Sakyadhita
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BUDDHIST WOMEN
AIMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

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

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

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

ORIGINS IN ANCIENT INDIA

In the sixth century BCE, the Buddha affirmed the equal potential of women and men to achieve liberation. This affirmation represented a significant departure from prevailing views that defined women primarily in terms of their reproductive function and capacity for productive labor. The bhikkhuni sangha founded by Mahapajapati, the Buddha’s aunt and foster mother, may have been the first monastic order for nuns in history. Since its inception, Buddhist has been unique in recognizing the equal spiritual potential of women and men. Despite this egalitarian philosophy, unequal social structures persist in most Buddhist cultures today. Today, the bhikkhuni sangha
survives primarily in three traditions – Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese – but efforts to establish or revive full ordination for women are underway in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and elsewhere.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

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

1987 1st Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women
     Kalachakra Temple, Bodhgaya, India
     Theme: “Buddhist Nuns in Society”
     Keynote Speaker: H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama

1991 2nd Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women
     Thammasat University (Ransit Campus), Bangkok, Thailand
     Theme: “Buddhist Women in the Modern World”
     Keynote Speaker: Chancellor of Thammasat University

1993 3rd Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women
     International Centre, Colombo, Sri Lanka
     Theme: “Buddhist Women in Modern Society”
     Keynote Speaker: Ranasinghe Premadasa, President of Sri Lanka

1995 4th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women
     Mahabodhi Meditation Centre, Leh, Ladakh
     Theme: “Women and the Power of Compassion: Survival in the 21st Century”
     Keynote Speaker: H.M. Rani Sarla, Queen of Ladakh

1997 5th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women
     Wat Onaloum, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
     Theme: “Women in Buddhism: Unity and Diversity”
     Keynote Speaker: H.M. Queen Norodom Siranouk, Queen of Cambodia

2000 6th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women
     Mahapajapati Monastery, Lumbini, Nepal
     Theme: “Women as Peacemakers: Self, Family, Community, World”
     Keynote Speaker: Minister of Culture and Sport

2002 7th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women
     Huafan University, Taipei, Taiwan
     Theme: “Bridging Worlds”
Keynote Speaker: Annette Shu-lien Lu, Vice President of the Republic of China

2004 8th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women
Joong Ang Sangha University, Seoul, Korea
Theme: “Discipline and Practice of Buddhist Women Past and Present”
Keynote Speakers: Kwangwoo Sunim, Anne Carolyn Klein, Paula Arai

2006 9th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women
Sau Seng Lum Hall, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Theme: “Buddhist Women in a Global Multicultural Community”
Keynote Speaker: Sharon Suh

2008 10th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women
Hotel Mongolia, Ulaanbataar, Mongolia
Theme: “Buddhism in Transition: Tradition, Changes, and Challenges”
Keynote Speakers: Shundo Aoyama and Myeong Seong Sunim

2009 11th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women
Chua Pho Quang (Universal Light Monastery), Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Theme: “Eminent Buddhist Women”
Keynote Speaker: C. Julia Huang

2011 12th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women
Sathiradhammasathan, Bangkok, Thailand
Theme: “Leading to Liberation”
Chief Guest: Princess Srirasmi of Thailand

2013 13th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women
Mahaprajapati Monastery, Vaishali, India
Theme: “Buddhism at the Grassroots”

U. S. NATIONAL CONFERENCES

1988 St. Mary’s Retreat Center, Santa Barbara, California
Theme: “Buddhism Through American Women’s Eyes”

1996 Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California
Theme: “Unity and Diversity”

2005 Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts
Theme: “Women Practicing Buddhism: American Experiences”

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

1989  *Sakyadhita: Daughters of the Buddha*

1994  *Buddhism Through American Women’s Eyes*
Karma Lekshe Tsomo, ed. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications

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

1999  *Buddhist Women Across Cultures: Realizations*

2000  *Innovative Women in Buddhism: Swimming Against the Stream*
Karma Lekshe Tsomo, ed. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press

2004  *Bridging Worlds: Buddhist Women’s Voices Across Generations*
Karma Lekshe Tsomo, ed. Taipei: Yuan Chuan Press

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

2006  *Out of the Shadows: Socially Engaged Buddhist Women in the Global Community*
Karma Lekshe Tsomo, ed. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications

2009  *Buddhist Women in a Global Multicultural Community*

2013  *Eminent Buddhist Women*

**VIDEOS**

1996  “The Power of Compassion” (30-minutes)

1998  “Women in Buddhism: Unity and Diversity” (31-minutes)

**INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS**

Sakyadhita Training and Meditation Centre, Katubedda, Moratuwa, Sri Lanka
Sanghamitra Institute, Bodhgaya, India  
http://www.jamyang.org/

EXTERNAL WEBSITES  
http://www.sakyadhita.org/  
http://www.sakyadhita.org/usa/  
http://www.sakyadhita.org/canada/  

SEE ALSO  
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhikkhuni  
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Congress_on_Buddhist_Women%27s_Role_in_the_Sangha  
Engaged Buddhism  
Women_in_Buddhism  
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayya_Khema

REFERENCES  


Tsomo, Karma Lekshe, Daughters of the Buddha  

2009-2013 SAKYADHITA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  

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