

## SAKYADHITA NEWSLETTER

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## BUDDHIST WOMEN IN MODERN SOCIETY:

### A Report on the Third International Sakyadhita Conference on Buddhist Women

Colombo, Sri Lanka - October 25-29, 1993

by Gabriele Küstermann

A warm reception awaited participants arriving in Colombo for the third International Sakyadhita Conference on Buddhist Women. We experienced two kinds of warmth. First was the warm-hearted welcome of the Sri Lankan women who organized the conference and provided kind hospitality throughout our stay in Sri Lanka. Second was the warm climate of Sri Lanka, with plenty of sunshine during the day and thunderstorms nearly every night.

The inauguration of the conference took place on the October 25 at the huge hall of Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall in Colombo," under the patronage of the President of Sri Lanka, His Excellency D.B. Wijetunga. The overall conference theme was "Buddhist Women in Modern Society." President Wijetunga and special guests lit the flame that marks the opening of important celebrations in Sri Lanka. In his words of welcome to the audience of 1500, he stressed that Sri Lankan women are well on their way to full emancipation. He reminded the audience that Sri Lanka was the first country in the world to elect a woman, Mrs. Bandaranaike, as Prime Minister. Another encouraging message was delivered by Bhiksu Bellanwila Dhammaratana of the Buddhist Library in Singapore, who generously sponsored the inaugural ceremony, providing tea for all in attendance and dana (the noon meal) to hundreds of monks and nuns. The President of the Mahabodhi Society of Sri Lanka, Mr. Gamani Jayasuriya, then spoke on the important role women play in maintaining family life and a moral society, especially in view of the pressures of modern life.

The next speakers at the inaugural ceremony were Ms. Kusuma Devendra and Ms. Ranjani de Silva, the gallant President and Secretary of Sakyadhita Sri Lanka, who were responsible for the seamless organization of the conference. Hon. Renuka Herath, Minister of Health and Women's Affairs of Sri Lanka, and Bhiksuni Hye Choon Suk, President of the Korean Bhiksuni Association, then offered their words of congratulations to the assembly. The next guest speakers were the President and Secretary of Sakyadhita International, Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh of Bangkok and

Bhiksuni Karma Lekshe Tsomo of Honolulu, and the President of the National Association of Dasasilmathas of Sri Lanka, Panagoda Mithragnanassari Silmatha.

The women speakers were especially direct in addressing the problems women face as they try to gain greater opportunities and shoulder more of the responsibility for spreading the Buddha's teachings. They explained that Buddhist women need to be free to use their capabilities and potentialities in order to better serve humanity. They especially stressed the deficiencies women face regarding education in the religious field.

The subject of re-establishing the Bhiksuni Order in Sri Lanka, a highly controversial subject in Sri Lanka, fared badly during preparations for the conference. The Ministry of Buddha Sasana (Buddhist Affairs) offered their support to the conference on the condition that the re-establishment of the Bhiksuni Order not be a subject of discussion! This was naturally an affront to Buddhist women, in view of the fact that the re-establishment of the Bhiksuni Order is wished for by women all over the world, is one of the goals of Sakyadhita. Sakyadhita Sri Lanka refused to agree to avoid the topic and instead, in a diplomatic coup, won the support of the President of Sri Lanka.

Several speakers reminded the audience of famous Buddhist women in Sri Lankan history. They made particular mention of the renown Bhiksuni Sanghamitra, daughter of the great Indian emperor Ashoka, who transmitted both the original bodhi tree sapling and the bhiksuni lineage from India to Sri Lanka several centuries before Christ and of Bhiksuni Devasara who, together with other Sri Lankan bhiksunis, brought the Dharmagupta lineage of the bhiksuni precepts from Sri Lanka to southern China during the fourth century after Christ. The long-lasting effect of their efforts was that this lineage has continued uninterruptedly and is the only bhiksuni transmission extant in the world today. It flourishes in the East Asian countries of Taiwan, Korea and Vietnam, and is now reaching women in Western countries.

It is interesting to note that this historical event has been recorded by Chinese historians, but is impossible to trace in the historical records of Sri Lanka. After the Theravada school became dominant in Sri Lankan history, there is no evidence of other Buddhist schools in the chronicles. Nevertheless, though the number of statues of

bodhisattvas found in Sri Lanka definitely points to the existence of Mahayana Schools in Sri Lanka prior to that time.

During the conference, this subject was discussed freely. Bhiksuni Jampa Tsedroen's talk, "Challenges in Monastic Life Today," was discussed with great interest in exchanges immediately after the talk. With dasasilmathas participating in increasing numbers, this was a topic of keen interest in workshops throughout the conference. Lacking education on the topic, the dasasilmathas took this chance to put forward detailed questions on the issue and finally to demand the re-establishment of the Bhiksuni Order in Sri Lanka. At the same time, it was evident that the first step toward improving the status and conditions of Buddhist women in Sri Lanka is to improve the education of the women interested to becoming part of the Sangha.

Mr. Senarat Wijayasundera, Professor of Pali and Buddhist Studies at the University of Colombo, gave a very interesting talk on "Women in Theravada Countries with Special Reference to Nuns: Problems and Solutions." Dr. Paula Arai, now lecturing at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, presented a moving talk entitled "Japanese Monastic Women in Historical and Cultural Context." Bhiksuni Karma Lekshe Tsomo, from the Philosophy Department of University of Hawai'i spoke on "Comparing Buddhist and Christian and Buddhist Women's Experiences." Dharmacharini Sanghadevi of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order in England talked about "The Role of Laywomen in Buddhism," emphasizing the activities of Buddhist women in their Order and explaining the Dharmacharini or Dharmachari ordination which they regard as being between the five vows of a lay practitioner and the ten precepts of a novice nun or monk. "Maintaining Human Values in a Time of Rapid Change" was the subject of the talk given by Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh. She stressed the importance of understanding the Four Noble Truths, a central teaching of the Buddha, in cultivating and maintaining sound human values in the modern world.

