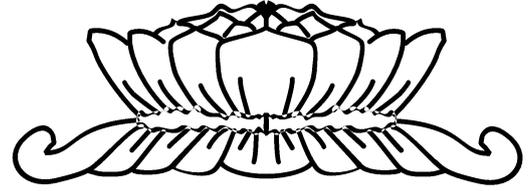


lotus



Journal of the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara

Issue No. 39, Summer 2013



Birmingham Buddhist Academy



Message from the Spiritual Director

Birmingham Buddhist Vihara was established by Sayadaw Dr Rewata Dhamma in 1981 with the aim of propagating the Buddha's teaching in the west both through the medium of meditation and the study of the scriptures.

Sayadaw had three projects to fulfil his aims in his lifetime: the establishing of the Peace Pagoda (1998), the Sangharama Vihara (2002) and the Teaching Hall for a Buddhist Academy. He was successful in completing the first two in his lifetime; the third one, Dhamma Hall, was completed successfully by his supporters in 2007.

During The Buddhist conference, in the Peace Pagoda on 26 November 2005, Dr Martin Stranger, (Head of Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham) stated that:
"Together, the Department and the Vihara hope to work towards the establishment of a Buddhist Academy, collaborate in the production of joint conferences in Buddhist studies, construct university level courses and build a partnership that will generate a greater interest in Buddhist Studies."

On 25th November 2010, during my visit to Myanmar, I submitted an application to the State Sangha Committee, in Yangon, for the establishment of a Buddhist Academy at the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara. In return two letters of approval were presented to me (please see the following pages). I would like to say special thank to Sayadaw Dr Kumarabhivamsa, Chairman of State Sangha Committee, Religious minister and Dr T Z Naing, Pro-rector of the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University, Yangon for their support.

Now, the Buddhist Academy appears successfully today and fulfilling Sayadaw Dr Rewata Dhamma's main aim as well as following in the Lord Buddha's footsteps. The Lord Buddha appeared in the world for the welfare, the blessing and the happiness of all beings. Therefore, we can say " Lord Buddha is for everyone and Buddhism is for all". The Lord Buddha said: There are beings with a little dust in their eyes, who, not hearing the dhamma are decaying, (but) if they are learners of dhamma, they will grow (The Book of Discipline, Vol. IV, P.28).

In conclusion, we would like to thank all of our supporters, devotees and dhamma friends for their supporting of the vihara and especially for the Buddhist Academy. As well, we must acknowledge Mr Robert Black for all of his hard work in gathering together and editing the contents of this special issue of Lotus Review-39, Buddhist Academy Inauguration. Finally, we would like to say again special thanks to Ven. Dr Kumarabhivamsa, (Abhidhaja Maharathaguru) Chairman Sayadaw of State Sangha committee from Myanmar, for the help he has given towards the establishment of the Birmingham Buddhist Academy.

Ven. Dr Ottara Nyana, 30th June, 2013

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: st-1100/mt(1)/145/2010

Date: 28th December, 2010

1. A special university council meeting (No 1/2010) was held on 27th of December, 2010 at International Tehravada 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.

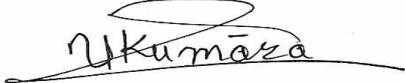
Chairman Sayadaw	01-651007
Vice Chairman Sayadaw	01-661006 01-661746
Secretary Sayadaw	01-651008
Joint Secretary Sayadaw	01-660804 01-664157

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
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အဘိဝဇ္ဇ အပ္ပမဟာသဒ္ဓမ္မဇောတိကာ
ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ ဆရာတော်



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



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.



Donations for the Buddhist Academy

1. Dr Sai Hyne+Dr Mya Mya Aye	£100
2. Mr Latzar+ May Sandar	£160
3. Dr New Win Thein, Zwe Nanda+Dr Thin Thin Hlaing and friends	£526
4. Ms Ellen Parker, Birmingham	£100
5. Dr Kottegoda+Dr Mallika, Birmingham	£200
6. U Aye Myint&Daw Khin Thantar Wai(Hlathetar), Yangon	\$1000 (for air ticket)
7. U Than Naing& Daw Snadar Wai(Hlathitar)Yangon	\$ 550 (for bag-150)
8. Dhamma school Foundation, Yangon (for Lecture)	iPad 10 (installation Holy Tipitakas)

Main Dana Sponsors for the Peace Pagoda Anniversary are Dr Mar Mar Lwin, Birmingham and Ms Aye Mya Khin and family, London.

