

Sakyadhita

International Association of Buddhist Women

TABLE OF CONTENTS

9th Sakyadhita Conference in Malaysia

Chanting Japanese in Malaysia

Closer to the Buddha Land

An Unusual Journey that Brings Us Together

Fulfilling the Buddha's Dream: Beginnings of the Bhiksuni Sangha in China

Karuna for Telemarketers

Tibetan Buddhist Nun "Shot Down like a Dog"

Seeding the Dharma in the Present Moment

What is New With You?

Books on Buddhist Women

Women Living the Dharma in the Midwest



9th SAKYADHITA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BUDDHIST WOMEN IN MALAYSIA

by *Bhikshuni Jampa Tsedroen (Carola Roloff)*

This year's Sakyadhita conference took place from June 17 to 21 in Kuala Lumpur. For five days, 530 female and male participants from 25 countries gathered to discuss the topic, "Buddhist Women in a Global Multicultural Community." All were united by a common interest to practice the teachings of the Buddha. Young student activists, women from many different lines of business, politically active social workers, oppressed women, female executives, scientists, and social scientists sat together as friends. The 12-hour program was filled with morning meditations, short talks, discussions, workshops, and evening recitations. Those who were not exhausted at the end of the day also met for cultural performances in the evening

Buddhism Supports Patriarchal Structures

Even serious topics could not detract from the cheerful atmosphere. For generations, women have become used to adversity. These days, however, more and more women are rising up. Nor are education and emancipation for women stopping at the borders of Asia. The world's peoples are demanding religious tolerance and equality, and discrimination is increasingly critiqued. Yet looking at an estimated 300 million Buddhist women around the world, one finds that a majority continue to live in poverty, without equal access to education and Buddhist practice. In Asian societies, which are strongly influenced by Buddhism, traditional interpretations of the scriptures may even help to prop up patriarchal social structures.

In the light of global changes in attitudes toward women, the Buddhist traditions are being asked to explain the contradiction between the theory and practice of the Buddhist teachings. Especially nuns, but also laymen, who usually have monk teachers and keep up a close teacher-disciple relation, are torn between respect for their teachers and new scientific discoveries that at least partly contradict traditional representations of women.

Women's social habitus and their status within the Buddhist community do not permit them to openly voice doubts regarding their teachers' words or those of the Buddha, at least not without risking a loss of respect in the Buddhist community.

Buddhist Women in a Global Multicultural Community

The 9th Sakyadhita Conference focused primarily on the effects of globalization caused by growing international connections that affect various aspects of society. For example, Bhiksuni Tenzin Palmo talked about monastic life in a consumer society. As at previous conferences, participants showed great interest in learning from each other and were open to experimentation. The close contacts that were cultivated will extend beyond the conference.

The hosts set an especially good example of collaboration. Malaysia, with its Muslim majority, is a prime example of a multi-cultural society that gives close attention to its minorities. Islam is the state religion and 60 % of the population are officially Muslim. According to the country's constitution, all ethnic Malays are Muslims by birth. At the same time, Chinese Buddhists make up about 20% of the population, Indian Hindus 6 %, while the 9% Christians can be found in all ethnic groups. There are also Malays who practice Theravada or Tibetan Buddhism.

The conference program started by introducing the situation of Buddhist women in Malaysia, followed by cross-cultural presentations on Buddhist women's new roles and opportunities. Certain topics were potentially explosive, such as women and power, discrimination against nuns in Thailand, and Zenju Earthlyn Manuel's talk, "What Does Buddhism Have to Do with Black Women?" From the midst of the audience, calls for clearly naming the problems grew louder and louder.

Several workshops and a whole morning were dedicated to the topic, "Bhiksuni Vinaya and Full Ordination for Women." It became clear that most opposition to the full ordination of women can be traced to a lack of knowledge of the history of Buddhism and of other Buddhist traditions. Further information on the issues is urgently needed. The forthcoming First International Congress on Buddhist Women's Role in the Sangha, to be held at the University of Hamburg from July 18 to 20, 2007, will address these issues.

Leading nuns and monks of all Buddhist traditions, scholars, and social scientists from all over the world have been invited as speakers. In his letter of recommendation to the organizers of the congress, H.H. the Dalai Lama says, "I have agreed to participate in the symposium on 20 July 2007 and give my full support. I hope that the symposium will inspire Buddhist women in their dedication to a religious life and improve their social recognition." Observers around the world are eager to see the outcome.

For further details, see:

<http://www.congress-on-buddhist-women.org>.

Translated from German to English by Herdis Horn.

CHANTING JAPANESE IN MALAYSIA

by Zenju Earthlyn Manuel

The traffic is heavy on our way from the airport to the five-day 9th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women being held at Sau Seng Lum Temple in Selangor, Puchong, just outside of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. There are hundreds of palm trees, tall and squatting ones, lush green bushes, small cars, and small SUVs. Inside the cars, Asian Muslim women are wrapped in cloth, some from crown to chin, some from crown to toe. As we ride along, our host tells us housing is built so not to take up space, to preserve open land. She tells us that, when she was in America she was shocked to see one house taking up large spaces of land, that one family could have so much to themselves. I looked out the window knowing that I wanted that kind of house, with a lot of land, not like the ones I saw out the window that reminded me of urban subsidized housing, people stacked upon each other. It was clear that on this journey in Malaysia, I would be studying this individualistic self, understanding this "self," and practicing to let go of it.

When I sit quietly enough, images of the Sakyadhita conference grace my heart. Three days after being back in Oakland, California, I still heard the voices of the Tibetan nuns singing "We Shall Overcome," singing deep in their hearts, that they do believe that liberation is possible today, not someday. I listened to the song from the other side of one of the curtains that divided a dormitory of hundreds of lay and ordained women. I sang "We Shall Overcome," too, but it is a silent rendition. Tears well up in my eyes. What brings such a song of freedom to the hearts of an African American woman over 50 years old, such as myself, and Tibetan nuns in their youth? Perhaps it is that they long to be in Tibet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, sharing the Dharma. I long to know what African country I came from and what language my ancestors spoke. Yet, despite our displacement we arrive together at the same home of Sakyadhita, having been taught Buddha's teachings, celebrating life with five hundred other devoted Buddhist women, lay and ordained, from 45 countries, including Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Australia, Sweden, India, United States, Canada, and, of course, Malaysia.

At the opening ceremony, Theravadin, Mahayana, and Vajrayana nuns were invited to chant from their respective traditions. San Francisco Zen Center's Kyoshin Wendy Lewis, an ordained Zen priest, and myself, having taken lay initiation vows, are waiting to chant the *Heart Sutra* as translated for the American Japanese Soto Zen tradition. Only thing folks can't quite figure out is why we are on the program to chant in Japanese. The program coordinator asks, "Are you Japanese?" There's a sign on the back of Kyoshin's chair that says "Japanese," designating the row. The row in front of us is designated "Theravada," with nuns from Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia.



"No, we say, "We're not Japanese, we're American."
 "Then why are you chanting in Japanese?"
 "Because we were asked to represent Japan for the ceremony?"

We cringe, knowing it is not literally possible to represent Japan.

"You speak Japanese?" they ask, looking at my black African face and Wendy's European one.

"No, but we do chant the *Heart Sutra* in Japanese at our temple."

"So, you're Japanese?"

"No, were Americans."

Sitting in a room filled with photographers and reporters from Malaysian newspapers and TV, they snap pictures because they see an African dressed in a lay robe in the Japanese Zen tradition. As they snap I wonder where are the Japanese anyway? The questions continue with another set of inquirers who are coordinating the ceremony.

"There are only two of you?"

"Yes."

"Where are the rest of the Japanese?"

"Are you nuns?"

They glance at our short-cropped hair standing out among the shaved heads of our Dharma sisters. The nuns representing China are chanting. After them, it is time for us to head for the elevated stage and stand in front of a six-foot high Buddha statue, before at least 300 people, including dignitaries, politicians, and abbots of the largest Buddhist organizations in the country. The conference is an important event, given the country is predominantly Islamic. But one more question. A young Malaysian woman from the back taps me on the shoulder.

"Are you from Africa?"

"No."

"Are you Japanese?"

"No, I'm from America and I practice Zen in the Japanese tradition."

She smiles, still a bit confused, probably not so much about my being American or African as much as trying to understand Buddhism outside of an Asian country.

When our turn comes to chant, there is only one thing to do: chant the *Heart Sutra* (*Maka Hannya Haramitta Shin Gyo*) as Japanese as possible. Even though I did not have this particular chant memorized, I heard our voices echoing out across the silent auditorium as I read and Kyoshin stood steadfast facing the audience. Only two of us on that elevated stage, as if we were standing on a mountain. The sound of our voices seemed to reach the lake 100 yards away from the open 20-foot-square doorway of the temple. I thought a breeze came to the stage, but it was the air from the cooling system.

After chanting, we bowed to the Buddha, then to the audience and walked off the stage. Back at my seat, I sat listening to the Korean nuns whose *Heart Sutra* chant sounded most similar to ours. I felt honored that Kyoshin had invited me to join her, because even though it seemed we were in over our heads, we managed to extend our chant of compassion.

Later, we were congratulated on how beautifully we chanted and how the voices of two sounded as voluminous as an entire group of nuns. Perhaps it was pure Buddha nature and our planting our feet firmly, despite and because of the confusion we brought to the ceremony, that helped our voices to sing. Perhaps the chant reminded us of being in the Buddha Hall at the San Francisco Zen Center, being joined by the sangha back home. Whatever the reason for our success, Kyoshin and I turned to each other and acknowledged that next time we'll bring more of the sangha. I thought, yes, so that they will know there are more than two of us that chant the Buddha's *sutras* in Japanese in America.

