

Lotus Review



**Dhamma Hall
Souvenir Issue**

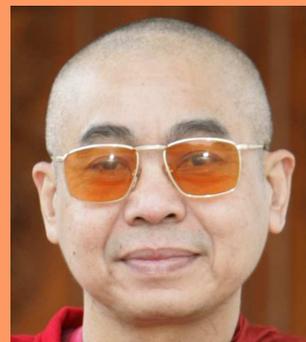
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VENERABLE DR. REWATA DHAMMA 12 Dec. 1929 - 28 May 2004

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Birmingham Buddhist Vihara and
Dhammatalaka Peace Pagaoda
29/31 Osler Street,
Ladywood,
Birmingham B16 9EU
0121 454 6591
e-mail: office@bbvt.org.uk
website: www.birminghambuddhistvihara.org
Charity No. 513368

Spiritual Director



Dr Ottara Nyana



U Ratthapala



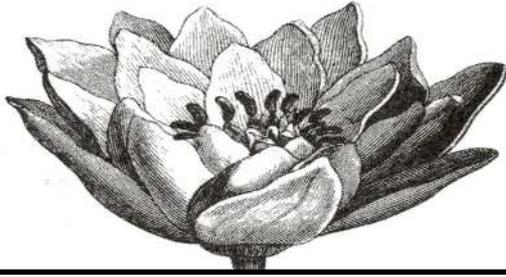
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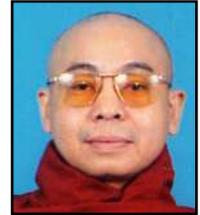
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The Lay Review and Newsletter of the
Birmingham Buddhist Vihara

SUMMER 2007

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Message from the Spiritual Director



On Sunday, 29th July 2007, Sayadaw Dr. Rewata Dhamma's disciples and supporters will celebrate the 9th anniversary of the Dhammatalaka Peace Pagoda, the third anniversary of his passing away and the opening ceremony of the Rewata Dhamma Teaching Hall, which will include the veneration of Sayadaw's statue.

The opening of the teaching hall is marked by four events. Firstly, we are publishing this special Lotus; secondly, we have published Sayadaw's last paper (*Process of Consciousness and Matter*); thirdly, I have arranged for the shipment of various items from Myanmar (Sayadaw's statue, his biography, teak arts and reference books); and, finally, the establishment of the Buddhist Academy Partnership with Birmingham University.

During the Buddhist Conference held in the Peace Pagoda on 26th November 2005, Dr. Martin Stringer (Head of Department of Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham) said that the Department and Vihara hoped to:

- ◆ Work towards establishing a Buddhist Academy.
- ◆ Collaborate in the production of joint-conferences in Buddhist Studies.
- ◆ Construct 'university-level' courses.
- ◆ Build a partnership that will generate a greater interest in Buddhist Studies, perhaps by creating a lectureship or research post in Buddhist Studies.

Furthermore, we intend to run Diploma courses, children's courses and long term meditation retreats in the new dhamma hall.

During the three years 2004 to 2007, we have successfully completed various deeds to fulfil Sayadaw's aims and to honour him:

- 1) The opening of a Middle School in his village, Thamangone (12th December 2005).
- 2) The restoration of the Dhammatalaka Peace Pagoda to its former glory (July 2006).
- 3) The opening of the Rewata Dhamma Teaching Hall (2007).
- 4) The commissioning and installation of Sayadaw's bronze statue.

Further to these achievements the publications during this time have been:

- ◆ A compilation of his essays and talks entitled *The Buddha's Prescription* (Triple Gem Publications, USA), published for the 7th Peace Pagoda Anniversary (22nd July 2005).
- ◆ Sayadaw's Biography (January 2007).
- ◆ Sayadaw's last paper entitled *Process of Consciousness and Matter*, Triple Gem Publications (anticipated July 2007).
- ◆ Three special LOTUS magazines (2005/06/07).
- ◆ *Guide to Peace Pagoda*, Yann Lovelock

In conclusion, I would like to thank all of our supporters, devotees and dhamma friends for supporting the Dhamma Hall construction, Sayadaw's other dhamma projects and book publishing. I would like to acknowledge and thank Robert Black for all his hard work on this issue of Lotus as well as for the taking of photo records, and Linda Tomlinson for her contribution. Finally, I would like to thank the City Council for their support and John Beard without whose effort and enthusiasm I do not believe we would have completed the building of our dhamma hall for a very long time.

Ven. Dr. Ottara Nyana
Birmingham Buddhist Vihara
1st July 2007



"When one studies Buddhism one studies oneself; when one studies oneself one forgets oneself; when one forgets oneself one is enlightened by everything and this very enlightenment breaks the bond of clinging to both body and mind not only for oneself but for all beings as well."