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SITAGU INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY
TRUST (SIMT)

FOUNDER AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR
DR ASHIN NYANISSARA (Ph.D D.Litt)

REGISTERED CHARITY NO: 1141196

Lifelong Aspiration Accomplished

The first time I had a chance to know the most venerable Dr Rewata Dhamma was way back in April 1978 in Derby when an introductory letter from ex first prime minister U Nu detailing a contact address in Birmingham was received. No sooner had I got the letter from Bhopal, India than Sayadaw posted his letter explaining how I can get to Birmingham and also about one Burmese family then living in Nottingham. Over the course of many years the family he alluded to be U Maung Maung Than who has become close friends to us.

When I met with Bhante in person on the first occasion in June 1979, during the most venerable Mahasi Sayadaw's visit to Birmingham, he had no Vihara of his own but resided at the Tibetan Vihara at 41 Carlyle Road. Welcoming smile, soft low tone and above all warmth and kindness were his inherent virtues. A deeply embedded ambition of his right from the outset was the dissemination of the pristine teachings of Lord Buddha in the western world whilst furthering his higher qualification in India as a Theravada Burmese scholarly monk. Having attained his PhD, with flying colours, in Buddhist studies in the Mahayana tradition from the Hindi Universities in Varanasi in 1967, he set foot in Birmingham through sponsorship by the Tibetan Buddhist Organization based in Birmingham

Being on foreign soil he had to face a different cultural tradition and religion as well as face up to the reality of hardship all round. Notwithstanding such a multitude of difficulties, his tenacity drive and determination were unabated to set up a Theravada Buddhist Vihara in the heart of the United Kingdom particularly in the epicentre of a cosmopolitan city such as Birmingham. Having resolutely made his mind up for the sake of Buddhist Sasana, he persevered doggedly without complaint despite the natural vicissitude in the early years.

Through sheer hard work, bolstered by a group of devout Burmese Buddhists together with a sympathetic local community, the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara (BBV) was successfully founded at 47 Carlyle Road Edgbaston in 1981, the birthplace for the Burmese Theravada Buddhist Tradition in the UK. In early 1990 Sayadaw's unswerving and unrelenting endeavour paid off handsomely when Birmingham City Council (BCC) granted 1.25 acres of barren land in Osler Street for the construction of the pagoda and other buildings, initially on long lease with a right to purchase later on at a modest price. A master plan for the Pagoda, Vihara and Dhamma Teaching Hall were drawn up by an architect David Jones. Ground work commenced soon after the land deal was completed. On May 24th 1992 foundation stones were laid by a group of eminent most venerable Sayadaws from Burma.

With Bhante's tireless travails in criss-crossing the globe to raise most needed funds combined with added efforts from deeply dedicated devotees here in the UK, the shining upshot witnessed today has transformation the once derelict piece of barren land into the oasis of the idyllic and magnificent Dhamma Talaka Peace Pagoda for the people by the people and of the people.

The second Vihara construction project also came to fruition in 2002 thanks to magnificent financial support from well wishers. Sayadaw as always worked tirelessly in promoting and propagating the Buddha Sasana whilst at the same time adopting the principle of living in harmony with other faiths and respecting each other.

Hard on the heels of a trustee meeting in June 2002, at which the panel discussed at length the issue of finding a suitable successor in the not too distant future for Bhante, Sayadaw went to Burma and chose Dr U Ottara Nyana who was not a stranger but had lived for some years in the UK already and for a few months at the BBV before taking up a new position as lecturer at the Theravada Buddhist University in Yangon. Despite Sayadaw being unable to initiate the final project before his untimely demise, his handpicked highly capable protégé Dr U Ottara Nyana followed his mentor's footsteps steadfastly from the day he so unexpectedly got to take over and converted Sayadaw's dream into a practical reality by completing Dr Rewata Dhamma's Dhamma Teaching Hall followed by the launching

of the Birmingham Buddhist Academy (BBA). The latest milestone is a testament to the unity of team work and the opening of the door of everyone's wisdom eye.

