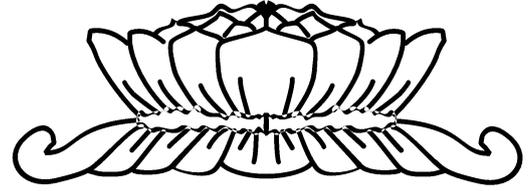


lotus



Journal of the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara

Issue No. 33, Spring 2011



Birmingham Buddhist Academy



On 25th November 2010 Dr Ottara Nyana, during his visit to Myanmar, submitted an application to the State Sangha Committee, in Yangon, for the establishment of a Buddhist Academy at the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, UK. In return the following letters of approval were presented to Dr Ottara Nyana.



Union of Myanmar

Ministry of Religious Affairs

International Theravāda Buddhist Missionary University

Dhammapāla Hill, Mayangone P.O. Yangon, Myanmar

Rector 01-650705
Pro-Rector (Academic) 01-650706
Pro-Rector (Administration) 01-650713
Registrar 01-650702
Fax- 095-1-650700

Ref: ၄၆-၁၁၀၀/မတ(၁)/၁၄၅/၂၀၁၀

Date: 28th December, 2010

1. A special university council meeting (No 1/2010) was held on 27th of December, 2010 at International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University (ITBMU) in Yangon, Myanmar. Venerable Dr Ottaranyana, Spiritual Director of Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, submitted a case regarding the establishment of the Buddhist Academy in Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, UK, which would become a branch of ITBMU.
2. We, the members of education council as well as the members of the administrative body of the university, thoroughly perused and discussed the case in all respects. Then, duly exercising the power vested in the education council and in conformity with article [d], section three, chapter two of our university rules, we unanimously agreed to establish a branch of ITBMU, namely, the Birmingham Buddhist Academy at Birmingham Vihara, UK.
3. We do hope that a mutual and continual cooperation between the ITBMU and Birmingham Buddhist Vihara Trustee is to be established in due time. Further details and follow-ups are to be implemented by ITBMU and BBVT.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours Truly,

Professor Dr Than Zin Naing

Pro-Rector (Admin)

Union of Myanmar
State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee,
Monastery of Maha Nayaka, Kaba Aye Hill, Yangon, Myanmar.

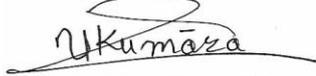
Chairman Sayadaw 01-651007
Vice Chairman Sayadaw 01 - 661006 01 - 661746
Secretary Sayadaw 01 - 651008
Joint Secretary Sayadaw 01 - 660604 01 - 664157

Date: 20th January, 2011

To Whom It May Concern

This is to certify that the State Sangha Maha Nayaka committee, located in Kaba Aye Pagoda road ,Yangon, Myanmar, is the highest authoritative body regarding matters of all local and oversea religious education, and wellbeing of the whole of Myanmar Sanghas' affairs . The case related to the establishment of Birmingham Buddhist Academy in Birmingham, UK, has recently been submitted by Dr Ottaranyana , Spiritual Director of Birmingham Buddhist Vihara through the education council of the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University (ITBMU), Yangon, Myanmar. The education council of ITBMU has agreed to give a permission to establish a branch of ITBMU as the Birmingham Buddhist Academy, UK. We, the elected members of State Sangha Maha Nayaka committee, have decided, in the presence of 15 members-together-session , to accept the proposal and to proceed the establishment of Birmingham Buddhist Academy in Birmingham, UK.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr Bhaddanta Kumarabhivamsa

(Abhidhaja Maha Ratthaguru)

Chairman of State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee

Yangon, Myanmar

နိုင်ငံတော် သံဃ မဟာနာယက
ဘဒ္ဒန္တ ကုမာရာဘိဝံသ
အဂ္ဂမဟာပဏ္ဍိတ
အသိဝေ အဂ္ဂမဟာဘဒ္ဒမဇောတိကာ
ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ ဆရာတော်

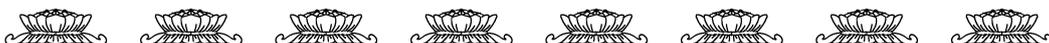


We believe that this will be a great achievement for the UK as well as Europe and will see the fulfilment of Dr Rewata Dhamma's golden dream. It is intended that the BBA will run accredited courses leading to a Diploma or MA in Buddhism. In addition shorter certificated courses in topics such as 'the leading of long and short term meditation retreats' (both theory and practice) and 'hospital chaplaincy training' etc. will be offered.

