

# *Sakyadhita*

## *INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BUDDHIST WOMEN*

### **AIMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women** is a global alliance founded at the conclusion of the first International Conference on Buddhist Women, held in Bodhgaya, India, in 1987, under the patronage of the Dalai Lama. The initiative for the conference came from the German nun Ayya Khema; the American nun Karma Lekshe Tsomo; and the Thai professor Chatsumarn Kabilsingh (now Bhikkhuni Dhammananda). The organization aims to unite Buddhist women of various countries and traditions, to promote their welfare, and to facilitate their work for the benefit of humanity. Sakyadhita (Daughters of the Buddha) now has almost 2000 members in 45 countries around the world. Biennial international conferences bring laywomen and nuns from various countries and traditions together to share their research and experience and to encourage projects to improve conditions for Buddhist women, especially in developing countries. Sakyadhita has been registered as a 501(c)3 non-profit in the State of California since 1988.

Working at the grassroots level, Sakyadhita provides a communications network among Buddhist women internationally. The organization promotes research and publications on Buddhist women's history and relevant topics. It supports Buddhist women's initiatives, including education projects, retreat facilities, training centers, women's shelters, social welfare projects, and social justice activities to create equitable opportunities for women in all Buddhist traditions.

#### **Sakyadhita's objectives include:**

- To establish an international alliance of Buddhist women
- To advance the spiritual and secular welfare of the world's women
- To work for gender equity in Buddhist education, training, institutional structures, and ordination
- To promote harmony and dialogue among the Buddhist traditions and other religions
- To encourage research and publications on topics of interest to Buddhist women
- To foster compassionate social action for the benefit of humanity
- To promote world peace through the teachings of the Buddha

#### **ORIGINS IN ANCIENT INDIA**

In the sixth century BCE, the Buddha affirmed the equal potential of women and men to achieve liberation. This affirmation represented a significant departure from prevailing views that defined women primarily in terms of their reproductive function and capacity for productive labor. The *bhikkhuni sangha* founded by Mahapajapati, the Buddha's aunt and foster mother, may have been the first monastic order for nuns in history. Since its inception, Buddhist has been unique in recognizing the equal spiritual potential of women and men. Despite this egalitarian philosophy, unequal social structures persist in most Buddhist cultures today. Today, the *bhikkhuni sangha*

survives primarily in three traditions – Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese – but efforts to establish or revive full ordination for women are underway in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and elsewhere.

## **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES**

Since 1987, Sakyadhita has held twelve international conferences on Buddhist women in Asia and three in North America. The conferences feature papers, workshops, and performances on topics relevant to Buddhist women. The global gatherings are open to all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or religion.

- 1987** 1st Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women  
Kalachakra Temple, Bodhgaya, India  
Theme: “Buddhist Nuns in Society”  
Keynote Speaker: H.H. the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama
- 1991** 2<sup>nd</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women  
Thammasat University (Ransit Campus), Bangkok, Thailand  
Theme: “Buddhist Women in the Modern World”  
Keynote Speaker: Chancellor of Thammasat University
- 1993** 3<sup>rd</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women  
International Centre, Colombo, Sri Lanka  
Theme: “Buddhist Women in Modern Society”  
Keynote Speaker: Ranasinghe Premadasa, President of Sri Lanka
- 1995** 4<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women  
Mahabodhi Meditation Centre, Leh, Ladakh  
Theme: “Women and the Power of Compassion: Survival in the 21st Century”  
Keynote Speaker: H.M. Rani Sarla, Queen of Ladakh
- 1997** 5<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women  
Wat Onaloum, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Theme: “Women in Buddhism: Unity and Diversity”  
Keynote Speaker: H.M. Queen Norodom Siranouk, Queen of Cambodia
- 2000** 6<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women  
Mahapajapati Monastery, Lumbini, Nepal  
Theme: “Women as Peacemakers: Self, Family, Community, World”  
Keynote Speaker: Minister of Culture and Sport
- 2002** 7<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women  
Huafan University, Taipei, Taiwan  
Theme: “Bridging Worlds”

Keynote Speaker: Annette Shu-lien Lu, Vice President of the Republic of China

- 2004** 8<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women  
Joong Ang Sangha University, Seoul, Korea  
Theme: “Discipline and Practice of Buddhist Women Past and Present”  
Keynote Speakers: Kwangwoo Sunim, Anne Carolyn Klein, Paula Arai
- 2006** 9<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women  
Sau Seng Lum Hall, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
Theme: “Buddhist Women in a Global Multicultural Community”  
Keynote Speaker: Sharon Suh
- 2008** 10<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women  
Hotel Mongolia, Ulaanbataar, Mongolia  
Theme: “Buddhism in Transition: Tradition, Changes, and Challenges”  
Keynote Speakers: Shundo Aoyama and Myeong Seong Sunim
- 2009** 11<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women  
Chua Pho Quang (Universal Light Monastery), Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam  
Theme: “Eminent Buddhist Women”  
Keynote Speaker: C. Julia Huang
- 2011** 12<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women  
Sathiradhammasathan, Bangkok, Thailand  
Theme: “Leading to Liberation”  
Chief Guest: Princess Srirasmi of Thailand
- 2013** 13<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women  
Mahaprajapati Monastery, Vaishali, India  
Theme: “Buddhism at the Grassroots”