Kusuma Devendra spoke on "Peace and Conflict Resolution in a Threatened World." She discussed this subject against the very sad background of recent political events in Sri Lanka. At the moment about 600,000 people from the North of the island have wandered to the south to escape heavy fighting between radical Tamil and Singhalese government forces. The refugees are both Singhalese and Tamil, demonstrating clearly that conflict between political fanatics of all stripes inflicts suffering upon innocent inhabitants who have no wish to be involved. The talk of Theja Gunawardhana recounted the life and fate of Aung Sang Suu Kyi, the Burmese democracy advocate

and Nobel Peace Prize Winner who lives under house arrest in Rangoon. Despite the constant threat to her life, Aung Sang Suu Kyi stays on in Burma to call the world's attention to the appalling conditions the Burmese people are enduring under the dictatorship of the military dictators in control of the country. This presentation motivated everyone to include her protectively in their prayers.

After the conference, participants from 20 countries toured the most sacred Buddhist sites of Sri Lanka by bus. We went first to the hill town of Kandy, the former capital. Sakyadhita members of Kandy received us there with huge, beautifully ornamented elephants, and a troupe of drummers, dancers, and flute players who led us to the sacred temple where the relic of a tooth of the Buddha is enshrined. We were lucky enough to be allowed to enter the innermost sanctuary of the temple where the venerated tooth is kept. After touring the ancient temple and offering respect to relic, the local Buddhist Women's Association treated us with a wonderful Sri Lankan lunch. Their speaker, encouraged by the activities of Sakyadhita, in turn encouraged the members of Sakyadhita International to persevere in their efforts to make the lives of Buddhist women more meaningful.

After Kandy, we visited Anuradhapura, the historical starting point of the spread of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Mahindra, son of Emperor Ashoka, arrived at this place in the 3rd century B.C.E. The teachings of the Buddha which he brought were readily understood and accepted by the king of that region and consequently spread all over the island. It was at this place that his sister, Bhiksuni Sanghamitra, arrived a little later with a large retinue of bhiksunis and established the Bhiksuni Order in Sri Lanka. With her, Bhiksuni Sanghamitra who brought a sapling of the sacred Sri Maha Bodhi Tree in Bodhgaya which she planted at Anuradhapura. Sri Lankans claim that the present bodhi tree growing at that place is the offspring of the original tree planted there exactly 2300 years ago. Descendants of this bodhi tree have been planted all over Sri Lanka and are highly revered. As the President of the country noted in his inaugural address, the anniversary of this event, to be celebrated on Full Moon Day in December 1993, "is of particular significance to the Buddhist women of Sri Lanka. I have no doubt that they will take the lead in celebrating the event in a fitting manner." In preparation for the celebration, two golden shining statues of the royal brother and sister have been brought from Thailand to Colombo and were led in grand procession from Colombo to Anuradhapura.

Sakyadhita members on the tour hope that our sisters in Sri Lanka have managed to prevent the blaring of loudspeakers at the site of the bodhi tree. In constantly announcing the names of the temple sponsors, the loudspeakers seriously disturb the devotions of the many pilgrims from all parts of the world who come to meditate and pay their respects to this sacred site.

The Sakyadhita Conference received widespread newspaper, radio, and television coverage. There is no doubt that this favorable coverage and the vivid commentaries that appeared in the media will help Sakyadhita Sri Lanka in pursuing their future goals much more effectively. Their appeals to the public to assist materially in the goal of establishing institutes for the education of dasasilmathas had already received a very positive response with two offers of land soon after the conference. Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne, founder of the Sarvodaya Movement, also offered to cooperate with Sakyadhita Sri Lanka in providing leadership training and education for nuns.

The following message of the German-born bhiksu Nyanaponika was printed in a special edition of Colombo's Daily News on the Inauguration day of the conference: "This conference is very timely. In the present situation in the world, we cannot afford to be left without the great power for good that exists in Buddhist womanhood and even more so in the renunciation of Buddhist nuns. This potential has too often been neglected or ignored due to indifference or prejudice. The great and laudable objective is to deliberate on ways and means for improving the situation of Buddhist nuns everywhere, their education and their spiritual progress. As a Theravadin monk, I wish to express my full support of these important aims and offer my best wishes for the success of this undertaking. It is my hope that you will not be content with just listening to lectures and formulating declarations, but that you will also decide on action. These are not leisurely times and we cannot allow ourselves delays, but must be determined."

At the end of the conference, in accordance with the wishes of the delegates assembled, a resolution was drawn up that specifically addressed the pressing needs of Buddhist women in Sri Lanka. The resolution was then put forward to the President of Sri Lanka and tendered to the press. It was published word by word the next day in the Daily News. To be diplomatic and ensure the success of our long-range goals, the delicate issue of bhiksuni ordination was not confronted directly. The text reads as follows:

In so far as Buddhist women have been a devoted and energetic force in the establishment, growth, and preservation of the Buddhist sasana in Sri Lanka for hundreds of years;

In so far as the problems of modern society require the dedicated efforts of the Buddhist women of Sri Lanka for their resolution;

In so far as effective efforts for the betterment of society require both general education and a thorough knowledge of the Buddhist texts;

In so far as the attainment of nirvāna requires training in the practice of the Dhamma and the Vinaya, and the proper practice of Dhamma and moral discipline requires facilities for training;

In so far as there is an effort to achieve equal opportunities for women throughout the world, we resolve that it is time to achieve equal opportunities for Buddhist women, and especially nuns in Sri Lanka;

Be it resolved that the government and general public of Sri Lanka lend its support by donating land, buildings, and funds to establish a Sakyadhita Institute for Buddhist women, its aims being:

- 1.To provide a scholarship fund for providing education to needy dasasilmatas;
- 2.To provide education in Pali, Dhamma, English, Vinaya, and the various subjects of a secular education, as well as training in meditation, health care, community awareness, and monastic life, a library and courses in Buddhist social ethics;
- 3.To administer a trust fund to provide outreach programs to administer similar institutes for education and training in monastic life in the various districts of the country;
- 4.To include an international component for exchanging information with Buddhist women in other countries and to take the lead in providing hospitality to Buddhist women and nuns arriving for study and pilgrimage from countries throughout the world;

5.To assess the needs and the interests of Sri Lankan Buddhist women, including the needs of disadvantaged dasasilmatas;

For these reasons stated above, we feel that it is absolutely essential to establish a center for Buddhist women in Colombo to accomplish the above purposes, to increase the personal awareness of Buddhist women and improve the quality of their lives, so that they may better contribute to the well-being of society and to the creation of peace in the world.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, President

Ranjani de Silva, Vice President

Bhiksuni Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Secretary

Joke Hermsen, Executive Committee Member

All those who attended the conference wish to thank the organizers, who worked so diligently for so long to guarantee the success of the gathering. We are especially grateful to our Dharma sister Ranjani de Silva for the wonderful atmosphere and kind attention to foreign delegates. We all treasure this experience in our hearts. The conference was tremendously fruitful and prepared us all to work conscientiously for our common goals in future.

Karma Lekshe Tsomo has been asked to prepare for publication the conference proceedings from the second and third International Sakyadhita Conferences. The proceedings will then be available to others interested in the topics. It is also hoped that the proceedings can be translated into relevant languages and provided economically to women in Sri Lanka and other developing countries.



Sakyadhita International has suggested Ladakh, India, as a location for the Fourth International Sakyadhita Conference. The proposed date is the summer of 1995. Further news on these events will be reported in future newsletters.

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## Vietnamese Nuns Bring Calm to Neighborhood

by Jim Dickey

(The following article commending the efforts of Bhiksuni Dam Luu, a longstanding member of Sakyadhita, appeared in the Honolulu Advertiser on September 4, 1993.)

At a busy San Jose intersection, motorists sometimes come to a screeching halt to stare curiously at Vietnamese nuns with shaved heads walking single file so slowly they seem to be standing still.

The women, proceeding on that inch-by-inch spiritual journey known as walking meditation, pass the front of a magnificent temple of ancient Chinese design. By the end of the year, the nine Buddhist women will preside over a million-dollar, 9,000-square-foot temple, Chua Duc Vien (Virtue Fulfilled Temple), at the southeast corner of McLaughlin Avenue and Tully Road.

Chua Duc Vien is the only Buddhist temple in Northern California run by women and one of the few in the nation, said Bhante E. Nandisvara, a monk who heads a temple in Campbell.

Master nun Dam Luu saved for 10 years for the \$400,000 down payment, 30 percent of which came from recycling newspapers, cans, bottles, cardboard boxes, computer paper - "everything," she said. The rest came from donations from 3,000 temple members throughout the Bay Area.

Dam and eight other nuns and novices live next to the temple in a ramshackle building converted from a 1930s single-family home. The nuns have been there since 1985, in the process winning over their neighbors.

Nandisvara, who holds a doctorate in Indian religions from Oxford, said Buddhist nuns have nearly disappeared from Vietnam, where they long enjoyed equality with men. In many other Asian nations, nuns and all other women still are treated like second-class citizens, he said.

"There used to be 12,000 to 15,000 nuns in Vietnam," he said. "Now there are only 600 to 700. The others were disrobed by the Communists and forced to work in the fields."

As the chief teachings of Buddhism involve compassion and the cessation of suffering, the nuns practice a tenet known as "loving kindness." This is expressed in their hospitality and their concern for neighbors.

Julia Estimada, 59, a Catholic and a native of the Philippines, said the nuns came by one day with an interpreter to introduce themselves.

"They just bowed and bowed and said, 'We are living close to you and, if we are bothering you, please tell us,'" she said. "They don't talk English, but they understand through the heart and say, 'Thank you, thank you.'"

Another neighbor, Nemat Tehrani, an Iranian Jew, said he and his wife stopped at the temple one day and were told, "Welcome, welcome. Come in, come in. See everything." He accepted the nuns' spontaneous invitation to lunch.

Visitors stop by often to light incense in the chapel, talk to the Buddha or visit the ancestors' altar where photos of dead relatives are kept in frames for nine months before being cataloged and placed in albums for perusal by succeeding generations.

The story of San Jose's temple originated 57 years ago in a Vietnamese village with the tears of a 4-year-old daughter of a farmer.

The child often was taken to the village temple and cried so hard when it was time to go that her parents eventually allowed her to stay and be raised by the temple nuns.

She was educated to be a nun and grew up to be called by a spiritual name meaning Mother of the Buddha - Dam Luu.

In Vietnam, Dam operated a home for orphans of the war, including the children of American servicemen. But when Saigon fell, the Communists "took everything away and threw everybody in the streets," she said.

Dam eventually made her escape from Vietnam on a small boat overflowing with 200 people, no water and no food. The suffering was so intense in the six-day journey to Malaysia that "I wanted to die," she said.

Dam found her way to San Jose in 1980, rented a small house for a temple and began saving to build a permanent temple.

Buddhism has "much to offer America," Dam said, especially "to relax. You have to relax and slow down. If you continue racing like a machine, you will eventually.... You will live longer and healthier with Buddhism."

Like Carmelite nuns tucked away in a monastery praying for humanity's salvation, the Buddhist nuns believe they can effect a change in American society.

Nhu Phuoc, 28 and Dam's chief assistant, said the young nuns also want to bring a sense of calmness to visitors to their temple:

"They talk too much, and they come to temple when they have problems at home. They come here and they calm down. It is like a church, except that the temple is always open."

