

2521 (1978) The Twelfth General Conference Tokyo

The Twelfth W.F.B. General Conference, with the theme of *Buddhist Contributions to the Future* was held at the Tsukiji Hongwanji Temple and Zojoji Temple in Japan, from 1 to 6 October 2521. When the meeting ended, it issued a Declaration, as done once before by W.F.B. when it had its Fourth General Conference in Nepal. This practice of having a Declaration at the end of each W.F.B. General Conference had been followed ever since this Tokyo meeting. As had been the case in the past, there were many resolutions recommended by the participants. As many of them remained unimplemented, the Steering Committee of the conference felt that more strict criteria should be applied in the submission of draft resolutions for the consideration of the W.F.B. General Conferences. The following guidelines were established: (A) No resolution of a political nature should be considered by the Standing Committees; (B) They should examine the ways and means of implementing the resolutions. Those which faced difficulties of implementation should not be recommended for approval by the plenary session; and (C) The financial implications of the resolutions were to be submitted, and each Standing Committee was required *to devise ways and means of providing funds to implement any of these projects*. This was a useful exercise although the conference did not escape from having to consider a prolific number of resolutions. At W.F.B. meetings which followed this Tokyo session, there seemed to be a slowing down in the number of resolutions submitted to the concerned conferences.

Among the recurrent questions, was the matter of setting dates for Visākha or Buddha Day. The gist of the proposal in this regard was for the W.F.B. Executive Council, in consultation with various Regional Centres, to discuss thoroughly the matter of fixing one day for the observance of Visākha Day by all the Buddhists of the world and to bring

the question up again at the 13th W.F.B. General Conference for *fixing the same day for this very sacred and holy day for all Buddhists.*

The need to keep each other informed among the W.F.B. Regional Centres came up for consideration again. The proposal read: *Whereas a suggestion was made and accepted at the previous W.F.B. Conference that information regarding the many W.F.B. Centres be gathered and published, but as yet, it has not been achieved except by a few Centres We, therefore, resolve that all W.F.B. Centres should publish concrete information on Buddhist activities in each Regional Centre by the next W.F.B. Conference.* Progress has been slow up to 2533 (1990). Concerning publications, there was again a call for W.F.B. to publish a Commemorative Volume in memory of Dr. Malalasekera, as already mentioned in reviewing the 11th General Conference. As with other cases, financial constraints prevented action on many worthy proposals, and this was one of them.

An interesting request was made by one of the American Regional Centres which was approved by the conference. It indicated that there was a great desire in the USA. and European countries to learn Buddhism, both in theory and practice, but there existed, at that time, a real shortage of Buddhist teachers, especially masters of meditation practices of Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna. For this reason, it was *earnestly requested that the various countries with training centres for Buddhist teachers, especially meditation masters, make special efforts to provide teachers on Buddhism and Buddhist meditation for the USA and Europe.*

Another resolution dealing with international aspects requested UNESCO to initiate a special study program in order to find out whether or not all great world religions could, in any way, and to any extent, be harnessed for promoting education for development and world peace, and if so, *what aspects of what religion can be used with maximum positive impact on UNESCO activities for achieving its objectives of building defenses of peace in the minds of men.* It was further requested that the decade commencing from 2524 be declared *the International Decade for Peace Through Religion.* The sentiments expressed in this resolution were clearly in the interest of the welfare of humanity, but so far UNESCO had not taken any action on W.F.B.'s request. There was a growing

awareness on the part of W.F.B. to find other means of relating itself/to international organizations for more effective cooperation with them. This would, no doubt, be one of the challenges for W.F.B. in the 2533's (1990s). After all, if the peoples' power expressed through their religious convictions for attaining peace in the world were not harnessed appropriately by the international organizations of the United Nations system, they would be losing a fundamental source of support for achieving their goals.

That the W.F.B. was keeping itself alert to the changing needs of the times could be seen in a resolution adopted at the Tokyo conference on the recommendation of the Humanitarian Services Committee. It dealt with drug abuse, a problem which had assumed gigantic proportions by then. All the W.F.B. Regional Centres in different parts of the world were requested to make special efforts *to propagate the Ethical Teachings of the Buddha, the science of deliverance to educate the misled people to give up their psychological craving for drugs and lead a useful and law-abiding life, to provide opportunities for citizens from all walks of life; as well as cooperating with the leaders of other religions to find out ways and means of solving this serious problem.* Again, the role of the W.F.B. Regional Centres in such efforts cannot be overemphasized.

Another resolution on Lumbinī, Buddha's birthplace, was adopted. W.F.B. declared 2522 as the Lumbinī Year for the purpose of, among others, organization of seminars and conferences on Lumbinī's significance, the promotion of pilgrimages to Lumbinī, -and to cooperate with and provide the Lumbini Development project with funds, publicity and other means.

As with other recent W.F.B. General Conferences, there was a panel discussion on the theme of the 12th Conference: *Buddhist Conceptions of Future Society*. Three Japanese experts led the discussions which were both lively and popular.

Last but not least, the meeting saw Buddhist women gathering more strength. Women representatives of the conference attended a grand service hosted by the Japan Buddhist Women's Association, at the Tokyo Grand Hotel, to offer prayers for world peace. Dr. Sugi Yamamoto, director general of the Japan Buddhist Women's Association, expressed the hope for

and humanist organizations to work for peace and harmony with the ultimate aim of achieving a world community.

- (III) We will explore the untapped religious and educational resources for the benefit of the younger generations; and*
- (IV) We will assist in the complete restoration of Lumbini the birthplace of Śākyamuni Buddha.*