daily activities become more inwardly directed, we can direct more attention to the Dharma and to setting our lives in order so as to be ready for death and future rebirths.

In traditional Buddhist societies, many older people take the eight precepts and pass their time in meditation or other meritorious



Pilgrims and tourists converge at the monumental Borobudur, Indonesia.

activities, such as circumambulating holy objects, making prostrations, chanting, visiting temples, and so on. The Dharma becomes the focus of their lives and they cultivate devotion. In this way, their lives remain meaningful and important, even as the axis of focus shifts.

For women in particular, it often happens that our youth is taken up with acting out the roles that society has determined for us. First, as physical objects of desire we strive to be as attractive and alluring as possible to fulfill male fantasies. Then as wives and mothers, we devote ourselves to nurturing our homes and families. Nowadays, most women also have full-time careers in which they must work hard to keep ahead. Even while enjoying many advantages, women live stress-filled lifestyles designed to meet the expectations of others.

Even in the modern world, however, we see an interesting phenomenon occurring. Many people, especially women, having fulfilled their life's tasks as wives, mothers, and professionals, are now ready to give their attention to more introspective callings such as the arts, the alternative healing professions, psychology, and the study and practice of spiritual paths. Since these women are often highly educated and motivated, they are able to acquire new skills and extend a positive outreach to the society around them. Rather than spending their declining years merely playing golf or watching TV, their inner spiritual world is now given greater prominence.

Awhile back, I met a group of women living in an affluent small town in Florida who were devoting their later years to sincere spiritual practices and philanthropic activities. These women were benefitting not only their own neighborhoods, but also reaching out to people in other cultures and lands. They felt very happy and fulfilled to be using their time for the benefit of others as well as themselves.

It seems that the foremost regret expressed by the dying is, "I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me." By contrast, many people I know have remarked that the latter part of their lives has become even more satisfying and meaningful than their earlier years. Now they can discover their own genuine interests rather than merely conforming to societal expectations. Although they accept that their earlier life experience was necessary for what has developed later, like a tree that grows slowly and only in time can reveal its true characteristics, yet they feel that they have finally found their reason for living.



Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo at the 13th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women held in Vashaili, India in January, 2013.

Of course, most of us would prefer a 25-year-old body, but few would choose to return to our 25-year-old mind! So instead of dreading the approach of old age, despite the unavoidable loss of physical and mental flexibility, we can welcome this new stage of life and explore its potential. We have a choice either to view our ageing as the gradual fading of all our dreams or to regard retirement as the start of a new and exciting era.

As we grow older, we see our contemporaries – our friends and family members – succumbing to illnesses and death, so we are forced to recognize these states as natural and inevitable. As Buddhist women, we have an important part to play in demonstrating an alternative lifestyle that is not so dependent on the usual societal roles and can show the way forward to greater freedom and a more meaningful way of living. Even if our old knees ache too much for sitting cross-legged and health issues slow us down physically, our minds can still be bright and clear. Our meditation can deepen and mature.

Now that we have more time for ourselves, we can select a lifestyle that is meaningful and engaging, exploring spiritual pathways and reaching out in social engagement, thus benefitting ourselves and likewise benefitting others. This is a great opportunity to put the skills acquired over our lifetime to good use. We are reborn to a new life without having to discard the old one!

Many people chose to travel or learn new skills, sports, or crafts once their “official” work and responsibilities come to an end. As Buddhists, the question we can ask ourselves is, “Now that my worldly responsibilities are fulfilled, how can I use this life most practically to be of help to myself and others? What needs to be done to make some more advances on the Dharma path?” Our path need not include long retreats or total immersion in Buddhist community work. There are many ways to develop ourselves and tame our mind. Usually as we grow older, the storms of emotional upheavals have quieted, we have some basic self-understanding, and hopefully our formal practice has also deepened over the years. Now we have the time and space to nurture the *bodhi* saplings of our practice toward fruition and to encourage the *bodhi* tree of realization to reach its full potential.

For many ageing Buddhists, there is also the issue of where to live as our faculties decline. As the family nucleus shrinks and

no longer offers home facilities, many older people, especially in the West but also increasingly in Asian countries, must face the probability of living their later years in a nursing home. To end up surrounded by people and caregivers who have no interest in spiritual matters can be a very gloomy prospect. Therefore, it is time to start talk about starting retirement homes for senior Buddhists – communities not limited to any particular tradition. The main problem is probably financial, since acquiring suitable land and buildings, plus the subsequent upkeep would require considerable investment. However, it would be a very worthwhile endeavor and surely requires more thought and attention. It is important to make good use of our later years, while our faculties are still functioning, even as our physical vigor declines.

Finally, it is up to us to take the life we have been given and make the most of the opportunity to develop our potential. This precious human body is precious because we can use it to cultivate our mind and advance along the path. We can use our remaining days to create the circumstances to die without regrets.

Sometimes as we age, we can become very ill with life-threatening diseases such as cancer or heart problems. This is common. Many people look on the onset of such sicknesses with dread and horror and hope to die quietly in their sleep with no prior warning. However, it is not always an advantage to pass away without any preparation.

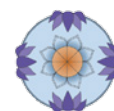
When we recognize in advance that our allotted time here is limited, we have the opportunity to make arrangements for leaving this life in an orderly and satisfactory manner. Knowing that we are truly going to die and that time is running out can help us focus the mind wonderfully on what is important and what is *not* important. People are often *transformed* as they begin to finally let go of attachments and long-held resentments in readiness to pass on.

Facing death gives us a chance to reconcile our differences, repair broken relationships, and allow those whom we hold dear to know that they are loved and appreciated. In the face of our imminent mortality, we have nothing to lose but our hang-ups.

At the point of death, it is best to focus the mind on our personal practice or object of devotion. At least we can try to concentrate on light and absorb our minds in that. Friends and loved ones surrounding a dying person should remain calm and supportive, not giving way to grief, but perhaps gently chanting something appropriate.

On the whole, if one has led a fairly decent life, and especially if one has made some effort to merge the Dharma with one’s mind, then death holds no fears. The consciousness will follow along its accustomed path. So it is vital to make sure, while we still have some control over our thoughts and emotions, that this will be a pathway we would wish to travel.

As Professor Dumbledore advised young Harry Potter, “For one with a well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure.”



OPENING THE DOORS: FRESH VOICES OF TRANSFORMATION

Interview by Raymond Lam for BuddhistDoor

Bhiksuni Karma Lekshe Tsomo is the past president and conference coordinator of Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women. In this series of questions with BuddhistDoor, she reflects on some key issues about Buddhist women and the long road ahead.

B: My interest has always been how Buddhism can empower and transform women, and how women can in turn empower and transform women. I want to see this virtuous cycle happen because I can see that many old institutions – once run exclusively for men, most of them still run by men – need a fresh voice that can bring people back to Buddhism and grow all three traditions. Do you think this is still a fair charge to make or are we seeing genuine, if slow, progress across the board?

KLT: Change is gradually happening, but Buddhist institutions are still run almost exclusively by men. As an ancient tradition struggling to survive under very different social conditions and faced by intensive conversion attempts in many countries, Buddhism needs to utilize all of its human resources, especially women. Overall, women have proven themselves to be competent, honest, and enthusiastic about preserving Buddhist traditions, though their contributions have rarely been acknowledged. Buddhists who truly care about social transformation and spiritual development can no longer ignore women's potential to contribute greatly to the flourishing of the Dharma.

If Buddhists in more affluent countries understand the serious problems that Buddhists in less fortunate countries face, hopefully, they will generate compassion and find ways to help their Buddhist sisters and brothers, especially sisters. When Buddhists from affluent countries go on pilgrimages, they donate generously to monks and monks' projects, but rarely do they visit or even know or care about Buddhist women's projects. The image of the saffron-robed monk has a very powerful allure in the minds of most Buddhists. The image of spiritual power is almost always male and, as a result, financial support and encouragement flow almost exclusively to male monastics. With such unequal support for monks and nuns, the disparities between the circumstances of male and female monastics grow increasingly acute with each passing year.

In secular society throughout the world, gender equity is the buzzword. But in Buddhist circles, conference speakers and institutional leadership remain almost exclusively male. This syndrome works to disadvantage women. In view of the current global ethic of gender equality, some Buddhist societies appear extremely backward. We find a great contrast between Taiwan, Korea, and Vietnam, where Buddhist women enjoy educational opportunities, strong lay support, and full ordination, and other countries where women are making little progress. The contrast appears to turn on access to full ordination for women.

B: 2013 marks the 13th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women. Was there anything different about it from the previous twelve (thematically, demographically, etc.)?