Great Master Dogen

When Ven. Dr. Rewata Dhamma first arrived in Birmingham who would have imagined that we would have a pagoda, or that a vihara would be established for Buddhist monks to live in and teach the dhamma. Buddha relics which he brought to Birmingham now rest in the pagoda spire and it was to our Pagoda that the United Nations Buddha relics were brought for veneration. Not many people know how much he was called upon to be present as the relics toured the world. So many invitations flooded in. Sayadaw was a monk of great stature on the world stage and we are lucky to have had him in our midst.

Now, under the direction of Dr Ottara Nyana, we have the culmination of his dream: a Dhamma Hall where Buddhism will be made available to a wider audience. Study of the Buddha's teaching is ideal in such an appropriate and inspiring setting and courses and classes will be held in association with city educational establishments.

All of this is situated alongside the reservoir and next to the sea cadet ship Vernon where I practised and trained in sea rangers during World War II. Now I am studying and practising Buddhism just next door.

About six or seven months ago I joined Ven. Ottara Nyana's class studying the Dhammapada. Although I already had no fewer than five translations of this, these only presented the verses. It was only after studying with Dr Ottara Nyana, using the Sitagu International Buddhist Academy translation, that these stories of everyday life and experience, that had caused the Buddha to utter each verse (423 in all), really came alive.

The most important thing about Dr Rewata Dhamma was his ecumenical outlook. The fact that our Zen Group meets at the vihara bears this out and we are more than grateful to have a great place to practise our meditation. Bhante dreamed of having a Tibetan vihara, a Zen vihara and an Old People's Home on the site. Sadly these cannot be accommodated, but we do have the Dhamma Hall which will be of importance to us all.

I am happy to say that Dr Ottara Nyana continues the spirit and outlook of our Birmingham Sayadaw. The well attended ceremony to honour the Buddha's birthday and the famous standing rupa at the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery this year demonstrates this. Each different School did their own chanting. Starting in a small way we have been doing this for some years now but this year was exceptional. The mix of traditions made the occasion a truly joyful, colourful and devotional event. Thanks are due to the West Midlands Buddhist Council.

As many of you know, I am a Zen trainee. Dogen Roshi, or Great Master Dogen, brought Soto Zen from China to Japan in the eleven hundreds. In his Zazen rules he states:

"The means of training are thousandfold but pure Zazen (meditation) must be done"

I was so reminded of this on the Buddha's birthday and it has always been this way. Long may it be so and may all beings be well and happy.

Vajira



PHOTOGRAPHER: ROBERT BLACK

Dr Rewata Dhamma
1929 - 2004

Born in Myanmar in 1929, Ven. Rewata Dhamma studied under several eminent scholar monks from a young age. After completing higher studies, he was given a state scholarship in 1956 to study Hindi and Sanskrit in India. He went on to study Indian philosophy and Mahayana Buddhism, gaining his Ph.D. from Varanasi University in 1967. He edited and published the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* with its commentary in 1965 and a Hindi translation of this, with his own commentary in Hindi, in 1967. For the latter he received the Kalidasa Prize from the Hindi Academy for one of the outstanding books of the year and it still remains a university textbook in India.

In 1975 he was invited to England, where he eventually set up the West Midlands Buddhist Centre, finally to become the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara. From this base he travelled to Europe, as well as the U.S.A., Mexico and Brazil, teaching Buddhism and leading Insight Meditation retreats in various centres and universities. He was also highly regarded in Asia and served on a number of commissions and interna-

tional Buddhist bodies. In 2000 the Government of Myanmar awarded him the prestigious title of Aggamahapandita.

In 1998 Sayadaw realised his dream of housing the Buddha relics, formerly belonging to the Myanmar royal family, in the Dhammatataka Peace Pagoda, which opened the same year. Subsequently he opened the Sangharama Monastery on the same site and was planning to build a Buddhist academy prior to his death on 26 May, 2004.

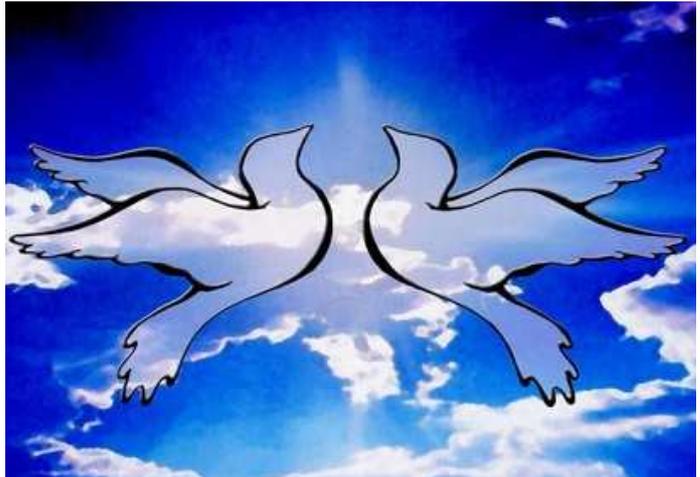
Other books by Dr Rewata Dhamma include *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma* (with Bhikkhu Bodhi, Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka, 1993); *The First Discourse of the Buddha* (Wisdom Publications, USA, 1997); *The Buddha and His Disciples* (Dhammatataka Publications, UK, 2001); *Emptying the Rose-Apple Seat* (Triple Gem Publications, USA, 2003) and *The Buddha's Prescription* (Triple Gem Publications, USA, 2005).