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## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### England

Wendy Barzetovic, Sakyadhita representative for England, reports on the annual gathering of the Daughters of the Buddha in England:

"The Sakyadhita meeting in London was great. There were 30 plus people there - even four men! Ayya Khema came from Germany and gave a wonderful talk on 'Dealing with Stress.' We had a discussion on 'Living as a Practicing Buddhist in England.' For those who weren't Buddhist, it was phrased 'Trying to Follow a Spiritual Path.' We split into about five groups. This gave people a chance to get to know one another a little better. We all talked of our own experiences. Then one person from each group reported back to the whole group at the end.

"The group has gathered about \$80 that it wishes to donate to a nuns' project in India. Last year we sent a similar amount to the Jamyang Choling nuns' project in Dharamsala.

"Sakyadhita England has joined the Network of Buddhist organizations in the U.K. inviting His Holiness the Dalai Lama to come to England to teach."

Wendy felt sad that she was unable to attend the Sakyadhita conference in Sri Lanka, but remembers fondly the first conference in Bodhgaya in 1989. The conference and the pilgrimage to the sacred Buddhist pilgrimage places afterwards were very special occasions for her.

Wendy sent news of a small group of women in London who are exploring ways of grounding their work as psychotherapists within an orientation that is both body-centered and informed by feminism, Buddhist psychology, meditation, and spirituality. For further details, please call 071-272-5738 (London).

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A Buddhist Summer Camp in Taiwan

by Yi-hsun Huang

Buddhists generally recognize the advantages of training in Buddhist principles from a young age. As yet, however, programs for educating young people in Buddhism are rare in the West. Most Western Dharma centers are still struggling to establish viable programs for adults and have not found suitable models or qualified teachers for their young people.

The need for Buddhist education for children is being actively addressed in Taiwan. Many temples have begun organizing Sunday schools and summer camps to meet this need, aware that imparting positive values to children is essential for a balanced and peaceful society. Some of the summer school camps attract hundreds and even more than a thousand enthusiastic children. Here we learn about a six-day camp held in July, 1993, at Fa-Kuang ("Dharma Light") Temple in Taipei. Perhaps this camp will serve as a model for similar programs in other countries.

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Fa-Kuang Temple is tucked away off a busy street in downtown Taipei. In the last few years, it has gained fame for housing one of Taiwan's best graduate Buddhist institutes. But that is not all that goes on here. On a steamy summer day in July last summer, the courtyard of the temple was swarming with delightful children chattering excitedly. They had joined together to study and practice Buddhism.

This year the Fa-Kuang Buddhist Annual Summer Camp was bigger than ever before. In fact, the numbers swell every year as more and more children learn about it. Buddhist parents are very happy to send their children to attend such a camp. Not only do the children learn about Buddhism, they make good friends and have a lot of fun.

Altogether there are 150 children this year. The organizers of the camp made plans for 60, but many more arrived. As they arrived and signed up, the children were divided up into 12 groups, boys and girls separately. Within these groups, they got to know each other very well. The children ranged in age from 6 to 15. The minimum age was supposed to be 8, but several children begged and promised good behavior until they were finally allowed to stay.

The structure of the daily program depends upon the facilities and equipment available. It also depends on the energy and creativity of the teachers. The program at Fa-Kuang included stories and songs, as well as traditional Buddhist practices like prostrations and chanting. In addition, there were competitions and performances. During the day each group prepared a play based on a famous Buddhist story, then at night each acted it out before all the other children. By participating actively in this way, the children became familiar with many stories in the Buddhist texts and many famous episodes from Buddhist history.

The summer camp at Fa-Kuang lasted for seven days, including the days of arrival and departure. The schedule every day was very full:

6:00 - 6:30 Chanting

6:30 - 6:45 Exercises

7:00 Breakfast

8:00 Cleaning the place

8:30 Meditation

9:00 - 9:50 Class

10:00 - 10:50 Chanting and singing Buddhist songs

11:00 Lunch offering service

11:30 Vegetarian lunch

12:00 - 1:30 Rest

1:30 - 2:20 Class

2:30 - 3:20 Games

3:30 - 4:20 Chanting

4:30 - 6:30 Bathing and recreation

6:30 - 7:00 Evening meal

7:00 - 8:30 Evening program

The morning chanting session started at 6:00, so the children woke up very early to wash their faces before the session began. Then they gathered in their groups and performed prostrations along with chanting. The morning session was simple but complete - not a special children's version. The language used in these services is classical Chinese, so the children learned to read these complex characters as they did the chanting. They were very serious as they chanted and bowed.

Meditation sessions were short, since children's attention span is short. Sitting meditation sessions were interspersed with walking meditations, so they would not get bored. First they were taught the correct posture. Most were very flexible and many were able to sit in full lotus position without difficulty. As with adults, it is important that children learn the meaning of the practices they do. At Fa-Kuang Temple, the children studied the meaning of the chanting and prostrations in classes during the day. Through the use of stories, they were taught the meaning of taking refuge and the meaning of being a Buddha. In the classes, they were encouraged to ask plenty of questions to clarify any doubts or confusion. The atmosphere was intentionally very relaxed to maintain the children's interest.

They were also taught the value of making offerings and the meaning of the chanting during the offering services. At meals, each group sat at a round table and ate Chinese style. Before each meal, the children chanted a prayer: "I offer this food to the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and sentient beings. May I engage only in wholesome behavior and cut out all unwholesome behavior." Taking some grains of rice with chopsticks from the left side, the right side, then the center of the bowl, they learned to mentally say, "May I eliminate all negative deeds, engage in all positive deeds, and liberate all sentient beings." Of course, the children had to be taught this procedure well before the meal, not at the table, because they got very hungry! At the end of the meal, they learned to offer thanks to the temple, the donors, and all sentient beings.

Chanting and singing Buddhist songs were especially popular activities. Children love interesting and beautiful songs. They can create merit and learn about Buddhism as they chant and sing. At Fa-Kuang Temple, the children were divided into five singing groups which stayed the same throughout the week. Children love to show off what they have learned. In the evening assemblies, they enjoyed performing right away whatever song they learned that day.



