

Sakyadhita Newsletter

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"Bridging Worlds"

6th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women

Taipei, Taiwan
July 11-18, 2002

Sakyadhita: Daughters of the Buddha

Sakyadhita aims to empower women and transform their lives, their communities, and their worlds. Continuing this mission, the 7th International Conference on Buddhist Women will focus on how women can fulfill this potential by joining their efforts.

In our increasingly complex world, we are presented each day with new challenges and opportunities. Buddhists around the world are meeting frequently to discuss how Buddhist ideas and practices, such as compassion, skillful means, and uncompromising integrity, can help people maximize their potential to meet these challenges. More than ever before in history, women are playing leading roles in these crosscultural, interreligious exchanges. The next phase of these valuable exchanges will be the 7th International Conference on Buddhist Women to be held in Taiwan in July 2002.

Background of the Conference

Since 1987, representatives of the world's estimated 300,000,000 Buddhist women have been

meeting to discuss the ways that Buddhist women can constructively approach humanity's enormous problems. Since 1987, Sakyadhita has organized national and international conferences in India, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Ladakh, Cambodia, Nepal, and the U.S. to discuss issues of vital importance to Buddhist women around the world: meditation, social activism, gender equity, and ways to achieve peace and harmony in the world. Publications such as *Sakyadhita: Daughters of the Buddha*; *Buddhist Women Across Cultures: Realizations*; *Innovative Buddhist Women: Swimming Against the Stream*; and *Women as Peacemakers and* videos such as "Compassion in the Himalayas" and "Women in Buddhism: Unity and Diversity" that document the conferences have served to heighten an awareness of these topics among thousands of people globally.

Conference Sponsors

The 7th International Conference on Buddhist Women is jointly sponsored by Sakyadhita: International Association of Buddhist Women, Taiwan's Wuyen Association for Protection of the Blind, National Taiwan University's Buddhist Studies Center, and the Bodhi Foundation. Hua Fan University is also an associate sponsor. Sakyadhita is the world's leading international association of Buddhist women. It was established in Bodhgaya, India, in 1987, as an alliance of Buddhist women dedicated to nurturing women's potential for compassionate social action through networking, education, publications, and practical training. The Wuyen Association for Protection of the Blind, established in 1992 by Bhikshuni Lien-chan, promotes the cultural and educational welfare of the blind and offers them opportunities for loving interaction with others.

Conference Objectives

This conference is a unique example of cooperation among representatives of diverse cultures, religions, and social backgrounds. The aims of the conference include:

- * To advance global communications among Buddhist women
- * To promote harmony and understanding among the world religious traditions
- * To further the spiritual and temporal welfare of women around the world
- * To foster dialogue on ways to achieve gender equity in religions around the world
- * To encourage compassionate social action
- * To support world peace through the Buddha's teachings

Taiwan - A Buddhist Pure Land

Buddhism is flourishing in Taiwan perhaps more than anywhere in the world and Taiwanese Buddhist nuns and laywomen are taking leading roles. The Chinese Buddhist tradition practiced in Taiwan is one of only three traditions (with Korea and Vietnam) that offer women full monastic ordination. The Buddhist women of Taiwan are among the most progressive and active in the world, contributing their energies to spiritual and social growth.

Taiwan is a country steeped in Buddhist and Taoist thought. In the last few decades, it has emerged from single-party rule to a flourishing multi-party democracy and prosperity. With economic prosperity has come a renaissance of interest in Buddhism among the people of Taiwan in all age groups. In 1999, the Buddha's birthday became a national holiday. By that time, Taiwan was home to almost 30,000 ordained monks and nuns, 4,000 Buddhist temples, 35 Buddhist seminaries, 5 universities, and 3 colleges, as well as Buddhist high schools, orphanages, retirement homes, hospitals, libraries, and publishing houses.

Chinese Buddhists traditionally practice the Pure Land and Zen traditions. In addition, interest in Tibetan Buddhism has grown since the Dalai Lama's first visit in 1997. A strong focus for many Taiwanese is "Buddhism for the World," harmonizing educational advances, technology, and spiritual practice. The development of Buddhism in Taiwan parallels the country's social development and economic well-being.

