

# AMERICAN BUDDHIST WOMEN

Encouraging Inclusion Across American Buddhisms

The USA National Branch of Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT of Sakyadhita USA

At New Year's 2014, Sakyadhita USA launched our new eZine, *American Buddhist Women*. It was an important milestone for us as we honor the first tenant of our mission: *To establish an inclusive alliance of Buddhist women in the U.S.* The response to issue No. 1 was extremely positive. Lay and monastic Buddhist women from across the country emailed to say how much they liked the new eZine. Several shared their stories for this and upcoming issues. And we've reprinted some reader responses in a new section called "Join the Conversation."

Again, we invite readers to share their stories about their lives and Buddhist practice. In particular, how do you integrate your practice into your daily life as an American Buddhist woman? Email your story with a photo to: [susa@sakyadhita.org](mailto:susa@sakyadhita.org).

This issue of the eZine concerns the theme of the upcoming Buddhist Women's conference in Evanston, IL, *Dharma Women: Custodians of Our Planet*. (See panel right.) The knowledgeable presenters are sure to inspire us to renewed awareness and action in the interest of our shared future on planet Earth. This eZine issue contains all the information about presenters, program and registration.

In addition, this eZine issue offers a special feature article by the well-known pioneering scholar of Buddhist feminist theology, Rita M. Gross. Prolific writer and Professor Emerita of Comparative Studies in Religion at the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, Gross challenges us to think deeply about strategic priorities as we face the reality of the global ecocrisis threatening the future of our planet and its inhabitants.

Sakyadhita USA wants to thank Asayo Horibe, past president of The Buddhist Council of the Midwest and organizer of the 9th Buddhist Women's Conference, and the BCM itself, for allowing SUSA to co-sponsor this important conference. Asayo and her team must have all the credit for bringing together the excellent and dedicated presenters. We send them all our deepest gratitude and expectations for a life-changing conference.

-Charlotte Collins, SUSA President

## 9th Annual Buddhist Women's Conference Dharma Women: Custodians of Our Planet

Sponsored by

The Buddhist Council of the Midwest

<http://www.buddhistcouncilmidwest.org/news.htm>

and Sakyadhita USA

<http://www.sakyadhitausa.org>

Saturday, March 8, 2014

8:00 am - 6:00 pm

Lake Street Church, 607 Lake Street, Evanston, IL 60201

### Program Overview

Keynote Address: Laurie Lawlor

*Touching Wonder, Experiencing Healing: The Practice of Mindfulness in Nature*

Special Guest

Venerable Dr. Pannavati

Presenter: Marla Donato

*The Precious 1%: Stop the Frack Attack  
& Other Dangers to Our Water*

Interactive Workshop Presenter: Kathleen Rude

*Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in  
Without Going Crazy*

Interactive Workshop Presenter: Carol Winkelmann, Ph.D.  
*Buddhist Women's Leadership & the Environmental Crisis*

Inter-faith Panel

*How is your tradition addressing environmental concerns?*

Ven. Dr. Pannavati, Susan Padelek, Mazher Ahmed,

Omie Baldwin, and Surinder Kaur Singh.

Facilitated by Sensai Tricia Teater

Registration includes Continental Breakfast  
and Vegetarian Lunch

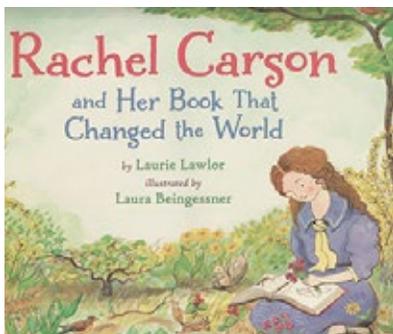


## CONFERENCE PROGRAM DETAILS

The 9th Annual Women’s Buddhist Conference, sponsored by The Buddhist Council of the Midwest and Sakyadhita USA will be held at the Lake Street Church in Evanston, IL, on International Women’s Day, March 8, 2014. This year’s theme, **Dharma Women: Custodians of Our Planet**, will focus on environmental issues and strategies for sustainability, activism, and coping.