Venerable Dr. Rewata Dhamma passed away peacefully in his sleep in the early morning of 26th May 2004. ❖



World Peace

DR REWATA DHAMMA



What humanity needs 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 injustice. 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 virtuous 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 religions teach the people to develop morality, love and respect for others; however, whatever we witness in this world indicates 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 the 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 kinds of diseases, physical and mental. There are very few people who are free from physical disease for one week or one year, or even a 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 round of suffering; just as if the doctor gives us a medicine and we don't use it, but keep it in the shrine room as a 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 cannot 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 we truly taking refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha can we become Buddhist. Buddhism is not a religion of grace but a 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 saranam gacchami* 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 from unwholesome actions. It is usually understood as five moral precepts (*pañcasila*) 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 value 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
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universal
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 or 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 releases 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 world's 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 judgement 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 and 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 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 question. 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 future generations. 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. ❖

Buddhism and Burma

(Myanmar)

D. Guha

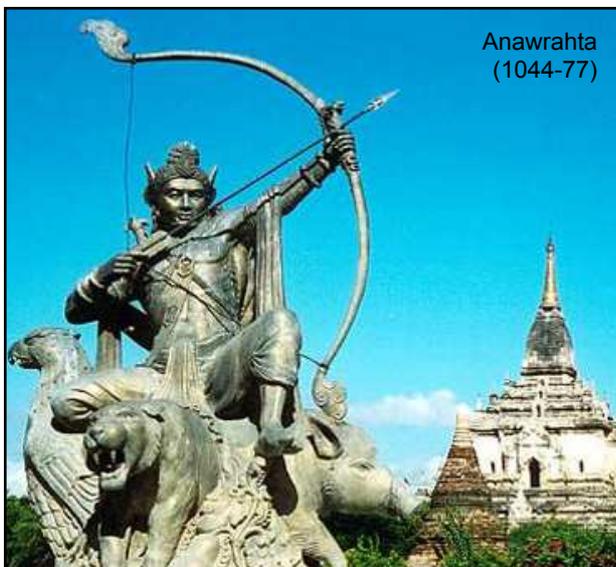
Buddhism was officially adopted by the Burmans, the major racial unit of Burma, as early as the eleventh century. Indigenous tradition, however, takes back this introduction even to the lifetime of Buddha when, so it is said, the faith came to this country through the good offices of two Mon merchants, Tapussa and Bhallika. The Buddha, so says the tradition, graced them with some hair of his head which they carried and enshrined on the top of the Singuttara hill, at the place where now stands the famous Shwedagon. This pagoda, however, is not the only shrine of which Burma can boast. There are innumerable shrines scattered all over the country, the maximum number being clustered within a sixteen square mile area at Pagan, the nerve centre of ancient Burmese Buddhist culture.

Leaving aside the tradition, whose authenticity is yet to be proved, it can be said with some definiteness that Buddhism, particularly its Theravada form, was implanted at Pagan for the first time as early as the eleventh century by the Burmese monarch Anawrahta (1044-77). Urged by his spiritual adviser

Shin Arahan, the king requested the Mon monarch Manuhal of Suvannabhumi (identified with Taikkala in the Bilin township of the Thaton district) to kindly send him a set of the Pali Buddhist scriptures. Unfortunately the request was rudely turned down whereupon Anawrahta waged a fierce war against the Mon king, humbled him, ransacked his capital and brought back to Pagan some thirty huge sets of the Pali scriptures. Fitting honour was extended to the scriptures which were housed with all solemnity at Pagan in a library specially built for the purpose. Obsessed as they were by the faith of the Aris and other indigenous religious rites and practices, the people envisaged a new order of life and with this great acquisition opened a new chapter in the religious life of the people.

Incidentally, it is worth recalling that according to the Mahavamsa, a Pali chronicle of the fifth century Ceylon, Buddhism reached Suvannabhumi as early as the third century before Christ when emperor Asoka sent two Buddhist monks there, Sona and Uttara, to preach the teachings of the Master. Though it is somewhat difficult to determine the genuineness of this statement, the whole affair does not appear to be just a figment of imagination. It should further be mentioned that researches in archaeology have proved beyond doubt that as early as the sixth century, if not the fifth, of the Christian era, Sanskrit Buddhism had found a fair stronghold at Sriksetra, ancient Prome, which was then the cradle of the Pyu culture.