Hua Fan University

The Conference site, Hua Fan University, was established by Ven. Shig Hiu Wan in 1990 to promote enlightened education in technology and the humanities. The university, located 45-minutes outside of Taipei, offers a quiet, natural environment in which to explore issues that are of critical importance to humanity's future.

Conference Program

Leading Buddhist scholars, practitioners, and social activists from around the world will express their ideas and offer insights on the critical issues facing contemporary society. Small group discussions and interdisciplinary panels will facilitate an exchange of ideas among participants.

The overall conference theme is "Bridging Worlds." Presentations and small group discussions will focus on the following topics:

- * Understanding Buddhist Women in Taiwan
- * Understanding Buddhist Women around the World
- * Bridging the Buddhist Traditions
- * Bridging the World's Religions
- * Bridging Monastic Ideals & Everyday Life
- * Bridging Study & Practice
- * Bridging Generations
- * Bridging Contemplation & Social Activism
- * Bridging Value Systems: Ancient & Modern
- * Bridging the Gender Gap, Transforming Institutions

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BUDDHISM IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY:

GENTLE MESSAGE IN A DANGEROUS WORLD

Karma Lekshe Tsomo

In today's world, we see an increasingly close intertwining of local, regional, national, and international interests. Intended or not, people throughout the world are drawn together on the basis of personal, economic, cultural, and political ties.

These global connections link the world community closer together, and it is becoming increasingly clear that the welfare or woes of people in different parts of the world is the welfare or woes of us all. A drop in the Tokyo stock market or a terrorist act in New York both have significance for all of us.

Close ties in the international community can be tremendously beneficial, but they can also be the source of many problems. Just as with the members of a family, an increase in intimacy among the members of the international community requires greater mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect if friendly global relations are to be maintained. Social, economic, political, and racial injustices in the world are not simply local problems, they are issues that affect us all and require our full attention.

When greed, hatred, and ignorance rage out of control, they fuel consumerism, aggression, and economic exploitation that endanger everyone in the global community. It is now crucial that human beings establish genuine dialogue, based on understanding and a commitment to work for our mutual well-being. Otherwise, tensions will continue to mount and erupt in increasing violence that threatens us all. The more closely we are drawn together, the more responsibly we must behave to ensure world peace.

Spiritual values and practices can play an important role in our increasingly intertwined global community. The pace of modern life is escalating and human beings face more stress in their daily lives than ever before. Such high levels of stress not only put the physical and psychological health of us all at risk, but also threaten the health and well-being of our communities.

As traditional religions and philosophies fail to adequately resolve these stresses, many people are turning to Buddhist teachings for guidance, meditation, and solace. The Buddha's teachings contain many practical techniques for calming anger, controlling desire, and creating harmonious relationships. In a world as full of violence and corruption as ours, people seek comfort and wisdom from a spiritual path that teaches nonviolence, contentment, compassion, generosity of spirit, and peace of mind. As a result, Buddhist centers are springing up in cities and towns all over the world.

As millions of people in Western countries turn to Buddhism, the various Buddhist traditions are experiencing not only a revival, but also an internal renewal. In the course of history, religious traditions ebb and flow like waves in a great ocean. They flourish under the inspiration of great spiritual leaders, then gradually decline and lose their dynamism, often becoming stale and corrupt. Eventually, when leadership and social conditions change again, the original teachings are rekindled and re-envisioned to meet the needs of a new time.

Today Buddhism faces the challenge of renewal and reformulation. The Buddhist traditions must respond to the needs of a very different world than when Buddha Shakyamuni taught. At this critical turning point in world history, there is a need for wise and dynamic leaders who are able to skillfully adapt the Buddha's teachings to new social conditions. It is essential that Buddhists help nurture qualified and ethical leaders who not only explain these teachings, but exemplify them.

The modern world faces a crisis of cultural values that requires a rethinking of what it means to be authentically human. Preserved within Buddhism are spiritual treasures that are universal in their appeal and application. Today, however, Buddhists must address the problems of living in a very chaotic world. For Buddhism to be meaningful in people's harried lives in this technological age, it must demonstrate how the teachings are relevant and effective by producing genuinely compassionate, wise, and caring individuals who are committed to alleviating the suffering of the world.