We all, devotees and general public, as a whole are greatly indebted to the late visionary Sayadaw as he was the one who sowed high quality Dhamma seeds on this particular fertile soil for the sole benefit of mankind. From now on the onus is fairly and squarely upon us to continue to nurture the already healthy Dhamma shoots not allowing them to wither but grow more stronger and brighter ever year.

Dr U Ottara Nyana, the current incumbent Spiritual Director, after all carries the torch of late Sayadaw's legacy in **Protection Preservation and Propagation of Lord Buddha's Teachings in pristine and purity all over Europe and beyond.**

May we all beings be well happy and attain the ultimate bliss of Nibbana.

Dr Kyaw Myint Oo



The six Buddhist universities of ancient India

D. Amarasiri Weeraratne

It is well-known that with the rise of Buddhism in India there dawned the golden age of India's culture and civilisation. There was progress in all aspects of Indian civilisation under the impact of Buddhism. This is very much in contrast to what happened in the Roman empire in Europe with the rise of Christianity. With the coming of Christianity into power the Dark Ages dawned upon Europe. During this era whatever progress that was achieved by the Greeks and the Romans received a set-back and came to a stand-still. Schools and centres of philosophy were closed down. The famed library at Alexandria was burnt down by a Christian mob led by a prelate. Hypatia the learned philosopher and teacher was dragged into a Church and her flesh was torn off her body. As a result of these barbarities Europe was plunged into the darkness of ignorance and poverty for a thousand years. The Dark Ages of European history was really the golden age of the Christian Church, because it did the conversion of the barbarians to Christianity during this time. The great philosophers and intellectuals of Europe who left their mark on human civilisation were all pre-Christian pagans who lived prior to the rise of Christianity, e.g. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Pliny, etc. The Christian era was marked by an absence of such men. Illiteracy and religious intolerance prevailed during the Dark Ages.

At the end of this period the Muslims had conquered parts of the Roman empire and established their rule in Spain, Portugal and parts of France. They introduced the learning of the Greeks and Romans as well as knowledge gathered from their contacts with India. This set the pace for Martin Luther's reformation which broke the power of the Catholic Church. The ensuing liberal policies persuaded by the Protestants brought about the Renaissance, after this the Europeans pushed back the power of the Churches and began to make progress in civilisation.

In contrast to this with the rise of Buddhism in India, there arose many centres of learning which did not exist before. Buddhist monks could opt for a life of meditation in the forests, or a life of teaching, preaching, propagating the Dharma as a result of the activities of the teaching monks, seats of learning arose. These seats of monastic learning (Pirivenas) gradually developed and some of them became full-fledged universities. As a result Buddhist India came to have five major universities which achieved wide fame. These five were 1. Nalanda, 2. Vikramasila, 3. Odantapuri, 4. Jagadalala and 5. Somapura.

Nalanda University is the best known of ancient India's universities. It's site has been discovered and it's ruins have been preserved by India's Department of Archeology. It is situated in Bihar State, the ancient Magadha country. Magadha is well known as the cradle of Buddhism. Bihar is so called because it had a large number of Viharas or Buddhist monasteries. Nalanda was a prosperous city during the days of the Buddha. He visited it during his preaching itineraries. When in Nalanda, the Buddha sojourned at Ambavana the mango-park with his disciples. Nalanda was also the home town of Ven. Sariputra, King Asoka had erected a Stupa at the spot where he was cremated.