We would like to invite you to support our Birmingham Buddhist Academy financially as well as academically.

Supporters of Birmingham Buddhist Academy

U Chan Sein+Daw Chein Kin and family, 45-Thantlwin Rd., Yangon	\$1100
Lavita Wae+Daw Myint Myint Than, Mahamyaing Pharmacy, 24 St., Yangon	\$ 500
(U Maung Ko) Daw Khin Win, 101/2-Thantlwin Rd., Yangon	\$ 200



LORD BUDDHA'S SOCIAL TEACHINGS

Recently in our Meditation class on Monday evenings, Dr Ottaranyana has been instructing us about Lord Buddha's social teachings from Mangala Sutta and Sigāla Sutta. The background to the Mangala Sutta can be found in the Jatakas. When Lord Buddha was the Bodhisatta, he stayed in a charnel ground. At that time there was a Brahmin who believed in omens. When rats bit one of his valuable garments he had it thrown away in that same charnel ground, because he believed it had become unlucky. The Bodhisatta picked it up. When the Brahmin told him that it would bring him bad luck, the Bodhisatta said that no wise person should believe in omens. Even in modern times there are such superstitious beliefs. I was brought up in Northern Ireland, and my mother was very superstitious. When I bought new shoes and put the shoebox on the table she said, "Don't put shoes on the table. It's bad luck!" She used to say, "It's bad luck to open an umbrella in the house"! We had to dry it outside. When one of us broke a dish, she immediately broke two empty milk bottles. She said. "If you break one dish, you always break three of them. Now that can't happen". One day as a child, I was out shopping with my mother. She found a purse with lots of money, left behind by another shopper. She said, "I would like to have kept that money as we are very poor, but if I had kept it, something bad may have happened to my child". So she handed it into the lost property. Although she didn't know Lord Buddha's teachings, she understood that an evil action would have brought an evil result. [So thanks to my late mother] She may have been thinking of a god punishing us, but we Buddhists are self-reliant. We don't look to an external force to bless us. If we want blessings, we have to perform the meritorious actions ourselves. As Bhante pointed out, "We bless ourselves". Mangala sutta has 12 verses containing 38 blessings by which we can bless ourselves, but I am only going to mention a few of them, from my own personal experience.

Another blessing in MANGALA SUTTA (VERSE 2): 'Not to associate with the foolish, but to associate with the wise, and to honour those worthy of honour —this is the highest blessing.' For example, there are older people, especially those who have been born Buddhist, who know the Dhamma, and have good morality, who come to the Pagoda on Vesak, Dhammacakka Day and Katina, like the elders we paid respect to on Vesak. I can ask them for their advice on what should be done and what should not be done. This has been a blessing for me as I try to become a good Buddhist and practice as they do.

MANGALA SUTTA (VERSE 7). 'To cease and abstain from evil, to abstain from intoxicating drinks, and be diligent in performing righteous acts —this is the highest blessing.' As Bhante has warned us, 'Don't believe it if someone tells you that Lord Buddha didn't teach us to avoid drinking alcohol'. When I was a new Buddhist [about 12 years ago] I was persuaded like that. I went for a meal with my husband and another couple. I thought it was O.K. so I drank some wine with the meal. I felt very sick and my head became extremely painful. Everywhere I looked I could see double of everything, so I had to go home by taxi. When I got home I began to vomit. I lay on the kitchen floor, as the vomit spurted from my mouth and over my clothes. [The fabric slippers I was wearing had to be thrown away]. My husband was saying, "Who will make my evening meal? Who will help me to bed?" [Because we were alone without relatives, and following his cancer surgery he depended on me to change his drainage bag]. So this is obviously unwholesome because I failed to care for my husband, it leads to remorse, regret and worry, even now when I remember it. Furthermore Lord Buddha teaches in SĪNGĀLA SUTTA (VERSE 248): "*Young householder, there are these six evil consequences of indulgence in intoxicants; actual loss of wealth in this very life; liability to be involved in quarrels; susceptibility to illness and disease, loss of good name and reputation; indecent exposure of the body; impairment of intelligence*". No need to explain this further. We have all seen these results of

drinking alcohol on the news. So that is what happens to those who don't bless themselves by following Lord Buddha's social teachings.