An increase in the gross national product does not ensure happier human beings. Often the more wealth people have, the more problems arise. When human beings become caught up in luxurious, artificial lifestyles, distant from social realities and the earth that sustains them, and as a consequence lose touch with their inner resources and experience a sense of meaninglessness in their lives. Alcohol, drugs, despair, domestic violence, and communal conflicts are all symptomatic of the spiritual poverty that afflicts the modern world, and it is at this point, when their spiritual health reaches its lowest ebb, that human beings naturally seek a path to a more meaningful life.

To effectively address the problems of contemporary life, Buddhism must confront some very difficult issues and come up with satisfactory responses, not only to spiritual morass, but to such

dire issues as environmental destruction, terrorism, war, and global economic exploitation. This is a challenge to Buddhist institutions and practitioners everywhere, requiring us to live up to our own ideals. If Buddhist institutions are ethical, fair, and harmonious, the tradition will deserve respect and become a valuable resource for helping solve the world's problems.

If, on the other hand, Buddhist individuals and institutions are dysfunctional, they forfeit their credibility and cannot provide the spiritual leadership people in the world today so badly need. To be meaningful and effective, Buddhist groups and individuals must present viable alternatives to the spiritual poverty and corruption that is so widespread.

Buddhism speaks of tolerance, inner transformation, and enlightenment for all sentient beings, and it must make good on these ideals if it is to bring major benefits to the world. Buddhism today faces the dilemma of preserving its spiritual authenticity and unique cultural traditions, while at the same time making Buddhist philosophy and practice relevant to people living very different lifestyles than in centuries past.

Temples in Tokyo and Taipei, Dharma centers in San Francisco and Sydney are facing a crisis of relevance that must be addressed to ensure that Buddhism survives and flourishes. To be relevant today, Buddhism must not only answer people's spiritual needs and provide alternatives to materialistic, stressful ways of living, but also address current social problems such as racism, sexism, environmental destruction, communal strife, and economic injustice.

With 10% of world's population on the verge of starvation, it is not enough to simply teach meditation and prayers. Buddhists must demonstrate their commitment to peace and human happiness by working actively to correct social and economic inequalities.

What are the major problems facing the world today and how can Buddhism help? Today, people in both technologically advanced as well as in developing countries face unprecedented levels of stress in their lives, and Buddhism offers highly effective meditation techniques to help us all cope and nurture inner peace and sanity.

For example, in response to the psychological needs of individuals and families, Buddhism provides practical methods for dealing with anger, attachment, and other emotional distress. In a world racked by personal, domestic, communal, and international conflicts, Buddhism teaches valuable methods of non-violent conflict resolution. In an age sadly in need of moral leadership, Buddhism offers clear ethical guidelines and living exemplars of principled behavior.

On an international scale, Buddhism sends a timely message of tolerance, compassion, harmony, peace, and loving kindness. In order to make a lasting contribution and provide effective moral leadership, Buddhism has to live up to its own ideals by making sure its own institutions are fair and harmonious. The early Buddhist communities of India were among the world's first examples of democratic institutions and shared decision-making.

Now Buddhists must be attentive to the voices of under-represented groups and ensure them a fair role in decision-making. Today, because of highly improved communications technology,

the world's religious traditions today have an unprecedented opportunity to join together, cooperate, and learn from each other. It is time to set aside our differences, try to resolve our misunderstandings, and forge new alliances. Those who love peace and are willing to work for it must become models for social justice and peaceful coexistence.

Buddhists must not only share their spiritual resources, but also share responsibility in caring for the world's poor and downtrodden. Buddhists everywhere must raise their voices in support of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and develop what His Holiness the Dalai Lama calls a "sense of universal responsibility." As Martin Luther King implored, we must "rise above the narrow confines of our individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of humanity."