### Keynote Speaker: Laurie Lawlor

*Touching Wonder, Experiencing Healing: The Practice of Mindfulness in Nature*



Ms. Lawlor is an environmental activist, teacher, and award-winning author of over 30 books, most notably *This Tender Place: The Story of A Wetland Year* and *Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World*. In 1991, she co-founded the Lakeside Buddhist Sangha in Evanston, IL and in 2001, Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh formally ordained her. She will give an overview of what we are facing environmentally. [www.laurielawlor.com](http://www.laurielawlor.com)

### Special Guest: Venerable Dr. Pannavati



Ven. Dr. Pannavati is a black, female Buddhist monastic ordained in the Theravada and Mahayana traditions with Vajrayana empowerments and transmission by Zen Roshi Bernie Glassman. She is also co-founder and co-Abbot of

Embracing-Simplicity Hermitage in Hendersonville, NC. Ven. Dr. Pannavati is the catalyst of many missions, both here and abroad, teaching the dharma wherever she goes. She will present her water project with India’s untouchables. [www.pannavati.org](http://www.pannavati.org)

### Presenter: Marla Donato

*The Precious 1%: Stop the Frack Attack & Other Dangers to Our Water*



Journalist and educator Marla Donato will discuss how the controversial oil extraction process known as “fracking” is contaminating residential water supplies and threatening public lands locally and nationally. Ms. Donato was a full-time staff reporter and editor for United Press International, the *Chicago Tribune* and then editor-in-chief of a local environmental social/justice monthly magazine. She is a frequent contributor to Native American publications and the Earth Network where she produced a local Emmy-nominated documentary. She currently teaches at Columbia College and DePaul University in Chicago.

### Interactive Workshop Presenter: Kathleen Rude

*Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We’re in Without Going Crazy*



The enormity of our planet’s challenges can leave even dharma women feeling helpless and hopeless, but interactive workshops will provide strategies to rekindle hope and empower participants to action. Kathleen Rude, environmental writer/advocate and facilitator of and mentor

for Joanna Macy's "The Work That Reconnects," will present Active Hope, a practice about "becoming a participant in bringing about what we hope for" for our planet.  
[www.gaiawisdom.org](http://www.gaiawisdom.org).

**Interactive Workshop Presenter:**

**Carol L. Winkelmann, Ph.D.**

*Buddhist Women's Leadership & the Environmental Crisis*



Carol L. Winkelmann, Ph.D., will address Buddhist women's leadership and sustainability in this interactive workshop. Today we are in the midst of a mounting environmental crisis that calls upon Buddhist women to lead the way towards sustainable solutions. Traditionally, however, women have been enjoined by religion and culture to feminine modes of being that are neither highly respected in the community nor always efficacious in the face of crisis. In this interactive workshop, participants will re-evaluate conventional leadership discourses in our culture and consider how androcentric or dualist thinking can be obstacles to effective leadership. Buddhist scripture and principles cast light on our strengths and challenges as we take up our calling as caretakers of nature and catalysts for change. Carol is a linguist and professor at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, practices Buddhism in the Karma Kagyu tradition, and is a board member of Sakyadhita USA. She is currently writing about Buddhist women's leadership.

[www.sakyadhitausa.org](http://www.sakyadhitausa.org)

**Inter-faith Panel**

*How is your tradition addressing environmental concerns?*

Ven. Dr. Pannavati, Susan Padelek, Mazher Ahmed, Omie Baldwin, and Surinder Kaur Singh. Facilitated by Sensai Tricia Teater.

## REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Registration Fees:

\$80, General

\$50, Full-time Student, Senior on SSI, Person on Disability, or Clergy

\$0, Monastic

Registration Fee includes:

- ◆ Keynote address
- ◆ Three 90-minute sessions
- ◆ Interfaith Panel, ceremonies
- ◆ Vegetarian continental breakfast & lunch

## REGISTRATION DEADLINES

Capacity is limited to 150 participants, so please register early. Registration will be taken in order received and must be postmarked no later than **March 1, 2014**. Lunch cannot be guaranteed for registrations postmarked after February 28, 2014. There is no registration fee for monastics, but please register before March 1 so we may provide your meal.