KLT: The theme "Buddhism at the Grassroots" focused attention on the living conditions and current projects of Buddhist women in many different countries. With more than 600 participants from 32 countries, we had wide representation from Buddhists of different communities and had a chance to get updates on the wonderful work that Buddhist women are doing around the world. For the first time, we had participants from Turkey and Estonia, and learned about Buddhist women in China. Bhiksuni Guo Xuan, an abbess from Xian, estimated that there are currently 80,000 *bhikkhunis* in China, more than the number of *bhikkhunis* in Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and other countries combined.

Located in India, the conference had a large number of local participants, especially from Maharashtra and various Himalayan regions. For the first time, we had speakers from Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. This conference was unique in including a number of video presentations on topics as diverse as the roots of gender discrimination, the lives of Korean nuns, and the work of B. R. Ambedkar for the advancement of women and the lower castes. The conference demonstrated Buddhist women's environmental awareness on a grassroots level by not using disposable utensils.

Afternoon workshops allowed participants to share their experience one-to-one and performances by the Tara Dancers afforded insight into contemporary Buddhist creative expressions. One hundred compassionate volunteers flew in from Vietnam to offer delicious, nutritious vegetarian cuisine. The pilgrimage to Buddhist sacred sites following the conference was a very special opportunity for Buddhist women from around the world to join their prayers and to express their common aspirations.

B: How can Buddhist feminist groups mobilize effectively? Many already look to the grassroots organization of Sakyadhita as a model. Are there any variables that an individual organization needs to factor in, such as the region they are based in or their level of funding?



Bhiksuni Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Bhikkhuni Adhimmata, and Himalayan nuns chanting at the 13th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women in Vaishali, India.

KLT: Sakyadhita encourages the establishment of grassroots Buddhist women's groups everywhere. What is encouraging is a growing awareness that Buddhist feminism is not a pejorative term, but a compassionate response to gender discrimination that urgently needs repair.

Women in different regions have different interests and concerns, determined by their circumstances. The immediate concern for women in most of Asia is how women can learn more about Buddhism. Building Buddhist institutes requires enormous resources and skills that most Buddhist women do not have – educational resources, organizational skills, communication skills, and so on. Buddhist women's projects are very much dependent on the scarce resources that are available to them. As long as Buddhist nuns are barely scraping by, why would intelligent young women want to pursue a career as a nun? By contrast, Buddhist women's projects in more advantaged societies have resources to run kindergartens, shelters, retreats, schools, and other endeavors, some of which generate further resources and enable women to move toward self-sufficiency. In these societies, Buddhist women have an impressive track record and great potential for future achievements.

B: How involved are traditional Buddhist organizations and foundations with Sakyadhita? In general, do they recognize women's critical role in the future Buddhism, or do most still seem to resist any calls for change or reform?

KLT: Many Buddhists seem to totally ignore women's issues and women's roles. Most traditional organizations are not involved at all. Most Buddhists seem unaware of the critical role women can play and do not seem to care about women's disadvantaged status. Buddhists seem to believe their own propaganda that women and men are equal in Buddhism, and are blind to the blatant inequalities that currently exist. Some Buddhists pay lip service to women's importance, but institutional structures do not reflect any commitment to women's advancement or to women's equal participation. In fact, the mantra that women and men are equal in Buddhism acts as a kind of smokescreen to mask inequities that are clearly visible. Buddhist organizations need to be restructured to give women greater autonomy and leadership opportunities.

"Buddhism at the Grassroots" means preparing women from the ground up, by providing the causes and conditions for successful leadership: systematic education, healthcare, training, and experience. In response to a growing awareness of the need for more equal representation of women in Buddhism, women, especially female monastics, may be pressured to step into teaching and leadership roles before they are fully grounded and trained. Occasionally, in an effort to be politically correct, women may be thrust into positions of authority and expected to teach without the benefit of the solid training and education that their more privileged brothers get. Buddhists urgently need qualified people to represent Buddhism in public discourse and it is impossible to speak with authority unless one has adequate education, encouragement, and experience. All of this requires resources that Buddhist women in most countries do not have. So, we are stuck in a bit of a Catch 22. We need support to nurture

Buddhist women leaders and we need Buddhist women leaders to help garner support.

B: How is the future of women's participation in Buddhism looking, judging from the results of this year's conference? Certainly it varies region by region: which are the hotspots where development for Buddhist women is urgently needed?

KLT: The future prospects for Buddhist women's development are excellent, if they get adequate support. Judging from this year's conference, Buddhist women are becoming increasingly active in their own communities and are linking up internationally to provide inspiration, encouragement, and support like never before.

The needs of Buddhist women in each country are different, however, which makes Sakyadhita all the more interesting. Buddhist women in Europe and North America are working on issues such as sexual harassment, greater representation in the U.N., historical research, textual analysis, and women's representation in Buddhist institutions. Buddhist women in developing countries are vitally concerned with basic issues such as health, hygiene, access to Buddhist learning, practice, and training opportunities, including monastic training and vocational training.

The international partnerships forged through Sakyadhita are extremely meaningful for women, many of whom have felt isolated, alienated, and discouraged. We want to address the most urgent needs first, such as the trafficking of Buddhist women and children, which is rife but often ignored, and healthcare, especially for women infected with HIV/AIDS. In some areas, such as Buddhist psychology and meditation, they find common ground, which is very inspiring and empowering. Buddhist women's transformative potential is immeasurable, limited only by a lack of qualified leadership and financial support.

B: One of the conference topics was "Is there a feminine Dharma?" Can you elaborate on this?

KLT: This question is loaded, but it's worth exploring. Do women and men approach Buddhist practice differently? The papers presented on this topic made it clear that Dharma practice and attainments are open to all, regardless of gender. The basic nature of the mind and the potential to purify it are not different for men and for women, at least in Buddhist theory.

It was also clear from the ensuing discussions that the circumstances for realizing the human potential for enlightenment are very different for men and for women. How can women get access to the tools for liberation if they cannot read, have no books, no access to teachers, or their work schedules and domestic duties leave them little time for learning about the Dharma? How can they develop the confidence to strive for liberation if they are taught from early childhood that the very body they occupy is a result of their bad *karma*? How can women gain the confidence to strive diligently when women's path to higher ordination is blocked? These are the challenges that Buddhist women face today.

The key to remedying these problems is greater awareness. Given equal education and opportunity, women can contribute fresh insights on Dharma in daily life. Women can help expand the concept of intensive practice beyond the monastic limits imposed by certain traditions, providing greater affirmation of lay practice. Women may put their communications skills to work, developing new, more accessible ways of expressing the Dharma. Putting their organizational skills to work, they can develop more egalitarian structures for Buddhist and other social institutions.



BASIC BUDDHISM IN SONGS: CONTEMPORARY NUNS' ORAL TRADITIONS IN KINNAUR

by Linda LaMacchia

In Kinnaur, a Himalayan district of Himachal Pradesh, Buddhism has been practiced at least since the translator Rinchen Zangbo built Buddhist temples there in the tenth century. Half the population is Buddhist, half is local Hindu, and many *jomos* (Buddhist nuns) live and practice there. In the Vedas and ancient Sanskrit literature, Kinnauras were portrayed as semi-divine beings, lovers of song and dance. Still today Kinnauras are famous for their singing and dancing, both secular and religious. Kinnauri women are generally the main singers, but for Buddhist songs, the *jomos* are the main composers and singers.

Kinnauri nuns sing two main genres of song: Kinnauri language songs called *githang* and Tibetan language songs called *mgurma*. Since 1990 I have recorded both, but especially the *githang*.¹ Tibetan language songs are most often composed by a lama for his disciples, and these *mgurma* are generally thought of as Dharma teachings and not "songs" at all, even though they have a melody and are sung. But the *githang* that nuns compose and sing are often dismissed as history or entertainment, although these songs relate to such topics as the guru, the temple, the Buddha, and the model nun Nyima Zangmo.

In a recent article, R. Balkaran and A. W. Dorn argued that scholars of religion should use popular narratives as sources of religious knowledge, and not just rely on didactic texts.² I agree. So my purpose here is to examine nuns' Kinnauri language songs (*githang*) as sources of basic Buddhist teaching, using Dundes' method of analytic categories – texture, text, and context³ – and taking as examples songs that nuns sang (and Professor Ramesh Chandra Negi transcribed and translated from my recordings) between 1995 and 2010. I argue that nuns' songs are valuable sources of basic Buddhism and that, for higher levels of understanding and practice, basic Buddhism is an essential foundation.

In the following sections, I define basic Buddhism, and texture, text, and context; then identify basic Buddhist concepts in three songs; and conclude by asking what value the songs have and whether ordained nuns should be singing them.