The enlightened attitude that Buddhism teaches--to awaken and liberate living beings from suffering--is timely. This compassionate approach teaches us to put the needs of others before our own and work ceaselessly for the welfare of the world. Buddhism teaches us to cultivate peace in our hearts and work to relieve the sufferings of all living beings, without exception. Now, in this time of fear and uncertainty, Buddhism's gentle message of peace and compassion offers solace and sanity to a troubled world.

LOVING KINDNESS AS A PATH TO PEACE

by Ariya Nani

Peace is more than the absence of war. This statement runs through my mind as I think about peace and the ways to bring peace about. Wars and conflicts arise out of anger, aversion, and ill-will. If we want the violence to stop, we must abandon these thoughts of anger, aversion, and ill-will. But we are not yet able to completely abandon these unwholesome states of mind. To create peace and mutual understanding, we have to replace these unwholesome states of mind by actively generating harmonious, peaceful states of mind.

In the Buddhist scriptures, the state of mind opposite of anger and aversion is called loving kindness or metta. Other translations for metta are friendliness, goodwill, benevolence, amity, and universal love. Metta or loving kindness is wishing others well. It is not only an absence of aversion or ill will towards others; it is a state of mind that actively wishes for other beings' welfare.

Metta is completely different from ordinary love, which is sensual, emotional, or sentimental, since these types of love are always accompanied by attachment. Metta is love without the desire to possess. It is detached love. If our minds are completely infused with metta, then unwholesome thoughts like anger and ill-will no longer have a chance to arise. If we maintain thoughts of loving kindness, there will be harmony and understanding in our communities. In this way, metta can serve as a strong and powerful means of achieving peace in the world.

Achieving peace involves peace within and peace without. “Peace within” means coming to peace with oneself, creating peace within oneself, breathing peacefully, and living peacefully. “Peace without” means to be at peace with whatever situation we encounter and with whatever type of people we encounter.

How can we train in loving kindness and develop these wholesome states of mind? The Buddhist scriptures call it metta bhavana, training in loving kindness meditation. This is one of the four brahmaviharas, or sublime states of living. Metta is called “sublime,” because to have a mind completely free from all anger and aversion is not so easy, as we know from our own experience.

The scriptures teach us to develop thoughts of good will first toward ourselves, because the genuine wish for other beings’ welfare can only arise when we are able to wish it for ourselves. A mind that is poisoned and aching cannot radiate wholesome thoughts of loving kindness to others. This means we first have to come to peace with ourselves. We have to give up all unwholesome attitudes towards ourselves and develop wholesome thoughts of loving kindness toward ourselves instead.

This can be done by internally saying, “May I be happy, healthy, and well. May I be at ease and in peace.” We practice this as long as it takes to establish the thought firmly in our minds. We continue until our whole body and mind are infused with a feeling of goodwill. After that, we develop this feeling of metta towards other people, other groups, and all living beings.

In the systematic practice of metta bhavana, there is a clearly defined way to direct loving kindness toward other people. When we switch from generating metta toward ourselves and begin to generate it toward other persons, we may say, “Just as I want to be happy, healthy, and well, may other people also be happy, healthy and well.” This acknowledges the very basic wish of every thoughtful being to be happy and well. Nobody wants to live in misery and unhappiness. With this understanding, we build bridges to other beings.

From our own experience, we know that we are constantly trying to create favorable conditions to live peacefully and happily. Other beings are just the same. They, too, want to live in conditions that are favorable for peace and happiness. With this in mind, we generate the wish that others also be happy and well. Later we may say, “May these people be happy, healthy, and well. May they live at ease and in peace.”

Loving kindness and goodwill have to be firmly established in our minds. Through intensive and repeated practice, it is possible to strengthen this wholesome state of mind and, at the same time, to weaken the unwholesome states of anger, aversion and ill-will. Of course, the best thing is to completely eradicate all states of anger and ill-will, and to have a mind that is suffused with thoughts of loving kindness and benevolence towards ourselves and all sentient beings at all times.

Metta is a state that encompasses all living beings without discrimination. It breaks through all the barriers that separate beings from one another. There need to make room in our hearts for every single living being, without exception. When loving kindness is developed to its fullest potential, there are no longer categories such as loved ones and enemies. These divisions fall

away and we develop the same benevolent attitude towards all beings. To the extent that we are able to maintain a mind filled with metta, to that extent there be peace within and around us.