## REGISTER NOW!

Download the mail-in Registration Form at:

[www.sakyadhitausa.org/](http://www.sakyadhitausa.org/) (click on the form link)

These conference details, including on-line registration, are available after February 12 at:

[www.dharmawomensconference.org](http://www.dharmawomensconference.org)

## SUPPORT A DHARMA SISTER

If you are able, consider adding to your registration to help a dharma sister to attend the conference.

## SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE

Sakyadhita USA will award 5 scholarships to Buddhist laywomen who would like to attend the March 8, 2014, Buddhist Women's Conference in Evanston, IL. The scholarship will pay the registration fee of \$80. If you are in need of a scholarship, please email us at:

[susa@sakyadhitausa.org](mailto:susa@sakyadhitausa.org)

For more information call 847-869-5806 or 224-623-1304.



# SAKYADHITA SISTERS - USA

## Our Lives, Our Stories, Our Practice

**Janet Nima Taylor**  
**Venerable Urgyen Nima**  
**Temple Buddhist Center, Kansas City, Missouri**



I have been practicing Buddhism since studying in India in 1977, and now am the director of an organization I created here in Kansas City. We call ourselves The Temple Buddhist Center, and have about 400 people who participate in the various programs we offer throughout the week, including many different types of Buddhist traditions.

[www.templebuddhistcenter.org](http://www.templebuddhistcenter.org)

I first took my Refuge Vows in 1999. I took my monastic vows on April 5th of 2013 with Lama Surya Das and had a chance in December to renew them under The Bodhi Tree at the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhi Gaya, India. I am passionate about creating a place where people can come to learn, study and practice meditation and Buddhism together as a sangha. There are many online options, but there is something so special about the physical energy of being part of a spiritual community.

We are in Kansas City, Missouri, and are fortunate to have the encouragement and support of the Unity church (Unity Temple on the Plaza) that provides us with space and helps promote our activities. I am able to lead the Buddhist group and offer classes thanks to the Unity Temple work I also do. <http://www.unitytemple.com/about/buddhist.asp>

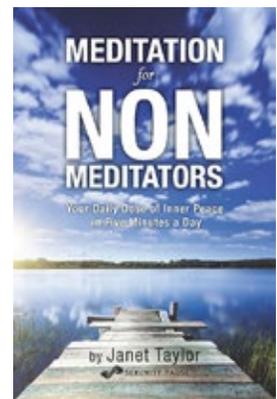
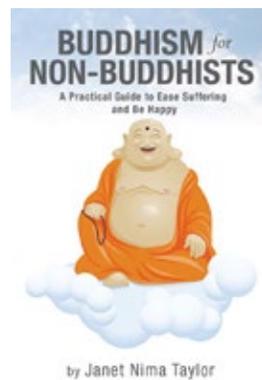
We are fortunate to have about 150 people come each Sunday at 9 am to meditate together, and we offer 30-minute meditations at 12:10 pm and 5:30 pm every day, 365 days per year. I just started a “Basics of Buddhism” class with almost 200 people in attendance. There is a surge of interest in meditation and Buddhism here.

My main daily practice is meditation in the morning and night in the Dzogchen tradition. I practice Ngondro in the

morning, and a Yidam practice at night, based on Lama Surya Das' teachings and experience of ten years in silent retreat, ten years practicing with other traditions and now 20 years teaching. Lama Surya Das is an advocate for women's equality, which has inspired me tremendously. I attend four ten-day silent retreats each year as well.

I have written two books for beginners: *Buddhism for Non-Buddhists* and *Meditation for Non-Meditators* that are available on Amazon. I also participate in the local interfaith community to offer a Buddhist perspective.

As a nun, I have chosen to not wear my robes daily or shave my head. I do wear robes when on retreat. I “wear the colors” (maroon, orange, yellow or red) of Tibetan Buddhism and have cut my hair very short. I find that this compromise makes me more approachable here in the Midwest, and



enables me to work with the Christian congregation without being too off-putting. There is also the issue of which ordination process I will take once I complete my two years as a novice. As we know, there are many difficulties and differing opinions about what Bhikkhuni ordinations can and should be.

One of the many challenges I face walking this uncharted path is how best to daily uphold my commitment to monastic living without having a monastic support system around (I live in a small apartment near the temple). I know others face a similar dilemma—wanting to take the next step of monasticism, but still needing to pay the bills. We are in the midst of figuring out how this will work in our modern Western culture.