The Structure and Context of the Songs

While "basic" can be readily defined as meaning fundamental, essential, what is built on, what is frequently repeated, simplified, preliminary, suitable for beginners, deciding what topics to categorize as "basic Buddhism" and for whom they are "basic" is not so easy. For example, in *Basic Teachings of the Buddha*, Glenn Wallis chose 16 Pali *suttas* for their basic Buddhist views, but asserts that other scholars would certainly make other selections.⁴ In *The World's Religions*, Huston Smith identifies seven "key notions" as "basic Buddhist concepts": *nirvana*, no-soul, *karma*, reincarnation, impermanence, suffering, and *skandas*.⁵ Interestingly, three of these are not included in the nuns' songs: *nirvana*, no-soul, and *skandas*.

By contrast, Georges Dreyfus describes "preliminary studies" in modern Tibetan monastic training in India, which prepare students for more advanced parts of the curriculum leading to the *geshe* degree.⁶ Through debate, students learn basic philosophical concepts and are given an overview – a cognitive map – of 70 topics relevant to exoteric and esoteric (*tantric*) studies. In *The World of Tibetan Buddhism*, the Dalai Lama links basic Buddhism to the First Turning of the Wheel shared by all Buddhist traditions: the four noble truths, the three higher trainings (ethics, concentration, and wisdom), and the 37 aspects of the path to enlightenment.⁷ Finally, in a commentary on the *Lamrim* ("stages on the path") teachings, the third Dalai Lama speaks of "the three scopes of spiritual application": initial, intermediate, and supreme. The practitioner of initial scope is "one who does not work for the pleasures of this life, but instead sets his mind upon the practices leading to rebirth either in a heaven or as a human being."⁸ In other words, here the goal is not yet liberation from *samsara* for oneself or for others. The basic Buddhist topics for a person of initial scope are: correct attitudes toward the spiritual master, the "human situation," "death and the lower realms," refuge, and "the laws of karmic evolution."⁹

Singing the Dharma

Dundes' analytical categories for folklore are texture, text, and context. Texture is "the [original] language, the specific phonemes and morphemes employed ... textural features are linguistic features."¹⁰ Dialects vary from village to village. I do not know Kinnauri, but I will point out Tibetan words used for Dharma concepts in the songs. Context is the "specific social situation in which that particular item is actually employed ... how, when, where, why, to whom, and by whom," and text is "essentially a version or a single ... singing of a folksong."¹¹ Text is the meaning and is translatable. I will focus on the basic Buddhist content of the texts in their English translations.

My first example is "Song about Friends." In terms of texture, three nuns from Kanum (central Kinnaur) sang this song in Kinnauri. For "prayer," the Tibetan word *monlam* was used. In terms of context, in 1996 three nuns from Gaden Choling Nunnery came to my room in Dharmasala to sing some songs, because it would "gladden my heart." They explained that the song is not exactly a Dharma song, but turns the mind toward Dharma. In terms of text, the song has 53 lines, but here I have shortened it. The lines expressing worldly views are omitted and the 22 lines expressing Buddhist views are kept.

1. At nine in the morning [a quiet time], as we sing a song about friends,
2. ____, hail falls and a snowy wind blows.
3. If the hail wasn't falling and the wind wasn't blowing, the branches wouldn't be moving.
4. ____. On the branches are flowers of ice.
5. ____. When they see the sun they melt.
6. ____. If rain falls, they absorb it.
7. Nectar! Nectar!
35. Today will come only once. We say a prayer.
36. What type of prayer? All of us friends,
37. ____, if we have a long life,
38. ____, we pray that we gather once again.
39. If we die, we'll have no chance to meet again.
40. When we die we will reach a very dark place.
41. The god of death will come with his weapon. We will be forced to go with him.
42. ____. We will go naked.
43. When we die only our cup of tea will remain.
44. If you remember death, you won't speak a harsh word.
45. Friend and friend, we see our friends only in this life.
46. ____. There is no real [permanent] friend.
51. Today will come only once. So we say a prayer,
52. ____, not only for this life,
53. ____, but also for the next life.

What are the basic Buddhist topics here? In lines 1-7, nature demonstrates interdependence and cause and effect; these terms are not used but are implied. Lines 35-46 state that each day of human life is precious. Like "The Four Immeasurables," a prayer for the happiness of all beings, the singers pray for a long and happy life for themselves and their friends. The song also states that death is certain, we have no choice about dying, and we cannot take friends and possessions with us when we die. If we remember death we will be kinder now. Even friends are impermanent. Lines 51-53 are a prayer for this life and the next life.

My second example is the song of Kachen Lama. In terms of context, this song was sung by the head nun, Upal Devi, along with three other nuns near the wood stove in the kitchen of the Kanum village nunnery on *Losar* (New Year's) in December 2009. In terms of texture, this 14-line song was sung in Kinnauri and contains Tibetan terms, including *kachen* (a monastic degree), *sarpa dasang* (new monastery), *tsawai lama* (root guru), *gelong* (fully ordained monk), and *thugs-je* (translated as "blessed"). The singers added extra syllables, like *la* and *li* to make the lines the same length, but the transcriber did not include them, and repeated lines are not shown. Lines 1 and 2 (*haya be hona beli be hona*) are traditional, meaningless syllables used to introduce a *githang*. They seem to signal our entry into the realm of song. The text reads:

1. *Haya be hona, beli be hona.*
2. *Beli be hona, haya be hona.*
3. This new monastery, who blessed it?
4. Not just anyone, the root guru blessed it.
5. That root guru, whose son is he?
6. Not just anyone, he's the son of Gelong.
7. Son of Gelong, nephew of Vazir.

8. The nephew of Vazir, what is his name?
9. His name is Kachen Chogs Zogs-pa.
10. In this monastery, what prayer can we say?
11. We can pray, "May all beings be happy."
12. May all beings be happy, may the guru's life be stable.
13. May the guru's life be stable, until the crow turns white.
14. Until the crow turns white, until the crow grows horns."

What are the basic Buddhist topics here? First, to consecrate a new monastery, a qualified person such as a root *guru* is needed (lines 3-4). The root *guru* is situated in the local community by naming him and identifying his family ties (lines 5-9). Then the singers pray for the long life of the *guru* and for happiness for all beings, as in the Four Immeasurables prayer (lines 10-14).

My third and last example is "Song on Impermanence." This song is the most dharmic of all the *githangs* recorded. In terms of context, in 1996 a 30-year-old nun of Nichar Village in lower Kinnaur sang it for me at her house (her private *gonpa*, or temple). A nun from Moorang in central Kinnaur had composed it; the singer had forgotten her name, but had written the song down in a notebook. In terms of texture, the song is a Kinnauri *githang*, but Dharma concepts are expressed in Tibetan. In fact, most laypeople cannot understand these terms – for example, *dugngal* (suffering), *gyatso* (ocean), *gewa* (merit), *konchog sum* (the Three Jewels), *dinchen tsawai lama* (kind root guru), *rigs drug* (six realms), and *sangyas* (Buddha). Some words are also expressed in Sanskrit: "*samsar*" (cyclic existence), *yama* (lord of death), and *dharmaraja* (Dharma king). The text reads:

1. It is said about the world it is an ocean of misery,
Burning like a fire of misery.
If you remember death, give up non-virtuous actions,
And accumulate virtuous actions.
Having accumulated virtuous actions, give offerings to the Triple Gem.
2. When death comes, nobody will help you.
Not only will nobody help you, even your own family will not help,
Not only your family, but also your very beloved body.
Leaving the beloved body will also happen.



Kinnauri women in Chitkul, Baspa Valley.

3. At the time of death, naked and alone,
We will not know where we are going.
We will reach the hand of Yama's messenger.
In front of Dharmaraja,
Black stones and white stones will be separated.

4. Who will pull us out of the ocean of misery?
Only you, please pull us out, Protector, Triple Gem,
And the kind root guru.
O root guru, close the door of the six realms,
And make taut the rope of Buddhahood.

A number of Dharma teachings are expressed here. The song's very first word is "*samsar*," translated here as "world": *samsar lonnig dugngalu gyatso*. In verse one, we listeners are advised to reflect on suffering – the first Noble Truth – and on death and rebirth, thereby being motivated to practice virtue – one of the three higher trainings – and are reminded of the Buddhist concepts of *karma* and cause and effect. In verse two, we think of the inevitability of separation and death – forms of impermanence, one of the four Buddhist seals (along with suffering, no-self, and *nirvana*). In verse three, we remember that, after death, we will be reborn according to our white or black deeds (*karma*). The fourth and last verse gives us hope that we need not suffer alone, but can seek refuge in the three jewels – the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha – and the *guru*, the fourth refuge for Tibetan Buddhists.