After Anawrahta had brought over the Pali scriptures to Pagan its study, coupled with the pressure put forth by Shin Arahan, encouraged the king to make Theravada Buddhism the religion of the State. His enthusiasm ushered in an era of religious reform. Pagodas were built, a new programme of education



Anawrahta
(1044-77)

was adopted, and the cause of culture was strongly encouraged and advocated. After the death of Anawrahta, his son Kyanzittha (1084-1113) followed his father's programme of reform. According to the Shwesandaw inscription of the year 1093 he sent a mission to India to restore the temple at Buddhagaya, where Gautama had attained Enlightenment, an act which became the first official attempt on the part of a Burmese king at establishing cultural contact with India. Shin Araham continued to be spiritual adviser to the king and it was to him, more than to anybody else, that Burma owes the establishment of Theravada Buddhism, and the era of pagoda building which he inaugurated was the most creative age in Burmese religious and cultural history. It should be mentioned here that if Anawrahta and his successors were not able, or did not care, to exterminate all the other existing cults, they gradually weakened them by unwavering patronage to the Theravada. Having command over the seagirt coast of Burma, they were able to keep in touch with the reigning Buddhist monarchs of Ceylon, to check their Pali Texts with those of the latter and to receive and give help in matters religious.

the monarch brought it about. Schisms within the Samgha were healed, and once again the ideal of a unified church, with the king as the guardian, was attained. With these reforms Burma entered a new chapter in the history of Buddhism. Never again was the country so seriously concerned about its religious orthodoxy and Buddhism became self-sufficient.

The early kings of the Toungoo dynasty (1531-1752) were too busy with political conquests to give much attention to the internal organization of the Samgha. As conquerors they also became missionaries and the annals shine forth the name of at least one king, that of Bayinnaung (1551-81), who stopped animal sacrifice in the Shan States and distributed scriptures amongst the people.

The most noteworthy achievements of the Naungyan dynasty, which ruled in the latter half of the Toungoo period, consisted in the steps taken by its kings towards delimitation of religious lands and the appointment of a supreme civil officer for the purpose.

Coming to the Alaungpaya dynasty, the first point that attracts attention is a bitter controversy amongst the monks during the time of King Alaungpaya (1753-60) and his four immediate successors, with reference to the proper way of wearing the monastic robe: whether it should cover both the shoulders or leave the right one exposed. After a long struggle which continued for more than a century and in which much precious human blood was shed, at long last the controversy came to an end during the time of King Bodawpaya (1782-1819) with the verdict in favour of those insisting on covering both shoulders.

Bodawpaya was a great builder. During his reign scores of pagodas rose. An ardent collector of books he had many treatises, particularly those written in Sanskrit, brought from India for the royal library, encouraged their study and even got a number of them translated into Burmese. His reign too saw great progress in the pursuit of secular knowledge, even amongst the members of the Samgha. Subjects like astronomy and astrology, massage and medicine, divination and soothsaying, archery and swordsmanship, boxing and wrestling, arts and crafts, music and dancing attracted the attention of both householders and members of the Samgha. At first the king tolerated this, but when he



Photographer: Robert Black

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, Pagan fell before the onrush of the invading Tartars, and Burma was left in a state of prolonged anarchy and confusion. Buddhism naturally shared in the general decline. Religion languished, the Samgha split up into sects, and though pagodas were built, none of them could rival even the lesser temples of Pagan. This state of confusion continued till the second half of the fifteenth century when Dhammazedi (1472-92) ascended the throne and a somewhat stable kingdom was set up. Reform in the Samgha was necessary and

found the monks getting more and more engrossed with the study and practice of the secular subjects, he foresaw danger for the future and to avert this took stern measures to put the Samgha in order. His mission was only partly successful, as there are references to the pursuit of secular knowledge by monks during the time of King Pagan (1846-52), even during that of King Mindon (1852-78), though secretly.

Bagyidaw (1819-37), Tharawaddy (1837-46) and Pagan, all Bodawapaya's successors, were keen enthusiasts who contributed immensely to the welfare of the Samgha. But the real glorious period of the Burmese Buddhist ecclesiastical life is marked by the reign of the great King Mindon, the son and successor of King Pagan. With him we enter an era of peace, progress and prosperity for the religion. The period of his rule was indeed a golden age for the Samgha which enjoyed the sincere and vigorous patronage of the King. He infused new vigour into the order by taking pronouncedly keen interest in all its affairs. Religious studies were pursued by the monks with vigour and zeal, and some of the best pieces of Burmese Buddhist tracts were composed during this period. Enthusiasm even penetrated among the common people who started vying with one another in observing the precepts of the Master. It was Mindon's encouragement and leadership that gave new life to Burma which had not yet been much affected by the impact of Christianity imported by her British conquerors. It was under his patronage that the Fifth Buddhist Council was held at Mandalay, the last centre of Burmese monarchy, and the text adopted in the Council was incised on as many as 729 stone slabs. It is again this text which has formed the basis of the revision work of the Three Pitakas done under the auspices of the Sixth Buddhist Council held in Rangoon during 1954-56.

A few words about the effects of the impact of Theravada Buddhism on Burmese life and culture will possibly not be out of place.