Other than the usual financial struggles of making Buddhism self-sustaining, I feel that our sangha is well-supported and well-received by the community. We're doing a great deal of community outreach because that is part of our mission, and it's a great way to show our neighbors what Buddhism is all about—through our behavior, not just our beliefs.

May all beings be happy and free from suffering.



Jacqueline Kramer

The Hearth Foundation

NATURE, CHILDREN AND THE HOME ALTAR

From the Hearth Foundation Shrine Room Series Class



While looking at a sunset, the ocean, a quiet green clearing mottled with shade, or listening to breaking waves on the shore, our hearts feel lighter, even elated. Nature offers an entryway into the experience of awe. By gathering up a bit of nature and adding it to our home altar we can bring a taste of that awe into our home, a reminder that life is wondrous each day. Flowers, stones, and other natural relics have the ability to lift us up to a place of heightened awareness as we sweep our floors and wash our dishes.

In the Hearth community we create flower arrangements for our home altars in order to infuse our homes with nature's vibrancy. The arrangements sit in for the 10,000 gifts of the Earth. Joan Stamm writes, "Given that flowers, plants, and all living things express and give rise to this highest state of human experience—our love and sanctified joy—is it any wonder that we put flowers on altars, and offer flowers to Buddha?" Natural arrangements on our altar remind us that, even during challenging times, there is beauty.

Flowers and plants are also teachers of impermanence. Each day, on altars all around the world, monks, nuns and lay people replace dying flowers with fresh ones. Even the most glorious live arrangement will someday end up in the trash heap. Our home altars offer this daily dharma lesson on impermanence. No matter how carefully we may preserve our flowers, they will die—and in a rather short period of time. When we make friends with the inevitability of impermanence, when we stop fearing or fighting the way life is, we become freer.

My granddaughter, Nia'a Rose, and I took a walk one winter morning on a mission to find something for our home altar. We traveled through wild grasses down by the creek where I pruned a few gray branches that were hanging off

a dormant tree. We stopped to talk to a neighbor I'd never met before. When I told her we were looking for things to put in a flower arrangement she invited us to prune one of her bushes that had bright red-orange berries on it and to cut some rosemary from a bush towards the back of her property. We came home with beautiful, unexpected things for our altar, had a refreshing walk in nature, and made a new friend. Our time outside made us feel closer to the land and the season. Instead of cursing the cold, gray landscape, we noticed the abundant life sleeping under cover. At home, our arrangement depicted the state of hibernation that sets in at this time of year in Sonoma. Some long, dusty gray branches with tiny green shoots coming off them in erratic patterns, a splash of red-orange winter berries, and a couple sprigs of fragrant rosemary with tiny blue-purple flowers on their tips, lay on the table awaiting the vase.

When children spend a great deal of time in front of the TV, or some other form of electronics, they are in danger of missing the lessons nature so elegantly teaches. By taking a walk outside with our kids we provide them with the opportunity to remember this Earth's wonder and beauty. If we walk with the intent to be aware and look around us, the time spent becomes even richer. We get to know the plants that are native to our area and become intimate with the unique qualities of each season. We connect with people in our neighborhood and life feels friendlier. There is so much to be gained by a walk in nature. Learning becomes what it is meant to be, a joy.

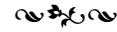
Enjoy a walk with your children. Search for things to put on your home altar that remind you of the world outside your home—fruit, stones, shells, twigs, flowers or any other natural objects. Some Hearth city dwellers have reported finding signs of the natural world while walking down city streets and through parks. Are there leaves on the ground? "Weeds" in the cracks? Is there an interesting stone? Even in the dead of winter there are pigeon feathers and snow waiting to be melted in a silver bowl.



In spring my home altar displays pink and white apple blossoms and jewel-toned tulips. In winter it holds gray stalks with tight little buds sleeping snugly in the chill air till spring. In fall there are red, orange, and yellow leaves and in summer, roses. All seasons are beautiful—infancy, childhood, the teen years, adulthood and old age. Each season has its unique gifts and lessons. The more we celebrate the changes and flow with them, the easier life becomes. When we enjoy the natural world, and share it with our children, we become more comfortable with life's inevitable changes and are reminded to appreciate, even see the beauty of, impermanence. Through our little home altar we are reminded to celebrate life.