When we look around us, however, we see and hear about quarrels, dissension, jealousy, violence, fighting, and war. Most people's hearts are not at peace. The different wars that are going on throughout the world are just the outward manifestations of the wars that are going on within our hearts. For this reason, we first have to stop the war within ourselves and come to peace.

After establishing a firm sense of loving kindness in our hearts, this metta will also manifest in our actions. When we speak with other people, our words will be a manifestations of loving kindness – soft, gentle, and sweet to the ear. We will speak words that contribute to other people's well-being and will not insult or harm others in any way. In the same way, metta will be the basis for all our physical actions. We refrain from any actions that may injure others or contribute to their harm. Instead, our actions will be manifestations of our intention to help others and contribute to their welfare.

Each person has the responsibility to develop her own mind. We cannot do this for others and others cannot do it for us. When a person's mind is strongly developed in loving kindness, then the mind is vibrant with thoughts of metta and this will have an influence on others around them. Being in the presence of a person with a loving, calm and peaceful mind helps us to become calm and peaceful ourselves.

To create peace in the world, we must first create peace within and then express it in our actions of body, speech and mind. It is difficult to change the world, but we can begin to change ourselves. This is within our reach. Just like when a stone is thrown into a still pond and the ripples spread out in concentric circles, so, too, the radiance of our minds filled with loving kindness will shine brilliantly, encompassing more and more beings.

There is a story that illustrates the power of the mind to develop loving kindness and how individuals with metta are loved and respected by both human and non-human beings. Once upon a time, a rich Indian man named Visaka arrived at the great monastery of Anuradapura in ancient Ceylon and asked to be ordained as a monk. For the first five years, he stayed in that monastery and studied hard. After that, he started to practice meditation.

Visaka used to stay for four months in one monastery and then proceed to another one. Once when he was on his way to a monastery on Cittala Mountain in the southern part of the island, he came to a crossroads. Not knowing which way to take, he stood there wondering which way to turn. A deva (deity) of the mountain came to him and said, "You should take this route." Eventually he arrived at a monastery, where he stayed for four months.

After four months had passed, he got up one morning and began to think about where to go next. As he was reflecting, he heard someone crying and saw a deva sitting on the stairs of the veranda. The monk asked, "Who are you and why are you weeping?" The deva replied, "I am the deva of that tree and I am weeping because you will leave this place." The monk asked what benefits the deva would get if he stayed. The deva replied, "Your presence, Venerable Sir, has brought a feeling of loving kindness among us devas. If you leave, then quarrels and dissension

will break out again. That is why I request you to stay.” So Venerable Visaka said, “If my presence helps you live in peace, then I will stay on.” So he stayed for another four months, and another four months, and another four months, because each time he wanted to leave, the deva again requested him to stay on. He stayed in that monastery until the end of his life, when he entered parinibbana and passed away.

We should follow in Venerable Visaka’s footsteps and always strive to have a heart full of loving kindness wherever we go and toward everyone we meet. In this way, we can create peace both within and around us.

Teaching Dhamma to the Children of Nepal

by Bhikkhuni Sujata

Nepal: Birthplace of Buddhism

Nepal, the birthplace of the Buddha, is situated in the middle of the mighty Himalayan mountains. The country is broken into three geographic zones: 15% mountains, 68% hills and valleys, and 17% lowlands called terai. Stretching across the terai, from east to west, are the towns of Devdaha, the Buddha's maternal land; Lumbini, where the Buddha was born; and Kapilavastu, the site where the Buddha first preached the Dharma. It was while listening to the Dhammacakka Sutta and Anatta Sakkhara Sutta in Kapilavastu that the first five brahmin followers of the Buddha, who had served him as he practiced austerities, achieved liberation and became the first arhants.

These first five arhants, who all came from the region of Nepal, formed the first Bhikkhu Sangha. Thus it was that the Three Jewels – the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha – appeared in the world. The first Buddhist novice, Sramanera Rahula, also came from this region – from the Shakya family of Kapilavastu, ruled by the Buddha's father, King Suddhodana.