After the talk I presented on Black women and Buddhism, it was clear to more of the women and men in the room that I was American. There was a genuine interest from the nuns and laywomen from all over the world about the human condition of African Americans in the United States, especially black youth. They wanted to know about the possibilities of Buddha's teachings affecting the despair among African Americans. They wanted to know about Buddhism in ancient and contemporary Africa. Presenting the paper turned their focus from discerning my nationality or the origin of my Zen robe to a collective inquiry of oppression in the light of the Buddha's teachings and more questions about Soto Zen. Then, I felt they could understand my presence at the gathering and I became more of a Dharma sister.

Three days after that presentation, on an early morning in the humidity of a granite sky and the prized Malaysian bougainvillea bouncing lightly, the Muslim prayer called out over Puchong, surrounding the temple and my head. Outside, barefoot, in my light cotton kimono, normally worn under a black Zen practice robe, I hung up wet clothes to dry. A private joy brought a smile to my face, because I

was suddenly not from anywhere else in the world other than where I stood, feet to the one earth beneath a sliver of a familiar moon. There was no longing for Africa in the moment, having found a global sangha speaking a language that inspires a life of Dharma.

As I explore full ordination in the Zen tradition, I contemplate wanting to be a nun and not a priest, as we call our ordained. And this may be because I walked away from the conference feeling a part of the global Buddhist world, feeling the honor of being a nun, a “venerable” as they are called. I trust that the merit of the Sakyadhita gathering will be transmitted to all sentient beings.

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CLOSER TO THE BUDDHA LAND

by *Melissa Shane*

This year has proved to be a great blessing. Not only was I introduced to Sakyadhita and its dedicated leaders, but I also had the good fortune and privilege to attend my first Sakyadhita conference: “Buddhist Women in a Global, Multicultural Community.” The conference was attended by hundreds of lay Buddhists, ordained nuns, teachers, researchers, and others curious to know more about Buddhism.

It was a journey I will not soon forget. I had some travel experience in Asia in the past and had little doubt that I would feel at home in Malaysia. As I write this, I am glancing through photos, small trinkets, and educational materials I received during the five days of the conference, followed by travels to temples throughout the gorgeous Malaysian countryside. I feel as though I received more from this experience than I can put into words. Here I will try to highlight just a few of the countless gifts I received.

The opening ceremony was breathtaking. Conference attendees from across the globe; both ordained and lay, represented the diversity of Buddhist traditions as they chanted prayers and a welcome to all. The robes and lay dress of countries including Korea, Vietnam, Nepal, Cambodia, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand filled the conference hall and temple, which was charged with so much energy. It was as if I could feel the unified intentions and spirit of all the wonderful people who were there – an extremely moving experience. In Malaysia, I was united with kindred spirits who had traveled so far to come together peacefully and join their sincere intentions to relieve the suffering of all beings. I shed a few tears that morning, as I considered how fortunate I was to share that moment. The upcoming days, filled with learning and making global connections and friendships, succeeded my highest expectations.

The conference sessions were lively and inspiring. I learned so much about the struggles and accomplishments of women, whether lay Buddhist, ordained monastics, or

somewhere in-between. I had been naïve to the real discrimination that women within the international Buddhist community experience. For example, Buddhist women who wish to become ordained face countless barriers, unlike their male ordained counterparts. The opportunity to delve more intimately into these and other topics came through small interpersonal workshops. I had the opportunity to not only participate, but to lead a workshop as well.

I deeply appreciated exploring what it means to be a Buddhist woman, in my case, an American woman and student on the Buddhist path. I was also introduced to sacred dance and learned about movement as meditation, as we chanted blessings and prayers familiar from *puja* ceremonies I have attended in the past. The workshop that I led on “Buddhism and HIV/AIDS” explored the global issue of the largest pandemic in the world at this time. We discussed what we can do in our own small but influential communities in various parts of the world. We also considered our own fears and ambivalence around the disease, and the sobering issues of death and dying, as well as our potential to help the disenfranchised by taking compassionate action.

At the conference, attendees were treated to delicious homemade vegetarian food and nightly music and dance by Malaysia’s gifted local talents. We took time for group meditation each morning and chanting every afternoon, enjoyed tea and sweets with new friends, and quietly made notes in our journals about the new, communal discoveries that unfolded each day. We were treated to beautiful displays within the temple and conference center, including an exhibit of 500 arhats fashioned from clay.

The temples we visited following the Sakyadhita conference – scattered throughout Ipoh, Malaka, and Penang – were impressive to say the least! Especially memorable were the temples carved out of caves. I’ll never forget entering the first one and looking up at the mossy, lush, majestic cliffs. The sight elicited a feeling of seemingly endless greenery, as if I had been shrunk into a bonsai tree world or an exquisitely detailed Asian painting. The gardens and ancient images of the Buddha and protector deities made me feel closer to the Buddha land. I admired the detail and beauty of each temple we encountered, explained through the kindness of local Malaysians at each temple community. All expressed their kindness and generosity by inviting us to share meals, chanting, and prayers. Together we celebrated and honored Sakyadhita for its undeniable courage and dedication to the mission of empowering women around the world and promoting peace in every aspect of the organization’s tireless work.

To learn more about Sakyadhita, future conferences, and opportunities, to give and be inspired, please go to www.sakyadhita.org.

Until the next Sakyadhita conference in Mongolia brings us together again...!



AN UNUSUAL JOURNEY TO BRINGS US TOGETHER

Pik Pin Goh

In the summer of July 2006, twelve nuns from the Himalayas excitedly traveled to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to attend the 9th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Woman. Sramanerika Padma Chhokid, the head nun of Yangchen Choling, was among them. Yangchen Choling is a small monastery for women located in Spiti, a secluded valley in the remote highlands of the Indian Himalayas. This was Padma's first journey aboard and she had no idea that her foray across the Indian Ocean would bring so many people together and have such a powerful impact on so many human beings.

Himalayan people have little contact with the outside world, so Padma was never quite sure when her birthday was according to the Western calendar. But she knew that she was 47 years old, or 46 Western years, since the time spent in her mother's tummy is counted in Spiti. She went through many hardships in her early years, due to the harsh Spiti winters, poverty, and lack of education. Being religious by nature, she became a Buddhist nun at a young age. Working night and day to benefit others, she was naturally nurturing and eventually became a role model for her lovely community of nuns.

Over a period of 20 years, Padma struggled against all odds to create a monastery in Spiti. She played a central role in assembling the residents of Yangchen Choling and creating a monastery for women in a mountainous area that had never had one before. With selfless dedication, she helped transform a small band of nuns in tattered robes into a vibrant and highly respected community of accomplished practitioners. Surviving the initial hardships of practicing in a scorpion-infested cave, she led the nuns in building a beautiful, traditional Tibetan-style monastery with a full-time Buddhist Studies program for more than 36 nuns.

In a region where nuns had hitherto been overlooked in favor of monks, she became highly respected for her leadership qualities, helping raise the profile of women practitioners in Spiti. Defying all odds, she was among the first nuns in Spiti to be invited to lead public prayers for community events. The sound of her clear, harmonious voice leading the Prayer of Truth for the liberation of Tibet at the consecration of the village temple in Hansa in 2003 is one of her community's fondest memories. Happily, this moment was captured on videotape as an inspiration to future generations of women.

Since Sakyadhita was founded in 1987, international conferences on Buddhist women have been held every two years. These gatherings have brought women from many countries and cultures together and transformed many lives. As part of its noble objective to benefit Buddhist women, Sakyadhita makes a special effort to sponsor nuns and laywomen from remote areas to attend these conferences. For these neglected women, meeting people from different backgrounds to exchange ideas on spiritual practice is a really eye-opening experience. The Malaysian Conference Planning Committee and international donors raised funds to sponsor some women from Spiti to attend the 9th Sakyadhita International Conference in Kuala Lumpur. Padma was among the fortunate ones.

Padma arrived in Kuala Lumpur on June 16 with ten nuns from India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Soon after the opening ceremony on June 17, she fell ill with fever and chills. Two volunteers noticed her discomfort and took her to see a doctor. The doctor immediately sent her to the hospital for a checkup, where a physical examination revealed a vague abdominal mass, swollen cervical lymph nodes, pneumonia, and a bleeding ulcer. After two weeks of clinical tests, a CT scan showed a huge ovarian tumor, which was inoperable. A biopsy of the cervical lymph node confirmed an advanced stage of adenocarcinoma from the malignant tumor. The doctors attending her reached a consensus that active treatment was inadvisable.

When Padma was given the news about her terminal condition, her only wish was to return to her monastery to give final counsel to her nuns and die in her snowy homeland. However, she was in the hospital receiving medical treatment, with many tubes in her, and too weak to travel. The doctors devised a treatment plan to control the symptoms, in the hope of making her strong enough to travel home.

Kasih Hospice Care Society (KHC), a non-governmental charity organization in Kuala Lumpur that provides palliative care, was requested to take over Padma's care. The aim was to get her medically fit to travel before it was too late, though achieving this aim was by no means certain. As the doctors at the hospital put her on an intravenous drip and Ryle tube to control her vomiting, they were not confident that she would make it. The doctor at KHC, by contrast, felt that Padma was overloaded with fluids and needed to



restrict her fluid intake. Due to differences in management style and the urgent concern about time, we requested that she be discharged from the hospital.

