

SAKYADHITA CONFERENCE 2017

HONG KONG

The first conference, in 1987 Bodhgaya India, was organized by Venerable Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Venerable Professor Dhammananda (Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh) and the late Venerable Ayya Khema. This year was the 30th anniversary, and the 15th international conference. Venerable Karma Lekshe who has been extremely dedicated, and the driving force all these years, has announced her retirement. So.... there are definitely major changes happening. The international committee is 'regrouping' and 'reorganizing' to fill this huge gap. On a similar theme, it has been 30 years since the late Ayya Khema asked me to be the Canadian representative for Sakyadhita. How the time has passed! As founder and president of Sakyadhita Canada, I too am retiring. I am very grateful for ALL that, Sakyadhita has given me and I look forward to the board of Sakyadhita Canada carrying on the mission to connect, share and support Buddhist women in Canada.

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

The 15th conference in Hong Kong hosted 750 participants from 32 countries, mostly monastic women and lay women. The theme of this conference was *Contemporary Buddhist Women: contemplation, cultural exchange & social action*.

Each of the 15 conferences has had its own particular flavor and format, depending on the country, the culture and the theme. This year, the days and the evenings were full and the rich program provided a great variety for all those attending. The days began with early morning meditation from many traditions (Theravadan, Tibetan, Korean, Nichiren-Shu, Vietnamese). There were scholarly panel presentations both morning and afternoon, followed by a wide variety of workshops (such as art, meditation, healing, compassionate listening, dharma rap, yoga, calligraphy, martial arts etc). The presenters' submitted papers well in advance, so that the translators could prepare for the task of offering

simultaneous translations. A hard copy was provided to each participant, which was very beneficial. Daily chanting was performed from many Buddhist traditions (Pali, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Tibetan, Vietnamese, Mongolian), and in the evening we were entertained by numerous cultural events (Chan Drum music, Chinese Pipa, Singing Bowls, Guzhang music, marital art demonstrations etc). Personally, for me, a very rich part of the conference was the 'global networking', the sharing of Dhamma with women from many cultures, countries, and traditions. For the monastics, the conference also provided the opportunity to share important Vinaya 'discipline' with nuns from different traditions.

All the Sakyadhita conferences have been empowering, bringing inspiration to all who attend and providing a special time for connecting and sharing with kalyanamitta (spiritual friends). It has been a time to receive support and encouragement for life's challenges, and for living a spiritual life. Truly, a unique and wonderful opportunity, and I am most grateful that I was able to attend and to volunteer for such an important event.

The last day started with more than twenty focus groups discussing various topics of current issues (social engagement, justice, science, monastic training, future of Sakyadhita etc). Following the focus groups, the national groups met and this year there were five Sakyadhita Canada members in attendance.

The official photographer for Sakyadhita was Olivier Adam (<http://www.olivieradam.net/>) and he generously shares with us his pictures. I hope you enjoy them. Thank you so very much to everyone and I am delighted to share this experience

Smiles,

Jayantā