Within the first five years after the Buddha’s enlightenment, a number of Shakya princes of this region became monks. In addition, the Buddha's father became an arhant while sitting under the white royal umbrella and died seven days later. After his death, his wife Queen Prajapati Gautami went to the Buddha at Nigrodharama Vihara and asked to become a nun. The Buddha is said to have refused her request three times. The 80-year-old queen then shaved her head, donned yellow robes, and, along with 500 of her followers, walked 250 kilometers from Kapilavastu to Vaishali, where they all asked permission to become bhikkhunis. These noble ladies of the terai were successful in their plea, initiating the Bhikkhuni Sangha.

Other sacred places in the terai that the Buddha visited include Samagama Meluppa, Devdaha,

Kakkarapattan, Uttarak, Nigam, Haliddhavarana, Panjjanika Nigam, and Kundadhanvana. The Buddha preached the well-known Mahasaya Sutta in Kapilavastu, the Samagama Sutta in Samagama, and the Devadaha Sutta in Devdaha. When the Buddha was 78 years old, King Vidudhava invaded the Shakyana kingdom and massacred many people. The people who survived were forced to migrate to different areas of Nepal.

The Revival of Buddhism in Nepal

Two hundred years later after this tragic slaughter, the great Indian Buddhist King Ashoka came to Lumbini. There he erected a stupa, built stone pillars with commemorative inscriptions, and made offerings of 100,000 gold coins. An inscription preserved in Sanskrit reads:

The gods' beloved Priyadarsi king visited here 20 years after his coronation. One stone pillar and a stone slab were erected, as the Buddha was born here. Since it is the birthplace of the Buddha, Lumbini village is exempted from tax.

During King Ashoka's reign (c.273-232 B.C.E.), the congregation of monks was divided into 18 sects (nikayas) – 12 belonging to the Theravada school and 6 to the Mahasanghika. In 248 B.C.E., the third Buddhist synod was held at the Ashokan monastery in Pataliputta in India. At that time, Nepal was ruled by King Sthunko, the Kirat king. The king's son married Ashoka's daughter Charumati, who established Charumati Vihar in Nepal. Five bhikkhus were sent from Ashoka's realm to the Himalayan region to propagate the Dharma in 230 B.C.E.

By 187 B.C.E., the center of Buddhism in Nepal was Lalitpur, now known as the city of Patan (from its interim name, Ashoka Pattana), which is located in the Kathmandu valley. Many stupas and monasteries were constructed as the Dharma spread throughout this area. Nepal became the crossroads for Dharma exchanges between India, Tibet and China.

Over the course of many centuries, Mahayana Buddhism became well-rooted in Nepal. There is also evidence that the Bhikkuni Sangha existed in Nepal. Of 200 inscriptions dating from the Lichchavi period (462-879 C.E.), 15 are Buddhist in origin. The words "Arya Bikkhuni Sangha" and "Mahayana" appear on the pillar of a Buddha statue found in Chapa Tole, Lalitpur.

This figure dates from the era of King Ansuvarma (576-620 C.E.). Another Buddha pillar inscription, which was found in Yangal Vihar, Lalitpur (691 C.E.) says that the figure was made or donated by "Shakya Bhikkuni Parisuddhamati."

By the 15th century, the celibate monastic tradition had seriously declined in Nepal. The long-standing tradition of permanent ordination for monks and nuns had disappeared and Buddhism was practiced by laypeople only. A later tradition of ordaining young men as a novices for four days still continues. However, this tradition is not for girls.

Revival of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal

Only in the 20th century was Theravada Buddhism re-established in Nepal. The late Bhikkhu Mahaprajna was the first Theravada Buddhist monk in the 20th century. He became a Mahayana monk and then re-ordained as a Theravada sramanera in Kushinagar in 1928. He received full ordination in Myanmar in 1931. The honor of introducing the anagarika tradition to Nepal from Myanmar goes to the late Bhikkhu Prajnananda Mahasthvir.