Jacqueline Kramer, author of *Buddha Mom—the Path of Mindful Mothering* and *10 Spiritual Practices for Busy Parents* has been studying and practicing Buddhism for over 30 years. When she became pregnant with her daughter, she applied Buddhist principles to her pregnancy, birthing, and mothering, to good effect. This led to her books and teaching. In 2008 Jacqueline received the "Outstanding Women in Buddhism Award" at the U.N. day for women in Thailand for her work teaching Buddhism to mothers. She is the director of the Hearth Foundation ([www.hearthfoundation.net](http://www.hearthfoundation.net)), which offers online lay Buddhist practice classes designed for families, a monthly newsletter and other resources for mothers seeking spiritual support and inspiration. The Hearth Foundation has students from Australia, Argentina, New Zealand, Europe, the U.S., Canada

and many other countries. As a vice president of Alliance for Bikkhunis [www.bhikkhuni.net](http://www.bhikkhuni.net) she is actively engaged in supporting Theravadin women's monasticism. Jacqueline lives in Sonoma County, California, with her daughter and granddaughter.



## SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLE

### By Rita M. Gross



## Precious Birth, Precious Earth—A Buddhist View of Sustainability

By Rita M. Gross

From time to time, I have published papers on Buddhist approaches to and resources for ecology, though it is not my major concern or expertise. I think that Buddhist thought offers a great deal of wisdom about how to live in a sustainable manner on our earth. In my own work on Buddhism and ecology, I have consistently argued that the problems are too much consumption by too many people. Both terms are equally important. Too much consumption. Too many people.

I get very frustrated that so many commentators on sustainability are so timid when it comes to talking about "too many people." Because everyone concedes that too much consumption is a problem, it is more important to discuss what is ignored by so many—too many people. We must do so unless we are willing to put up indefinitely with extremely unequal distribution of the resources needed to live a fulfilling life, which is a consumption issue. To have a satisfying lifestyle and sustainability of that lifestyle, our planet can accommodate only so many people. Our earth simply cannot accommodate unlimited population growth



and a satisfying lifestyle for all. If we insist on trying to have both, inevitably we will end up with an extremely unequal distribution of the resources needed for that lifestyle. Most likely, that will be followed by war, disease, and famine. Those are the inevitable results of too many people trying to live on too few resources to support that population at a decent standard of living.

Every now and then, someone who thinks population does not figure into issues about sustainability tries to back up that claim by demonstrating that everyone now alive on planet earth could be fitted into the state of Texas if their personal space were sufficiently restricted. But there are two questions. Where would their food come from? Who wants to that live way—in a very limited space in Texas—just so there can be more people on earth?

How much deprivation should anyone be asked to put up with to allow for constantly increasing population? What is the virtue or benefit of squeezing ever more people into the same space and expecting them to live on resources that would be ever diminishing if they were equitably distributed? What makes more people more valuable than a better life for fewer people? What makes more people more valuable than wilderness or the variety of animal species? Those who claim that consumption, but not population, is the issue seem unwilling to confront the fact that the earth is a finite place with finite resources, while humans seem quite capable of reproducing, if not infinitely, at least excessively.

We need to concede that a meaningful human life does involve consumption, under modern conditions perhaps more consumption than we would like to concede. While we could all give up personal automobiles if we had decent public transportation, who wants to give up warm houses in the winter, computers and the internet, music, books, travel....all of which consume considerable resources. In other words, a decent standard of living is more important than ever-expanding, unlimited reproduction, and we probably have to choose between these two. Why do we put up with policies that encourage excessive reproduction? At this point, population growth is probably not even zero but is a negative population growth. Why do we tolerate the subtle pro-natalism so prominent in the Western world, especially in the United States?

Buddhism offers some true wisdom and compassion with which to think about sustainability.