With the advent of Buddhism, Burma underwent major changes in various phases of her life. Formerly a Burman was either an animist or a votary of traditional gods. But when Buddhism presented a new form of religion, Burma discarded her old creed and embraced it. In the process of adopting the new faith, she gradually gave up the old gods and took up the Theravada. The force of the new faith was so great that the Nat spirits, the powerful gods of primitive

beliefs, became gradually absorbed by the new faith.

Buddhism brought Burma into the arena of culture and civilisation. The people, who were much too imbued with rather primitive customs and habits, became steadily moulded into a progressive nation. It encouraged them in the pursuit of art and literature. It brought to them the power of systematic thinking which is possibly why the abstruse philosophy of the Abhidhamma and dry treatises like the Pali grammar could attract Burmese attention so much. All that is beautiful and good in Burmese life and society today is indeed a gift of Buddhism.

Buddhism has played an important role in unifying the peoples of Burma. Racial jealousy was rampant everywhere, but it was Buddhism that ultimately brought the discordant racial units into one unified whole under one religious banner. When the Samgha became well-established, we find its leaders taking an active part even in the political affairs of the country.

The social life of Burma became greatly benefited under the influence of Buddhism. This discipline refuses to recognise any grading in society based either on birth or on material possessions. Thus, Burma saw the formation of a society based on the theory of equality. Democracy is the very essence of Buddhism, and very few countries enjoy such democratic social life as Burma does today.

Buddhism has been instrumental in the educational progress of Burma. Since time immemorial the Buddhist monks took upon themselves the task of imparting primary education to the people without any bias for the social unit to which they might have belonged. The toil and labour put forth by the monks in this direction consequently raised the level of literacy amongst the Burmese and this high rate of literacy is still now the subject of envy of most people of the East.

To the growth of the Burmese language and literature too Buddhism made considerable contribution. Originally poor in ideas and vocabulary, the Burmese language became very much enriched and embellished by contact with Pali language and literature. We now find many classical works in Burmese which derive their materials directly or indirectly from the rich storehouse that Pali literature provides. It may be said with confidence that it was through Pali that Burma found her way to intellectual development. ❖

karma and tsunami

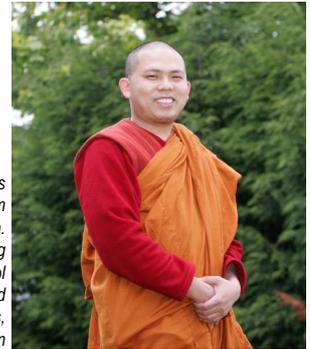
*An analysis of Kamma
in relation to the
Tsunami event of 2004*

by **NAGASENA BHIKKHU**

One of the most memorable experiences that shocked the entire world was the devastation of the 2004 Tsunami, which indiscriminately killed so many people and left so many unanswered questions behind it. The Buddhist concept of karma in relation to this event is not only a challenge to comprehend but also caused disputes between many scholars and individual believers. Following the Tsunami I collected evidence of people's views in order to support my understanding of how the concept of karma results in individuals developing different opinions about it. Viewing Dukkha as a related issue of Karma, Spiro (1974) wrote of three cognitive problems:

1. The very fact of suffering poses the simple intellectual puzzle of why it exists at all.
2. Its unequal distribution sets up a further puzzle of why some people suffer more or less than others.
3. Its seemingly inequitable distribution creates the intellectual moral problem known as the Jobian problem, i.e. why the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer.

The second of these, the unequal distribution of suffering, which was seen with the Tsunami event, has divided the opinions of many Buddhists. From Prof. Asanga's viewpoint (a Buddhist scholar), our perception of the Tsunami should not be taken for granted by mere reasoning; or as an apparent result of our past karma. He described the cause of the earthquake as taught in the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*



Nagasena Bhikkhu is resident at Birmingham Buddhist Vihara. He is currently working on his PhD at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

in which it is said that one should correctly look at the cause of natural law before any determined conclusion of past karma is taken into consideration. His opinion is also shared by an American Zen monk, Kusala Bhikshu, who believes that the textual explanations of the five *Niyama* are adequate for explaining why a Tsunami happens and how it should be perceived. According to their argument past Karma alone is not enough for determining the cause and effect of a Tsunami. He pointed out the five *Niyama*, all of which from his viewpoint should be taken into account in the understanding of a Tsunami. However, Ananda Guruge (a former Sri Lanka Ambassador to the USA), has a traditional view and, in the Los Angeles Times of 2005-JAN-08, related the present political problems in Sri Lanka to the consequences of the Tsunami when he wrote:

"The regions had been suffering bad karma, perhaps caused by oppression, unjust war,

¹The five *niyam*s are: *utuniyama* - the law of temperature, seasons and other physical events; *bijaniyama* - the law of plants or organisms; *karmaniyama* - the law of past and present karma; *cittaniyama* - the law of mind; and *dhammaniyama* - the law of cause and effect in general.

and other negative actions....believe that those who died were paying the price of accumulated demerits in this life or in previous reincarnations. Those who survived have been rewarded by their past behaviour, in this and previous lifetimes".