A rest period followed the noon meal. Taiwan is quite hot in the summer and the children naturally felt sleepy after lunch. Boys and girls returned to their separate sleeping areas to nap, keeping silent during this time. After the rest period came games, all of which had a Dharma meaning. The group leaders found that it was best to make a game out of learning. There were 20 games in all. As the children learned a game well, each received a stamp. Those who collected 20 stamps during the week received a prize on the last day.

One especially popular game was an obstacle course, where the obstacles along the way were labelled Laziness, Pride, and the other delusions. They played a dart game where the targets were the three poisons of the mind: Attachment, Anger, and Ignorance. They played a game of throwing hoops around sticks representing the five precepts and the ten virtuous actions. One day they performed the ceremony of bathing the Buddha, eliminating dust both from the statue and from their own minds. On another day, they strung prayer beads. In this way, learning about Buddhism was both interesting and enjoyable for the children.

All the games and activities, costumes and props, were prepared by the teachers beforehand. An interesting program requires considerable thought and effort on the part of the teachers. To teach the practice of generosity, each child was asked to bring a present when they came to the camp. These were then distributed as prizes by drawing lots. To illustrate the well-known theme "Life is like a dream, an illusion, a bubble, a mirage," the children were given bubbles to blow. Another day they played a kind of bingo using the names of 53 people mentioned in the Avatamsaka Sutra who learned the doctrine of the Buddha and finally became wise.

Each day the morning and afternoon classes presented instructions on different topics, sometimes using a particular theme that was reinforced throughout the day. The topics included how to make prostrations, how to generate the enlightened attitude (bodhicitta), how to light candles and offer them before Manju ri, and how to understand the Four Noble Truths. One afternoon the Heart Sutra was committed to memory. In a comfortable way, the classes helped the children become familiar with the Tripitaka, or "three baskets" of teachings of the Buddha.

Sometimes in the afternoons they watched videotapes of Buddhist subjects, such as a drama of Kwan Yin which held them in rapt attention. Sometimes they wrote reports on their experiences at the camp. Sometimes they learned Buddhist English: A for Arhat, B for Buddha, C was Ch'an (Zen meditation), D for Dharma...L for Lotus, M for Monk, N for Nun, O for Offerings, P for Pure Land, R for Rosary, S for Sangha, T for Temple, V for Venerable, and so on. An MC asked questions like on a quiz show and the boys and girls competed to come up with the words. On other days this competitive game format was also used to check their comprehension of key Dharma concepts. "Do you want to be born as a hungry ghost?" "No!" "What activities do you have to avoid?" "Lying, killing, stealing...etc." By the end of the week, the children had absorbed many of the basic Dharma teachings.

Drawing Buddhist pictures was another popular activity. The children were asked to draw Buddhas, bodhisattvas, or anything they saw in the temple. One child drew a very cute picture of a little nun with a hat. Some of them drew large posters about the temple and the activities at the camp. Afterwards the pictures were displayed and the children were all very excited to see what the others had drawn.

Although the summer camp at Fa-Kuang Temple lasted for seven days, a camp could also be three days, five days, or longer. In this case the temple provided food, lodging, insurance, and all instructional materials for the duration, charging only 50 cents a day per child. There were 24 teachers and group leaders, two for each group, so the children got plenty of personal attention.

On the first day a welcome party was held. The schedule and discipline were explained at that time. The teachers - nuns of the temple, parents, and public school teachers - were introduced to the children. Each of the 12 groups was given a name: Compassion, Knowledge, Arhat, Bodhisattva, Generosity, Morality, Patience, Perseverance, Concentration, Wisdom, and so on. They learned a series of witty prompts and responses, including how to offer applause and cheers to express approval of their peers. They really enjoyed practicing the cheers.

The discipline was simple: to keep quiet and follow the schedule. If anyone misbehaved, they would be asked to bow to the Buddha or recite the Heart Sutra, though some teachers felt these activities should not be used as a punishment. Some of the boys

misbehaved and were asked to perform these activities, but they were seen chatting and cutting up very soon thereafter, so it did not seem to have a great effect. Some of the girls also were disciplined for not arranging their slippers neatly. When asked to bow, they took their punishment very seriously and cried, so their group leader felt very sad about it.

There were many humorous moments, too. The children added funny lines to the plays they wrote that made everybody laugh. The teachers enjoyed the children's antics and worked at keeping them amused.

On the second day, the children were allowed to choose one of four different Buddhist services: Amitabha Buddha, Kwan Yin Bodhisattva, Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, and the Medicine Buddha. Then performed these just as adults would do, complete with prostrations and reciting the name of the Buddha or bodhisattva while circumambulating, though perhaps a bit more slowly. This activity was repeated several times during the week, so each child got a chance to join in all four.

Another day a teacher discussed environmental awareness: how to protect the earth's resources, how to be mindful of using these resources, how to be more careful about pollution and cutting trees. She made the lesson very interesting by citing familiar problems and situations. Even though the children were too young to wash the dishes themselves, they decided not to use disposable utensils at the camp.

Another teacher discussed Chinese poetry with the children. She explained the Buddhist meaning contained in the poems. The children copied each one out by hand, though they probably did not really understand them. Some found this lesson boring and fell asleep.

Evenings were cooler, so more strenuous activities were often held then. One evening was devoted to the practice of Three Steps, One Bow - a Buddhist practice popular in Mahayana countries. Because the practice included chanting before and after each bow, and because there were 150 children and 50 staff members, it took three and a half hours to cover a distance of 300 meters. The teachers decided it might have been better to have several lines, instead of just one. In addition to chanting the names of

Buddhas and bodhisattvas as they bowed, the children made vows to benefit their parents, teachers, friends, and all sentient beings. Sometimes they included prayers for their parents' good health and for their academic performance as well. Everyone would chant an aspiration in unison on the first two bows; on the third bow, everyone remained silent and made an individual aspiration.