We get a comprehensive account of Nalanda university from Hieun Tsang the brilliant Chinese scholar who came there for his studies during the reign of King Harsha-Siladitya. Back in China he wrote this

famed "Ta - Tang - Si - Yu - Ki" Buddhist Travels in the western world. This has been translated into English by Samuel Beal a British scholar who was once the ambassador to Peking, China. It has been called the treasure house of accurate information by European Archaeologists. They found the information given there invaluable for them to locate the sacred shrines of the Buddhist in India. Indians and their scholars were hopelessly ignorant of these places and could do nothing to help the archaeologists. I - Tsing (675-685) was another Chinese monk who came to India and studied at Nalanda. He too like Hiuen Tsang has left an account of his travels. In this he gives an account of Nalanda and his stay there. At the time of Fa-Hion's visit it was an ordinary Buddhist monastery. Lama Taranata the Tibetan historian also gives an account of Nalanda in his works. It appears that King Kumara Gupta (AC 415-455) built the first monastery at Nalanda. It was a seminary for training Buddhist monks. Its site was not too far nor too close to the city. Hence it was selected as an ideal centre for the pursuit of Buddhist studies by monks. Nalanda University was an expansion and extension of this seminary. King Buddha Gupta (AC 455-467) Jatagatha Gupta (AC 467-500) Baladitya (500-525) and Vijra (525) made additions and expansions to the buildings. King Baladitya made a shrine-room a house of worship which was 300 feet high. His son Vijra built the fifth monastery. King Harsha Siladitya built the sixth monastery and surrounded the university buildings with 9' high wall. In the 10th century when Hieun Tsang entered the university, there were 10,000 resident students. They came from all parts of India and foreign lands. It was India's leading University. Its chancellorship was reserved for India's foremost Buddhist scholar when Hieun-Tsang visited Nalanda Silabhadra Maha Thera held the post. At that time there were 10,000 students, 1510 teachers, and about 1,500 workers at Nalanda. Students from foreign lands such as Tibet, China, Japan, Korea, Sumatra, Java and Sri Lanka were found there. Admission to Nalanda was by oral examination. This was done by a professor at the entrance hall. He was called Dvara Pandita. Proficiency in Sanskrit was necessary, as it was the medium of instruction. All Chinese monks going to India for higher studies in Buddhism had to go to Java and brush up their Sanskrit. Hieum Tsang reports that of the foreign students only 20% managed to pass the stiff examinations. Of the Indian students only 30% managed to pass and gain admission. Therefore the standards required were high. Casts, creed and nationality were no barriers in keeping with the Buddhist spirit. There were no external students at the university. Nalanda was maintained by the revenue from seven villages which were granted by the king. The study of Mahayana was compulsory for Buddhists. One could also study the doctrines of 18 other Buddhist sects. One could also study secular subjects like science, medicine, astrology, fine-arts, literature etc. The six systems of Hindu philosophy were also taught. One could study Hinayana forms of Buddhism. This included the Theravada commerce; administration and astronomy were also taught. The observatory of the university was situated in a very tall building. Lectures, debates and discussions were part of the educational curriculum. Hieun Tsang states that 100 lectures were delivered there every day. The discipline was exemplary. Nalanda University occupied an area of 30 acres. There were three large libraries bearing the names Ratna-Sagara, Ratna-Nidi and Ratna-Ranjana. One of these was nine storeys high. Nalanda was graced by the presence of India's most brilliant Buddhist luminaries. Some of them were Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Dharmapala, Silabhadra, Santarakshita, Kamalaseela, Bhaviveka, Dignaga, Dharmakeerty etc. The works they left behind are mostly available 14 Tibetan and Chinese translations. The originals perished when Muslim invaders under Bhaktiar Khilji set fire to Nalanda and beheaded the monks (AD 1037). Prior to that Nalanda flourished for a thousand years, a lighthouse of wisdom and learning, the first of its kind in the world. Bhaktiar Khilji the invader of Magadha set fire to Nalanda when the monks were about to have their meals. This is revealed in the archaeological remains which show food abandoned in a great hurry. Charred rice from the granaries also tell this sorry tale. Nalanda's ruins and excavations are preserved in a Museum by the Indian government. On 19.11.58 the President of India, Rajendra Prasad inaugurated the Nava Nalanda Viharaya at a site close to the ancient university. Master of the Tripitaka Ven. Jagadish Kashyap was appointed head of the institution on 12. 01. 1957 the Dalai Lama handed over the ashes of Nalanda's famed alumni - Hieun Tsang to the Indian government, headed by Pandit Nehru. The Chinese government donated five lakhs of rupees for a mausoleum which enshrines these relics. The Muslims carried the university idea to the West, and after that universities came up in the western - world.