MANGALA SUTTA (VERSE 7). 'To cease and abstain from evil, to abstain from intoxicating drinks, and be diligent in performing righteous acts —this is the highest blessing.'
So how is it when one does put this into practice? Recently I had the opportunity to socialise in a way similar to that described above. I was afraid to go. I don't want more unwholesome action and more remorse. Fortunately this invitation coincided with Dr. Rewata Dhamma's commemoration day on Sunday 30th May. So I chose to attend that instead so that I could take the Refuges and Precepts directly from the monk. This was a great blessing for me. One of the meanings of the word 'Refuge' is 'a place of safety' and the Pagoda was a real 'place of safety' for me that day.

MANGALA SUTTA (VERSE 8). 'Reverence, humility, contentment, gratitude, and the timely hearing of the Dhamma, the Teaching of the Buddha —this is the highest blessing'; and (VERSE 9). 'Patience, obedience, meeting the Samanas (holy men), and timely discussion of the Dhamma —this is the highest blessing.'

These two verses sum up my Buddhist faith now and the wonderful life I have because of it. Two '*highest blessings*' to me are attending Meditation on Monday, and having Dhamma talk from Bhante; '*timely hearing of the Dhamma*' and coming to Abhidhamma class on Tuesday afternoons, '*timely discussion of the Dhamma*'. Also '*Reverence, humility, and Patience, obedience, meeting the Samanas (holy men)*'. All of this means I have wonderful peace when paying respect to the Monks who have higher morality, and can speak Lord Buddha's language almost like a first language and know his words by heart. And lastly, '*contentment, gratitude*': Since Dr. Ottaranyana gave me the work on Visuddhimagga; I had no time for music or entertainment either inside or outside the house. [In SINGĀLA SUTTA (VERSE 247) Lord Buddha advises against entertainments 'Young householder...frequenting shows and entertainments leads to dissipation of wealth...'] but I found greater peace and happiness in studying Visuddhimagga, [Bhante calls it Dhamma Pīti]. So now I just stay quietly at home, enjoying Abhidhamma lectures or chanting on the Internet. People may think that the activities Lord Buddha advises us not to do can bring happiness. But we Buddhists know they can bring trouble at the time, and remorse and other bad results later. But if we do what Lord Buddha advises in these two Suttas, we can have happiness and freedom from worry now and we can expect a good result in the future. That's why they are called 'The highest blessings'.

Pamela Hirsch



A Path to Somewhere?

There are as many reasons to start the practice of meditation as there are people, basically I suppose most people are aiming for enlightenment but I have discovered over the years that each person's ideas of what enlightenment is are different. Many of us think that at some point in our practise we will develop what we think are supernatural powers which will give us the edge on others. There are some who feel that by sitting for half an hour in silence now and then we will achieve enlightenment that will bring a profound understanding of everything plus freedom from suffering forever. I am not suggesting that these things are not possible but I am suggesting that we might be more gainfully employed by putting our effort into observing the mind in the present moment not trying to achieve anything to become anything or acquire

anything in the future because it does not yet exist does it? There is only now and the now that has gone into the past and that doesn't exist either.

I have got a headache after all that so let's leave all that philosophy behind, it drives you up the wall doesn't it, and return to the long suffering meditator sitting there with his or her aches and pains, wandering mind, tiredness, boredom and confusion, wondering if they will ever be enlightened and sometimes losing the will to continue. My own experience has been that fighting against pain, tiredness, boredom etc is definitely not like the way to overcome them, it only exacerbates them and confusion reigns but when one day it is realised that the hindrance can begin to be overcome by allowing them to be there under the meditation microscope then slowly the realisation that it's not the conditions that are the main source of our suffering but our attitude of mind, our fears, our doubts and our mental and physical conditioned habits formed over a lifetime and maybe more.

When we begin to realise that this body and this mind are not the essence of our being then we can start to let go of our self inflicted suffering. Just to add a personal note, I find that a sense of humour brightens the path. Also, just maybe, the path will end when we find we are already there. Finally, just for the record, I'm still not sure what enlightenment is!