Being a politician, he looked at the event in conjunction with his political thoughts as he related the Tsunami to the present war in the country. However, this statement, especially belief in past karma, is brought into question by the Ven. S. Dhammika's explanation, who argues against the belief of past Karma being to blame by quoting from the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha says that the belief that what we experience is only a result of past Karma (*Sabbam tam pubbe katahetu*) is a wrong and false view (*miccha ditthi*). The Ven. K.S. Dhammananda further clarified the most interesting point of the misconception of Karma by quoting from the *Anguttarnikaya*, i.e. wrong view is:

1. The belief that everything is a result of acts in previous lives
2. The belief that all is the result of creation by a Supreme Ruler
3. The belief that everything arises without reason or cause.

What I have quoted above shows that different people's concept of karma contradict each other. How can these contradictory views be observed through phenomenology (experience rather than concept)? How much does a scholar understand a victim's consciousness when they are seeking help from religion? This is an issue for phenomenologists when their explanations are trying to be specific about a believer's consciousness. My phenomenological interest is to ask what happened in the consciousness of the sufferer and observer when this Tsunami took place, and how was it dealt with by spiritual practice during the event. The emotion they experienced as a result of the Tsunami was a universal phenomenon which can be observed when, through religious rituals, a result manifests that lets the performer's mind be satisfied by the overcoming of an immediate suffering.

The suffering of victims has been practically experienced, but how much they further experienced this suffering after their rituals is a big question. The experience of rituals and suffering may not be

contradictory but there is the question of how victims understand it from their religious perspective. For example, a man can understand the truth of suffering and thereby overcome it easily. This example is collected from the BBC News Interview in January 2005 with a Sri Lankan man who said that he can deal with the tsunami event by understanding and accepting the suffering. Accepting such suffering is one of the four noble truths described in the first sermon of the Buddha. Conversely, in the case of a Thai woman who was interviewed on TV, she expressed the view that there was only one way to relieve her emotions and that was by accepting her own past karma and that of her dead son. These two reports have shown different abilities in dealing with the same situation. Whether explaining the theory of Karma can effect the victim's emotions or not, what we as observers notice is that the emotions of a victim are more important at that point in time than that of their intellectual understanding.



However, our phenomenological problem is that even though understanding the Tsunami from the viewpoint of textual explanation may be logical to a detached observer (e.g. a scholar), the clinging and emotions that operate in the minds of the victims and their relatives cannot be appreciated. Therefore, the question of our empathy (scholar's empathy) when measuring the victim's consciousness and experiences can become a problematic issue. To answer such a problem I used quotes from Asanga and Dhammika above, but neither source was properly aware of the victim's consciousness when they observed the event. The observer's explanation might be of help to certain readers but not for all victims. If a scholar

was one of the victims it may prove difficult for other observers to understand how they dealt with their trauma. Their viewpoint might be very different as they may not be able to stabilize their thinking by using textual or scriptural knowledge at the moment of the experience. Despite these differences, the beauty of a phenomenological study is that there should be no discrimination due to religious identity because it deals with emotions and the experience of human beings which is universal to all.

In conclusion, there may be three levels of spiritual consciousness involved here of which an observer should be aware: firstly, textual explanation; secondly, individual experience and reaction; and, finally, social and cultural influence. Therefore, not only should the observer be experienced in managing their emotions when dealing with issues relating to rituals, understanding, karma or all three, but they must also avoid employing their scholarly opinion about such matters.

The effectiveness is also seen in the Buddha's teaching of karma, where he taught it should be considered as a "real friend, relative and one's own refuge", which will only become justified with the advice "not to accept his teaching unless experienced". Karma in this sense is a matter of individual reaction and experience rather than that of scholarly opinion.

Karma and Sila

No disciplinary codes (*Vinaya*) were introduced by the Buddha for lay followers whereby justice could be sought in the case of violation, or at least not from the Buddhist court. What he taught, for the benefit of both laymen and monks, was the threefold *Dhamma* (morality, meditation and wisdom) by the practice of which enlightenment can be achieved. The practice of morality (*sila*) is primarily defined by five rules that all Buddhists are required to observe. These are: not killing, not stealing, not indulging in sexual misconduct, not lying and not drinking alcohol or taking drugs that cloud the mind. Due to the limitations of this essay I will deal only with one precept, which is the one associated with language. This particular precept is further classified into four actions: harsh speech, slanderous talk, idle gossip and lying.