KHC does not own its own premises and often has to borrow premises from others to care for destitute or homeless patients. The first critical issue, then, was to find Padma a place to stay. Upon hearing our plea, Bhikkhu B. Saranankara Thero, the chief priest of the Sri Lankan Buddhist Temple and principal of Sentul Sri Jayanti Sundat Dhamma School in Kuala Lumpur, very kindly allotted a room at Maha Karuna Compassion Home. As she rested there, her condition began to stabilize.

Even if Padma could be made fit to travel, however, the five-hour flight to Delhi was just the beginning. Getting back to Yangchen Choling Monastery meant an additional two-day land journey across austere and very mountainous terrain. To get Padma safely home was therefore a major challenge, both for Padma and KHC.

Very quickly, however, the conference organizers, friends, well-wishers, and ordinary people off the street came to know about Padma's plight. Total strangers read about her situation in the newspaper and rallied together to offer their help. Some people visited her regularly to provide comfort, some donated money for her hospitalization and travel costs, while others cooked food and brought it to the volunteers. Sramanerika Sonam Wangmo, a Bhutanese nun, translated and cared for her tirelessly day and night. Many people said prayers for her, all in their own special ways.

Padma was not an ordinary patient. She showed great courage in the face of death and showered her caregivers

with kindness. She expressed no fear or self-pity. Despite great discomfort due to a distended abdomen and breathlessness, she never complained or showed frustration. Even though she vomited frequently, she never soiled her clothes. When we could not get a container to her quickly enough, she even swallowed the vomit, so that we did not need to clean up the mess. She was that thoughtful – always putting others before herself. She was constantly concerned about the welfare of those who cared for her and wore an indelible, radiant smile.

During her illness, Padma taught us some Himalayan chanting with beautiful melodies. She was the composer of her life's orchestra and we were the audience that enjoyed her song. She was in full control of her life and her life's melody rose to a crescendo at the end. Those who cared for her learned a great lesson – that every moment in life is incredibly precious and that we can do much good, even during a time of illness, if we willingly accept our illness. If we face life directly, death is not so frightening after all.

With an outpouring of love and concern, KHC's experienced medical team balanced medical science with compassionate service. Teaming up with the organizing committee of the 9th Sakyadhita Conference, these devoted caregivers provided wholesome care and were able to regenerate Padma to a point that she could return to the Himalayas. Within seven short days, she was transformed from a failing, bed-ridden patient with an oxygen tube to the nose, tube to the stomach, and catheter from the lower body, into a smiling and confident patient ready to travel.

On July 19, Padma flew off to New Delhi, accompanied by Tai Yun, a skilled KHC nurse. The air tickets were sponsored by compassionate Buddhist donors and Malaysian Airlines (MAS). The Kuala Lumpur International Airport Authority was kind enough to allow the ambulance to drive right out on the tarmac and Padma was then fork lifted into the plane. Due to the cancer, Padma's abdomen was badly swollen and it was very difficult to lift her into the seat. Seeing her difficulty, an MAS crew member bent down and used his back to support Padma's body, while the medical team positioned her into her seat. Such selfless concern was touching beyond words.



The five-hour flight to New Delhi was not easy and Padma threw up frequently on the way. Under the care of Tai Yun and the MAS flight attendants, she finally reached her destination at midnight. Thanks to the coordinated international efforts of many well-wishers, arrangements had been made for an ambulance to meet her on the tarmac and lift her from the plane. She was greeted by Tara Krajanek, a young Austrian woman who was raised in Bodhgaya and frequently travels to Yangchen Choling as a volunteer. Her guardian, Karma Lekshe Tsomo, along with Padma's brother and concerned friends, awaited her arrival with trepidation and anxiety. It has been a long, long vigil.

Once Padma arrived, she was carried up three flights of stairs to Tara's flat and placed on a comfortable bed in an air-conditioned room to escape the oppressive heat of the Delhi summer night. Alternately sipping water and throwing up, she lay conscious, despite the pain medication. Although bloated and ashen, she responded warmly to everyone who came to express concern. With fond memories of Malaysia in her heart, she seemed relieved to be back in India, a few thousand miles nearer her homeland.

There were still many decisions to be made. Would it be wise to transport her to Spiti in her debilitated condition? Would it be possible to get a helicopter to fly her in? Would it be safe to take a helicopter over the Himalayas in the monsoon rain? Would the monsoon skies clear long enough to see her safely home? If she traveled by road, would she make it back safely?

The Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh offered the use of his helicopter to airlift Padma to a landing pad nearest to Spiti. Just to be sure, Tara and Lekshe made alternative arrangements. Just at the last moment, news came that the monsoon was in full gale and the helicopter could not take off. An agonizing decision had to be made. Was it better to wait five days for another helicopter or send her off on a two-day journey over bumpy mountain roads instead?

Her caregivers decided that this was Padma's decision to make. When the options had been explained, Padma expressed her wish to leave for Spiti by ambulance as soon as possible. The ambulance was summoned and Tara's car was prepared for a late night departure. Accompanied by two Austrian nurses, a translator, her brother, an Indian nurse, two drivers, and two mechanics, Padma silently bid her sad farewells and the two vehicles slowly started on their treacherous journey. For those left behind, this was the saddest imaginable moment. Feeling bereft, they could only make prayers through the night.

As the caravan trundled up along the northern India byways to the foothills of the Himalayas, Padma maintained a quiet dignity. Despite the intense discomfort she must have felt, she never complained. After fourteen hours on the road, the caravan arrived in Manali, where Padma was transferred to a smaller ambulance able to negotiate the mountain roads and outfitted with the little oxygen available at the local hospital. The party decided to leave for Spiti

immediately, barely stopping to catch their breath. Finally, after another ten hours of travel over bumpy dirt roads, at 2 am on July 22, Padma finally reached her beloved Yangchen Choling. At the monastery, she was received by the nuns, members of her family, and the villagers of Pangmo, who lined up to welcome her home. Ten hours later, safely back at the monastery after her courageous journey, beloved Padma peacefully passed away.

Although it is unbearably sad that such a fine practitioner passed away so young, everyone involved in her care derived great joy from having known her and great peace from having done our best to accomplish her final wish. Surrounded by her loving Dharma sisters at Yangchen Choling and the pristine snow mountains of her beloved homeland, Padma finally rested in peace. Her nearly impossible dream was made possible by the generosity and kindness of many people, reaching across differences of faith, culture, and national borders. All these people selflessly reached out to a red-robed nun in dire need of help. Like a cooling rain in a world scorched by confusion and violent anger, her peaceful heart brought a shower of blessings to all who met her.



For the staff and volunteers at KHC, Padma elicited our deepest compassion and gave us a great gift – the confidence to meet future challenges. The many volunteers and friends who walked with Padma during the last days of her life will always treasure this journey of love, care, laughter, and unconditional generosity of spirit. For days after, the nuns and villagers in Pangmo celebrated her life and made prayers for her favorable rebirth, rejoicing in the enormous merit she had accumulated during her brief lifetime in this world. Through her example, Padma continues to encourage us to live every day meaningfully, here and now, to be good to each other and create virtue for future lives. Padma's journey to Malaysia was brief, but it brought us all together on a greater, unexpected journey of love and human kindness.

FULFILLING THE BUDDHA'S DREAM: BEGINNINGS OF THE BHIKSUNI SANGHA IN CHINA

Roseanne Freese

A debate began 2,500 years ago about what constitutes a valid transmission of the monastic discipline for women (Bhiksuni Vinaya). The Buddha settled the matter after his stepmother, Mahaprajapati, requested to join the Sangha three times. Buddhist tradition says that the Enlightened One was reluctant to ordain her, but was finally convinced by his attendant Ananda. The Buddha's reluctance is echoed in some corners of the world today by some people who believe that the lineage of the Bhiksuni Sangha has been lost. Questions have been raised about the transmission of the *bhiksuni* lineage to China and the appropriateness of the participants. Are these doubts warranted? Were we to apply the same questions to the transmission of the Bhiksu Sangha, could all doubts be removed? Interestingly, a careful review of historical documents reveals that the transmission of the ordination for Chinese nuns was far better documented than that of the monks.

There are two approaches one can take in investigating the issue of: (1) what the Vinaya defines as proper transmission and (2) what the historical (human) records reveal. The Buddhadharma centers on guiding human beings toward enlightenment along the Noble Eightfold Path of right intentions, speech, and actions. As individuals practice this path, they may choose to join the Sangha and the Sangha chooses to accept the aspirant. There was no Sangha prior to the Buddha's enlightenment, but Indian society did support asceticism and renunciant men and women who often spontaneously formed small groups for collective cultivation, study, and friendship. Kings and householders valued such groups and when the future Buddha first journeyed into the forest, he had no trouble in finding companions.

Buddhism was first recognized in China during the first century CE, when Emperor Wu Di granted permission to establish an official residence (*si*) for two Indian monks in the capital of Loyang, in the central Chinese province of Henan. The residence for these two monks, Kasyapa and Shemoteng, was built sometime between the years 67 and 73. The Chinese word *si* (temple) could be used to refer to either a monastic residence (*vihara*) or a simple shrine for devotion to the Buddha. For the Chinese, however, the two Indians were foreigners. Their spirits were not native, their Buddha pujas were different from Chinese rites for the dead, and the *mantras* they used during meditation were not the revered words of Confucius on how to lead the moral life. Although they were recognized as holy men, they were still foreigners praying to foreign gods and serving the needs of foreign ancestors, so why should they care about the Chinese? Even more fundamental, they had no common language. The Chinese worshiped sylphs, immortals, the emperor as the Son of Heaven, and all kinds of nature spirits in the rocks, trees, and mountains. They knew nothing of bodhisattvas, monasticism, or the Buddha's teachings. Kasyapa and Shemoteng were regarded as intellectually brilliant, fascinat-

ing, and courageous to have crossed the Pamir and Kunlun Mountains and the wastes of the Gobi Desert, but they were still outsiders. The two Indian *bhikkhus* practiced right intention, right speech, and right action, but the soil was not yet prepared to receive the seeds of their transmission.