One evening each group chose a representative to tell a Buddhist story, either a familiar story or one chosen from a storybook. The acting was really quite dramatic and each group enjoyed cheering their representative along. Another evening there was a drama competition between the groups. Each group was given a different story from the sutras or from Buddhist history. The children could chant it, act it out, compose songs about it, or express it in any way they wished, preparing their own costumes and props. The children proved themselves amazingly creative and the results were appreciated by all.

On the final evening, candles were lit and presented to the Buddha by everyone at the camp. Children, teachers, and staff joined together in this act of devotion, so simple and yet so meaningful. Enlightenment is for all - old and young, large and small. The candles we placed at the altar symbolized lighting up our own minds - the best possible offering to the Buddha.

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Children's Direct Seeing

by Dr. Thynn Thynn

Not so long ago, I bought a monopoly game for my children with the intention that all four of us my husband, the children and myself - could sit down on weekends and play together.

At the time that I bought the game, it seemed to be a good idea, as monopoly appears to be a game where adults can participate without getting bored. But in actual practice, things did not turn out as I had envisioned.

My seven-year old son Tet got very upset whenever he lost. After the first game together, my husband never joined in again. As for myself, I persevered only a few more times. Still, the children continued playing whenever their friends come over.

On one particular day, my little son lost as usual. This time it was too much for him and he got into a fit of anger. I thought, 'Now is the time to talk to him about playing games.' So when he had cooled down a bit, I started to explain to him what a game is all about and about winning and losing. He listened attentively, but could not be reconciled to my ideas. I kept wondering how much good my talk was doing him, but suddenly he piped up, "Mommy why is it when I play with balls or other toys I don't get angry but when I play with money I get so mad?" To be honest, I was dumb- struck by his question. I thought to myself, 'My goodness, why didn't I have that kind of wisdom when I bought the set?' I could only marvel at the way the children are teaching me more than I teach them.

While I was busy rationalizing and intellectually explaining away the concept of winning and losing, obviously my little son found it hard to follow such a discourse. He resorted to looking directly into his own mind and taking a clear look at the cause of his own problem. Meanwhile I, as the mother was too preoccupied with my intention to teach him and failed to see his state of mind at that particular moment.

I also noticed that from that time onwards my little son stopped making a fuss over monopoly and began to relate better to the game. Prior to this he would always blame his sister or others for his losses and it was becoming a habit. When he saw what was happening in himself, he must have assumed responsibility for his own anger. That must have been the magic cure. If we adults could learn to do the same, there would be little discord among families and communities.

One fine day about a year ago, my nine- year-old daughter Win asked me very sweetly, "Do you know, Mom, what my friends in school say about you? They said you look more like my grandmother than my mother."

She did not criticize, nor judge nor express any opinion about it, but the message got through to me immediately. Her friends had made a straightforward comment without malice or ill intent, and it went straight to my heart. Since then I have been trying to dye my fast-greying hair and lose weight, to the delight of my daughter.

Obviously, children in their innocence are more adept at looking directly into themselves at others and at certain situations whereas we adults tend to complicate and distort things with our rationalizations, criticisms, and judgements. Hence, the fault is always with others and the outside world.

I suppose we were also direct and innocent when we were young, but as we grew older we lost this directness and innocence. How did we become so distorted? What went wrong?

There is no simple answer. Maybe it was the conditioning that attended our education, the inculcation of established values in family and society.

Early on in life, we were taught to discriminate and judge for ourselves in a polarized manner. In every aspect of life, everything was split into opposites, good versus bad, success versus failure, wealth versus poverty and so on. As our young minds got caught up in this dualistic way of looking at things, we gradually lost our original way of viewing the world as a totality.

In becoming educated, we are trained to be critical and logical as proper preparation for adequate performance in our careers. As our intellectual abilities are enhanced, we develop our minds but not our hearts. As we lose more and more of our childhood innocence, our lives become more and more competitive; confusion and frustration almost inevitably result. We may find we need to seek help, either from psychologists or from religion.

Many have found consolation in Buddhist meditation. For example, vipassana meditation can be viewed as an inward-looking practice which is strictly non-judgmental and non-discriminatory in nature. It is an exercise in looking directly into ourselves in an effort to undo all the conditioning that has taken place within our lifetime.

In fact meditation is nothing sophisticated. We are just relearning what we have forgotten. We are actually learning to shed the sophistication of our intellect and the accumulation of mental possessions. We are learning to go back to the simplicity of our childhood, and to our original nature which was so pure and untainted.

That is why many sages are esteemed for a childlike quality in their nature. This does not mean the wise man has reverted to childhood. A child is innocent but lacks the maturity and the wisdom to handle his own life. Adults have the maturity to some extent, but lack the innocence. This innocence bestows wisdom, it can only be achieved through the practice of "direct seeing" into one's own mind.

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## The Meaning of Compassion

by Daw Su Su Sein

Compassion, the English translation of the Pali word "karuna", may be further expanded to: "that which moves a good person's heart at the sight of the suffering of other people." Its main characteristic is the desire to remove the suffering of living beings. Its chief function is the overcoming or eliminating of cruelty. It is a principle which goes beyond mere wishing to the actual doing of kind and helpful actions to benefit others.

True compassion goes hand in hand with helpfulness and a willingness to sacrifice self-interest to promote the welfare and happiness of humanity. Its indirect enemy is grief. Grief and sorrow are morally weak states, whereas true compassion is both morally strong and personally strengthening. By cultivating the principle of compassion in ourselves, we overcome cruelty. In the course of overcoming cruelty, we cultivate wisdom. Perfect wisdom is the crown of compassion.

The Four Sublime States are pure love, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. These four states constitute the moral and spiritual foundation of human beings. At the same time, they are real sources of peace and happiness.