Bhikkhu Prajnananda was born in Kathmandu and became a monk in the Tibetan tradition in 1928. He later re-ordained as a Theravada sramanera (novice monk) in 1930 in Kushinagara under the auspices of Ven. Chandramani Mahasthavira, a monk from Myanmar and received full ordination as a bhikkhu in Myanmar in 1932. Today in Nepal there are about 150 monks and 130 nuns in the Theravada tradition.

Establishment of Nepal Buddha Pariyatti Siksha

In 1963, the Bhikkhus Pragyanaanda and Buddhaghosha Mahasthvir and Upasaka Dharmaratna established a Buddhist community called “Nepal Bauddha Pariyatti Siksha.” Their aim was to provide Buddhist education to laymen, laywomen, and children. In most monasteries in Nepal, there are pariyatti centers where layman or laywoman can study the Buddhadharma in continuing classes up to the tenth standard.

Most of the centers in the ages are conducted under the guidance of nuns. Each year more than 300 students enroll in Bauddha Pariyatti Program to study the Budhadharma. This year about 350 students joined the classes. Altogether over a thousand students have benefitted from these programs. We offer the students free books, stationary, and clothes. These efforts are sponsored by the Himalayan Buddhist Education Foundation, Chakupat, Lalitpur.

Problems Encountered in the Village Schools

Children are the foundation for the world’s future. Their minds are uncluttered and easily trained. If we can give them a good education and plant wholesome seeds of the Dharma, then these children will grow strong and mature. However, we face numerous difficulties teaching Dharma to the children, both in the cities and the villages.

First, there is no transportation to the schools, many of which are located far from residential areas. Some students ride bicycles, but most must walk between 2 and 3 kilometers. Second, most of the students in Lumbini are from Muslim and Hindu families. Even if students are interested in studying Buddhism, their families usually forbid it. Third, students in the villages speak their own local village languages. Some cannot even speak Nepali and there are no books in the local languages.

In Nepal, most course books on Buddhism are written in Newari, the language of the Kathmandu valley, and are not available in Nepali or other languages. The lack of literature in appropriate languages makes it very difficult to teach the children Dharma.

Fourth, due to extreme poverty, some students in the villages join the Buddhist classes only to get a free pen, paper, and books. Poverty is so pervasive that many people are barely managing to survive. In the city, on the other hand, most students are busy with sports, music, video games and television, so they have no time to learn Dharma. Pariyatti Dharma classes are conducted on Saturday, which conflicts with a full, enticing schedule of television programs that draw students away from classes.

There is no substantial support from the government to promote Buddhist studies. The Buddhist need the government's support to deal with these problems. Better transportation is needed to help students attend classes and Buddhist literature is needed in the local languages.

Some Prospects

Most students who learn Dharma usually develop gentle characters. They respect Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and their teachers. Some would like to receive ordination, but their parents will not allow it. Even so, some students practice the precepts every Saturday.

Despite the difficulties, I am committed to teaching the Dharma and feel protected by the Dharma. At present, there are 3,952 villages and 58 city municipalities in Nepal, but we have only 17 Buddha Pariyatti Centers. We hope to expand Buddhist study opportunities in the villages. For these efforts we need support from national and international organizations in order to educate Nepalese children in Buddhadharma.

Immediate needs include more support from national and international organizations to educate Nepalese children in Buddha Dharma, better transportation for students interested in attending classes, support for the publication of Buddhist literature published in local languages, and more Buddha Pariyatti Centers.

May Dharma spread far and wide!
May all sentient beings be happy!

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SAKYADHITA MEMBERS' FORUM

We deeply appreciate those who support Sakyadhita's valuable mission by becoming members and renewing their memberships. Members' suggestions and contributions toward making Sakyadhita an ever more effective organization are greatly appreciated.