Buddhist Historical Chronicles

The Buddhist traditions, both then and now, reflect the languages, customs, and character of over a dozen nations. Over the centuries, Buddhist monks arrived from the far-flung regions of what we today call Kashmir, India, Sri Lanka, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, and Vietnam. They brought a part of the Buddhist canon, which naturally reflected the lineages and traditions of their countries of origin. Indeed, it was not until nearly 400 CE that the Chinese realized that the Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist traditions were distinct.

During this early period, China was a huge and very broken country. As time went by, more and more military governors rebelled and peasants looked to Daoist spiritual leaders. Confucianism, the bedrock of Chinese political and social culture, began to fragment as palace officials opportunistically supported whoever sat on the throne, murdered rival clans, or retired into the mountains to distance themselves from the latest ruling faction. China's civil wars became more and more divisive. When the Han Dynasty fell in 220 CE, China split into three kingdoms: Wei in the north, Wu in the southeast, and Shu in the southwest (now Sichuan Province). By 280, the Jin had seized control of Central, Southeastern, and a part of Northern China. Exacerbated by foreign invasions, the Jin were finally forced to cede their holdings in China's heartland, the old capitals of Chang An and Loyang. In 317, they fled to the east and established their new capital in Jiankang (now Nanjing). They continued to rule the southeastern portion of China for another century, until 420, when Liu Yu, a general who had led several major battles to protect the Jin Dynasty from foreign invasion and internal unrest, seized the throne himself and established the Liu Song Dynasty. With his rise to the throne, the most chaotic era in Chinese history began, the Era of the Sixteen Kingdoms. This era of violence lasted until 589. Mirroring the fragmentation of China, Buddhist communities sprang up hundreds and thousands of miles apart, in Kucha, Dunhuang, Chengdu, Xiangyang, Chang An, Luoyang, Ye, Jiankang, Lushan, Guangzhou, and Hanoi (then occupied by the ruling houses of Jiankang). As soon as royal patronage in one regional capital dissolved, monks and nuns were forced to flee to another city for refuge.

Unlike the turbulent history of China, the Sri Lankan chronicles describe a far more peaceful and stable society for receiving the ideas and practices of Buddhism. In the Dipavamsa and the Mahavamsa, Sri Lanka's earliest recorded histories, Emperor Asoka's son and daughter, both in monastic robes, arrived from India in 247 BCE. Sanghamitta, the royal daughter, brought with her the gift of a sapling from the original *bodhi* tree under which Sakya-



muni discovered enlightenment. She was accompanied by a group of nuns who joined her in ordaining the first Sri Lankan *bhiksunis* and thus transmitted the *bhiksuni* lineage from India to Sri Lanka. The *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa* are not chronicles of Buddhist history, however; instead, they chronicle the founding, consolidation, and growth of the kingdom of Sri Lanka.

By contrast, the early sixth-century Chinese works, *Lives of the Nuns* (*Biqiuni Zhuan*) by Bao Chang (circa 516) and *Lives of Eminent Monks* (*Gao Seng Zhuan*) by Hui Jiao, are intended to be Buddhist historical chronicles. They both focus on the arrival, spread, and acceptance of Buddhism in China. Both trace the eminent personalities, foreign and native, that helped shape early Chinese Buddhism. Hui Jiao's 305 biographies of monks begins with the story of Shemoteng and Kasyapa in the first century and spans four hundred years until the death of Fa Jing in 500.¹ Bao Chang's more concise collection of 65 nuns' biographies begins in the third century, when Jing Jian is the first woman in China to receive the full monastic precepts – but from a single monk – and ends with Fa Xuan, who passed at the age of 83 in 516, revered by princes of both the Qi and Liang Dynasties.² Both books frequently refer to the same people and events and cross-illuminate one another.

Bringing the Vinaya to China

In *Lives of the Nuns*, Bao Chang carefully documents who ordained whom and the texts used to carry out such ordinations, but it is essentially a chronological work that traces the biographies of women from the Jin, Liu-Song, Qi, and Liang Dynasties. By contrast, in *Lives of Eminent Monks*, Hui Jiao is not so interested in chronology. Instead, he organizes his biographies into ten main sections: translators of the sutras, promoters of the virtues of Buddhism (especially to emperors), workers of spiritual marvels, master of meditation (*dhyana*), masters of Vinaya, those who gave their lives in pursuit of the Dharma, those who did good works, those preeminent in chanting, great teachers, and those who guided the spiritual welfare of others. Most sections begin with the earliest significant personage for that section, but the section on masters of Vinaya begins with the life of Vi-

malaksa, who arrived in Chang An only in 406. He is famed for being able to provide the missing portions of the *Vinaya in 100 Sections* (*Shi Song Lu*) for Kumarajiva to translate.³

The endless streams of refugees during this period of upheaval in China had one benefit: monastics in different cities had a chance to meet and compare notes. Strikingly, it was not until 399 that Fa Xian realized that there was no complete text of the Vinaya available in Loyang. With four other monks, he secretly stole out of China to go to India to acquire one. Ironically, just a 100 miles to the southeast, Dao An, perhaps China's greatest native teacher and translator of the early period of Chinese Buddhism, had acquired a full set of the Theravadin Vinaya in Xiangyang, now the county seat of Xiangfan in northern Hubei Province. This was in 382, but the news had not traveled north.⁴ Fourteen years later, in 396, another Chinese monk named Tan Shi carried his copy of the Vinaya from the Northern Wei kingdom in the far northeast to Korea.⁵

It is clear that these Buddhist communities practiced independently of one another, but how does one explain the fact that there were so many monks in so many communities throughout China, when the Vinaya only became widely available after 400? Who conducted their ordinations? Who served as witnesses? Who were their preceptors, abbots, and administrators?

The transmission of Vinaya texts to China was a lengthy process. Early on, Yan Fo Tiao applied himself studiously to promoting Buddhism by composing China's first indigenous Buddhist work, *Aphorisms on the Ten-fold Wisdom of the Novice Monk* (*Shami Shi Hui Zhang Zhu*). He also completed the first translation of The Dharma Mirror Sutra (Fa Jing Jing) in the late second century in Loyang.⁶ However, it was another 75 years before Dharmakala of India produced the first complete translation of a Pratimoksa text. His translation of the *Pratimoksa of the Mahasanghikas* (*Seng Qi Jie Ben*) was completed in Loyang around the year 250.⁷ Another one hundred years passed before Dao An, incited by the monk Buddhasingha, sent his disciples out from northern and central China to acquire the Vinaya. Thus, it was not until around 379 that further efforts were made to acquire texts on monastic discipline.

We have clear records to document the ordination of Hui Guo, who became China's first Buddhist nun. Their ordination took place in 434 in the country's wealthiest city, Jiankang. Their preceptors and *acaryas* are fully identified with biographies of their own. By contrast, although we know that China's first monk Yan Fo Tiao was an impressive translator and writer, we know nothing about who ordained him, where, or when. We are told that he was a colleague of Lokakshema (Chin: Zhiloujiachan) and the Parthian merchant An Xuan, and that he was active toward the end of the second century,⁸ but even the most basic information about his ordination is missing.

The quality of Buddhist practice in China was so uneven that an Indian monk of the Theravadin tradition, Dharmak-

ala, lamented in the mid-third century:

The Sangha [in China] does not practice its religion in accord with a systematic set of rules, as does its orthodox Indian counterpart. The only thing that distinguishes its members from the laity is that the former shave their heads. They do not maintain a discipline that distinguishes the Sangha from the laity. Though they do observe penance and fasts, they do not abide by the same code of practice as the Indians, but content themselves with an initiation of the sacrificial rituals observed at Chinese ancestral tombs (si). Seen through the eyes of an Indian monk, they are a rather shoddy spectacle.⁹

Even so, Dharmakala ordained a dozen monks sometime between 249 and 252 at Bai Ma Si (White Horse Temple), the imperial guesthouse that Han Emperor Wu Di gave to the first Buddhist missionaries, Kasyapa and Shemotong, almost 200 years earlier. Unfortunately, the great biographer of Lives of Eminent Monks neglected to reveal who these 12 men were.

The Bhiksuni Vinaya

What of the Bhiksuni Vinaya? The earliest work devoted to the lives of Chinese nuns may be that of Sanghavarman, a monk of Sogdian ancestry known as Kang Seng Kai in Chinese, who translated the Karmavacana of the Dharmaguptaka School in 252 in Jiankang.¹⁰ Another translation of this text was made by the Persian monk Dharmasatya (Chin: Tan Di) just two years later.¹¹ In 266, Dharmaraksa (Chin: Zhu Fa Hu), a monk who lived in many places in northern China including Dunhuang, Chang An, and Xiangyang, translated into Chinese the Bhiksuni Pratimoksa Sutra (Biqiuni Jie). This text includes a set of recitations that nuns are obliged to recite in their monastic communities in the evening every full and new moon.¹² Unfortunately this translation of the Biqiuni Jie by Dharmaraksa is now lost.¹³ Some 50 years later, the aspirant Jing Jian consulted with the monk Fa Shi at Western Gate Temple (Xi Men Si) in Loyang on the difference between the precepts for monks and nuns. In response, Fa Shi admitted that, "The Dharma has not been fully established here in China."¹⁴ He advised them to consult the Kashmiri monk Zhishan who, being from the western regions, would know more.