Vickramasila is said to have been situated on the banks of the Ganges near the northern part of Magadha. Although its site was undiscovered, the Indian newspaper 'Searchlight' of 25.4.80 carried an account of the discovery of the ruins of Vickramsila by Dr. B. S. Varma, Superintending Archeologist in charge of the discovery of the ruins of the Vickramsila Excavation Project.

According to this Vickramasila was situated at Antichak Village, Kahalagon, Bagalpur District. Vickramasila was said to be a sister institution of Nalanda and was said to have been founded by a monk called Kamapala, under the patronage of King Dharmapala. (AC 770-810). The King granted land-endowments for its upkeep later King Yasapala also patronised the institutions by liberal land endowments. Under the Pala Kings Vickramasila rose to 9 positions when it rivalled Nalanda and bade well to outshine it. In the centre of the university was the main lecture-hall. It was called 'Vidyagriha'. There were six entrances to this building and near each entrance was a monastery for resident monks about 150 teachers were accommodated in each monastery. Like Nalanda Vickramasila was also surrounded by a high-wall. There were six 'Dvara Panditas' i.e Professors who examined candidates seeking admission. Here too high standards were maintained. 108 Professors were engaged in teaching and administrative duties. The curriculum of studies was similar to that of Nalanda. Here preference was given to the Tantric form of Buddhism.

Dipankara Sri Gnana who is also known as Atisha (AC 960-1055) was the more-famous of the scholars of Vickramasila. His fame spread far and wide as the propagator of Buddhism in Tibet Tibetans hold his name in the highest veneration. When he was at Vickramasila he was invited to teach and propagate Buddhism in Tibet. He postponed it for some time till he completed his work at Vickramasila and then undertook the task. Vickramasila achieved its high water mark of prosperity and fame under him. Sri Gnana's period was the golden era of Vickramasila. In 1038 Sri Gnana left Vickramasila for Tibet to organise Buddhist studies in that country. Vickramasila was managed by a staff of Professors. They constituted the Board of Education, Board of Administration, Board of Discipline and the Board in charge of entrance examinations. Inaugurated in about 800 A.C. it graced the land until it was demolished by the Muslim invaders.

Odantapuri

Odantapuri was considered the second oldest of India's universities. This was situated in Maghada, about 6 miles away from Nalanda. Acharya Sri Ganga of Vickramasila had been a student here. Later he joined Odantapuri King Gopala (660-705) was the patron who helped to found this university. According to the Tibetan records there were about 12,000 students at Odantapuri. Our knowledge of this seat of learning is obscure, and we are not in a position to give more details. This too perished at the hands of the Muslim invaders. It is said they mistook the universities with their high walls for fortresses. They thought the Buddhist monks were "Shaven headed Brahmins" who were idolaters.

Somapura

Somapura was situated in East Pakistan. King Devapala (AC 810-850) is said to have erected the Dharmapala-Vihara at Somapura. The ruins of these buildings cover an area of about 1 square mile. There was a large gate and the buildings were surrounded by a high-wall. There were about 177 cells for monks in addition to the shrines and image houses. A common refectory and a kitchen are among the ruins, Remains of three -strayed buildings are to be seen. This university flourished for about 750 years before it was abandoned after the Muslim invasion.

Jagaddala

King Ramapala (1077-1129) is said to be the founder of this University. Jagaddala University was the largest construction works undertaken by the Pala Kings. This was a centre for the study and dissemination of Tantric Buddhism. It followed the methods, practices, and traditions of Nalanda. According to Tibetan works many books were translated to the Tibetan language at Jagaddala. The Buddhist teacher Sakya Sri Bhadra, seeing that Nalanda, Vickramasila, and Odantapuri were in ruins after the Muslim invasion, entered Jagaddala for his studies. It is said that his pupil Danaseela translated ten books to Tibetan Sakya Sri Bhadra was responsible for the propagation of Tantric Buddhism in Tibet. He lived for seven years at Jagaddala. In 1027 the Muslim invaders sack and destroyed Jagaddala.

