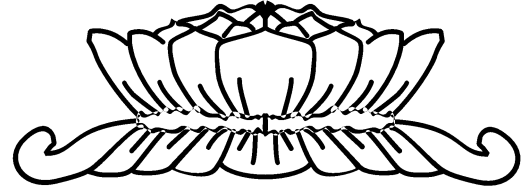


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Journal of the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara

Issue No. 36, Spring 2012



Ministry of Religious Affairs



International Theravāda Buddhist Missionary University

Ref: st-1120/mt(1)/150/2012

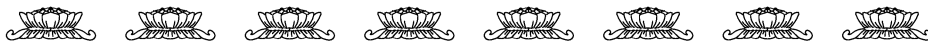
Date: 20th January 2012

To Whom It May Concern

With regard to the establishment of the Buddhist Academy in Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, UK, the special university council meeting (No 1/2010) was held on 27th December 2010 at International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University (ITBMU) in Yangon, Myanmar. The council had unanimously agreed to establish a branch of ITBMU, namely, the Birmingham Buddhist Academy at Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, UK, mainly for the sake of the propagation of pristine Theravada Buddhism in the UK and Europe.

On the 20th December 2011, Venerable Dr Ottaranyana, Spiritual Director of Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, submitted a set of syllabuses and Quality Standards System to the university council regarding the relevant subjects to be taught and the System to be followed in Post Graduate Diploma and MA courses which are to be offered in the Birmingham Buddhist Academy at Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, Birmingham, UK. After a thorough perusal of the submitted syllabuses submitted by Dr Ottaranyana, we have found that, although there are some minor discrepancies between the submitted syllabuses and the ITBMU's syllabuses, the contents of the proposed syllabuses are in good agreement with our ITBMU's syllabuses. Therefore, we would very much like to give our full approval to the Venerable Dr Ottaranyana's proposed syllabuses to be offered in the Birmingham Buddhist Academy at Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, Birmingham, UK.

Yours Truly,
Professor Dr Than Zin Naing
Pro-Rector (Admin), ITBMU



Birmingham Buddhist Academy (BBA) (Diploma Course in Buddhist Studies)

Introduction

The programme leader, Dr Ottaranyana (Aggamaha Pandita), is professor emeritus of the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University (ITBMU) in Yangon, Myanmar and has worked as Dean of Patipatti (Meditation) in ITBMU from 1999 to 2003. In 2011 his scholarly work *The Essence of the Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga Rasa)* was published by Triple Gem Publications.

It is proposed that the Diploma Course (DC) in Buddhist Studies should be taught as a one year's full-time or two years' part-time course based at the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara's Teaching Hall. Alternatively this course may also be offered to part-time students as a distant learning course. This course is designed to provide the student with an in-depth knowledge and understanding of Theravada Buddhism. It is also intended that this course should provide a wide knowledge base for those wishing to go on to do an MA in Theravada Buddhist studies.

It is proposed the two years' part-time course should consist of assessment by essays for each module and a final examination or assignment paper of 5000 words.

Year 1

Duration: two 15 week semesters (September-May).

Contact Time: 4 modules per semester, each module comprising of two teaching hours every 3 weeks. Assessment will be by essay at the end of the first and second semesters.

Four modules will be offered, comprising of 2 core subjects and 2 non-core subjects:

Core Modules

1. Monastic Disciplinary Rules (Vinaya)
2. Doctrine (Sutta)
3. Philosophical Psychology of Buddhism (Abhidhamma)
4. Meditation – Theory and Practice

Non-Core Modules

5. Morality and Social Ethics
6. Pali Grammar
7. Myanmar Language and Literature
8. History of Buddhism

Year 2

Duration: two 15 week semesters (September-May).

Contact Time: 4 core modules in the first semester; each module comprising of two hours teaching every 3 weeks and assessment will be by essay at the end of the first semester. The final semester will be assessed by a 3500 word essay of a topic of the student's choosing and a final examination or alternatively a 5000 word essay of a topic of the student's choosing from the core modules. Submission date for all essays will be 31st August.