Zhishan is known for conferring the novice precepts on Jing Jian, who thus became China's first ten-precept nun, sometime in the early fourth century. Delighted by Jing Jian's dedication, Zhishan (or someone from his community) introduced her to Tanmojeduo (Dharmakatri?), a monk who was also from the west, probably India. Jing Jian went on to receive the full bhiksuni precepts from Jing Jian and four other monks. They used both the Karmavacana and the Pratimoksa of the Mahasamghikas, a Vinaya text that had been brought from Scythia in Central Asia to Loyang sometime between 335-342. These works had been translated before the death of the monk Buddhasingha (Chin: Fotudeng), a native of Kuche, a kingdom located in the far western reaches of today's Xinjiang Province, in 348.¹⁵ Lives

of the Nuns relates that Dharmakatri erected an ordination platform and ordained Jing Jian and four other women. Thus, he presided over the first bhiksuni ordination in China.¹⁶ Shortly thereafter, Jing Jian and Buddhasingha conferred full ordination on the nuns An Ling Shou and An Ling Shou. Following in the footsteps of her preceptors Jing Jian and Buddhasingha (credited by Chinese tradition with founding no less than 893 temples), established five or six more monasteries for nuns in the Later Zhao capital of Ye, some 150 miles to the northeast of Loyang (Henan Province), including The Citadel of the Sages Temple (Jian Xian Si). Jing Jian mentored 24 disciples at her vihara, Bamboo Forest Temple (Zhu Lin Si), and An Ling Shou mentored no less than 200.

Before his death in 357, Dharmakatri ordained another nun, named Zhi Xian. She was famous in her time for chanting the Flower of the True Law Scripture at her vihara, the Vihara of the West (Xi Si; perhaps a reference to the direction from whence the Buddha's teachings came), located in northern Jiangsu Province, 150 miles east of Ye. Zhi Xian was a survivor of the first "suppression of the monasteries" in Chinese history. By the mid-fourth century, war and famine had driven thousands to pursue the monastic life, even if the Buddhist precepts was imperfectly understood. While the intent of many was sincere, other factors induced some to take up monastic life. Monasteries were excused from paying taxes and the biannual tribute of agricultural goods to the imperial warehouses. Further, monks were excused from obligatory military service and labor on civil works projects, such as building and repairing dykes and roads. Monastic life in China at this time could also be very lucrative.

During this tumultuous time, women often joined monasteries without the knowledge or permission of their parents, which is strictly prohibited in the Vinaya. The requirement that women undergo a probationary period (siksamana) of two years to verify that they were not pregnant was either unknown or poorly enforced in certain places. At the same time, what abbot or abbess would turn away a starving child or a woman in danger of being raped by soldiers and brigands?

One local warlord, Du Ba, detested the Buddhists. He was not a Confucian; in fact, he was disliked by the Confucians. Instead, he was a committed follower of Laozi, the author of the Dao De Jing (Book of the Way). Hui Jiao, Zhi Xian's biographer, accuses him of being a follower of the Way of the Yellow Emperor, a Daoist sect. Buddhist propagandists regarded followers of the Way of the Yellow Emperor as little better than the "Yellow Scarves" bandits who had overthrown the Han Dynasty in the late second century, the last time China had known any real order and prosperity. Rather than risking rebellion by his own people by overtly banning Buddhism, Du Ba declared that he would have all monks and nuns in his region interviewed to see whether they could properly recite their precepts and sutras. Many monastics fled the region to avoid the interrogations. Zhi

Xian was the last person to be interviewed and was questioned by Du Ba himself. Impressed by Zhi Xian's ability to measure up to his demanding questions, the warlord soon gave in to desire and, laying his hands on her, attempted to rape the stalwart nun. Zhi Xian resisted vigorously, but rather than let go of her, Du Ba went for his dagger, stabbed her more than 20 times, and left her for dead. What happened to Du Ba is unknown. Zhi Xian not only survived the attack, but also deepened her cultivation. She eventually took on more than a hundred women disciples and found a generous patron in Emperor Fu Jian. Not only did Emperor Fu Jian send Bhiksuni Zhi Xian robes that took three years to embroider, but he also gave her a financial gift of one million cash – the largest gift recorded anywhere in either the *Lives of Eminent Monks* or the *Lives of the Nuns*.¹⁷

In 382, Dao An acquired major portions of the Vinaya in 10 Sections, including the Bhiksuni Vinaya, and wrote several commentaries on these works. Dao An also introduced the prolific Indian translator Kumarajiva (Chin: Jiumoloshi) to Emperor Fu Jian. Kumarajiva produced dozens upon dozens of translations – the first Buddhist texts to travel throughout China. Kumarajiva's work inspired China's famed pilgrim monk Fa Xian, from the northern capital of Chang An, to travel to India to acquire the Vinaya, the first Chinese monk who set out to do so. It was through Kumarajiva's efforts that the final translation of the Vinaya in Ten Sections was completed. This translation made it possible for Hui Guo to receive ordination from the Sri Lankan Bhiksuni Sangha in the great city of Jiankang in 434.

With one primary edition of the entire Vinaya now available, new editions soon appeared throughout China. The earliest was a commentary by a foreign monk named Tanwulan who wrote *The 260 Precepts: Discrepancies Among Three [Texts]* (*Er Bai Liushi Jie San Bu He Yi*) that appeared in Jiankang in 381.¹⁸ Working together, the Chinese monk Zhu Fo Nian and the Indian monk Buddhayashyas translated the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya in Four Sections* (*Bhiksuni Vibhanga*, Chin: *Si Fen Lu*) in Chang An, Shaanxi Province, sometime between 410 and 412.¹⁹ Vimaloksa lectured on the Vinaya in Ten Sections farther to the south in Hubei Province sometime between 410 and 412.²⁰ Sometime after the monk Buddhahadra (Chin: Fotobatolo) arrived at Dao Chang Si in Jiankang in 418, Buddhahadra collaborated with Fa Xian to translate *The Great Monastic Canon* in 40 Volumes.²¹ A few years later, in 423 or 424, the monk Buddhajiva (Chin: Foxianshi) translated the *Vinaya in Five Sections* (*Wu Fen Lu*), perhaps at the same temple.²²

Sometime after the grand ordination conducted by both the bhiksu and bhiksuni assemblies in 434, after the nun Hui Mu was "fully admitted into the Sangha," she commissioned images of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions and ten copies of the *Vinaya in Four Sections* and *Rituals for Entering the Monastic Life*, which she distributed to monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen in monasteries to the west of the capital of Jiankang (southern portions of Jiangsu and Anhui Provinces).²³ Not only did she practice and teach, but she

also made possible the transmission of the ordination texts for the benefit of all those who aspired to join the Sangha.

Sri Lanka Nuns and Full Ordination

The nun Hui Guo was the leader of the large group of nuns who first received the *bhiksuni* precepts from Sri Lankan nuns. Her biography teems with an awareness of the challenges facing her. One by one, her teacher (*acarya*) Gunavarman answered the questions she raised: Has there ever been a transmission of full precepts without the presence of *bhiksunis*? Yes, Gunavarman replied, the Buddha ordained his own stepmother, Mahaprajapati, as the first nun. Is there any difference between the situation of Mahaprajati and the nuns who came later, and the situation of Jing Jian



and those who followed her in China who wish to receive the *bhiksuni* precepts? No, Gunavarman replied. Since China is a frontier country, more than a thousand miles from a fully established *vihara*, may a woman receive the precepts from just five *bhiksus*, instead of the full quorum of five *bhiksus* and five *bhiksunis* required in a border area? Yes, Gunavarman replied, because, surrounded by mountains and ocean, China constitutes a frontier area. With that, Hui Guo assembled four of her disciples to make up the basic quorum of five and went to see Sanghavarman (Chin: Sengjiabama). Following Mahaprajapati's own example, the five women receive the full precepts from Sanghavarman in Jiankang in 432.²⁴

In 429, the first group of Sri Lankan nuns arrived in China and took up residence in Luminous Blessings Women's Vihara in Jiankang. They were surprised to find nuns already in China, since they had been given to understand that the Dharma was new to China and there were no nuns. Befriending them, Seng Guo, a woman closer to them in age than the venerated elder Hui Guo, explained that Jing Jian and Hui Guo had received ordination from five monks, using the example of Prajapati. Like Prajapati, they would serve as the instructors of the Chinese nuns who followed

them. While Gunavarman (Chin: *Qiunabama*) confirmed that a *bhiksuni* ordination conducted by five bhiksus was legitimate, Seng Guo still felt uncertain about whether the proper protocol had been observed. She decided that it be appropriate to retake the vows, this time from both nuns and monks. Gunavarman replied that taking the precepts again from both the *bhiksu* and *bhiksuni* assemblies would be of great benefit.

After a few years passed, the nuns' good karma ripened and they were able to receive the ordination. The first group of Sri Lankan nuns had mastered the Chinese language, so when a second group of Sri Lankan nuns arrived in 433, led by the elder nun Tessara, the stage was set. Turning to Sanghavarman, the first group of Sri Lankans invited him to serve as the preceptor at the ordination. One year after the arrival of the second group of Sri Lankans, the two groups of Sri Lankan *bhiksunis* numbered a total of 20. In 434, with Sanghavarman as the preceptor and the appropriate numbers of *bhiksus* and *bhiksunis*, 300 women received the *bhiksuni* ordination from the Bhiksu and Bhiksuni Sanghas.²⁵

This ordination ensured that the individual women candidates were properly qualified for taking the precepts and that the *bhiksuni* precepts were properly conferred. Still, there were other women's viharas that were not properly transmitting the precepts. Enforcement of the Vinaya was still so spotty in China at the time that, in 445 Emperor Wen of the Liu Song Dynasty, a great patron of Buddhism, shut down Wang Guo Si (Temple of the Princely Kingdom), a woman's *vihara* in the capital, after a nun named Fa Jing was implicated in a plot to assassinate the emperor.²⁶ Just two years later, the Northern Wei emperor Tai Wu initiated the third suppression of Buddhism in China when a monastery in northern China was discovered hiding weapons. These incidents raised doubts in people's minds about the quality of the Sangha as a whole.