Vallabhi

Vallabhi University achieved as much fame as Nalanda. The Maitraka kings who ruled Western India constructed a monastery at Vallabhi their capital. While Nalanda was the centre for Mahayana Buddhism, Vallabhi achieved fame as the centre for Hinayana Buddhism. The Maitraka kings spent lavishly to maintain their university. They gave every encouragement and assistance to Buddhist studies at this institution. In the 7th century Vallabhi was as prosperous and famous as Nalanda. Hieum Tsang visited Vallabhi, and reported in his "Ta-Tang-Si-Yu-Ki" as follows:

- "The population of Vallabhi is very large. The country is rich and prosperous. There are over a hundred millionaire families there. Imported luxury goods are seen in this city. There are about 100 monasteries with about 6,000 Buddhist monks. Most of them belong to the Sammitiya Sect. There are also many

Hindu temples and a large Hindu population in this part of the country. The Buddha had visited this land during his ministry. There are stupas erected by King Asoka to mark the spots hallowed by the Buddha's visit."

There are about 100 shrines and about 6,000 resident monks studying at Vallabhi. They do not believe that Abhidharma was the teaching of the Buddha. They believed in the Antarabhava doctrine and were exponents of Puggalavada a traditions that disregard Abhidharma teachings that are inconsistent with the Sutra-Teachings.

I –Tsing's record

I-Tsing records that foreign students were found at Vallabhi. They come from many lands far and near from these facts we know that like Nalanda-Vallabhi was internationally recognised. There was a large library. This was maintained by a fund established by the King. An inscription put up by King Guhasena confirms this. Precedence was given to Sammitiya doctrines at this University. The course of studies included Comparative Religion. The Six systems of Hindu Philosophy and various other schools of Buddhism, Politics, Law, Agriculture and Economics also formed a part of the curriculum.

I-Tsing records that the graduates of Vallabhi, displayed their skill in the presence of the royalty, nobbles, and other eminent people. The Elders Gunamoti and Sthiramatic were Nalanda's alumni and were teaching there for a time. They are said to be the founders of Vallabhi. As the founders came from Nalanda, Vallabhi followed the Nalanda pattern in most of its activities. It flourished from 475 to 1200 A.C. It met the same fate as other Universities at the hands of the Muslim invaders.

Thus it would be seen that as long as Buddhism was a power to reckon with in India, it rendered yeomen service in the field of learning and culture. This is how it should be in a religion that teaches that ignorance is the worst enemy of Man and the cause of all his sufferings while knowledge (Pragnya) is his highest asset. Pragnya wins all that is good in this world, and finally brings him the highest happiness, mundane as well as supra-mundane.

When the Portuguese conquered the Kotte Kingdom there were flourishing Buddhist Seminaries (Pirivenas) at Totagamauwa, Keragala, and Wattala. The Sandesa poems of the period give glowing descriptions of them and their rectors. They were all razed to the ground "leaving not one stone upon another" according to Portuguese writers of the period. Quyroz mentions the demolition of the Wattala Vijayabahu Pirivena and the erection of the R. C. Church on it's land. Then followed an age of ignorance, decay and corruption for some 200 years. Finally during the reign of King Kirti Sri Rajasinha, Ven. Weliwita Saranankara started his Buddhist revival opening his Seminary at Niyamakanda, Udunnwara. His papillary successors opened the Vidyoda and Vidyalankara Pirivenas in Colombo. These Seminaries were upgraded and converted to secular Universities by the S.L.F.P. Government.



World Peace

What humanity need today is peace in the world for, as we know, the situation in all parts of the world is very chaotic. If we read the newspapers, listen to the radio or watch the news on television, most of the things we read, hear and see contain violence, cruelty, violation of human rights and justice. Even in countries where Buddhism is the main religion or state religion, such problems are experienced even though the Buddha's main teachings are development of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity within human society. The Buddha taught that men become noble by various conduct and charitable deeds and become outcasts only by misconduct and miserliness, not by birth. Thus Buddhism offers rights, responsibilities, justice and dignity to human society. It is universally applicable and offers freedom of thought and allows tolerance and respect towards others. Most of the world's religious teach the people to develop morality, love and respect for others; however; whatever we witness in this world indicate that we are moving in the wrong direction. The human ethic of morality is being ignored everywhere. It is indeed, a rarity for a person to be able to live with dignity and be treated justly. Now we have to find out why things are happening like this and how this situation has come about. This is the one point we have to discuss in detail.