The degrees of consequences by which each precept can be measured are quite different from one another. One of the most difficult precepts for the

practitioner is to refrain from telling a lie. They find it very difficult to avoid false speech because there is a certain amount of falsehood implicit in most of the minor social tropes that are used in the course of our daily interactions. For example, if someone asks you "How are you today?" you are likely to say "Fine, thanks." regardless of your actual state of being, because that person is most likely just being polite and does not actually expect a true answer. In fact, the person probably would not stick around to listen to the actual answer if you decided to give it. According to an interview I had with a man, for him refraining from false speech is the hardest precept, not because of the enjoyment of lying but because of a fear of the consequences of telling the truth. When asked what would happen if the truth affected other parties he said he felt that people like to listen to what they want to hear and not necessarily the truth. In terms of Buddhist understanding, it is a part of Buddhist karmic act, however, how can it be put into a phenomenological experience?

Contrarily, from my further research on the consequences of telling the truth, I have two examples which are the opposite of what the above statements have to say. Firstly, a boy who was bitten by a poisonous cobra was brought to the temple after the primary medical treatment failed. The parents and the abbot of the temple decided to perform Buddhist ceremonial chanting together and the three of them also agreed to chant the truth concerning their lives. The monk started to tell the truth first, he said, "Since I became a monk I have only been happy with the monk's robe for seven years. If I am telling the truth, let the poison flow out of this boy". Then the boy's father said "I do not like to offer *dana* even though I have been doing it my whole life" and his mother said "I have not been happy with my entire married life". Together they then said, "If we are telling the truth, by the act of this truth, let the poison flow away from the body.". As a result of this act of truth, the boy recovered from the poison.

Secondly, when the people in the town of Vesali were suffering from various diseases due to calamity and famine, the Buddha asked Ananda to chant the qualities of the Triple Gem. The Buddha said that if these qualities were the truth the people would overcome their suffering. Even though such an act of telling the truth is somehow different from the concept

of individual karma, people who are suffering can relate their karma to such truths. According to the *Mahakammavibhanga Sutta*, if any part of the five precepts is violated intentionally, the perpetrator is considered to have committed wrong karma. However, there is no Buddhist court where an evil doer can be given a physical or capital punishment, nor are such acts considered an infringement of God's commandments; but what Buddhism emphasises is that the doer's consciousness itself carries the moral consequence; e.g., a thief feels uncomfortable or scared when he sees the police because his consciousness carries the information of his wrong doings. If such consciousness (this karmic consciousness is called *noesis* - the act of consciousness) arises before the moment of death, in other words if he dies with such a frightened or worried consciousness, he is likely to be reborn in a lower realm.

The Buddha compares the influence of past karma with a piece of salt (past karmic consciousness) which when put into a very large jar of water (good action) has little effect; whereas, the same amount of salt put in to a very small cup of water (little good or bad action), will cause it to become brackish. These metaphors tell us that if our present good karma is like the big jar then any past bad karmic consciousness will be dissolved and have little effect. Thus, bad karma can be changed if one has generated sufficient good karma; similarly, good karma can be altered by the intervention of bad deeds. The Buddha's example of salt removes any convictions for a deterministic belief in past karma, e.g. Ven. Angulimala who, having previously murdered almost a thousand people, became an Arahant as a result of his present efforts. His present evil karma was purified and therefore no possible consequences existed for him to continue in *Samsara* (rebirth).

Karma in Samadhi

Karma originates from our mind, which the Buddha defined when a disciple of Nigandha argued that karma starts with the physical body. According to Buddha, physical or verbal karma cannot arise without a thought. Moreover, there are various types of consciousness that arise in relation to the types of karma generated, which in turn become a hindrance during meditation, e.g. the experiences of a meditator who reportedly quarrelled with his father so many

times that he could not meditate properly due to the interference of these memories. Thus, the hindrances that occur during meditation can be varied and depend upon the practitioner's karmic ability.

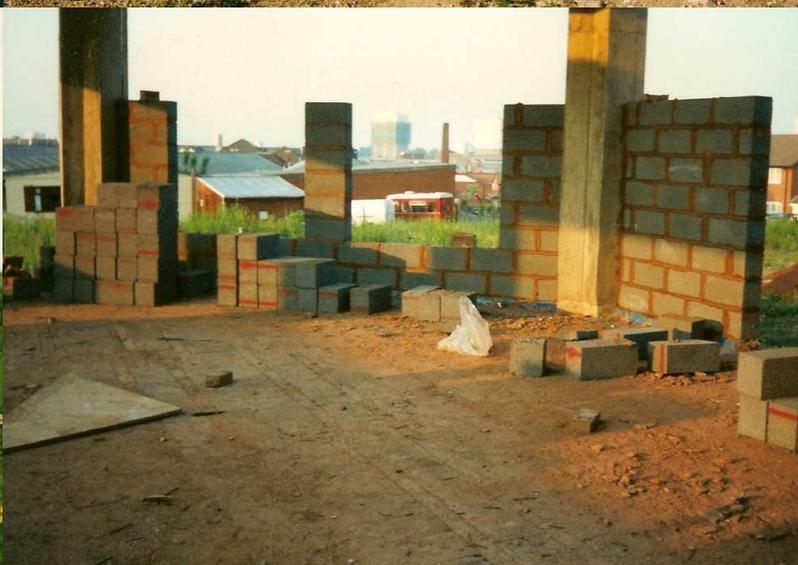
However, when the mind becomes calm by the process of meditation, the practitioner can easily deal with past karmic interventions through a detached awareness. It is from the standpoint of this detached awareness that the Buddhist concept of karma (what the Buddha defined as -"our own refuge" etc) should be understood. Not only can the meditative observer then see it as it really is but can also accept it in his meditation. This detached observation during meditation can also be a yardstick in assessing how the mind is proliferated with regards to the karma he has done. It requires a reflective and controlled mind when the previous karmic force interferes in meditation. Otherwise, it would be quite difficult for us to accept the effect of karma's involvement in our everyday lives. As Ponty said, the only way of seeing the truth about our existence is to step back from our involvement with the world. In the case of a Buddhist such reflection is to perceive the world as it is without the prejudice of a religious identity, not only in terms of individual existence but also the plurality of existence in the world. Buddha advised Ananda, in the *Majjhimanikaya* :