Entry Requirements

Candidates for the one year Diploma Course must have a minimum of one A level or equivalent.

Non-UK candidates must submit an English language certificate (TOEFL/IELTS 5.00).

Candidates must sit an entrance examination and interview.

Birmingham Buddhist Academy (BBA) MA in Buddhist Studies

It is proposed that the MA in Buddhist Studies should be taught as a one year's full-time or two years' part-time course based at the BBV's Teaching Hall. Alternatively this course may also be offered to part-time students as a distance learning course.

This course is designed to provide the graduate student with an in-depth knowledge and understanding of Theravada Buddhism. It is also intended that this course should provide a wide knowledge base for those wishing to go on to do a doctorate in Theravada Buddhist studies.

It is proposed the two years' part-time course should consist of 8 compulsory modules in the first year with modules 1-4 being studied in greater depth during the first semester of year two; assessment by long essays. The final semester of year two to be devoted to the writing of a 15,000 word dissertation on one of the modules studied during the first semester of year two.

1. Monastic Disciplinary Rules (Vinaya)
2. Doctrine (Sutta)
3. Philosophical Psychology of Buddhism (Abhidhamma)

4. Meditation – Theory and Practice
5. Morality and Social Ethics
6. Pali Language & Literature
7. Myanmar Language & Literature (in future)
8. History of Buddhism(in future)

Year 1

Duration: two 15 week semesters (September-May).

Contact Time: 4 modules per semester, each module comprising of two hours teaching every 3 weeks.

Year 2

Duration: two 15 week semesters (September-May).

Contact Time: 4 modules in the first semester; each module comprising of two hours teaching every 3 weeks and a 15,000 word dissertation starting in the final semester with a submission date of 31st August.

Entry Requirements

A candidate who applies for one year full time or two year part time MA course is required to submit their Diploma Certificate in Buddhist Studies.

(Unnecessary for a student qualified in Buddhist Studies)

Candidates must submit their BA, BSc or degree equivalent.

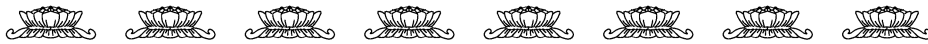
Candidates must take an entry examination.

Non-UK candidates must submit an English language certificate (TOEFL/IELTS 6.50)

For details please see our new website: www.birminghambuddhistvihara.org.uk

A new dedicated website for the BBA is soon to be launched.

**For further information please write to Dr Ottaranyana at
Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, 29 Osler Street, Ladywood, Birmingham, B16 9EU
or e-mail: ottama2000@yahoo.co.uk**



Birmingham Buddhist Academy Donors

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My brief insight of the meaning of "ANATTA" (with a little background)

Although born and brought up as a Roman Catholic Christian both my grandmothers were Buddhists. My maternal grandmother lived with us as family and was a big influence during my formative years living in Bahan, a suburb of Rangoon. Our area was full of monasteries. My gran made daily offerings of "Hsoon", and occasional special offerings to the local Abbot, I would always accompany her on visits to

the monastery, and frequently to the great Shwedagon Pagoda where in those days (late 40s and early 50s), my Buddhist aunts and cousins owned and operated many stalls on the covered steps of the pagoda.

Later I attended St. Paul's school as a boarder, and being a catholic the religious side of education was emphasized by the teaching brothers. Upon leaving school for Rangoon University I went through a phase of intense interest in different religions and philosophies. I read many books and sought debates and discussions with missionary Jesuit priests, Buddhist teaching monks, Muslim and Hindu imams and gurus. Out of all I was most drawn to the Buddhist way but did not really do anything about it.