This *githang* is unusual in being primarily a Dharma song. While other *githangs*, such as the previous two discussed here, are narrative and biographical songs that also contain Dharma terms and concepts, this one contains many Buddhist terms and concepts that a nun can use to teach basic Buddhism to her students. An example is the reference to what happens at death and what leads to rebirth in one of the three upper realms – human, gods, and jealous gods – and not in one of the lower realms – animals, hungry ghosts, and hells.

Valuing Tradition

What value do Kinnauri nuns' songs have? As some of the nuns said, the songs turn the mind toward the Dharma and "gladden your heart." They also teach basic Buddhism, as I have demonstrated. Moreover, by being expressed in traditional Kinnauri form, and by sometimes naming local places and families, the songs join universal Buddhist ideas to village customs in global-local, macro-micro links.

A final question is, given the monastic precept that prohibits singing and dancing, should nuns sing *githang*? This is Professor Negi's answer, and I think it is a good one: "Mostly the *jomos*' *githang* or songs are related to renunciation. But some songs are praise to their *guru* and Buddha, *bodhisattvas*, etc.... If [monks or nuns] sing a song which is much related to worldly expression, that is not good, because ... attachment to this world is there and their renunciations are not fulfilled. But ... religious songs are ... very much related to renunciation and those types of songs are causes of good practice."¹²

NOTES

¹See also by Linda LaMacchia: *Songs and Lives of the Jomo (Nuns) of Kinnaur, Northwest India: Women's Religious Expression in Tibetan Buddhism* (Delhi: Sri Satguru, 2008); *Buddhist Women Masters of Kinnaur: Gurus, Disciples, Modern Curriculum, and Traditional Songs*. (Video: <http://youtu.be/8x8oW4fvBLs>, 2013); "New Year's, Joining and Separating: How Buddhist Nuns Celebrate Losar in Kinnaur (H.P., India)," presented at CSRI, Toronto, 2010; and "Two Song Genres and Changing Identities of Mahayana Buddhist Nuns of Kinnaur (H.P., India)," *Tibet Journal* 32:4 (2007) 61-69.

²R. Balkaran and A. W. Dorn, "Violence in the Valmiki Ramayana: Just War Criteria in an Ancient Indian Epic," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80: (2012) 659-690.

³Alan A. Dundes, *Interpreting Folklore* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).

⁴Glenn Wallis, *Basic Teachings of the Buddha* (New York: Modern Library, 2007).

⁵Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).

⁶Georges Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Monk* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

⁷Tenzin Gyatso, *The World of Tibetan Buddhism: An Overview of Its Philosophy and Practice* (Boston: Wisdom, 1995), p. v.

⁸Glenn Mullin, *Essence of Refined Gold* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1987), p. 88.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁰Dundes, p. 22.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

¹²Personal communication, 2010.



THE CHANGING ROLES OF BUDDHIST NUNS AND LAYWOMEN IN CAMBODIA

by Thavory Huot

Cambodia is a post-conflict country. The radical policies of the Khmer Rouge have left the country deeply scarred. During the reign of the Khmer Rouge regime, Cambodia's social, economic, and political infrastructure were almost completely destroyed. The systematic collectivization of land and assets, the elimination of currency, the abolishment of private property, and the murderous activities of the regime created a national disaster from which the country is still attempting to recover.

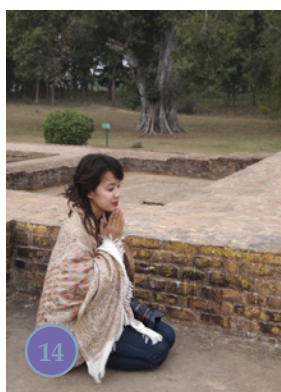
This trauma has left Cambodia with a high rate of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can be seen in the high incidence of violent crime and domestic abuse. The trauma also caused huge cultural shifts in gender dynamics in the country. During the Khmer Rouge regime, families were separated and everyone, male and female alike, was made to work in agricultural production. After the Khmer Rouge collapsed, the high number of male casualties during the Khmer Rouge era resulted in a gender demographic imbalance. During the years that followed, there were many more single, young, young women seeking marriage

13th Sakyadhita International Conference



Left to Right: 1. An Ambapali Dancer; 2. Nicole Stenos and other participants at the Sakyadhita conference reading about Buddhist women around the world; 3. A Sakyadhita conference poster in Vaishali, India; 4. A kaleidoscope of Nuns from India; 5. Marie Veno Thesbjerg, a travel photographer from Denmark, connects with another participant; 6. Meditation Hall at Mahaprajapati Monastery, Vaishali; 7. Participants exchanging contact information; 8. Buddhist friends from Indonesia who will help plan the 14th Sakyadhita Conference in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in July 2015; 9. The Tara Dancers liberating

on Buddhist Women in Vaishali, India



the body, heart, and mind; 10. Eugene Tjandraputri, Sakyadhita's youngest volunteer, helping with the pilgrimage tour; 11. Prayer flags commemorating the site where Sujata offered rice pudding to the young prince who would become the Buddha; 12. Paula Arai warming hands and heart; 13. Zen practitioners from Argentina, Canada, and the United States gather for some serious meditation; 14. Lien Bui on pilgrimage to the ancient Nalanda monastic university; and 15. Sonam Ongmu, Karen Jensen, and Eveline reunite at the Sakyadhita conference.

partners. This surplus led to a decline in the general status of women and women's rights.

The traumatic events of Cambodia's conflict period, combined with oppressive cultural norms, have left women and children in Cambodia particularly vulnerable to discrimination and abuse. After the failed Khmer Rouge communist rule, a staunchly hierarchical society has reemerged in Cambodia. Men are generally regarded as having a higher status than women, and thus more powerful and important. According to a report titled *The Status of Cambodian Women*, "the lower social status of women, on the other hand, means that many are treated as mere possessions or objects and are denied their rights and full participation in society."

In the 1970s, I witnessed the death of most of my family under the brutality of the Khmer Rouge. During those years, I was forced into manual labor, building dams and irrigation channels, and transplanting, plowing and harvesting rice. After the Vietnamese invasion in 1979, I survived by teaching in exchange for food for almost a decade. In the 1990s, I became the project coordinator of the Buddhist Association of Nuns and Lay Women, where I worked to empower women for national reconciliation and to heal the wounds of many years of war and genocide. Domestic violence, including assaults with deadly weapons, was common following the years of conflict. I have worked in various projects to oppose such violence since 1998.

Women and Good Governance in Cambodia

For fairness and effectiveness, good governance needs the active participation of women at all levels. Women are generally seen as more capable of solving problems peacefully and honestly. Women's groups are active in all areas of social development, from land rights to fighting corruption. Women are naturally good at networking, discussing problems, and agreeing on solutions. These skills are vital for influencing government and for the constructive development of Cambodia.

Cambodian women traditionally practice Buddhist precepts at the temples after their duties as housewives and mothers. At the temples, they cook for monks and clean the halls. After the Khmer Rouge was defeated, women participated actively in their communities to re-establish schools and temples. I participated in these struggles, urged the women not to give up, and witnessed their successful activities. Women share openly and passionately the challenges they face, including lack of education and ongoing abuse. They often meet resistance in their attempts to strengthen women's voices in their communities and in the political sphere. The number of women who are active in local or national government positions is very small and the particular trials that women face are for the most part overlooked. The perennial question that echoes is: How can we better connect with one another and encourage women's active participation in peace building in our communities?

At the Association of Nuns and Lay Women in Cambodia (ANLWC), I worked to empower women for national reconciliation and to heal the wounds of many years of war and genocide. Nuns and laywomen in Cambodia receive various types of training and work in partnership with local organizations to address the challenges women face and formulate activities to ensure the implementation of the Buddha's teachings. In both formal

and informal conversations, the nuns and laywomen discover a common need and desire to work together to help women victims and street children. They want to cooperate and learn how to support women's participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction. They feel that they can play a significant role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Their participation is vital in the process of maintaining peace and security.

The reflections of these nuns and laywomen capture the essence of the aims of the ANLWC: "We feel rejuvenated and confident that women can continue to do this work, and that we are not, ever, alone." "We would never want future generations to suffer the way we, the unlucky older generation, did." A group of Cambodian women, including nuns, developed a plan to visit patients who are affected with HIV/AIDS, both at home and at hospitals in Phnom Penh. The visits, which include Buddhist chanting, help the patients cope with despair. The group goes to the patients' rooms twice a month to offer blessings. These visits are very important for the patients and their families, especially as the time of death approaches. The nuns bring gifts to offer patients who have no family or have been abandoned by their families.