The first point Buddhists would make is that human life can be precious, rewarding, and valuable. But Buddhists also distinguish between a “precious human birth,” which is to be appreciated and treasured, and a simple, biological human birth. What makes the difference between these two kinds of birth? The opportunities into which one is born. Buddhists have usually said that means being born into a situation in



which one has a chance to fulfill the best of human potential. For Buddhists, that means being able to study and practice the dharma so that one may become enlightened. Even with less specifically Buddhist definitions of what makes a human life precious, sheer survival is never an adequate measure for having achieved a precious human life. In even the most technologically simple societies, people value art, ritual, and all the facets of human culture. They do not simply survive biologically nor live only for biological reproduction, but always create and value sophisticated, beautiful cultures. We should aspire for that to be possible for all people, much more than we should value simple reproduction and ever more people. One must wonder about the ethics of producing children for whom one cannot provide a precious human birth. Fewer children better cared for is certainly preferable to more children than can be well cared for.

For women (also for men, but definitely for women), being able to fulfill the potential for a precious human birth requires fertility control. The unequal biological requirements for reproduction shouldered by women mean that without fertility control, women are in virtual slavery. The current “war on women” in the United States and the desire to control women by keeping us “barefoot and pregnant” is an old male fantasy. But “war on women” policies also result in more people, undoubtedly “too many people.” Though those who advocate such policies are interested only in controlling women by making us endure pregnancies we don’t want, they are unwilling to do anything to take care of fetuses once they are outside a female body. Such policies severely curtail the

possibilities of having a precious human birth, rather than merely a human body, both for women and for the children they are forced to bear, and also for men to some extent.

After establishing the possible preciousness of a human birth and looking into what conditions derail that possibility, Buddhists would look into the role of desire, greed, clinging, or whatever other translation of *trishna* we might use in getting us to a situation of too many people consuming too much. Many progressives recognize the role of greed in fueling too much consumption. But they don't recognize and don't want to recognize that entirely the same dynamic that results in too much consumption also results in too many people. Both are fueled by desire/greed/clinging in exactly the same way. Every Buddhist knows that greed is one of the three poisons that keep *samsara* or cyclic existence going. Most Buddhists recognize that desire is insatiable and that because it is insatiable, desires can never be satisfactorily fulfilled. Because of the impossibility of thoroughly fulfilled desire, desire can never bring us true sanity or contentment. The only solution is transcending desire by using desire skillfully and wisely.

Regarding consumption, most Buddhists agree with the above analysis. Resistance arises, however, when we are asked to recognize that desire for children, especially, desire for sons instead of daughters, is just another desire. It does not deserve to be elevated into something different or put into a different class that is more legitimate or worthy than other desires, such as desire for wealth or achievement. A desire is a desire. Period. What the desire longs for does not change the essential psychology of desire nor does it change desire's inability to truly satisfy us. Fulfilling a desire for children does not bring peace and contentment any more than a fulfilled desire for wealth or achievement brings lasting, genuine peace and contentment.

I am not suggesting that lay Buddhists should not have children, any more than I am suggesting we should not own cars or houses, or seek achievement in our careers. But the same ethic of moderation must apply and the same recognition about the inability of fulfilled desire to bring

ultimate peace must be recognized. Especially, an excessive desire for children must be evaluated in the same way as excessive desire for possessions or achievement. Such desires are all in the same category. We need to be clear-eyed, not sentimental and pious about the desire for children. Excessive desire for children easily leads to too many people who, even if they only consume minimally, take the ecosystem past its tipping point. What is an excessive desire for children? Certainly, having child after child in pursuit of a son. Or abortion for sex selection in order to have a son later. Or taking extreme measures to have a biological offspring while rejecting children that have already been born. Having more than one or two children, especially if one lives in a society in which children involve a large carbon footprint. Favoring, through tax measures and other policies, those who reproduce over those who remain childless. If one wishes to reduce one's carbon footprint, one of the most effective ways is to limit one's reproduction. It is at least as effective as reducing one's consumption, if not more effective.

Sometimes people say with great passion "But I want children" and expect the rest of us to defer, as if that desire were somehow more imperative, more worthy, more in need of fulfillment, than any other desire people entertain. But most of us find that we have to live without attaining something we very deeply desired at some point in our lives, even though it is a totally legitimate desire, in so far as any desire is legitimate—a loving partner, a good job, companionship, living somewhere else. That is not a tragedy. That's just life. Learning how to live in equanimity in spite of unfulfilled longings is one of the great lessons a Buddhist meditator must undertake.