Compassion is generally taken to exist in connection with other people, but in reality, true and pure love and compassion for oneself should come first, so as to diminish our own cruel tendencies. Therefore, we first meditate on compassion for ourselves. It is impossible to radiate thoughts of love and compassion unless we ourselves have properly developed these qualities. Therefore, love and compassion in for oneself precedes true love and compassion for others.

The Buddhist method is always to deal with oneself first, for by so doing we put ourselves in a position to understand and help others more effectively. If we ourselves have selfish, angry thoughts and lack understanding, we harm not only ourselves, but other people, too. "One who profits oneself will profit others." No enemy can harm one more than one's own evil thoughts and craving. These inner enemies are our true enemies.

If we cannot find happiness within ourselves, we will not be able to find it anywhere. People who cannot control themselves cannot find happiness by performing services for others. Since they are not calm themselves, they cannot create a calm atmosphere. On the other hand, a person with true compassion, based on understanding, confers a double blessing: in helping others with pure motivation, due to an inner calm, the person feels happiness within and experiences happiness in helping others as well.



Meditation is mental training. From a trained mind spring right thoughts, words, and deeds. The Buddhist teaching reveal how self-development may be achieved, demonstrating how perfected individuals help create a perfect world. The inner world comes first, while the outer world is the manifestation of the inner world.

Thus, compassion for oneself comes first, and we can achieve it by clear thinking and self-discipline. But to attain it, we must understand the right way to nurture both ourselves and our children. Although in the teachings of the Buddha compassion for oneself comes first, it is not the same as self-pity. Feelings of self-pity are of a selfish nature, accompanied by misunderstanding and anger, and thus are harmful.

Meditation is the key, since training of the mind is the starting point. We should contemplate the teachings, then make up our minds to practice accordingly. We meditate first on compassion for ourself, until our heart, our mind, becomes compassion. Then we enlarge that compassion until it embraces all beings throughout the whole universe.

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The Enlightened Nun Subha

by Panadure Vajira Dasasilmatha

Because she had observed her precepts well as a good devotee of a former Buddha, Subha was born as the beautiful daughter of a prosperous goldsmith during the dispensation of Lord Gotama Buddha. Since her birth brought good luck to the household, her proud father named her Subha, which means "Lucky." He often thought, "This daughter of mine promises to be a perfect beauty. She reminds me of the superb royal jewelry I make!"

By the time Subha reached her sixteenth year, her father had become a rich man, receiving commissions from many rich clients. As his trade prospered, he had many goldsmiths working under him. Subha often wore the beautiful necklaces, coronets, and other ornaments he crafted for queens and princesses, parading and showing off their beauty. The parents and neighbors admired good-natured Subha, who appeared even more beautiful wearing delicate, refined ornaments. As Subha was kind, her home was a happy place, where friends and relations assembled in harmony.

Subha's neighbors often talked of a royal prince who had left his palace to lead an ascetic life. They said that the noble Sage had become a great saint, with many disciples. One day when the people of Rajgriha expected the noble sage's arrival, Subhas' father declared that day a holiday for his workmen and the maid Subha went with her parents and friends to witness the great sage's arrival. When the populace, led by King Bimbisara, heard the Lord Buddha's teachings, they were filled with joy. By evening the king, his retinue, and all the citizens of the town had accepted Buddhism as their faith. Very soon monasteries were offered to the Buddha, where some of the monks stayed, while others set forth to preach the doctrine.

Soon Buddhism was the accepted religion of the country. Many young men and women joined the Order of monks and nuns. Subha accompanied her parents to the teaching site and listened happily to the discourses. She saw the yellow-robed nuns and spoke with them. Her family became good devotees who often visited the monastery. One day, as the Lord surveyed the audience with supernormal vision, he saw that the maid Subha was experiencing last birth in samsaric existence - that she would become a nun and gain enlightenment. As the Lord preached that day, Subha listened intently and, at the end of the discourse, she attained the stage of a Stream Entrant. Thereupon she pleaded with her parents to allow her to become a nun. The parents were reluctant to part with her since, as their only child, she was slated to inherit their wealth. So, because they loved her, they tried their best to change her mind. In the end, however, they relented and, in due course, she became a nun. Her parents and relations thought that Subha would soon leave the nunnery and return to them, since she was fond of wearing fine clothes and jewelry.

Meanwhile Subha received doctrinal instructions from the nuns and observed her precepts well. She listened well when the nuns preached the Dharma and discussed

doctrinal topics at length. She received instructions on meditation and meditated peacefully. Without her, the fond parents' home became a desolate place. Eventually, they talked over with friends and decided to visit the nunnery with the idea of coaxing Subha to return home. As they visited the nunnery, her mother began to weep, saying: "Dear daughter! Our home is a desolate place without you. Think of the lovely gold jewelry made specially for you by your father! These ornaments decorated your neck, ears, and arms! Once you loved to wear them! Now we have no daughter to inherit them! Dear daughter, we are rich with much wealth and many servants! Return and be the owner of all our wealth!" Her relations and friends made the same appeal while the mother cried.

Subha, determined to stop further appeals, tried to convince them that their appeals were in vain. She advised them with these words:

Listen well, my mother and relations.

Attired nicely as befitted a youth,

I listened to the teachings of the Lord.

In a wholesome state of mind,

I then realized the Truth.

So I left my parents who loved me,

My devoted friends and relations all,

All luxuries of a comfortable life,

Considerable wealth, lands and fields.

Craving for worldly comforts,

Does not suit my life now.

I left my homey comforts.

I shall not go there again,

I prefer a life of solitude,

Devoid of all craving.

Those fallen into the abyss of desire,  
Often face disappointments,  
Loss of their wealth,  
Bodily hurt and even worse disasters.

Dear relations, listen to me.

Why do you try to tempt me

With all the troubles that I have left behind?

Dear friends, please realize that I am a homeless nun,

Who discerns no value in wealth!

My head is shaven;

I am clad in the robes of the Order.