The Working Group for Peace was established in 2008 in response to concerns over increased border disputes between Thailand and Cambodia. Nuns are invited to join in some activities, such as meetings and workshops. At the end of a consultation workshop with Thai and Cambodian participants, a joint statement was released calling for actions to find a peaceful solution to any existing border conflicts, for changes in media reporting, and for history telling and education to promote understanding and peace. "Through our joint statement we want our ideas to be heard. We want to show how people at the grassroots feel about conflict and how they want policymakers to consider peaceful solutions." "Also, we want to show to all Thai and Cambodian people that we are still working together and we do not want to break the friendship that exists between our people."

At the Working Group for Peace workshop I attended, participants made presentations about the culture and traditions of their countries, focusing on similarities instead of differences and building trust. Cheang Sokha, Director of the Youth Resource Development Program in Cambodia and spokesperson for the event, noted the importance of sharing cultural traditions and discovering commonalities. The New Year celebration, called Chhnam Thmey in Cambodia and Song Kran in Thailand, was selected as a common theme for the workshop. This celebration, which is similar in both cultures, is a time for forgiving, forgetting, and making wishes for the future. The workshop symbolized making a new start and working harmoniously together.

The Working Group for Peace represents a unique movement in Cambodia. In cooperation with the Thai Volunteer Service Foundation (TVS), it mobilizes organizations and individuals to work together and act for peaceful change.

The organization that I direct, Khmer Ahimsa, works towards the same objective. We feel that it is important for NGOs to work in cooperation with each other, not in competition, by building trust among people with similar goals. Working together in harmony, we will accomplish our goals more quickly. During 2010, we developed an action plan, with activities that included exchanging visits between Cambodia and Thailand and activities for raising

awareness. The action plan was created by all the participants, including Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, and hill tribe minorities. Villagers, youth, academics, activists, and the media, male and female, monastics and laypeople, all shared their ideas for working together. We have clearly demonstrated that nuns and laywomen are especially capable of playing active roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.



HWANG JIN-YI: THE DANCER WHO CHALLENGED SOCIAL INJUSTICE THROUGH TALENT, WIT, AND AUDACITY

by Hyunmi Cho

A 2006 Korean TV series and 2007 film tell the story of Hwang Jin-yi (1520-1560), a Korean courtesan, dancer, musician, and poet who challenged the Confucian, hierarchical, male-dominated society of the Joseon Period (1392-1910). Stories about her are found in classic folk history books. However, because she was a woman and a courtesan, dancer, and musician, she is not included in historical annals.

The series and film raise questions about inequality between men and women and the widening gap between rich and poor in contemporary democratic Korean society. Women in Korea today generally receive equal education up to the highest level and enjoy the freedom to make their own lives. Nonetheless, many women still accept traditional roles as objects of attraction, wives, and mothers. Perceptions of women in Korea are still grounded in Confucian principles and notions. Hwang Jin-yi's story addresses contemporary social issues through the entertaining media of female attractiveness, wittiness, and prodigious talent, and raises three important social issues in particular: gender identity, gender expression, and women's leadership.

Buddhism arrived in Korea around the middle of the fourth century. It was imported from India and China and thrived for a thousand years until the advent of the Joseon Kingdom. The Joseon kingdom favored Confucianism to keep the preceding Goryeo Kingdom at bay politically. This began a period of decline for Buddhism in Korea, which survived only among hermits in the mountains. However, Chinese culture, which had been imported along with the religion, still had an impact on the evolution of Korean Buddhism and other aspects of Korean culture during the Joseon period.

Hwang Jin-yi was born of an aristocrat father and a minor courtesan mother in Gaesung (in present-day North Korea). She was raised in a Buddhist monastery due to the low social status of her mother as a courtesan, the lowest class in the social hierarchy. Her mother hoped she would follow a traditional life as a wife and mother, but Hwang Jin-yi chose to break free from tradition and follow the same path as her mother. As a courtesan prodigy, she was frequently invited to participate in the cultural activities of Confucian aristocrats (*yangban*). She became the most popular entertainer of the day.

Courtesan as Gender Identity

In traditional Korean society, women who entertained upper-class or aristocratic male clients at banquets were known as *gisaeng*. The origin of *gisaeng* can be traced back to the *gyobang* tradition during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) in China, an institution for performing arts in the imperial courts. The Unified Silla Kingdom (676-935) in Korea was a close ally, and Tang culture greatly influenced the development of Silla culture, including bringing the *gyobang* tradition to the Unified Silla court. The tradition continued during the Goryeo Kingdom, which succeeded the Silla Kingdom and preceded the Joseon period.

In the Silla tradition of *gyobang*, strict gender separation was observed. Male dancers, called *mudong*, were in charge of performing mainly for kings, princes, and their guests, while the female *gisaengs* performed only for queens and princesses and occasionally for various court and Buddhist ceremonial events. *Gyobang* dancers were responsible for performing at Buddhist events such as the celebration of the Buddha's birthday (*yeon-dung-hae*).

With the decline of Buddhism during the Joseon period, *gyobang* shifted from Buddhist religious ceremonial dance to a Confucian form of ceremonial dance and a form of entertainment at the imperial court. In the process, the status of Buddhist monks and *gisaeng* dropped to the bottom of the social hierarchy. The *gyobang* tradition is no longer seen in Korea. However, elements of *gyobang* have recently reappeared in dance performances and are popular components of traditional dance repertoires. Dancers wear elegant courtesan costumes, coiffeurs, and hats from the Joseon period.

Dance as Gender Expression

Hwang Jin-yi was known for her witty lyrics and seductive style of dancing. She often mocked privileged Confucian aristocrats. On one occasion, Byeo Gye-su, an aristocrat renowned for his reputation as a pillar of Confucian morality, bet that he could be indifferent to Hwang Jin-yi, but in response to a spontaneous poem she composed, he became ashamed of his arrogance.

On another occasion, she performed before a famous spiritually advanced Buddhist monk. To test his spiritual discipline, she performed a seductive dance in a transparent garment shaped like a monk's robe. The monk was brought to his knees and later disrobed. Hwang Jin-yi was blamed for the seduction and his disrobing, which is an example of the systematic historical pattern of blaming women for man's weaknesses.

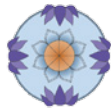


2006 Korean TV drama, Hwang Jin-yi.

The Audacity of Hwang Jin-yi in Modern Korea

Writers, journalists, and TV and movie producers in Korea's praise Hwang Ji-yi as a beautiful dancer and audacious woman who dared to challenge aristocrats at a time when males were privileged in Confucian society. Her story shows that a woman can be daring and, even when she is challenged by unfavorable circumstances. If women awaken, like Hwang Jin-yi, they can fulfill their dreams.

In Western and Asian countries, the freedoms women have gained have been compromised by traditional concepts of being beautiful objects of attraction. The proliferation of cosmetic hospital procedures in Seoul is an example. To achieve balance and their goals, women need to have a mindful education. It is more beneficial to train in mindfulness and healthful actions than to go through surgical procedures. This means eating balanced meals and having a daily exercise regime. From a healthy body, a positive mind will hopefully reach permanent freedom.



FROM MERCY TO JUSTICE: THE ANIMAL PROTECTION MOVEMENT OF BUDDHIST FEMALE MONASTICS IN CONTEMPORARY TAIWAN

by Bhiksuni Chuan-fa Shih

The tenet that "all lives are equal" is unique to Buddhist philosophy. To be compassionate towards living beings and protect them is fundamental to the practice of Mahayana Buddhist ethics. All sentient beings, human and non-human, are included. Thus, in both the theory and practice of Buddhism, "to give relief to non-human beings" is an important category of Buddhist charity. Contemporary religious charity puts much emphasis on the benefit of human beings, however, and few are dedicated to benefitting "non-human beings."

The practices of releasing animals and vegetarianism are key ways to achieve the goal of protecting life, and both have a long history in traditional Chinese Buddhism. Now, however, the animal protection movement has become a worldwide trend and NGOs for animal welfare and animal rights have been established one after another. As a religion that places a high value on protecting life, Buddhism is an active participant in this important contemporary movement.

In contemporary Taiwan, the movement to protect the rights of animals has grown due to the efforts of *bhiksunis*. In 1993, Bhiksuni Chao-hwei founded an NGO for animal protection called Life Conservationist Association (LCA) that has been involved in legislative issues and political advocacy. Active social engagement in the political arena is quite a departure from the traditional picture of *bhiksunis*. The LCA, is the first animal protection NGO in Taiwan to be engaged in social movements. In this new era, *bhiksunis* adopted unorthodox methods that were starkly different from the "conservative and compassionate" movements in the past. These non-traditional, even anti-traditional methods are closely in tune with the pulse of society in contemporary Taiwan, especially since the end of the martial law in 1987.