Around that time, some disciples of the nun Bao Xian, rector of Pu Xian Si (Universal Sage Temple), went to hear Vinaya master Fa Ying lecture on the Vinaya in Ten Sections. Perhaps with the incidents related above in mind, they became concerned about whether they had been properly ordained. In 474, at the age of 74, Bao Xian worried that these issues would raise doubts about the validity of nuns' ordinations. Consequently, she sent out orders to make sure that no nun had receive *bhiksuni* ordination below the minimum age of 20. If such a nun were found, she would be required to confess publicly before an assembly of *bhiksunis*, her suitability as a nun would be investigated, and, if she were deemed suitable, she would be permitted to be ordained once she reached the required age. Those who opposed these requirements would be expelled from the Sangha. After this decision, all doubts concerning the "correctness of the rite" were laid to rest. China now had the complete Vinaya texts and a lineage of *bhiksuni* ordination conducted by assemblies of both *bhiksus* and *bhiksunis*. The proper procedures for investigating and verifying an aspirant's intent were complete and any gaps between in-

attention, word, and action were now dissolved.

Conclusion

It is ironic that the validity of the ordination of nuns of East Asia has recently become the subject of doubt in some quarters. It took 300 years for the Chinese to appreciate the central role of the Vinaya in Buddhist practice, but once they realized this weakness in their understanding, they assiduously set about acquiring Vinaya texts, translating and distributing them, and seeking out proper instruction in the correct procedures. The biography of virtually every monk involved in making the *bhiksuni* precepts available, both in word and action, is included *The Lives of Eminent Monks*. Hui Jiao records that when Gunavarman died, the nuns of the capital gathered around his funeral bier and wept openly, overcome with grief.²⁷ King Mahanama of Sri Lanka was so dedicated to the propagation of the Bhiksuni Sangha that he sent, not one, but two ships of nuns to China. Although the cost of such a venture is not mentioned in any of the accounts, to cross the wide open seas at that time meant providing food and water for at least two years, not to mention the cost of gifts to be presented at the Chinese court. In addition, China is perhaps the most protocol-conscious society in the world, with attempts to create a civil service based on talent rather than connections dating back to Han Dynasty (216 BCE to 220 CE). This heritage has made the Chinese punctilious in observing correct form. For the Chinese Sangha and laypeople alike, the arrival of the Sri Lankan *bhiksunis* not only validated the legitimacy of the nuns' aspirations, but also enhanced the integrity of the Chinese Buddhist Sangha as a whole. Men and women were henceforth required to undergo proper investigation and training. As the biographies in *Lives of the Nuns* and *Lives of Eminent Monks* reveal, this attention to monastic protocol for both monks and nuns made Buddhism a vital force in Chinese life for millennia.



NOTES

1. Hui Jiao, *Gao Seng Zhuan*, Taisho Vol. 50, p. 417b-c.
2. Bao Chang (trans. Kathryn Ann Tsai), *Lives of the Nuns* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), pp. 105-106.
3. Hui Jiao, *Gao Seng Zhuan*, p. 400c and Erik Zurcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), p. 406.
4. Zenryu Tsukamoto (trans. Leon Hurvitz), *A History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1985), p. 208.
5. Xing Yun, *Fojiao Shi Nianbiao* (A Chronology of Chinese Buddhist History) (Gaoxiong, Taiwan: Buddhist Publications Society, 1987), p. 33.
6. Tsukamoto, *A History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, vol. 1, pp. 65, 93.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 136; and Zurcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, p. 56.
8. Hui Jiao, *Gao Seng Zhuan*, p. 324bc.
9. Tsukamoto, *A History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, vol. 1, p. 136.
10. Tanwude Bu Za Jiemo. See Ann Heirman, *The Discipline in Four Parts: Rules for Nuns According to the Dharmaguptkavinaya*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2002), p. 18.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Tsukamoto, *A History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, vol. 1, p. 208.
13. Heirman, *The Discipline in Four Parts*, vol. 1, p. 31.
14. Bao Chang, *Biqiuni Zhuan*, T2063, Vol. 50, p. 934c.
15. Bao Chang asserts that this occurred in 357, which would have been well after the death of Buddhasingha, which had occurred in 348. Since Buddhasingha introduced An Ling Shou to Dharmakatri, we feel this date is due to a copyist's error. This is further reinforced by the otherwise unduly long period given to translating these works, when many other sutras of similar length were translated in a matter of two to three years, if not sooner.
16. Bao Chang, *Biqiuni Zhuan*, T2036, v. 50, 934c; and Bao Chang, *Lives of the Nuns*, pp. 18-19.
17. Bao Chang, *Lives of the Nuns*, pp. 21-22.
18. Tsukamoto, *A History of Early Chinese Buddhism*, vol. 2, p. 750.
19. Ann Heirman, *The Discipline in Four Parts*, vol. 1, p. 4.
20. Hui Jiao, *Gao Seng Zhuan*, T2085, p. 400c.
21. *Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, p. 436b.
22. *Ibid.* p. 457a.
23. Bao Chang, *Biqiuni Zhuan*, T2063, 938c-939a; and Bao Chang, *Lives of the Nuns*, p. 46.
24. Bao Chang, *Biqiuni Zhuan*, T2063, p. 937b-c; and Bao Chang, *Lives of the Nuns*, pp. 37-38.
25. Bao Chang, *Biqiuni Zhuan*, T2063, p. 939c and 941a; and Bao Chang, *Lives of the Nuns*, pp. 53-54 and 63.
26. Bao Chang, *Biqiuni Zhuan*, T2063, p. 944b-c; and Bao Chang, *Lives of the Nuns*, p. 86 and 142.
27. Hui Jiao, *Gao Seng Zhuan*, T2059, Folio 3, p. 341a.

KARUNA FOR TELEMARETERS

by Ahna Fender

The phone rings this evening, an unfamiliar number appearing on the illuminated green screen of the handset. I should know better than to pick it up, but I take my chances.

"Good evening, may I please speak to Mr. or Mrs. Fender?" I cringe. There's the tip-off. "This is she," I answer stoically, preparing myself for the onslaught.

"Mrs. Fender, this is Vini, with so-and-so cable company, calling to offer you so many hundreds of channels including blah, blah, blah..."

I cut her off. "Vini," I say, gently. She pauses, perhaps surprised that I would remember her name. "I'm sorry, but I don't watch television." In her lilting Indian accent she chimes in, politely, "Then what, may I ask, do you do for entertainment?"

"I meditate."

"I'm sorry, what was that?"

"I meditate."

"Oh.... I see, and what type of meditation do you follow?"

"Vipassana. What about you, Vini?"

"You see," Vini says, her voice quickening, "I am an Indian girl, and in my tradition we practice yoga. We rise at 3:30 in the morning – it is best no later than 4:00 – drink only a glass of water and then begin our mind-body practices."

I commend her on her early rising and she laughs, her English suddenly becoming gay and colloquial. "So what is your email?" She asks. "I will send you some practices." I pause for a moment. "You know, Vini, I'm actually quite happy with my own practices, just as you are with yours. But I thank you for the offer."

"Oh yes, that is natural," she says, matter-of-factly.

She asks my name and I tell her. As we prepare to say goodbye she slips in a gleeful, "So nice to talk to you, dear," clearly enthused to exchange some words outside the parameters of her sales pitch. "You too, Vini," I say, and bid her goodnight.

I hang up, chuckling to myself at the many faces of this practice. Lately it seems to be calling me more at home – following me off the cushion and into the simple exchanges that make up my life. Slowly I am learning not to contract, not to shut people out, even the telemarketers. Somewhere across the world, Vini is sitting in some call center, doing her job, trying to find her own relationship to god.

I plop down on my couch and look at the television set, which I've draped a blue cloth over, and made into a small table. The reality out here is entertaining enough, I think.

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TIBETAN BUDDHIST NUN "SHOT DOWN LIKE A DOG" BY CHINESE GUARDS

On September 30, 2006, Kelsang Nortso, a 27-year-old Tibetan Buddhist Nun from the Nagchu Region of Tibet was shot to death by Chinese Boarder Guards at the Nanpa La Pass. Various newspapers and online media outlets report that the young nun was part of a group of 75 Tibetan women, children, and men on a religious pilgrimage to Nepal from Chinese occupied Tibet. As the Tibetans walked in single file over the snow in the Himalayan mountains, Chinese Boarder guides fired on the group. Kelsang Nortso was killed immediately, and a 23-year-old man from Kardze, Tibet, Kunsang Namgyal, was wounded, arrested, and later reported dead by the Chinese government.

According to the New York Times in an article filed from Beijing, the official Chinese government news agency reported the shootings as an act of self-defense prompted by an attack on the boarder guards by the Tibetans.

However, this same article reported the existence of video footage that appears to dispute the Chinese claim of self-defense. The footage was taken from a distance of about one-half mile by a Romanian cameraman with an international mountaineering expedition. The video was released by a Romanian television station and subsequently aired on television in various parts of the world as well as on the internet.