#### **U. S. NATIONAL CONFERENCES**

- 1988** St. Mary’s Retreat Center, Santa Barbara, California  
Theme: “Buddhism Through American Women’s Eyes”
- 1996** Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California  
Theme: “Unity and Diversity”
- 2005** Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts  
Theme: “Women Practicing Buddhism: American Experiences”

#### **PUBLICATIONS**

***Sakyadhita Newsletter*, published bi-annually since 1990**

**1989 *Sakyadhita: Daughters of the Buddha***

Karma Lekshe Tsomo, ed. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications (German edition, *Dochter des Buddhas*) (reprinted in Delhi: Indian Books Centre, 1998)

**1994 *Buddhism Through American Women's Eyes***

Karma Lekshe Tsomo, ed. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications

**1996 *Sisters in Solitude: Two Traditions of Buddhist Monastic Ethics for Women***

Karma Lekshe Tsomo. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press

**1999 *Buddhist Women Across Cultures: Realizations***

Karma Lekshe Tsomo, ed. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press (reprinted in Delhi: Indian Books Centre, 2000)

**2000 *Innovative Women in Buddhism: Swimming Against the Stream***

Karma Lekshe Tsomo, ed. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press

**2004 *Bridging Worlds: Buddhist Women's Voices Across Generations***

Karma Lekshe Tsomo, ed. Taipei: Yuan Chuan Press

**2004 *Buddhist Women and Social Justice: Ideals, Challenges, and Achievements***

Karma Lekshe Tsomo, ed. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press

**2006 *Out of the Shadows: Socially Engaged Buddhist Women in the Global Community***

Karma Lekshe Tsomo, ed. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications

**2009 *Buddhist Women in a Global Multicultural Community***

Karma Lekshe Tsomo, ed. Kuala Lumpur: Sukhi Hotu Press

**2013 *Eminent Buddhist Women***

Karma Lekshe Tsomo, ed. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

**VIDEOS**

**1996 "The Power of Compassion" (30-minutes)**

**1998 "Women in Buddhism: Unity and Diversity" (31-minutes)**

**INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS**

Sakyadhita Training and Meditation Centre, Katubedda, Moratuwa, Sri Lanka  
<http://www.sakyadhita-srilanka.org/>

Sanghamitra Institute, Bodhgaya, India  
<http://www.jamyang.org/>

## **EXTERNAL WEBSITES**

<http://www.sakyadhita.org/>  
<http://www.sakyadhita.org/usa/>  
<http://www.sakyadhita.org/canada/>

## **SEE ALSO**

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhikkhuni>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Congress\\_on\\_Buddhist\\_Women%27s\\_Role\\_in\\_the\\_Sangha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Congress_on_Buddhist_Women%27s_Role_in_the_Sangha)  
[Engaged Buddhism](#)  
[Women in Buddhism](#)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayya\\_Khema](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayya_Khema)

## **REFERENCES**

Mavis L. Fenn and Kay Koppedrayar, "Sakyadhita: A Transnational Gathering Place for Buddhist Women," *Journal of Global Buddhism* 9(2008) 45-79.

Thea Mohr. *Weibliche Identität und Leerheit: Eine Ideengeschichtliche Rekonstruktion der Buddhistischen Frauenbewegung Sakyadhita International*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002.

Rotraut Wurst. *Identität im Exil: Tibetisch-Buddhistische Nonnen and Netzwerk Sakyadhita*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2001.

Tsomo, Karma Lekshe, *Daughters of the Buddha*  
1998 "Women in Buddhism: Unity and Diversity" (31-minute video) [http://bhikkhu.webs.com/apps/videos/videos/view/prev?channel\\_id=3208215&from\\_id=15178708](http://bhikkhu.webs.com/apps/videos/videos/view/prev?channel_id=3208215&from_id=15178708) (9 minute clip)

## **2009-2013 SAKYADHITA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

President	Christie Yuling Chang
Vice-president	Paula Arai
Secretary	Melissa Vincenty
Treasurer	Maria Arroyo
Branches and Chapters	Margaret Coberly
Conference Planning	Karma Lekshe Tsomo