Please realize my homeless mendicant state!

Living on whatever food others offer me,

Wearing robes that others offer me,

Living according to the precepts -

Such is the life of a nun.

Omniscient Lord Buddha,

As well as the noble Sangha,

Have shattered all bonds of desire

To attain the freedom of liberation.

They are free and happy!

Craving and desire are frightful enemies.

Like a devastating fire, they bring  
All troublesome sorrows in their wake.  
Like enemies, they chose to punish us.  
Sensual pleasures are a terror,  
Poisoning the minds of people.  
Like a poisoned dart, they pierce the pure mind,  
Misleading people to danger and sin.  
Pleasures of the senses are frightful,  
Like a snake's head about to sting.

Those ignorant people,  
Who unable to cross the mire of desire,  
Wallow in the pleasures of the senses.  
They see no end in birth and death,  
In the vast sea of existence.  
Thus craving brings forth,  
Rebirth in sorrowful conditions.  
Their feet are as if bound  
Forever in the ocean of samsaric existence.

Greed and desire create foes,  
Enticing followers to danger.  
Repenting their folly,  
They face endless sorrows.  
Partaking of sugar-coated poisoned food,

They are happy, singing at first.  
As the poison works, it brings much torment.  
Suffering and disaster follow in its wake.

Therefore, dear friends and relations,  
For these reasons, I do not accept  
Your ideas of happiness dependent on wealth.  
I have found happiness in being a nun.  
Never will I accept home life again!  
Even as the Noble Ones,  
Who followed the Noble Eightfold Path,  
Were able to cross the fearful ocean of samsara,  
I shall certainly follow their steps,  
To gain the bliss of nibbana.

The friends and relations who listened never tempted her again. Most of them realized the truth of her words, and were happy when they listened to her.

Meditating on peace, Subha was able to attain her goal of attaining full liberation on the eighth day after her ordination. One day, as the enlightened nun was enjoying the bliss of meditation, Lord Buddha pointed her out to the nuns who came to worship him, saying: "Nuns! Look at the nun Subha! She has been well-trained by Theri Uppalavanna. Full of faith, she has maintained mindfulness and restrained her senses. By earnest endeavor, she has gained deliverance from the bonds. Her practice has culminated in the full attainment of Arahantship. She has reached the Three Higher Knowledges. It is only eight days since she received ordination. She is indeed a credit to the Order of Nuns!" When Sakra, the king of the gods, overheard the Lord's words, he came with his retinue of heavenly beings and worshipped the enlightened nun Subha.

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## Pilgrim's Progress

(for Buddha's birthday, 1993)

farewell, Expectations and False Hope!

on second thought, don't fare well. fare badly. fall  
and break your wily neck. may tanker truck wheels  
sever your favorite tendon. after all  
this trouble, from your siren's whining pitch,  
kindly depart, stillborn Anticipation.

Delusion, how well we came to know thee  
as we clung with bloody fingertips to  
your crumbling ledges,  
our grasp ebbing and sliding under  
curtains of dusty pebbles ripping  
down the jagged slope.

so, i won't end up as someone's wife. after  
two tries, i concede: wifeliness  
is not my gift.

so, i won't be an ivy-covered professor, at least  
not now and not in the big house  
and not in the city on the hill.

maybe i'll be someone else entirely and entire?  
whose exact nature eludes: some hybrid beast unfurling wing  
and fin, spikey yet with bits of eggshell and cocoon.  
but enough about me! Illusion, you are dying and  
i'm here to sing you out. so long, false friend:  
aspiration's incestuous cousin.  
may your sleep be barren and long  
may your step-children seek asylum  
with your enemies. on the other hand,  
look on the bright side: perhaps you'll make good  
fertilizer for banana tree and taro. I will plant on your  
grave, just before rising some black night  
to shake rattles of shark bone over  
your smoking remains, to dance howling and naked  
above your rocky heart.

by caroline sinavaiana

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Hearty Congratulations!

Rose Nakamura Receives Caregiving Award



Buddhist women are beginning to receive recognition for their efforts in the field of social service. On October 28, 1993, Rose Nakamura of Honolulu, Hawai'i, received the first Rosalyn Carter Caregiving Award for her outstanding contributions to the field of volunteer care for the frail and elderly. The award was announced by the Rosalyn Carter Institute for Human Development at a conference held at Georgia Southwestern College. Nominations for the award were put forward from among the 400 caregiving projects of the National Federation of Interfaith Caregivers. The Federation includes projects in 45 states throughout the nation.

Ms. Nakamura, a longtime Sakyadhita member, travelled to Americas, Georgia, to receive the award personally presented by Rosalyn Carter at a one-day conference on caregiving. Ms. Carter had the opportunity to learn about the Buddhist concept of dana, or selfless giving, and to introduce the concept to her husband, Jimmy Carter, formerly President of the United States. The Carters are well-known for their warmhearted humanitarian efforts. The Habitat project which Jimmy Carter founded is currently building homes on the Hawaiian island of Kauai in the aftermath of Hurricane Iniki. Ms. Carter is scheduled to visit Hawai'i and to address the volunteer caregivers of Project Dana when their Board of Directors meets in February, 1994.

Project Dana, which began its work in 1990, presently provides care to frail and elderly residents through nine projects on the islands of Hawai'i, Maui, and Oahu. In 1993, 400 volunteer caregivers provided assistance to over 600 elderly members of the community. Plans are underway to expand these services to new sectors of the community and to other locations in the coming year.

The success of Project Dana is largely due to the joyful and unceasing efforts of Rose Nakamura since she retired from her position as student advisor at the East-West Center in Honolulu. Her caregiving work is a source of inspiration to the Hawaiian community and to Buddhist women everywhere. It demonstrates the immense potential of Buddhist women to benefit society through compassionate selfless giving.

We offer our sincere congratulations to Ms. Nakamura for this well-deserved award.

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