Recognizing that desire for offspring belongs in the category "desire" can then encourage us to think about what social and religious polices would promote a more balanced approach to consumption and reproduction, helping us to moderate both in ways that promote sustainability. I have long contended that Buddhism is unique among religions in not being pro-natalist, in not forcing, or requiring people to reproduce to be considered worthwhile, decent human



beings. Non-reproducing celibate monastics have always been revered by Buddhists, which clearly demonstrates that Buddhists have always regarded childlessness as a legitimate lifestyle. As Buddhists, we are not commanded “Be fruitful and multiply.” If we have a primary command, it is the oft-repeated slogan, “find a tree or an abandoned building. Meditate and contemplate now, lest you regret it later.” Nor are we told that sexuality that does not involve reproduction is forbidden or sinful. While for monastics, all sexual expression is off limits, the situation is quite different for laypeople. Buddhists do have a strong sex ethic which asks us to be careful that our sexuality not be harmful to us or our partners. By extension, that ethic also includes the children that can result from sexual activity and the earth on which we all must live. These guidelines clearly mean that fertility control is, if not required in many cases, at least fully permitted. Most other religions either require people to produce descendants, forbid birth control, or both. That Buddhism does neither is one of our most liberating teachings, especially for women.

Given that we live in a culture that abounds in subtle pronatalism, people rarely hear criticisms of or alternatives to such policies and values. In fact, they are often shocked when people express anything other than pro-natalist values, suggest that having a baby is not always a good idea, that some births would be better avoided than encouraged, that less reproduction could be far better than more reproduction, or even the same amount of reproduction. It would be so helpful if anti-natalist views and policies had the same moral weight as pro-natalist views and policies. We need an ethic that values and rewards childless lifestyles and people who limit reproduction significantly and seriously. We need not only to discourage mindless consumption but also irresponsible reproduction, rather than regarding any and every birth as something to rejoice about. We really need to find ways to reward people, both financially and emotionally, who limit their fertility responsibly. Chief among these would be recognizing that helping and nurturing is far more comprehensive than parenting alone.

But so much is lacking now. Perhaps things are slightly better for young people now, but when I was a young woman who said that I did not intend to have children, I received no support whatsoever and a great deal of disapproval. I was routinely told two things. “You’re so selfish,” or “You’ll regret it someday.” At age seventy, I have yet to regret that youthful decision. But much worse is that fact that the work I have done to help humanity as a teacher and author is never regarded as something at least as helpful and nurturing as having children could possibly have been. All this has become vividly apparent to me more than once when I have labored hard to eventually produce a book manuscript. But

while mothers can show off babies and parents brag like crazy about their children’s accomplishments, if I even mentioned my manuscript, let alone showing it off, I would be censured. At least for a woman, choices and lifestyles such as those I have made are not celebrated and rewarded at all in our culture.



Rita M. Gross is one of the world’s foremost Buddhist scholars on matters of gender and religion. She is both a university professor and a dharma teacher who teaches widely in both academic centers and at various dharma centers. Her major book is *Buddhism after Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism*. Her forthcoming books are *Religious Diversity—What’s the Problem? Buddhist Advice for Flourishing with Religious Diversity* (2014) and *How Clinging to Gender Identity Subverts Enlightenment* (2016).



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Monastics Sign up for Obamacare\*

(\*The Affordable Care Act)

Not only has healthcare insurance coverage been an important concern for American families, it especially has been of concern to our women monastics. When they take vows of poverty, their healthcare needs do not go away; in fact, they may very likely be exacerbated for obvious reasons—the most certain one being the tendency of uninsured persons to skip health maintenance and preventive care. Alliance for Bhikkhunis founder Susan Pembroke said previously that this is one of the most important concerns of bhikkhunis, for which she founded the Afb.

For this reason, SUSA has been contacting communities of Buddhist nuns to ask whether they were aware of ACA coverage. Most nuns were in the process of applying for coverage. In states such as California where Medicaid (Medi-Cal) has been expanded, this is an especially attractive option for monastics.

