

8th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women

Seoul, Korea

Conference: June 27 to July 2, 2004

Temple Tour: July 3 to 5

"Discipline and Practice of Buddhist Women: Present and Past"

Korea, known as the "Land of Morning Calm," is the venue of the 8th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women. Everyone is welcome to attend the conference: lay or ordained, and neither lay nor ordained, of all nationalities and religious backgrounds. In addition to discussions and meditation, they can enjoy the beautiful mountains and forests of Korea.

South Korea is proud of its rich Buddhist cultural history. Seoul, with many temples, monuments, and an ancient Buddhist history of its own, provides a magnificent setting for this gathering of international scholars and practitioners of the world's Buddhist traditions. According to some scholars, the word "Seoul" comes from the word "Sravasti," the Indian town where the Buddha spent 25 rainy season retreats.

A GLIMPSE OF KOREA'S BUDDHIST CULTURAL HISTORY

Two thousand years of Buddhist culture has been preserved and is still widely practiced in the Republic of Korea today. An estimated 2000 historic Buddhist temples and monuments are testimony to the living presence of the Buddha's teachings. Koreans generally follow the Mahayana tradition, making vows to attain enlightenment to liberate all beings from suffering. Lay Buddhist generally marry and have families. They may join any temple they like and may take the five lay precepts. Buddhists may also decide to renounce household life and train as a monk or nun. Many lay and ordained Buddhist take bodhisattva precepts, eat vegetarian food, and emphasize the practice of the six perfections generosity, ethics, patience, perseverance, concentration and wisdom. Today 18 sects of Buddhism thrive in Korea.

Buddhism was introduced to Korea from China around 372 C.E. Because Buddhism was perceived to be compatible with indigenous shamanistic beliefs, it was quickly adopted. Gradually Buddhism developed to a position of cultural dominance during the Shilla Period (668-935 C.E.). Emphasis during this period was the law of cause and effect, and the interrelatedness of all things.

The Koryo Period (935-1392) is noted for an emphasis on ritual practices. The Korean Tripitaka was carved onto wood blocks which are preserved to the present day in Haein-sa Temple. The practice of meditation (Chinese: Chan, Japanese: Zen, Korean: Son) and the tradition of textual study gave Buddhism new vitality. During both the Shilla and Koryo Periods, Buddhism

enjoyed the patronage of the royal court.

During the Choson Period (1392-1910) was a time of decline for Buddhism. The new rulers favored Neo-Confucianism and adopted it as the state religion. Buddhism was severely restricted and periodically persecuted for five centuries. Temples could only be built in mountain areas and monks were prohibited from entering the capital city.

From 1920-1945, Korea was annexed by Japan. The Japanese colonial administration supported Buddhism, but promoted the Japanese sects with a married priesthood, and monks were encouraged to abandon their vows of celibacy. After the Japanese occupation ended, the indigenous Korean forms of Buddhism and the ideal of celibacy were reestablished.

Currently Buddhism is flourishing in Korea. Many new temples are being constructed and many ancient temples are being restored. Buddhists are actively engaged in society, organizing education programs, meditation classes, social welfare projects, and Buddhist cultural events. In Korea, the numbers of nuns and monks are roughly equal. After five or six years of training as novices, they are eligible to receive full ordination as bhiksunis and bhiksus. Monasteries for nuns and monks are strictly separate and function independently. Buddhist colleges and institutes provide equal education opportunities for both nuns and monks. This year a nun was selected to head the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Chogye order -- a historical first.

SAKYADHITA: GLOBAL COALITION OF BUDDHIST WOMEN

Since 1987, Sakyadhita: International Association of Buddhist Women has been working to benefit Buddhist women around the world. Established at the conclusion of the 1st Sakyadhita Conference in Bodhgaya, India, in 1987, the organization has 1900 members and friends in 45 countries around the world. Every two years an international conference is held to bring laywomen and nuns from different countries and traditions together to share their experiences on issues of mutual interest and encourage projects to improve conditions for Buddhist women, especially in developing countries.

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 other topics of interest. It supports Buddhist women's initiatives to create education projects, retreat facilities, training center, women's shelters, and local conferences and discussion groups. Members strive to create equal opportunities for women in all Buddhist traditions.

CONFERENCE THEME AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

The theme of the 8th Sakyadhita Conference is "Discipline and Practice of Buddhist Women: Present and Past." Tentative topics for discussion include:

Meditation Practices "Shamatha and Vipassana in the Buddhist Traditions," "Buddhist Meditation Practices: Asia and the West," "Practices for Developing Loving Kindness and Compassion," "Mindfulness in Daily Living," "Meditation and Work," "Combining Religious Practices, Combining Buddhist Practices," "Practical Meditation Techniques," "Meditation on Emptiness."

Everyday Practice "Ritual Practices," "Devotional Practices," "Practice of the Precepts: Lay and Monastic," "Food of Dharma: Rituals at Meals and in the Kitchen," "Rituals of the Robes," "Dharma in Everyday Life," "Dharma in Relationships."

Discipline, Education and Training "Teaching Dharma to Children," "The Education and Training of Laywomen and Nuns," "Buddhist Women and Discipline: Transitions," "Historical Spread of Buddhism Throughout the World."