The profoundly disquieting video shows Kelsang Nortso and Kunsang Namgyal being "picked off" from the front and back of the line of Tibetans walking in the snow, while a voice on the videotape is heard saying in English, "They are shooting them like dogs."

After the shooting, the Tibetans scattered. It is reported that 41 Tibetans made it to India, while 32, including children, remain unaccounted for. In another disquieting news report, The International Herald Tribune, Asia-Pacific reports that an international group of mountaineers witnessed Chinese Boarder guards armed with assault rifles marching a group of 10-12 "frightened" Tibetan children, aged 6-10 years through the camp.

For more information, including eyewitness accounts and responses, such as the Human Rights Watch's demands for an investigation and protections for the children, check the following sources, which were used to compile this article:

"China: Permit Independent Investigation into Shooting of Tibetan Refugees," Human Rights Watch, 26 Oct. 2006. <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/10/26/china14460-txt.htm>.

"Dharamshala condemns Nangpa Pass killing in Tibet," *TibetNet*, 17 Oct. 2006. <http://www.tibet.com/NewsRoom/shooting1.htm>.

Joseph Kahn, "Video Disputes China's Claim Shooting Was in Self-Defense," *The New York Times*, 16 Oct. 2006. <http://travel2.nytimes.com/2006/10/16/world/asia/16tibet.htm>.

Nirmala George (The Associated Press), "Tibetan refugees 'shot like dogs,' mountaineers film incident on Himalayan pass," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 24 October 2006. <http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/289702-tibet24.html>.

"Report: China holding Tibetan children after refugee shooting," (The Associated Press), *International Herald Tribune Asia-Pacific*, 10 Oct. 2006.

http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2006/10/10/asia/AS_GEN_China_Tibetan_Refugees.php.

The video of the shooting can be viewed at: <http://www.techzone.com/forums/showthread.php?t=21133>. Be forewarned that it is profoundly upsetting, however, and may be unsuitable for some viewers.



SEEDING THE DHARMA IN THE PRESENT MOMENT

Evelyn Diane Cowie

Out of the Shadows: Socially Engaged Buddhist Women is a compilation of the talks presented at the 8th Sakyadhita Conference in Korea and the latest book to spring from the Sakyadhita conferences.¹¹ Many of the articles published in *Out of the Shadows* delve into the historical development and growth of Buddhism – the seeding of the Dharma – as it spread across Asia and eventually to the West. Other articles warn of contemporary threats to Buddhism in places where it was once well rooted and flourished. Taken together, these articles inspire us to examine our level of commitment to the welfare of Buddhism and Buddhist women around the globe.

As a practical matter, for Buddhism to spread around the globe, it had to be seeded. It had to sprout, take root, and then grow sufficiently mature to spread throughout a country or region. When we trace the development of Buddhism throughout the world, we are, at least in part, looking to determine: Who carried the Dharma seeds from nation to nation? Who tended the Dharma seeds by translating the texts and *sutras*? Who nurtured the Dharma by giving the teachings? Who helped the Dharma put down roots by building temples and developing social service projects? Who helped reseed the Dharma after attempts were made to root it out?

Naturally, when we, as women, look to find traces of Buddhist women in the history of Buddhism, we are looking for the lay and ordained women who seeded and nurtured the Dharma historically. When we search history, we are often disappointed to find feminine voices absent. We, as Buddhist women, can go back and sometimes reconstruct our history by researching the historical record. Sadly, we often find that little was recorded about nuns and even less about laywomen. As some feminist writers have observed, the problem is that we are sorting through history looking for herstory, our story.

History is confined to the past, but our story – the story of this generation of Buddhist women – is being written now. We write our story literally, as authors setting ink to paper and seeding the Dharma with our writings. All the women who participate in Sakyadhita – including those who plan the Sakyadhita conferences, those who present articles at the conferences, and those who translate and edit the articles – are helping write our story. We write our story as socially engaged women who nurture and spread the Dharma through our words and actions.

Sakyadhita is a present-day, international sower of Dharma seeds. When the founding members began organizing the Sakyadhita conferences and publications, they created a forum for the voices of Buddhist women from around the globe. Consciously and actively, they began chipping away at centuries of silence and invisibility. When Sakyadhita members tackled the problems of women's ordination, they began chipping away at centuries of exclusion. Although much progress has been made, the work of chipping away at these impediments continues.

The Sakyadhita vision is based on a sense of social equity that values diversity and inclusion. This vision cuts through all of the barriers that normally function to separate and divide people. By working across the barriers of language, race, culture, disability, educational status, economic status, and lay/ordained status, Sakyadhita offers the most pristine vision of Dharma I have yet to encounter. It offers a liberating worldview for those who have traditionally been, and still are, marginalized by societal structures and norms.

Nevertheless, Sakyadhita has chosen a tough row to hoe. It is always easier to exclude rather than include. We exclude habitually, acting reflexively without deep thought and empathy. We exclude out of fear and lack of knowledge. We exclude to satisfy ego and to maintain power and control. Inclusion of differences – real or perceived – always takes greater effort. Inclusion requires being present, staying open, and working with whatever is placed before us.

As Buddhists, we strive to incorporate teachings and practices into our everyday lives and live with awareness of the present moment. However, this is a difficult task to accomplish in the relative confinement of our everyday lives. How do we, as members of Sakyadhita, do this on a global scale, when in this present moment most of the

world's Buddhist women continue to live in abject poverty and remain illiterate, perhaps much the same as they have from the time of Buddha Śkyamuni? In this present moment, many Asian Buddhist societies, which have traditionally been the keepers of the Dharma seeds, continue to reel from the effects of the wars and political upheavals that plagued the twentieth century and persist up to today. In the West, despite relative wealth and political stability, Buddhism is in its infancy, largely lacking supporting institutional structures, and out of reach of the masses. The challenges are great.

From the articles in *Out of the Shadows*, we learn that Buddhism has always faced such challenges and yet it still survives. Although the challenges are not new, what is unprecedented is the existence of a Buddhist women's organization like Sakyadhita, with the vision of breaking through barriers, and the technology to span the globe electronically. Sakyadhita's vision in response to the challenges now facing Buddhism and Buddhist women's talents continue to coalesce. What remains to be seen is the extent to which Buddhist women, united internationally across traditions and with the aid of technology, will be able to make a difference in resowing the seeds of human liberation in the Buddhist world.

Finally we can hear the voices of women around the world and have a chance to respond. Gantumur Natsagdorj writes that "after the democratic change took place in 1990 and Buddhists regained the right to practice their faith in Mongolia,"²² several women's temples were started but only one remains. When we read her words, do we close our hearts and turn the page, or do we find a way to support those struggling Mongolian Buddhist women? When Gantumur warns that Buddhism faces many challenges in Mongolia, particularly from a large influx of money from Christian churches, what is our response? When we learn that Buddhist books are scarce in Mongolia, do we raise money to help publish some? Will Buddhist women unite across denominations and raise funds to help preserve the Dharma in traditionally Buddhist countries?

Tenzin Norzin writes about the effect of the Communist Chinese occupation of Tibet on Buddhism in the Kinnaur region of India and the threats of religious conversion efforts in a traditionally Buddhist stronghold.³³ When we read her words, do we take action? Do we send a check or volunteer our time to support Kinnauri nuns studying at Jamyang Choling Institute in Dharamsala or Jampa Choling in Kinnaur? Do we develop methods to help preserve the Buddhist teachings in these remote parts of the world?

Thich Nu Nhu Nguyet writes about the dire lack of library resources in Vietnam and the continuing struggle nuns face in pursuing Buddhist studies in a culture that still prefers to support monks.⁴⁴ How do we respond? Do a few Sakyadhita members band together and develop a plan to get library materials to nuns in Vietnam, then share that plan with the other members around the globe for implementation?

I am suggesting that, as members of Sakyadhita, we need to do all of the above. Together we need to find new ways to seed and nurture the Dharma. When our sisters articulate the problems they are facing, we cannot simply let their voices trail off into the air as if unheard. Rather, we need to respond as true daughters of the Buddha and take action.

By staying present and working with these opportunities before us, we can effectively respond to the needs described by Gantumur Natsagdorj, Tenzin Norzin, Thich Nu Nhu Nguyen, and other members. As members of a grassroots volunteer organization, we can create a plan to meet these needs, pool our talents, do the research, write grants, raise funds, and implement the solutions we find.

At a minimum, by working with the Vietnamese Bhikkhuni Sangha, we could, for example, develop a list of core book titles needed by the nuns in Vietnam and raise funds in our local communities to purchase them. Even if all efforts to ship the books or purchase them in Vietnam fail,⁵⁵ we could carry them with us when the Sakyadhita conference is held in Vietnam. If 500 members each carried 5 to 10 books with them, the nuns would have 2,500-5,000 more books to read. If 1000 conference attendees carried 5 to 10 books each, the nuns would have an astounding 5,000-10,000 books to support their studies!

We could develop turn-key language labs and small libraries in each language – Sakyadhita Reading Rooms – to help lay and ordained women develop literacy skills, and find a way to make the teachings widely available in audio format to reach illiterate women. Teachings on CDs can be played on electric or solar-battery-powered CD players to help preserve the Dharma in remote areas still reeling from the occupation of Tibet. Radio broadcasts may be a viable alternative. In addition, we Sakyadhita members can make a commitment to look deeply at the needs in each developing country that hosts a conference and spend the two years prior to the conference focusing in depth on the needs of that particular country.

With the existence of Sakyadhita and modern technology, the Buddhist women of this generation have an unprecedented opportunity to hear each others voices and respond globally and effectively. But to do so, the planners among us need to plan. The organizers need to organize. The fundraisers need to raise the funds. Those among us skilled in languages need to translate. Those who are prosperous materially need to write checks. All skills are needed and have a place.