Bhiksuni Chao-hwei is a professor who grew up in turbulent times, when citizen movements were emerging. In the past, ideas like "no politics" and "getting involved in politics taints the six senses," conjoined with the generally mild temperament of Buddhists, caused most Buddhists to be disinterested in protests against the government or becoming involved in social movements. Most were conservative or even critical of social activism. However, due to political liberalization, the strengthening of a civil society, improved education, popular interest in religion, and other factors, Buddhists have gradually awakened and have become more radical, breaking with tradition.

Along with the changes taking place in civil society, Buddhism for the Human Realm, a philosophy of Buddhist social engagement developed in the 20th century, has become the Buddhist mainstream approach to social change in Taiwan. Because it meets the needs of the times, this approach has become a force for great social change in Taiwan and has transformed Buddhist communities. Buddhist scholars in Taiwan have also begun to focus on issues that integrate Buddhist teachings and social action movements.

Bhiksuni Chao-hwei finds that people in Taiwan generally lack respect for life, so animals live a very miserable life. Even legislation cannot prevent them from being abused. The unique "equality of all life" thinking of Buddhism seems to have been confined to vegetarianism and animal release activities, making it impossible to effect much change in the animals' situations. Thus, Bhiksuni Chao-Hwei decided to lead a group of Buddhist disciples in setting up an activist organization that specializes in animal protection.

Bhiksuni Chao-hwei takes exception to the idea that protecting animals should only be based on the danger of extinction, because this in itself quantifies life and is an ideology based on human beings' interests rather than animals' interests. The value of life should not come from labels like "wild" or "pet," but from the animals themselves. Their desire for survival should be equivalent to ours and so should their fear of facing abuse and death. Therefore, Buddhists' concern with protecting life and cherishing life should be motivated by respect for animals, not just by "our" feelings.

More importantly, Bhiksuni Chao-hwei points out the deficiencies of the Buddhist approach in which words speak louder than action. She thinks that thoughts must be formulated into a system of laws or policies that provide substantive protection for the minority, and that this systematic approach must be pushed through the power of organization and strategy, step by step. Only through social education and relentless efforts to influence the making of public policy can the voices of the abused animals be heard. In this way, their lives can be bettered and legislation for the protection of animals can move forward.

The mission statement of LCA expresses two main aims: monitoring policies and social education. By lobbying elected representatives, LCA tries to make them concerned about public policy. In addition, LCA urges legislation such as the Animal Protection Act and the Wildlife Conservation Act, and monitors the government to see whether it implements those bills. Simultaneously, through publications, lectures, seminars, exhibitions, and other activities, the facts about animal abuse are made public, so that the ideals of respect for life and concern for animals gain traction.

LCA's most important achievement to date was helping pass the



The city of Taipei, Taiwan, launched Animal Protection Day to encourage the public to consider pet adoption and proper veterinary care.

Animal Protection Act. Because of people's trust in LCA, the Council of Agriculture invited Bhiksuni Chao-hwei to be one of the members of the Animal Protection Law drafting committee. In 1998, the bill was passed by the Legislative Yuan and Taiwan became the world's 54th country to pass the Animal Protection Act. The main points of the bill include the basic welfare of animals and their appropriate

scientific use, management of the animal industry, shelters for stray animals and arrangements for their disposal, the humanitarian treatment of animals used for economic gain, and the banning animals from contests. The tenth Article makes Taiwan the first country in the world to ban horse racing.

In addition, LCA and ecological conservation groups in Taiwan created the Eco-Conservation Alliance, which successfully lobbied for amendments to the Wildlife Conservation Act, giving wildlife much more living space than the original official version would have given. Other great events that LCA promoted successfully include pressuring the Ministry of Education to amend the high school biology syllabus to make the currently required animal vivisection optional. LCA also promoted a ban on the online auction of live animals. It also prevented the Council of Agriculture from initiating hunting tourism and promoted legislature to ban the trading of wild animals for circus shows. It got the government to announce a ban on selling and hunting whale sharks and a law to make the sale and use of animal traps illegal.

Under the guidance of LCA, over 60 animal protection organizations and university student organizations have been set up in Taiwan. Animal welfare legislation has become important government policy. LCA's animal protection movement is quite special in Taiwan's religious landscape, because it plays a preventative role, trying to reshape ordinary support structures to create a friendly living environment for animals. Gradually, the Buddhist movement to protect life has shifted the focus from charity and animal release rituals to justice.

Bhiksuni Chao-hwei is a key figure, due to her personal commitment to social activism. She has a strong sense of justice and is ready to help the weak. Her noble qualities attract a willing group of allies, many of whom are not Buddhist. She is not afraid to challenge authority, whether it be the ancient texts or the traditional authority of Theravada elders. She makes her choices based on reason and the needs of the situation, adapting the core of Buddha's teaching to the present day.



THE QUESTION OF WOMEN IN BUDDHISM

by Bhikkhu Analayo

The question of the position of women may be one of the greatest challenges Buddhism faces at present. The Buddha himself provided a lofty example by fully recognizing women's spiritual potential. He had no doubt that their ability to awaken was equal to that of men. Nor did he believe that to be born as a woman is in principle the result of bad karma. That idea is a late intrusion into the Buddhist traditions.

In some respects, the Buddha went along with established conventions concerning gender hierarchy that existed in ancient India and used them as a framework so as not to upset the public. But within this framework he gave full opportunity for women to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to the path to inner peace and awakening.

According to the discourse that records the last moments of the Buddha's life, a central concern of the Buddha was to leave behind four assemblies of disciples: *bhikkhus*, *bhikkhunis*, and male and female lay followers. He believed that the Dharma will survive if it is lived, practiced, and taught by members of these four assemblies.

At present, probably the most pressing issue in relation to women in Buddhism relates to the *bhikkhuni* order. This has been lost in the Theravada tradition and has never been established in the Mulasarvastivada tradition in Tibet. Buddhism in these traditions has only three of the four assemblies. This predicament is comparable to a noble four-footed animal like an elephant who has one crippled leg.

The medicine to restore this crippled leg is not easily found. At times, supporters of the *bhikkhuni* ordination do not fully appreciate the legal problems involved. It is not meaningful to demand changes in the rules to accommodate the ordination of *bhikkhunis* in a tradition that bases its sense of identity on upholding the ancient rules without change. At times, opponents of the revival or creation of a *bhikkhuni* order do not fully appreciate the sincerity of those who wish to restore the four assemblies in order to promote the Dharma.

In a recent detailed academic research article published in the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, I come to the conclusion that the *bhikkhuni* ordinations held in Bodhgaya in 1998 are legally valid. Contrary to popular assumptions, they fully satisfy the requirements of the Theravada Vinaya. In other words, the Theravada order of *bhikkhunis* has been successfully revived and can fully claim legal recognition. This is a great relief, since it allows restoring the four assemblies without undermining the basis of the Theravada tradition, which is strict adherence to the Vinaya. In this way, in the Theravada tradition the crippled leg of the elephant's body is about to heal. Hopefully this process of healing will lead to a similar process of healing in the Mulasarvastivada tradition in Tibet, also.

The modern secular world is in a mess. The recent Bodhgaya bombings show how far things can go. This messy world urgently needs the spread of the peaceful message of the Dharma. For this message to spread, it needs to be carried forward by the four assemblies – monastic and lay, male and female – in all Buddhist traditions.



Opening ceremony at the 13th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women in Vaishali, India.

It is my sincere hope that Buddhists everywhere will pledge to uphold the vision of the founder of Buddhism: a Dharma lived and taught by all four assemblies. I also hope that Buddhists everywhere will do what they can to facilitate dialogue and the exchange of accurate information to ensure that women occupy the positions in Buddhism to which they are entitled. This will be of great benefit for the Dharma, for all Buddhist traditions, and for the world at large.



THAN HSIANG KINDERGARTEN: A CASE STUDY

by Bhiksuni Zhen Yuan Shi

In today's world, driven by information and technology, working parents prefer to live independently and manage their own families. As their families grow, some prefer to send their children to pre-education centers to learn in a group environment. How can Buddhists skillfully propagate the Dhamma in a complex society with new teaching methods? This paper includes a brief history of how Bhiksuni Fang Lian, a nun from Xiamen, China, came to Penang and established the first free Buddhist school for children. It tells the story of Than Hsiang Kindergarten's development and contributions, with a focus on its plans for future development.