- **Sakyadhita Mailing List.** The mailing list has been updated and is an even more effective communications tool than ever. We have added new categories to the database to include conference information, members' interests and skills, donations, and so forth
- **Retiring Officers.** We wish to express heartfelt appreciation to Sakyadhita officers Ranjani de Silva (President), Koko Kawanami (Vice President), Karma Lekshe Tsomo (Secretary), and Gabriele Kuestermann (Treasurer) for their selfless service to Sakyadhita over the past few years.
- **Financial Accounts.** Sakyadhita is a tax-deductible non_profit organization registered in California and satisfies the legal requirements set forth by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Copies of Sakyadhita's financial reports are available upon request.
- **Sakyadhita Newsletter.** We are grateful to Elizabeth Zielinska, Katherine Anderson, Georgina McClean, Milton Pang, Paula Hein, Karma Lekshe Tsomo, and all others who have contributed their time and energy to the Sakyadhita newsletters. We welcome submissions for future issues!
- **6th Sakyadhita International Conference Transcripts.** Transcripts of the talks given at the Sakyadhita conference in Nepal have been submitted to the Heinrich Boell Foundation in Berlin, whose generous support made the conference a tremendous success. Ellie Waters, Margaret Coberly, and Karma Lekshe Tsomo are now compiling the transcripts for publication. Many thanks to all those who contributed their research, time, and editorial skills to this project!
- **Conference Video.** Many people have inquired about the status of the video documenting the Nepal conference. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen difficulties in the editing process, the project is taking longer than expected. We are looking for access to video editing equipment in order to complete the project soon. Please keep in touch about this.
- **7th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women.** The next conference will be held at Hua Fan University in Taipei, Taiwan, from July 11 to 17. The International Planning and Taiwan Planning Committees are hard at work making arrangements for the conference and the tour following the conference. We hope you can attend the conference and welcome your ideas and participation in the planning. Please help publicize the conference as widely as possible!
- **New Sakyadhita Officers**

Members of Sakyadhita International elected new officers for a 2-year term beginning 2002. Karma Lekshe Tsomo (President) received a Ph.D. in Comparative Philosophy at the University of Hawai'i in 2000 and is Assistant Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of San Diego. She has served as the secretary of Sakyadhita since its founding in 1987 and has co-coordinator of nine national and international Sakyadhita conferences on Buddhist women. Since 1987, she has been director of Jamyang Foundation, a project which has established eight education programs for Himalayan women in India.

Her publications include *Sakyadhita: Daughters of the Buddha; Buddhism Through American Women's Eyes; Innovative Buddhist Women: Swimming Against the Stream; Sisters in Solitude: Two Traditions of Monastic Ethics for Women; and Buddhist Women Across Cultures: Realizations.*

Hema Goonatilake (Vice President) received a Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies at the School of Oriental Studies, University of London, in 1974. From 1974 to 1989, she taught at the University of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka. From 1989 to 1994, she served as Senior Advisor at the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in New York. Since 1995, she has worked in Cambodia with the Heinrich Boell Foundation, the Buddhist Institute, the Cambodian Foundation for Education, and the Association of Nuns and Laywomen of Cambodia. In 1998, she was co-coordinator of the 5th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women held in Phnom Penh. She has published over 100 articles and lectures internationally on topics related to Buddhism, gender and development, and human rights.

Carol Stevens (Secretary) received a B.A. in Graphic Design at San Jose State University in 1954. She has raised three children and worked as a teacher, artist, and writer. From 1984 to 1989, she worked as a special events organizer for the American Cancer Society in Honolulu. From 1989 to 2000, she worked a public relations specialist, fundraiser, and event organizer at Queen's Medical Center, where she also taught tai chi. Upon her retirement, she started a new career as an equine photographer and volunteers for a number of non-profit organizations. She has been a student of Buddhism for many years and has served as Sakyadhita membership secretary for two years. Her interests include karate, reading, and meditation.

Rebecca Paxton (Treasurer) received a B.A. in Art at Mills College in 1985 and an M.A. in South Asian Studies (Sanskrit) at University of California at Berkeley in 1993. For many years, she worked as a graphic designer and as an interior designer. She has studied different styles of yoga in the U.S., Europe, India, and Nepal. For the past five years, she has worked as a Svarupa Yoga teacher, Yoga therapist, and Sanskrit teacher. In addition, she has served as an editor and financial consultant on a variety of Sakyadhita projects. Her interests include meditation, comparative religion, and comparative philosophy.