We left Burma for the UK at the dawn of the military regime. All throughout the forty-odd years that I lived, worked, married and raised a family in England I missed the land of my birth. As far as religion was concerned I would content myself reading books about the Buddha's teachings by western authors. I tried to obtain a visa to visit Burma a couple of times without success until 1996. I was delighted to see many of my relatives and old friends. As usual once one makes contact with an old schoolmate others quickly follow, and I found out about an old classmate living near me in England. On my return I visited him and we rejoiced in our meeting after many long years. We had actually been classmates since the age of five! We spoke about many things during subsequent meetings and the subject of Buddhism came up. He was a born Buddhist but had somehow missed the initiation ceremony as a novice monk that all male Buddhists go through. I had made another visit to Burma meanwhile and my interest in becoming a Buddhist had been rekindled. My friend, Ko Myint Khine, had promised his mother that he would be initiated before he died. I expressed my desire to also go through the ceremony and officially become a Buddhist. We were both 59 years old and did not want to leave it too late. We made arrangements to enter a monastery in the Sagaing hills of central Burma in January 1999. The choice on my part was because my grandmother was originally from that area, and my friend has relatives in Mandalay, just across the river.

The Mahar Gandaryone monastery that we entered was one of the larger ones in that area, with its own extensive vegetable gardens and a community of nuns and novices who tended them. So we were forcibly on a strict vegetarian diet during our stay, which we both quite enjoyed. A wonderful 92-year-old monk was assigned to be our mentor. He was well-educated and spoke excellent English, which proved to be a boon, because he could explain things to us or translate from Pali into either English or Burmese, in which we were both proficient, anyway. Respecting our intelligence, he skipped the basic teachings, and taught us many things from the Abhidhamma even drawing parallels between certain ancient teachings and modern quantum physics. I was delightfully surprised to find out that he knew my father and remembered that they had attended certain lectures together during their own university days at Rangoon. It meant to me that my Karma must have been good! We kept in touch after my return to England.

Of the three basic truths i.e. ANISSA - or Impermanence, DUKKHA or Suffering, and ANATTA or no soul (EGOLESSNESS), I have always found it difficult to comprehend Anatta, perhaps due to my Catholic upbringing or because I have lived in the West too long, I don't know. However, one morning as I was walking along a covered pathway on my return from a shrine in the Sagaing hills, I noticed a family of three, probably mother, father and teenage daughter coming uphill towards me. I was in my saffron robes, of course, and trying to practice walking meditation. As I got nearer, I noticed that they had moved to one side as the path was rather narrow, and then they were on their knees with hands joined in the classic pose of respectful homage. I had been at the monastery about 4 days. Now, every day when 2 novice nuns brought our lunch, they performed this act of obeisance, but I had not paid much attention. However this time when I saw these strangers almost prostrate before me (I was on my own), I was instantly filled with a sense of pride "Ha, Look at them, bowing to me, because I am above them, I am superior to them", such were my immediate thoughts. I gave them some words of blessing and continued on the path. When I got back and sat down I was still feeling quite elated and puffed up with self-importance. As I sat to meditate and calm my mind, a slow realisation formed in my mind about the experience. I had been taught to pay homage to the three jewels-Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. Therefore this devout family was paying homage to the Sangha. In my robes I was a member of the Sangha. It was not "I" that they were bowing to. There is no "I".

What a fool I was that I should have had such false delusions.

Thus was my brief insight into the understanding of ANATTA.

With Metta, Peter Carrapiett aka U tha Din

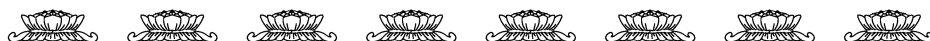
Reflections on a Fulfilling Job

The meditation class is still going strong and often we have more than twenty people attending. For me, it is a great pleasure to have all those friends to talk with and to share half an hour's meditation. It is also our good fortune to have the facility offered by the vihara and with the backing of Dr Ottaranyana and the resident monks. I have no qualifications to teach and don't consider myself a teacher. I like to think of the people who come along on a Thursday evening as a group of friends who practice meditation together, everyone seems to enjoy the evening and we have a chat after meditation. We certainly learn a lot from each other and we are not averse to bringing a sense of humour into our discussion.