Metta to all, Bill Strongman



Vihara News

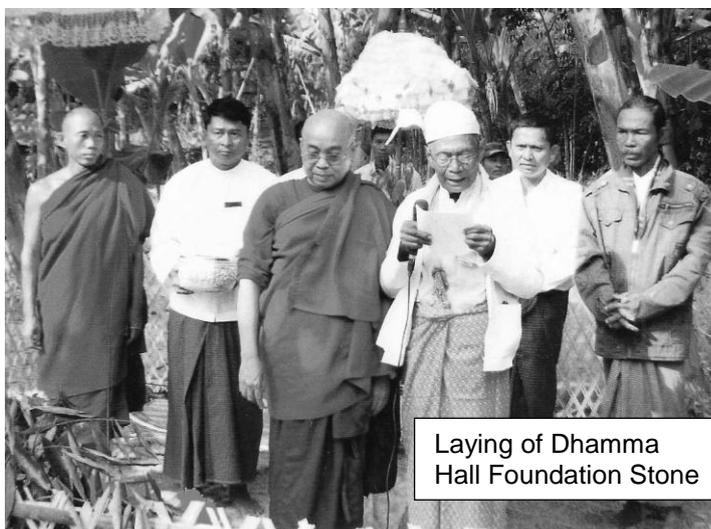
Dr Ottara Nyana's Activities

During bhante's recent visit to Myanmar (20/11/2010 – 26/01/2011) he was able to attend the Thamangon school anniversary celebrations on 12th December; the home village of our great teacher Dr Rewata Dhamma.

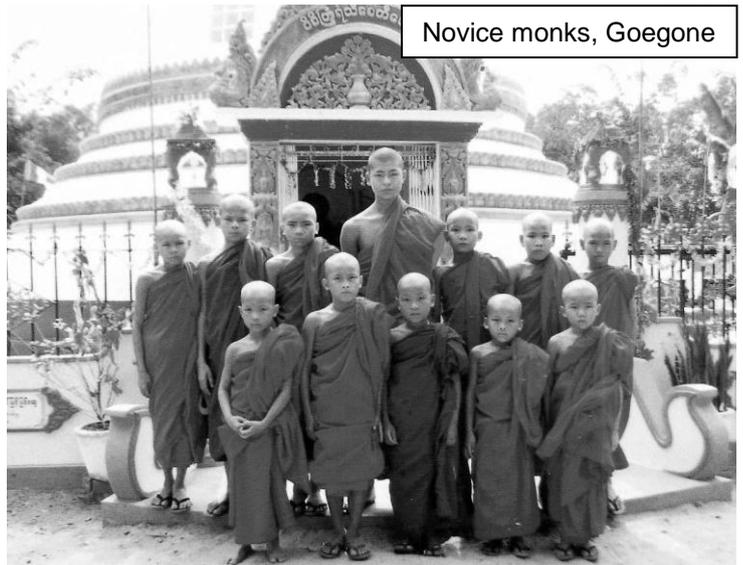
During the event bhante awarded scholarships to various students in the areas of medicine, public health, technology as well as to students who passed with flying colours from primary to high school level. The total cost of these awards amounted to K. 2,000,000 with the main supports being Dr Mar Mar Lwin, Karunabodhi, Pamela Hirsch and Dr Rewata Dhamma's Memorial Fund. A medical student is now a house surgeon and a public health student is working in a local hospital. You are welcome to support Dr Rewata Dhamma's village school.

Later, on 29th December, bhante visited his native village of Goegone (Kyonpyaw, Irrawaddy division). During the week he stayed there he was able to complete the pagoda construction he had started earlier in the year.

On 9th January, the Vicitra Ramsi Pagoda completion ceremony celebrations were a great success. The celebrations were attended by 30 members of the sangha and over 500 supporters all of whom felt the day had been a joyous and successful event. Later, on the same day, the Vicirta Dhamma Hall foundation stone was laid near the new pagoda.



Bhante was also very happy at being able to make a contribution of educational resources for use by the younger generations of the area. In total bhante donated 7000 sets of books (Buddhism, Key Stage I & II published by the Buddhist Education Foundation, UK) together with the DVD 'The Life of the Buddha'. It is hoped the books and DVD will be particularly helpful to the young people as an example of a modern approach to Buddhism as well as giving them the opportunity to have some educational material in the English language.



Novice monks, Goegone

Also during his stay in Myanmar bhante was able to visit the historical cities of Mandalay, Sagaing and Maymyo as well as pay respect to his great teachers and closest supporters.