If we observe Buddhist countries, morality and an ethical way of life is fast disappearing; the human qualities of righteousness, truth and justice are very hard to find. According to the Buddha, the

main cause of these problems is in the human mind. Whatever violence, cruelty and hatred we experience in our life is purely the result of the untamed condition of our mind.

“There is no fire like lust, no grip like hate; no net like delusion, no river like craving” and *“If one speaks or acts with an impure mind, then suffering follows”* said the Buddha.

If we do not tame our mind no one can help us to live a happy and peaceful life. As the Buddha told us, it is a well directed mind that elevates one, not the endeavours of a mother, father or relative, no matter how sincere they may be. If we study the conduct of Buddhist communities we find that the majority of people practice Buddhist traditions alongside cultural influences involving superstitions or particular rites and rituals. Very few members of the community actually understand and practice what the Buddha really taught and wanted us to be. The Buddha always wants us to follow his teachings honestly not just through blind devotion to him. Therefore, everyone in Theravada Buddhism has to take three refuges with the five basic precepts on every occasion in their day to day life.

The three refuges are: *Buddham saranam gacchami, I go to the Buddha as my refuge;*
Dhammam saranam gacchami, I go to the teaching as my refuge;
Sangham saranam gacchami, I go to the noble order as my refuge.

We regard the Buddha as a great physician who can diagnose our disease or illness. The Buddha said there are two kind of diseases, physical and mental. There are very few people who are free from physical disease for one week or one year, or even hundred years, just as there is no one free from mental disease even for one moment. Disease here means dis-ease. If something happens in our body or mind then we feel a dis-ease, just like the person whose mind is overwhelmed with anger, desire, delusion or jealousy etc. then his or her mind is not at ease, it is diseased.

We are all human beings suffering every moment, every day with these kinds of diseases; therefore, we must take refuge in the Buddha. The Buddha gave us the Dhamma as medicine i.e. Sila-morality, Samadhi-concentration or control of the mind and Pañña-wisdom or purification of the mind. If we do not use the Dhamma as our way of life, we will never become free from the the round of suffering; just as if the doctor gives as a medicine and we don't use it, but keep it in the shrine room as precious stone and pray over it many times a day. Will our disease be cured? If we don't apply the three teachings of the Buddha, how can we cure disease? In fact, we can't be called Buddhist as well. When we take refuge in the Noble Order, it means we are following their path. Anyone, whether man or woman, ordained monk or laity, becomes a Noble One through application of the teachings of morality, concentration and wisdom.

Thus when we apply the teachings in daily life, only then are truly taking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha can we become Buddhist. Buddhism is not a religion of great but religion of practice, *“ you should work for your own liberation, for the tathagatas only show the way”* says the Buddha. If one does not apply the teachings in day to day life, even if one says *Buddham saranam gacchami, Dhammam sarnam gacchmi and Sangham saranam gacchami* a hundred times in a day one is not a Buddhist.

Sila-morality, the foundation of training, includes all the virtues of the honest respectable person; it has been identified with virtues in general, and purification of the body, speech and mind by refraining as five moral precepts (*pañcasial*) which constitute the layman's definitive code of practical ethics. Man is a social being and develops his character in relation to the society to which he belongs, so whatever he does leaves its impression not only on himself but also on that society. The practice of the moral precepts must, therefore, also leave their impression. The five fundamental moral precepts are:

1. Abstaining from the harming or taking of life.
2. Abstaining from taking what is not freely given.
3. Abstaining from misusing the senses or sexual misconduct.
4. Abstaining from false speech.
5. Abstaining from taking intoxicating drinks or drugs.