When newcomers come along who have not meditated before Gordon explains the basics of meditation to them. He does this with great skill and understanding; making them feel at ease. All are welcome at this class, we have never turned anyone away and it gives me great pleasure to think that over the years we have, by our efforts to teach Buddhist meditation, giving a few people the means to overcome some of their problems. Unfortunately, Gordon can't always be there as he has a very busy working life and in my case old age is catching up with me and I can't always guarantee to be there. So, I'm looking around hoping that there is someone out there who could take on the job when I can't make it. If there is then please let Gordon or I know and we could give you a few pointers.

The class has been in existence since the early 80's and it was originally sanctioned by Dr Rewata Dhamma. It would be a shame if it came to an end. The only qualifications required are a desire to help others and to be a practitioner yourself. Your reward will be the joy of being a member of the lay sangha. p.s. I would like to remind you that the magazine you are reading was originated many years back with the idea that the lay people could have an opportunity to express their thoughts, observations, comments and ideas but we seem to be getting fewer and fewer articles as time goes by, so come on, put pen to paper – it would be a shame to lose it.

All the best, Bill



A simple stone

On retreat at Amaravati I choose my walking meditation path. Three or four times a day for the next ten days I will walk and grow familiar with this path. And so it is. By day four the initial restlessness has diminished; I am becoming easeful, even happy with the daily routine. The respite from sitting makes walking welcome, and the weather is balmy and kind. My awareness of the rising, moving and placing of my foot becomes a rhythm and all is well until.....I notice on the ground ahead of me a flint. I find it particularly attractive. Beautiful even. The land on which Amaravati rests is covered in a variety of flints but I have paid merely a cursory glance up to this moment. Now, however, the flint before me takes on special significance; I crave it and want to take it home with me.

"It will be a reminder of your retreat"

My mind offers.

"It will rest beautifully on your shrine at home"

It adds. Then it reminds me how I love the beauty of natural wood, stone, wool, cotton, etc.

I stoop and pick it up. It feels cool and good to hold. I place it in my pocket to take indoors.

My thoughts now move to the woodlice inhabiting the moist soil area beneath the stone. I feel a small ripple of regret at having disturbed them, but I pacify my mind with the thought that they will find many other comfortable resting places elsewhere in the grounds. But my peace has gone.

"Have I any right to take the stone?"

"Does it belong to Amaravati?"

"Can a stone belong to anyone since it is a natural, inanimate object?"

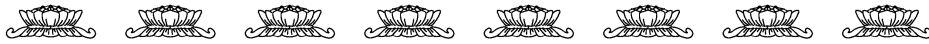
"Maybe I should ask permission?"

My mind is uneasy with all this questioning.

By now my rest and any opportunity to focus on my walking has gone. My mind is busy and uneasy. There is unease in my body and anxiety has set my heart racing. I put my hand in my pocket, take the stone and return it.

What remains in the residue of my thinking is a small regret, but it soon passes and it isn't long before peace descends and I feel able to resume my practice.

This story of the stone is not so much a teaching for me about not taking what is not freely given, though all the thinking is connected with this precept, but more an insight into what happens to the mind when there is craving. If this small, uncertain, craving could destabilise my ease and wellbeing, how much more must I guard my actions, since the whole purpose of my mindfulness practice is to attain the clear, serene peace of mind that I hope will one day lead me to the peace and bliss of nibbana.



Dr Ottaranyana's Activities

Visit to India and Myanmar

Dr Ottaranyana attended the Global Buddhist Congregation 2011 from 27 to 30 November in Delhi, India. Over 2000 delegates and observers (both monks and lay people) from different sects (Theravada, Mahayana and Vajirayana) from all over the world came together for this prestigious event.