Other Events



Anthony and Rachel's wedding blessing



Kathina Day 2010 by Dr Tha Htun Oo + Daw Khine Khine Su



Vihara Supporters from Greenock



Dana Lunch for Hnise & Hninky's birthday



Buddha Day

15th May 2555BE/2011

We have pleasure in inviting you to celebrate Buddha day in our Peace Pagoda on 15th May. The event will also include the presentation of the Honorary Academic title of Agga Mahapandita (Great Scholar) conferred upon Dr Ottara Nyana by the Myanmar government on 4th January 2011, Myanmar Independence day. Finally, everyone will be invited to take part in the Paying of our Respect to the Senior Citizens of our community.

Programme

Morning

10:30 Offerings and chanting in the Pagoda
11:00 Alms meal for monks
11:30 Communal meal

Afternoon

13:00 Welcome and Pagoda report
13:10 Chanting by various Buddhist groups
13:30 Five Precepts and Paritta chanting
13:45 Dhamma talk by senior monks
14:15 Presentaion of Honorary Title to Dr Ottara Nyana
14:25 Transfer of Merit
14:45 Paying of Respect to our Senior Citizens
15:00 Refreshments

Special Lotus

It is our hope to publish a special edition of the Lotus magazine to welcome the Birmingham Buddhist Academy in time for the Peace Pagoda Anniversary Day celebrations, which are to be held on Sunday, 10th July 2011.

In order to achieve this we would like to invite you to submit your articles, especially any academic papers, for this special edition of the Lotus magazine.

Please send any articles before 1st June 2011 to Dr OttaraNyana at ottama2000@yahoo.co.uk and copied to paduma8-lotus@yahoo.co.uk.



If you receive your Lotus magazine by Royal Mail but would like to receive it, plus other announcements, electronically please email your name and postal address to paduma8-lotus@yahoo.co.uk.



2555 BE/2011 Events Calendar

BIRMINGHAM BUDDHIST VIHARA & DHAMMATALAKA PEACE PAGODA

29 Osler Street, Ladywood, Birmingham B16 9EU

Tel: 0121 454 6591

e-mail: ottama2000@yahoo.co.uk

website: www.bbvt.org.uk

Festivals

Buddha Day (Visakha) Sun. 15 May 10:30am
Buddha Day (BM&AG) Sat. 14 May 12:45pm
Dhammacakka Day & Sun. 10 July 10:30am
Pagoda Anniversary
Abhidhamma Wed. 12 Oct. 7:00pm
(Pavarana) Day
Kathina Day Sun. 16 Oct. 10:30am

Full Moon

Chanting in the Pagoda at 7:30pm except on festival days.

19 January, 18 February, 19 March,
18 April, 17 May, 16 June,
15 July, 14 August, 12 September,
12 October, 10 November, 10 December

Retreats

Weekend (suitable for all) (Date to be announced)
Led by Bhikkhu Bodhidhamma
Classic Mahasi insight technique specifically
designed for the Western mind and taught in a
popular dynamic fashion.

10-Day (experienced) 19-28 August
Led by Dr Ottaranyana
Designed to enable meditators to experience the
characteristic of impermanence and nature of non-
selfhood as part of the process of insight meditation.

Devotee Days

An opportunity for devotees to offer Dana Lunch to
the resident monks of the vihara. After lunch
everyone may take part in a short meditation session
followed by a Dhamma talk by one of the resident
monks.

The event will take place on the 1st Sunday of each
month. For further details please contact bhikkhu
Nagasena or Bill Strongman.

Children's Class U. Ghosaka

Every Sunday from 1:00 - 3:00pm, except Christmas
Day and New Years Day. Suitable for 5+ years but all
welcome with or without children.

For further details please contact Ellen
mobile: 07814 972 460
e-mail: ellen06_121@yahoo.co.uk

Meditation Classes

Beginners: Advanced:
Thurs. 7:30pm Mon. 7:30pm

Pagoda Opening

Summer 9am – 7pm
Winter 9am – 5pm
The Pagoda is open most days but to avoid
disappointment please call or e-mail first to ensure
there will be someone available to welcome you and
show you around (see above).



BIRMINGHAM BUDDHIST VIHARA & DHAMMATALAKA PEACE PAGODA

29 Osler Street, Ladywood, Birmingham B16 9EU

Tel: 0121 454 6591

e-mail: ottama2000@yahoo.co.uk

website: www.bbvt.org.uk