The smallest of acts – the folding of this newsletter for mailing, the donation of small bits of time, or the donation of mailing labels or stamps - are crucially important. By

combining our determination, skills, knowledge, and time, Buddhist women united in one international organization can become a formidable force in seeding the Dharma, alleviating suffering, and raising the status of women around the globe.

As Buddhist women, we can write our stories through social engagement or we can write our stories through inaction. The story is ours to write. The Dharma seeds are ready to be sown. The women of this generation are the women that future generations will look back to for inspiration. The fact that future generations will have historical records – a Buddhist herstory – to look back to is due in large part to the efforts of Sakyadhita International Association of Women. What that record will say depends on the participation of each individual woman.

If you are interested in working towards solutions to the problems raised through Sakyadhita, please contact me at: Evelyncowie@yahoo.com.

Evelyn Diane Cowie, M.S., J.D., is a mother, former librarian, retired lawyer, and student of Tibetan Buddhism. Her interests include exploring the relationship between Buddhism and healing, right livelihood business, Dharma-inspired management of nonprofit organizations, and end-of-life decision making for Buddhists. Originally from Long Island, New York, she now lives in Maryland (USA) and enjoys working as a volunteer for Sakyadhita.



NOTES

1. Karma Lekshe Tsomo, ed., *Out of the Shadows: Socially Engaged Buddhist Women* (Delhi, India: Sri Satguru Publications, 2006) emerged from the 8th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women held from June 27 to July 4, 2004, in Seoul, Korea.
2. Gantumur Natsagdorj, "Buddhism in Mongolia and Mongolian Women's Practice." *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.
3. Tenzin Norzin, "Buddhism in Kinnaur and the Lives of Kinnauri Women." *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
4. Thich Nu Nhu Nguyet, "Education of the Vietnamese Bhikkhuni Sangha in Modern Times," pp. 91-94.
5. Vietnamese nuns study Chinese and English as well as Vietnamese. This may resolve some on the language-related problems encountered in attempting to get Buddhist materials to countries in need. The Ministry of Culture of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and other governments, including the U. S. impose certain restrictions, but the U.S. permit the sending of books, gifts, and money.

WHAT IS NEW WITH YOU?

In addition to feature articles from its members, the Sakyadhita newsletter is inaugurating a regular news feature for and about Buddhist women. Sakyadhita invites news from its members and chapters for Sakyadhita NewsLine.

Sakyadhita NewsLine differs in several ways from the usual feature articles. News focuses on facts, not opinions, and presents factual information objectively and accurately. News items concentrate on recent or current events, not historical events. News items are written by answering what journalists call the Five Ws: Who, What, When, Where, and Why. News items are generally short, making them a perfect way for members to communicate. Even people who are not professional writers and may shy away from writing longer articles are encouraged to participate in the newsletter.

Since these news items will be published in the Sakyadhita newsletter, the focus will be on Buddhist women, ordained and lay, around the globe. By submitting news about current events affecting Buddhist women in your area of the world, you help raise the awareness of all Sakyadhita International members about matters affecting Buddhist women in all corners of the world. Having a regular news feature is one way to bridge the distance that separates us.

News focused on Buddhist women might, for example, include short pieces on:

- local, national, or international news about Buddhist women
- recent events involving Buddhist women's organizations from around the world
- developments within the Bhiksuni Sangha
- news of interest to Buddhist laywomen
- government legislation or regulations affecting Buddhist women
- projects initiated by Sakyadhita Chapters
- other Chapter or member news.

News items may announce Buddhist women's accomplishments (the publication of a book or article), ordination ceremonies, and new projects created by and for women. News items help members celebrate the successes of Buddhist women and stay in touch in-between conferences.

To submit a short news item, simply email it to me in English at evelyncowie@yahoo.com, with Sakyadhita News @ in the subject line. Your English need not be perfect, just readable. Please remember to correctly credit any sources you quote from. I volunteered to coordinate all news features for the newsletter, but unfortunately I am fluent only in English. If you would like to submit a news item in another language, we will try to find a translator. If you would like to volunteer to translate, please email me.

The people who help translate at the Sakyadhita conferences translators, both professionals and volunteers, make possible a deep sharing of knowledge and experiences. We are deeply grateful for their expertise and open-heartedness. Translators are always needed. If you want to volunteer to translate please contact sakyadhita@mac.com. If you would like to contribute to translating Dharma books into Mongolian and other languages, we will be most grateful. We will also appreciate suggestions on applying for grants to support this work.

Please volunteer. Thank you



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WOMEN LIVING THE DHARMA: BUDDHIST WOMEN MEET IN THE MIDWEST

On March 11, 2006, the Buddhist Council of the Midwest and DePaul University co-sponsored a Buddhist women's conference in Chicago. The conference, which was the first of its kind in the Midwest, offered Buddhist women from all traditions, both lay and ordained, an opportunity to learn more about women and Buddhism, and to share their experiences and cultures.

Rita Gross, author of *Buddhism after Patriarchy* and Professor Emeritus of Religion at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, delivered the keynote address. In addition, three fully ordained women from different Buddhist traditions joined together in a special plenary to discuss Buddhist women and spiritual practice in the 21st century: Sudhamma Bhikkhuni (Theravada), Abbess of the Carolina Buddhist Vihara, Greenville, SC; Kyoki Roberts (Mahayana) of the Zen Center of Pittsburgh, PA; and Khenmo Nyima Drolma (Vajrayana), Abbess of the Vajra Dakini Nunnery, Bristol, VT. Buddhist authors, nuns, priests, and lay practitioners offered a variety of workshops and discussion groups.

Women Voicing the Dharma

On February 24, 2007, the Buddhist Council of the Midwest will hold a second Buddhist Women's Conference, "Women Voicing the Dharma," at DePaul University in Chicago. The organizers welcome the support and participation of members of Buddhist centers around the country. The keynote speaker at the conference will be Karma Lekshe Tsomo, president of Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women. Be sure to reserve the date!

A series of "confluent" events will be held by groups around the Midwest between February 17 and March 4 as a way of extending the one-day conference. This festival of events all over the Midwest will celebrate women in Buddhism with Dharma talks by women teachers, retreats that explore the Enlightened Feminine, classes and workshops related to the conference theme, and university lectures by the keynote speaker and plenary panel members. Fundraisers for the Women and Engaged Buddhism Award, art exhibits and concerts by Buddhist women artists, movies by and about Buddhist women, and book signing events by conference speakers will also be held. Local groups will have a chance to host guest speakers, introduce them to local Buddhist activities, and explore specific Buddhist traditions in greater depth. Events will be posted on the conference website: www.dharmawomen.org.

If you are interesting in hosting an event or a conference speaker or workshop

facilitator, contact the Buddhist Council of the Midwest by February 25. If you and your Dharma friends would like to participate in this festival, serve on the organizing committee, or get further information, please write to: info@dharmawomen.org or womenbcm@yahoo.org.

ORGANIZING SAKYADHITA CHAPTERS

On November 13, 2006, Sakyadhita Executive Committee members, Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Christie Chang, Margaret Krebs, and Rebecca Paxton met in San Diego, with Carol Stevens participating from Hawai'i, to review a preliminary draft of a guidebook for organizing Sakyadhita chapters. On the basis of thorough research, Evelyn Cowie, a Sakyadhita member and retired attorney, prepared an initial draft of guidelines to serve as a springboard for discussion and development of an official Chapter Guide. The working draft was then forwarded the members currently organizing Sakyadhita Chapters – Gabriele Küstermann (Germany), Gabriela Reichert (France) and Jutta Gassner (U.K.) – for review and input. We are now finalizing the Chapter Guide and will release it shortly, making available in PDF format to any member who wants a copy.

The goal of the Chapter Guide is to assist members who would like to organize chapters of Sakyadhita on a geographical basis. Sakyadhita hopes to eventually have at least one national chapter in each country. National and local chapters are a way to bring together Sakyadhita members and volunteers to work toward transforming our suffering world.

The purpose of forming chapters is to organize on a national and local level to support Sakyadhita's objectives and create solidarity among those committed to working toward those objectives. Chapters are forums for members to socialize, network, practice, and work together on Sakyadhita issues. Each chapter can create its

own unique vision of how to best accomplish these goals. With Sakyadhita's focus on benefitting the 300,000,000 Buddhist women in the world, chapters can select from an infinite variety of projects and possibilities. National and local chapters are a way to bring Sakyadhita members and volunteers together to work toward transforming our suffering world.

For more information on specific chapters contact:

Sakyadhita Germany:
Gabriele Küstermann g.kuestermann@gmx.de

Sakyadhita France:
Gabriela Reichert gabriela.r@wanadoo.fr

Sakyadhita U.K.:
Jutta Gassner jube_tta@mail.com

Evelyn Cowie has volunteered to serve as the Chapter Development Coordinator for the United States and is in the process of developing an umbrella USA chapter to facilitate the development of regional, state and/or local American chapters. For more information or to volunteer, contact her: evelyncowie@yahoo.com.

If you are interested in finding out more about starting a chapter in your area or serving as a Chapter Development Coordinator – a person who facilitates the development of Sakyadhita chapters in a particular country – please contact Sakyadhita. We are also in need of volunteer translators to translate the Chapter Guide and other materials into various languages. To request a copy of the guidebook or volunteer, contact: sakyadhita@mac.com. Thank you!



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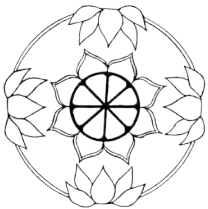
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