

8th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women

Seoul, 27 June to 2 July 2004

The 8th Conference on Buddhist Women took place this summer in Seoul at the beginning of the rainy season. Under the topic of "Discipline and Practice of Buddhist Women: Present and Past", it was attended by 1300 women and very few men, both lay people and ordained, from all over the world.

The National Bhiksuni Assembly of the Korean Buddhist Jogye Order organized the conference in the new assembly hall of the Joongang Sangha University. The dormitory where the participants were accommodated was the dormitory of the Buddhist nuns, which meant that the participants had to sleep on the floor. That was difficult for Westerners, who are not used to this experience. Anyway, each day always began at 6 a.m. with meditation from the different Buddhist traditions e.g. Korean, Tibetan, Japanese, Thai.

After the morning and afternoon panel presentations with simultaneous translation in several languages, there were discussion groups based on the topics of the various panels, twelve in all: The first and the second were about "Buddhist Women in Korea": There were talks about the "Historical Review of the Activities of Korean Buddhist Nuns", "Seon Practice of Korean Buddhist Nuns and the Current State of their Monasteries", or "Buddhist Laywomen's Social Work in Korea", etc. The talks were given by different "Sunims" – ordained women and men.

The third panel presentation bore the title: "Buddhist Women of the World". Martine Batchelor (USA), the first speaker, talked about "Buddhist Women and a Compassionate Society", Ranjani de Silva discussed "The Training and Education of Nuns in Sri Lanka", Hema Goonatilake, like de Silva from Sri Lanka, spoke about "Women Regaining a Lost Legacy: The Restoration of the Bhikkhuni Order in Sri Lanka".

Other topics were: "The Quiet Movement of Buddhist Women in Cambodia", "The Bhikkhuni Movement in Contemporary Thailand", "Nun Palmo: A Legend Across Tibetan Communities", "Buddhist Women in Zanskar", "Buddhist Women in Mongolia", "Buddhist Women in Kinnaur" or "Buddhist Women's Contributions in the West".

The fifth panel presentation was entitled "Meditation Practices". The talks included "Samatha and Vipassana Meditation in the Theravada Tradition", "The Meaning of Non-Duality in Practice of Compassion", or "Practice of the Precepts: Lay and Monastic" by Ven Tenzin Palmo, who was born in England, but is an ordained Tibetan Buddhist nun.

The sixth topic was "Dharma and Discipline". Talks were given on "The Education and Training of Laywomen and Nuns", "Practice and Precepts", and "The Art of Self-Cultivation". Panel 7 and 8 were about "Buddhist Education" and "Buddhist Monastic Training". Ven Karma Lekshe Tsomo (USA) for example talked about "A Different Dharma? Teaching Buddhism at Universities in the U.S.", whereas Ven Jampa Tsedroen from Germany spoke on "Bhiksuni Ordination".

Panel 9 dealt with "Everyday Practice", e.g. "Dhamma in Everyday Life", and Panel 10 with "Buddhist Practice and Women's Issues".

The last two panels were "Engaged Buddhist Practice" and "Buddhism Today". The talks included "A Silent Undercurrent: The Significance of Nuns' Socially Engaged Buddhist Practice in Thailand", given by Monica Lindberg Falk (Sweden) or "Buddhist Women as Leaders and Teachers", by Rita Gross (USA).

The different panels and talks were most interesting as was the additional cultural program organized by the Korean nuns. In the late afternoon there was chanting and different activities for the participants like painting fans or taking part in a Korean tea ceremony; then there was Korean Buddhist music and theatre, Tibetan music, and the Nirvana Philharmonic Orchestra played different music from Vivaldi to Spirituals and Beatles songs.

After the conference there was a temple tour to Haein-sa Temple, Pulguk-sa Temple or Unmun-sa Temple, where the participants got an impression of Korean Buddhist art and architecture. The next conference, the 9th conference on Buddhist women, will be held in Malaysia in 2006.

Rotraut Wurst

Korea im Zeichen globalen Wandels – politische und wirtschaftliche Antworten

München, 11. Oktober 2004

Während der Einbruch in Folge der Asienkrise angesichts der konstanten wirtschaftlichen Aufwärtsentwicklung Koreas nur als kleine Delle erscheint, verläuft die politische Kurve des Landes deutlicher unruhiger: Die Parlamentswahlen im April 2004 und ihre turbulente Vorgeschichte werden vielfach als Zäsur in der noch jungen Demokratie gewertet. Die politische und wirtschaftliche Entwicklung Koreas im Inneren wie im Äußeren war das Thema des diesjährigen Roundtable Workshops, den die BMW Stiftung Herbert