Engaged Buddhist Practice "Buddhist Responses to Social and Political Realities (Abortion, Death Penalty, Burma, Tibet, etc.)," "Buddhist Approaches to Conflict Resolution," "Interfaith Understanding, Inter-Buddhist Understanding," "Trafficking in Women and Children: What Can Buddhists Do? (e.g., "Learning from Korea's Experience of "Comfort Women")," "NGOs: Organizing for Social Change," "Buddhist Theories of Interdependence and the Environment"

Buddhist Practice and Women's Issues "Buddhist Liberation, Women's Liberation," "Is an Egalitarian Buddhism Possible?" "Buddhism and Women's Health," "Feminist Interpretations of Buddhist Doctrine," "Can Women Become Enlightened? How Do We Do It?"

Buddhism Today "Multimedia Opportunities," "Buddhist Practice in Uncertain Times (International Security, Nuclear Danger, Global Economics, etc.)," "Contemporary Buddhist Practices," "Buddhist Practice Today: Tradition and Adaptation"

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

June 26 All day Arrival in Korea
(Inchoen International Airport)

June 27 6:00-6:50 am Meditation
7:00-7:50 am Breakfast
8 – 11:00 am Opening Ceremony
Chanting in the Buddhist Traditions
Words of Welcome
Keynote Speakers
11:30-12:30 Lunch
1:00-6:00 pm Seoul City Tour
6:00-8:00 pm Welcome Reception, Dinner and Cultural
Program (Korean Bhikkhuni Association)

June 28 _____ 6:00-6:50 am Meditation
-July 27:00-7:50 am Breakfast
8:00-9:30 am Morning Panel Presentations
9:40-11:00 am _____ Discussion Groups
11:00-12:00 am _____ Lunch
12:00-1:00 pm _____ Free Time
1:00-2:30 pm Afternoon Panel Discussions
2:40-4:00 pm Discussion Groups
4:00-5:00 pm Tea Break
5:00-6:00 pm Chanting
7:00-8:30 pm Cultural Program

July 3-5 _____ **Temple Tour**
(Haeinsa, Unmunsa, Soknamsa, Bulguksa)

July 5 (after 6 pm) or July 6 _____ **Departure**

TRAVEL TIPS

The weather in summer in Korea is warm and a bit humid, with occasional showers. Modest summer clothes, a light sweater, walking shoes, and sandals are recommended. Out of respect for our host culture, please do not wear shorts or revealing tops. Please bring toiletries, any medications you may require, and snacks, if you wish.

Participants should arrive in Seoul on June 26. Those who provide arrival information by June 10 will be greeted at the airport by members of the reception committee, who will arrange transportation to the conference site. Foreign currency may be exchanged at the airport upon arrival. The local currency is the South Korean won (approximately US\$1 = 1200 won and Euro = 1300). Travelers from some countries do not need visas, but some do. Check <http://english.tour2korea.com/coming/essential/entry.asp> for details.

CONFERENCE FEES

The cost of the conference is US\$300 for members and \$350 for non-members. The conference fee includes simple Korean-style accommodations (futon), three vegetarian meals, and shuttle service at the conference site. Hotel accommodations are available nearby for those who wish.

The cost of the temple tour is \$120, inclusive of transportation, Korean-style temple accommodations, and three meals. Transportation from the airport to the conference site will be provided for arrivals on June 26 all day, and for departures on July 3 morning, July 5 evening, and July 6 all day. The fee for roundtrip airport transportation is \$30. Payment for registration must be received by May 15, 2004.

OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP

Thousands of women from developing countries would love to come to the Sakyadhita Conference in Korea, but lack the financial resources to attend. Your generosity can provide a laywoman or nun from one of these countries this once-in-a-lifetime experience. We encourage groups of friends to pool their resources and provide needed support. A donation of \$1000 will cover all expenses for a laywoman or nun from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tibet, or Vietnam to attend the conference.

We also welcome your ideas, suggestions, and participation in the conference planning!

REGISTRATION FORM

Conference registration fee

(Includes Korean-style accommodations, vegetarian meals, and shuttle service)

_____ \$300 for members

_____ \$350 for non-members

Airport transportation

(round-trip on days indicated)

_____ \$30

Donations

\$ _____ To sponsor a participant from a developing country

_____ I would like to sponsor a laywoman

_____ I would like to sponsor a nun

_____ I would like to sponsor someone from _____

_____ \$ _____ General conference donation

Name: _____

Address: _____

Country: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Affiliation: _____

Position: _____

Special Interests: _____

Languages spoken: _____

Please let us know if you are qualified and would like to help with the

translation of papers, simultaneous interpretation, or informal interpretation during discussion groups.

Deadline for registration, with payment, is May 15, 2004.

Send registration ***in US dollars*** (check or money order) to:

Sakyadhita International
47-710-2 Hui Kelu Street
Kaneohe, HI 96744

Please visit the Sakyadhita website for updates: www.sakyadhita.org.
For further information, contact: ktsomo@sandiego.edu.

Hope to see you at the conference!