The four days of events were mainly held at one of two hotels in Delhi. However, in the early morning of 30 November, all the delegates, observers and interfaith friends gathered in Mhattama Gandhi Park and chanted beautifully according to their different faiths, schools and languages all led by his holiness the Dalai Lama, Sangharaja and Sitagu Sayadaws from Myanmar and Sagharaja from Laos. Afterwards all the groups went to Nehru Park and planted holy trees: Mahabodhi, Anandabodhi and Sanghamittabodhi led by three great Buddhist monks.

The Global Buddhist Congregation 2011 agreed upon these possible projects

- Nalanda Cloud: Collect Wisdom
- Plan to protect Buddhist heritage worldwide
- A Buddhist University
- Programmes for youth outreach

Bhante also visited Delhi University, where he had previously attained his MA, MPhil and PhD, in order to present his book the Essence of the Path of Purification (EPP) to his past professors.

On 1st December, all the delegates and observers made a special pilgrimage to Varanasi by air and to Bodhagaya, Nalanda and Rajagir in 20 coaches. Everyone on the trips was very happy to be able to attend the Global Buddhist Congregation (GBC) under the Maha Bodhi tree where Lord Buddha attained Enlightenment 2600 years ago. There were several programmes under the Bodhi tree: the GBC opening ceremony marked by the offering of various items to Lord Buddha, such as Robes, food, flowers, thousands of water cups, gold umbrellas etc. Also at the site there was chanting for three days of the Holy Pali Tipitaka and evening dhamma talks by a Sitagu Sayadaw from Myanmar.

Three times bhante paid a visit to the Maha Bodhi Tree:

In the evening of 1st Dec. as soon as the group arrived, early morning on 2nd Dec. and again in the evening after their return from Rajagar. Each time the area was full of visitors some chanting, meditating, paying their respect or by making offerings to Lord Buddha and all under the Bodhi tree, which looked even more beautiful in the evening light.

On the morning of 3rd Dec. almost all the guests went back to New Delhi and bhante went on to Myanmar from Gaya International Airport and arrived in Yangon later that evening.

The following day Dr Ottaranyana was privileged to be invited to pay homage to a replica of Lord Buddha's tooth which was visiting Yangon and staying in the Kabar-Aye great cave for two weeks.

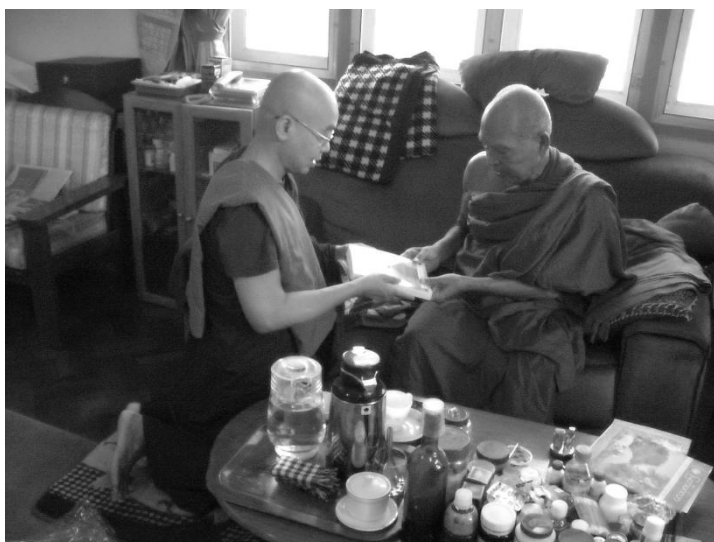
Bhante visited his home village to discuss the building of their dhamma hall and whilst there paid his respect to senior Sayadaws and elderly people with medicine, fruits and clothes.

Thamamgon school anniversary occurred on 17th Dec. and was marked by awards being presented to the school's brightest students who had passed their examination from primary to high school level with flying colours. Scholarships were also given to University students in accordance with their results, k-100000 for one distinction. The scholarships are sponsored by the Dr Rewata Dhamma memorial fund and Dr Mar Mar Lwin.