We want to encourage all of our readers to talk to monastics at your dharma centers to make sure they are applying for ACA healthcare coverage. This is a way we can really support them. The deadline is March 31! [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov)

NEXT SAKYADHITA INTERNATIONAL  
BUDDHIST WOMEN'S CONFERENCE  
Yogjakarta, Indonesia, 2015 June 23 to 30  
Watch for details!

## JOIN THE CONVERSATION

From Janet Nima Taylor, "I am an American Buddhist Woman... thanks so much for the work you are doing to organize and inspire women who are following the Buddhist path." Temple Buddhist Center, Kansas City, MO. Read Ven. Nima's story in this issue.

From Jennifer T., "I have been reading the winter issue of [the] Sakyadhita [eZine] the past couple of days and appreciate the communication immensely. Such a variety of articles—I feel so much better informed than before I got it. I will send in my membership and donation promptly. Thanks so much for your work."

From Shamy S., "Greetings, E magazine is terrific! Have I renewed for 2014? ... I have no idea how I found you but please let all know I appreciate all your efforts. I know it could not have been easy to set up the eZine." (Texas)

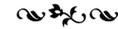
From Michaela Haas, author of *Dakini Power*, "Thank you for reaching out and for sending me this beautiful new e-Zine with the wonderful review of *Dakini Power*! ... I'd be happy to promote the e-Zine on social media. I can also put it on the Yogini Project FB page with their more than 20,000 followers." (She did it!) (California)

From Jacqueline Kramer, SUSA Advisory Board, "I read through the new journal and love it. It is really accessible and enjoyable to read—kudos! Sending much love and appreciation for the good work you do." Read Jacqueline's article in this issue. (California)

From Dallas D., "I'm very interested in your organization and the work that you do... I will look into the website to learn more about it. I'm a practicing Buddhist and am so happy to find an organization investing in women and leadership from a Buddhist perspective... There is such a need for Buddhist women to network and share their experiences. (Indiana)

From Tathaaloka Bhikkhuni, SUSA Advisory Board, "I read the eZine—looks great! I was particularly interested to read [about the March 8 conference on sustainability]." (California)

Please send us your comments, thoughts, ideas or suggestions to be published on this page in the next issue, Summer 2014. Email us at [susa@sakyadhitausa.org](mailto:susa@sakyadhitausa.org)

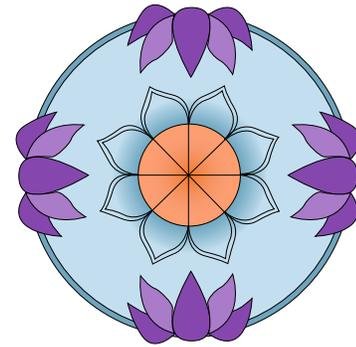


Sakyadhita is a Sanskrit word, which translates as "daughters of the Buddha." Sakya was the clan name of Gautama Siddhartha, the Buddha. The word *dhita* means "daughters." Sakyadhita USA, a branch of Sakyadhita International, was formed to serve Buddhist women in the U.S. SUSA was established in 2010 and is governed by a board of eleven lay and monastic women who live in the U.S. We have nearly 100 members spread across the country. Please consider becoming a member. You can read more about our goals and mission on the website and join the membership at: <http://www.sakyadhitausa.org>



Sakyadhita USA  
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### SUSA's Mission

- ☞ To establish an inclusive alliance of Buddhist women in the U.S.
- ☞ To promote dialogue among Buddhist traditions.
- ☞ To encourage wise, compassionate action for the benefit of humanity.
- ☞ To work for gender equity in Buddhist education, training, institutional structures, and ordination.

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Special artwork in this issue is from *Art Deco Design Fantasies* from the work of E. H. Raskin, Dover Pictorial Archive Series, NY, 2009. First published in 1926 by F. Dumas in Paris. From the cover: "This colorful collection of *pouchoir* (stencil) designs is from a rare, early-twentieth-century portfolio illustrated by E. H. Raskin. Featuring scenes of aquatic life including plants, anemones, shells, octopi and more, these vivid stencils were used as a resource for fabric, interior, and wallpaper designers."