Background

In 1935, Bhikkhu Fang Lian arrived in Penang from China, where he established the first free Buddhist school for children. In 1946, it was officially organized as Phor Tay School under the colonial government of Malaya, with kindergarten, primary, and secondary levels for children between the ages of 3 to 17. Many monks were invited from China, Burma, and Hong Kong to teach Buddhist studies to students. This Buddhist education project inspired Bhikkhu Ci Hang to establish a Buddhist

school Singapore in 1948 whose name was taken from Phoy Tay Penang. It also inspired Bhikkhu Jing Ming to found the first Buddhist primary school for children in Melaka in 1951. In Penang, Bhikkhu Chuk Mo and team founded the Zhen Hua Kindergarten in 1970 and Bhikkhu Wei Wu founded Than Hsiang Kindergarten in 1991. These seedlings spread to other states of Malaysia and a branch was established in Thailand in 2010.

From China to Penang: Founding Than Hsiang Kindergarten

Than Hsiang Kindergarten officially commenced in December 1991. During the first year, 95 children were enrolled in four classes: two for six-year-olds and one each for four- and five-year-olds. Than Hsiang's conviction is, "The Young to Learn; The Strong and Healthy to Serve." We constantly strive to create a stimulating and holistic child-centered learning environment, to create an atmosphere of affection and security, and to facilitate the children's moral, intellectual, physical, spiritual, emotional, and social development.

When Than Hsiang Kindergarten was first established, we recruited an experienced early childhood educator as the first principal and three experienced teachers to assist. Working hard to nurture these seedlings, they laid a solid foundation for the kindergarten today. We were grateful to the principal, especially in organizing the kindergarten's permit. We were also grateful to the principal from the Penang Buddhist Association for selflessly sharing her valuable advice and her 20 years of experience in early childhood education. With support from the public and all parties concerned, today Than Hsiang Kindergarten serves a total of 850 children.

Before- and After-School Care

Many working parents in the world today are not able to oversee their children's schoolwork, due to their busy work and business schedules. To meet this need, Than Hsiang Kindergarten offers before- and after-school care services. The little ones join the Than Hsiang family and are introduced to the Buddha's teachings. The parents feel at ease leaving their children in the care of teachers who oversee the children's homework, help the children become independent, developing social skills and cultivating their moral character. In addition to the before- and after-school care center at Than Hsiang's headquarters in Bayan Baru, four more education and care centers have been opened to spread good seeds throughout the northern states.

Asian and Western Approaches

Than Hsiang Kindergarten combines Asian and Western methods of teaching and parenting. This enables children to gain a more comprehensive education from two different cultures. Asian education trains children in the statutes of community life, Buddhism teaches the Ten Good Deeds, Confucianism teaches the "Standards for Being a Good Student and Child," while Western education focuses on learning through play.

We have a well-equipped playground, a wide range of creative, educational toys for children, and a computer lab with inte-

grated children's programs to expose children to IT at an early age. We also have a kitchenette where children have an opportunity to learn life skills, such as washing their own dishes and cleaning the table, which gives them a sense of independence and improves their self-confidence. We have extensive indoor and outdoor activities, such as sand play and water play, which provide fun, joy, and laughter. These activities are all part and parcel of our comprehensive program to promote the physical, mental, social, and emotional development of the children.

Than Hsiang Kindergarten attaches great importance to interactions between teachers and children. It promotes lively teaching methods to enhance children's learning abilities and instill the courage to ask questions. Than Hsiang Kindergarten provides a practical learning method that allows the children to unleash unlimited creativity by building their own dream tool with the use of simple equipment. This helps children explore creativity and trains them in both concentration and manual dexterity. All these activities help build confidence.

Than Hsiang Kindergarten's curriculum includes thematic approaches as well as learning through play. The curriculum is designed to suit the interests and needs of children in their daily lives. Teachers and children work together on a given theme through a series of activities (such as games, songs, and so on), simulating actual situations and challenging the children to reflect on the meaning of life. To peak their interest in learning, in addition to knowledge from textbooks, Than Hsiang Kindergarten involves children in scientific experiments to understand the true meaning of science.

The Value of Buddhist Studies: Ten Good Deeds

The founder of Than Hsiang Kindergarten, Bhikkhu Wei Wu, says children should start learning Buddhism when they are young and learn to practice the teachings in daily life. In addition to the pre-school syllabus, which meets the requirements of the Ministry of Education, Than Hsiang Kindergarten also imparts Buddhist knowledge to the children. The book *Ten Good Deeds*, which contains simple, touching stories edited by the teachers, is used as the key to moral education. Bhikkhu Wei Wu says that guiding children in moral conduct from a young age will help them cultivate love, patience, and altruism (bodhicitta). With good moral values, these children will become pillars of society in the future and make contributions for the good of the community and the nation.

The Ten Good Deeds are: (1) be filial to parents; (2) honour teachers and elders; (3) cultivate faith; (4) study diligently; (5) be friends with the virtuous; (6) love and respect life; (7) be grateful and content; (8) speak politely and lovingly; (9) love others as you love yourself; and (10) spend your time wisely. The Ten Good Deeds are an educational blueprint for the kindergarten. The aim is to help children develop positive moral values and cultivate respect for parents, teachers, and elders. The most important goal is showing them how to put these teachings into practice in their daily lives.

In addition, the kindergarten children are taught to recite the *Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*, also known as the "Heart Sutra." Bhikkhu Wei Wu wants us to learn the Heart Sutra because it con-

tains the essence of Buddhism and universal truths. Learning to recite the Heart Sutra helps inspire wisdom and correct goals in life, leading us on to the path to freedom from suffering.

Buddhist Activities

Each year, Than Hsiang Kindergarten organizes special events and activities, such as an orientation day, birthday celebrations, Bathing the Buddha Ceremony, children's camps, and so on. At the monthly birthday remembrance celebrations, children are reminded about the sufferings of the mother and play a touching song called "Tears of Gratitude." This song teaches the grace of parenting, instilling a debt of gratitude in the children, to help build warm, harmonious family relationships. Parents and grandparents are invited to participate in the celebration.

Each year during the Buddha Day celebration, each kindergarten organizes a Bathing the Buddha Ceremony. Teachers take this opportunity to impart the teachings of Buddha. During the ceremony, the monastics lead everyone in reciting the name of Sakyamuni Buddha three times and repeat this chant throughout the ceremony. The monastics explain to the children that the true meaning of Bathing the Buddha is to purify our contaminated hearts and minds.

During school holidays, our kindergarten organises a children's camp. The goal is to help the children learn independence by taking care of themselves and their friends, using group activities. The theme of this two-day camp is: "Toward Self-confidence and Independence." Activities include outings, cooking, music, movement, arts and crafts, storytelling, life skills, respect for parents and elders, and drama. During "Happy Hour," parents are invited to join in the activities of the camp. Other annual activities include parent's day, children's day, and the graduation ceremony.

Knowledge and Compassion

According to the teachings of the Buddha, mastering the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths builds a strong awareness that birth is suffering, all phenomena arise due to causes and conditions, and everything changes. The Buddha knew that living in this samsaric world was just like sailing on the ocean; sailing through the currents and waves, and being buffeted by the wind takes away control. Unless parents keep their thoughts focused single-mindedly, they will be swept up in the currents of materialism and capitalism, swept away by the waves of habitual tendencies, and fall into the sea of desire and habit.

Only with compassion can we produce positive energy. In this scientific materialist, information-driven world, Buddhist education plays an important role for the younger generation, helping them build a better future at a young age, so they can become leaders of tomorrow. Thus, in order to benefit society more profoundly, the compassionate Bhikkhu Wei Wu founded a model kindergarten for children in southern Thailand and offers courses for teachers and parents, to improve their education and help them embark on a process of lifelong learning to attain peace of body and mind.

FURTHER READING

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FILMS ON WOMEN IN BUDDHISM

Daughters of Dolma
Daughters of Wisdom
Cave in the Snow
Blessings
Sisters of Ladakh
The Buddha's Forgotten Nuns
Satya: A Prayer for the Enemy: The Nonviolent Resistance of Tibetan Buddhist Nuns
Gate of Sweet Nectar: Feeding Hungry Spirits in an American Zen Community



2013 NEWS

Collated by Bhiksuni Karma Lekshe Tsomo and Danie M. Becknell

Sakyadhita's New Blog: Awakening Buddhist Women
<http://awakeningbuddhistwomen.blogspot.com>

We are nuns, laywomen, monks, laymen, scholars, practitioners, young and old. We practice in different Buddhist traditions and are diverse in myriad ways, but we come together with a shared eagerness to express the joys and obstacles we encounter in the sangha and in practicing the Buddhist teachings. We have a personal or religious commitment to Buddhist teachings and/or have a keen interest in the preservation and study of these teachings.