On the following day, special celebrations were arranged to pay respect to the elderly, with K-5000 being given to 30 elders all of whom were over 75 years of age; this event was sponsored by U Aye Myint+ Daw Khin Thanta We (Hla Sitar family, Yangon).

On 20th Dec. Dr Ottaranyana submitted a set of syllabus and Quality Standard System to the Theravada Buddhist University council regarding the relevant subjects to be taught and the System to be followed in the Post Graduate Diploma and MA course for Birmingham Buddhist Academy. Bhante also gave lectures at the University to an assortment of international students. Bhante donated his book EPP to scholars, Universities, learning centres, meditation centres and libraries in Yangon and Mandalay.

On his return, 24th Jan., bhante brought back a replica of Lord Buddha's tooth which had spent two weeks in close proximity to the actual tooth of Lord Buddha in China, donated by Bamaw Sayadaw together with a letter of authentication from the Theravada Buddhist University, Yangon.



Dr Ottaranyana's future Activities

Bhante is going to Belgium during Easter from 6th to 9th April to lead Metta retreat in the Dhammaramsi Meditation centre. On Easter Monday a wedding and birthday party in the Buddhist tradition will be held in the meditation centre.

Bhante is also going to Brazil from 4th June to 12th July to lead meditation retreats and to teach suttas and Abhidhamma:

June

4th - leaving London to Sao Paulo

5th - arriving in Sao Paulo and heading to Porto Alegre, the southernmost city in Brazil. It will be cold there, but it is their newest group, and they are very eager to have bhante there for the first time.

6th (night) to 10th - retreat in Porto Alegre

10th to 13th - leisure time to know the city

14th to 16th - Sao Paulo, with a workshop during the weekend 16/17)

18th to 21st - Belo Horizonte at Nalandarama just rest.

22nd to July 1st - retreat at Nalandarama

July

2nd - flight to Aracaju

4th - two talks in Aracaju city

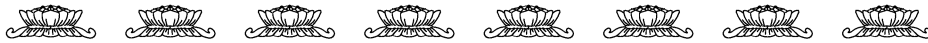
5th to 8th - retreat in Aracaju

9th to 11th Antonio Mateus and friends in Aracaju invite bhante to stay as long as he wishes in their home to enjoy the sun.

Vihara Activities

The number of educational visits to the pagoda, and number of students present in each group, has once again continued to rise significantly. Whereas in the past we may have expected to welcome 150 to 200 visitors a month since the beginning of 2012 the pagoda has been typically welcoming 200 to 250 per week. In addition to the increasing numbers wishing to visit it is very reassuring that the student's knowledge and understanding of Buddhism prior to their visits is also significantly improving.

As usual, Monday (for senior) and Thursday (for beginner) meditation classes are running from 7.30pm to 9pm in our vihara for all of visitors. An Abhidhamma class is also running from 2 to 3.30pm and run by Dr Ottaranyana. A Buddhist meditation class will begin on 28th April at 47 Carlyle Road from 6.30pm to 7.30pm on every Wednesday led by Dr Ottaranyana.



Birmingham Buddhist Vihara

**You are invited to celebrate Buddha Day
on
Saturday, 5th May 2556 BE/2012
and
Sayadaw Dr Rewata Dhamma's 8th Memorial Service**

Programme

- 10.30 a.m. Chanting in the Pagoda
11.00 a.m. Sanghadana
11.30 a.m. Communal Meal
1.00 p.m. Service in the Pagoda:
- ❁ Taking the Five Precepts led by Dr Ottaranyana
 - ❁ Paritta Chanting by the Monks
 - ❁ Chanting by other invited groups
 - ❁ Dhamma talk by Dr Ottaranyana
 - ❁ Paying of respect to our senior citizens of 80 years and above

Food sponsored by Dr. Aung Thein & Daw Than Than, London



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.

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