The moral conduct or precepts are built on the vast conception of loving-kindness and universal compassion. They will establish friendliness and the values of life not only between men but also with all living beings. Samadhi-concentration is purity of the mind (*citta-visuddhi*). Through the practice of Moral conduct or precepts are built on the vast conception of loving-kindness and compassion. Concentration one can maintain a good standard of morality. It is a very essential practice to discipline one's own mind. Whatever crime, violence or cruelty happens in the world is because of an untrained of untamed mind. So the practice of concentration is very important to live harmoniously in society.

Pañña-wisdom is the right understanding of life being impermanent, suffering and the absence of a soul or ego. Through wisdom one can uproot all traces of impurities which are latent in the mind as mental dispositions. It, therefore, is total purification of the mind. When the mind is pure and free from ignorance, then one experiences the ultimate peace, the bliss of Nibbana and release the truth within.

Nowadays we are talking a lot about loving-kindness and compassion, but we are not putting them into practice. As a result, national morality has declined to its lowest and it would be unfair to blame any individual person or group, we all have to accept our own responsibilities. The main cause of these problems is the human mind; the impure or wicked mind is the creator of all the worlds crimes, violence and undesirable situations. So it is necessary for us to practice the Buddha's main teachings of not harming any living being, doing good and purifying our minds through the practice of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity.

It is very common in all schools of Buddhism that the members of the order are engaged in material development (building pagodas, temples and the membership) but not in teaching what the people need, yet they teach what people want to hear. It would be wrong to judge whether Buddhism is developing or not based on material growth. The judgment must be based on the application of the Buddhist principles.

To revive the Buddhist heritage in Buddhist countries the first essential action is to have discussions on the practice of morality and find the way by which we are going to switch the emphasis now placed on traditional customs, rites and rituals to the living of the Dhamma in everyday life. In Theravada Buddhism, the recorded teachings of the Buddha in the Pali language and their translations are invaluable; most monks understand the meaning of what the Buddha taught for human beings to experience happiness and peace of mind, but the majority of monks those who know the Dhamma don't encourage the people to apply it. In Mahayana Buddhism, as we understand, there are many profound teachings of the Buddha translated into Chinese. It will be of great benefit for many if members of the Sangha endeavour to understand them, explain them in modern languages and encourage lay people to follow them.

If everyone in a country follows Buddhist principles then it would be impossible for any violence, cruelty or injustice to occur. Some may say that the main causes of these problems are political, economic or social structures, but for me the political, economic and social factors are not the primary causes. If the majority of people practice Buddhist principles then politicians and rulers will emerge from that society and will in turn exercise such qualities in government and their own social lives. Therefore, I would like to say that all of these problems are based in the human mind. The Buddha advised us not to do any evil but rather to do good for humanity and purify our minds. If many people in the world follow this advice honestly, we can hope for everlasting peace and happiness in the world.

It is very important to preserve and to rebuild the Buddhist heritage as we witness the Buddhist principles declining every day where Buddhism has a stronghold. One of many reasons is the way we practise Buddhism which influences our own culture and traditions. What I mean is we don't practise the real teachings of the Buddha, rather our own culture. For example, when we teach Buddhism in the West, we don't teach our particular culture and traditions but explain what the Buddha really taught for mankind. If we teach, for instance, Theravada Buddhism with emphasis only what the Buddha said in the Pali canon; without Burmese, Thai or Sri Lanka culture and traditions; then Westerners can understand and accept this very easily. In the same way if we teach Mahayana Buddhism according to Mahayana Sutras they will be able to understand and accept things without relating to a particular culture and traditions. Therefore, we find there are many people in the West who are committed to Buddhist teachings and follow them in practice in their daily life without any problems or difficulties.

If we are able to distinguish between our culture and Buddhism the people in our countries will be able to understand both distinctly. They will preserve their own culture and traditions and at the same time apply the main principles of Buddhism in their day to day lives. The young generation will then understand Buddhist principles without any questions. To promote this we need to take action as soon as possible, to publish proper literature and, where possible, produce appropriate radio and television programs. Simultaneously, training schemes need to be set up to train those who can work in the field in their respective countries. I hope this is the way we can preserve our noble heritage and promote the teachings of the Buddha for the future generation. We can then find everlasting peace within not only our community but throughout the world.

May you all be happy and peaceful. May you attain the peace and bliss of Nibbana within.

DR REWATA DHAMMA

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