We sincerely strive for gender equity and equanimity toward all sentient beings of any background, ethnicity, gender, national-

ity, or religion. We welcome all those who are willing to share in a meaningful discussion about these concepts

This blog is a moderated public forum where the varied and ever-changing dynamics that female Buddhist practitioners encounter are documented and discussed. We aim to make this a space for ongoing dialogue about these crucial issues.

In the months to come we will be sharing articles from Buddhist women of all walks of life. We welcome new submissions, as well as comments and suggestions. Please contact us at awakeningwomen@sakyadhita.org to submit an article.

Online Soon: The Awakening Buddhist Women Resource Library

The Awakening Buddhist Women initiative continues with the establishment of a Resource Library to benefit seekers of material on Buddhist women. The multimedia archive builds on the work of the Awakening Buddhist Women blog to present a wide variety of multimedia for visitors' use, enjoyment, and research.

The Resource Library archives a wealth of articles, videos, sound files, and images into one central collection of resources for Buddhist women and those interested in discovering more about women in Buddhism. It is designed to serve as a hub that shares materials for free and for everyone. All of these media are acquired with the kind permission of their sources or are rigorously referenced.

Sakyadhita and the Awakening Buddhist Women team look forward to welcoming you to the new Resource Library soon.

Women in Buddhism: A Free e-Learning Course on Women in Buddhist Societies

by Lisa Fancott

In June, 2013, an Interdisciplinary Colloquium and Workshop on Women in Buddhism was held at the University of Hamburg. The workshop discussions produced several recommendations, including the proposal to offer an online course covering historical and modern topics on Women in Buddhism. The E-learning course will be a first step in a wider program that will cover the three core areas of research, study and dialogue.

The first e-Learning course will build on the foundation and success of the first International Conference on Women's Role in



Congratulations to Sakyadhita Korea! On November 09-10, 2013 Sakyadhita Korea held its official inauguration in Seoul, South Korea. Stay tuned for their new website in 2014.

the Sangha that was held at the University of Hamburg in 2007, by continuing the same theme, namely, full ordination for Buddhist women. This topic is presently of high priority, both in the Theravada and Mulasaravastivada monastic traditions. The new e-Learning course will offer sound academic research on the legal questions of *bhikkhuni/bhiksuni* ordination, based on a study of the relevant Vinaya materials, followed by an updated regional survey on the current situation of nuns in the Theravada and Mulasaravastivada traditions.

The first E-Learning course on Women in Buddhism will be offered free of charge, beginning in 2014, with lectures by international scholars who specialize in various aspects of the topic. This study initiative, consisting of 12 lectures and related course work, will be held every Thursday during the summer of 2014. This initial course will be a starting point for further E-learning courses in subsequent semesters to further explore the various themes of Women in Buddhist Societies that were suggested during the recent workshop. Sakyadhita and Buddhist women everywhere are grateful to Bhikkhu Anaalayo and the University of Hamburg for their support for the ground breaking course. Search <University of Hamburg Women in Buddhism> for the website.

Fourth Sakyadhita Taiwan Dharma Translation Retreat

by Christie Chang

Sakyadhita Taiwan successfully held its Fourth Dharma Translation Retreat from August 22-24 at Puyi Yuan, Taiwan, which was well attended by over 30 participants. In addition to the local Taiwanese translators, we also had 13 Korean translators, 4 Indonesian translators, and an American translator joining the retreat. Before the formal translation training and retreat took place, there was a pre-retreat tour from August 19-21, in which many great *bhiksuni* communities were visited, including Buddhist Hongshi Institute, Yanghui Institute, and Nanlin Bhiksuni Sangha. Meanwhile, we also had a chance to pay respect to the authentic head relic of Master Xuanzang, the famous Buddhist monk translator in ancient China, preserved in a temple around the Sun Moon Lake.

During the three-day retreat at Puyi Yuan, we had the great fortune to invite many professional Dharma translators to share their experiences. In addition to these sharing sessions, the participants also had the opportunity to experience daily practices in a Taiwanese nunnery, with additional evening meditation sessions and workshops. Gloria Sherab Drolma taught the participants how to stay healthy with moving meditation, and they also joined Bhiksuni Zhaoyin, the Abbess of Puyi Yuan for a fun bamboo shoots digging session.

The end of the retreat was followed by the annual meeting of Sakyadhita Taiwan, which was well attended. Members had the opportunity to participate in the closing session and they were deeply touched by the reflections shared by the participants. As the following day was the largest *sanghadana* event held in Taiwan each year, a couple of international participants attended this event as another Buddhist cultural experience.

As a result of the gathering, the Indonesian translators have already come up with plans to translate one more Sakyadhita book, whereas the Korean team is also planning to translate selected papers from various past Sakyadhita conferences. Additionally,



Yujin Hong introduces herself at the Fourth Dharma Translation Retreat hosted by Sakyadhita Taiwan.

they may also hold a similar Dharma translation retreat in Korea sometime soon!

Inauguration of Sakyadhita Korea and Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo's Visit

by Hye-in Lee and Catherine Lee

Sakyadhita Korea, the newly established Korean branch of Sakyadhita International, announced its presence to the world with its first major event to commemorate its inauguration. Sakyadhita Korea invited Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo, renowned meditation teacher and *bhiksuni* leader, to Korea from November 6-12, 2013. During her stay, she gave lectures at two universities; held an inaugural Dharma talk; visited Bongnyeongsa, a major *bhiksuni* temple; and appreciated the beautiful sights of several temples around Korea, one over a thousand years old. In particular, her lectures at the universities offered an opportunity for young generations to rethink Buddhist teachings and Buddhist perspectives on social issues.

The inaugural Dharma talk was co-hosted by Sakyadhita Korea and the Buddhist Women's Development Institute on November 10th at Jogye Temple's performance hall. The following Sakyadhita Korea pledge was read aloud:

The Sakyadhita Newsletter is published annually by Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women. Please send any change of address to:



Sakyadhita
654 A North Judd Street
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Or email: newsletter@sakyadhita.org. For complete information about Sakyadhita's mission and conferences, visit the website at: <http://www.sakyadhita.org>.

As the Buddha's daughters, following the Buddha's teachings:
 We pledge to strive towards realizing a Buddhist Pure Land of equality and harmony.
 First, we shall seek to promote the international exchange of Korean Buddhists;
 Second, we shall provide a space for scholarly research and discussion;
 Third, we shall discover and cultivate talented Buddhist women.

The lecture hall was so jam-packed, with more than 400 in attendance, that many had to sit on the stage together with Jetsunma due to lack of space. Jetsunma's talk was a reinterpretation of the six *paramitas* in terms that modern Korean people could easily understand. Reviews of the talk said it was the greatest, most moving sermon in recent memory for Korean Buddhism.

Jetsunma's visit attracted much attention from the media and was featured in various newspapers. She stressed the importance of Korea's long-standing *bhiksuni* tradition and the role that Korean Buddhists could play in establishing an international *bhiksuni* sangha.

Thanks to Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo's visit, Sakyadhita Korea gained many new members who shared the ideals of Sakyadhita: to realize a better world by joining the strength of women. Sakyadhita Korea will focus on two major tasks in 2014. The first is the translation and publication of papers from previous Sakyadhita conferences and the second is planning a tour to Nepal and India to view the sites of Buddhist women's practice.

Acknowledgments

This issue of the *Sakyadhita Newsletter* was compiled and edited by Danie Becknell and Karma Lekshe Tsomo with assistance from Bhikkhuni Adhimutta, Ruby Grad, Neri Kristina, Li Li Leong, and Rebecca Paxton. Design by Danie Becknell. Photos by Sakyadhita volunteers (pp. 1-5, 10-11, 14, 16), T. Narayan of the *Hindustantimes.com* (p. 8), Wikimedia Commons (p. 11), and ETtoday.net (p. 13). The articles in this issue are abridged versions of papers presented at the 13th International Sakyadhita Conference on Buddhist Women held in Vaishali, India, in January 2013. We are grateful to Bhikkhuni Khiet Minh, the abbess of Mahaprajapati Monastery in Vaishali, and all the wonderful volunteers and donors who made the conference and therefore this newsletter possible!

Correction

The Jamyang Chöling nuns shown in the photo on page 19 of the 2012 *Sakyadhita Newsletter* were mistakenly identified as *bhiksunis*. They are *sramanerikas*. The editors regret the error.

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