"Let not a person revive the past, or on the future build his hopes; for the past has been left behind and the future not been reached. Instead with insight let him see each presently arisen state".

The practice of detached meditation is to achieve the wisdom of how karma should be understood on the route to enlightenment. A Japanese monk expressed his understanding of karma, associated with wisdom, when he wrote "In this world there is a time to meet and a time to part. There is a time to be born and a time to die. Therefore, my Buddhism is not the Buddhism that will cure cancer. My Buddhism is not the Buddhism that will make you rich.... If someone is kind to me, let them be kind. If someone is rude to me, let them be rude. I will receive them all, and from there a new me will step forward into this world. This is to break the bonds of karma". ♦

For an unabridged version of this article please contact
Bhikkhu Nagasena.

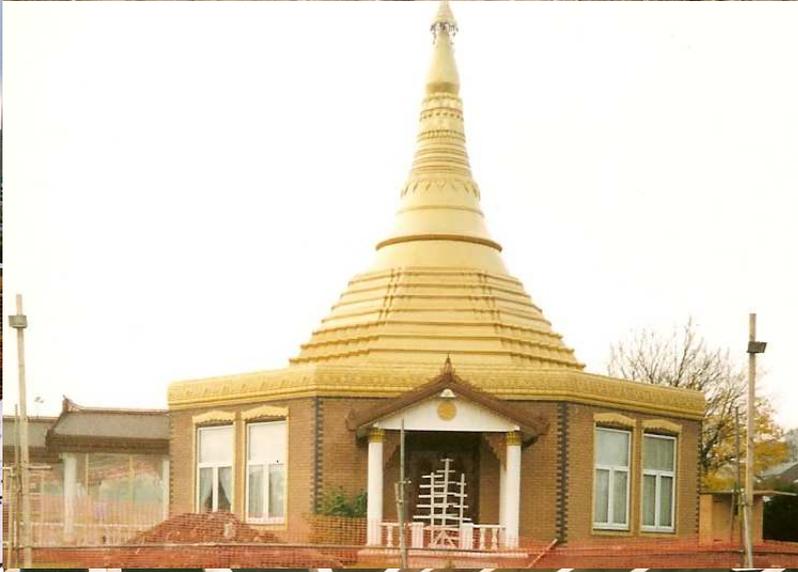
a pictorial record of our vihara







Work starts on Vihara







Visit by BBC



BBC Visit



Bhante's class



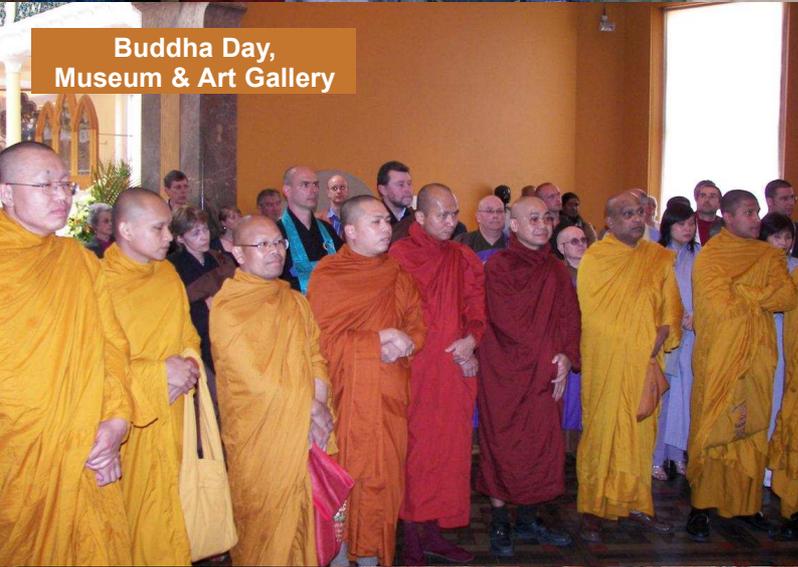
Buddha Day, 2007



Buddha Day, 2007



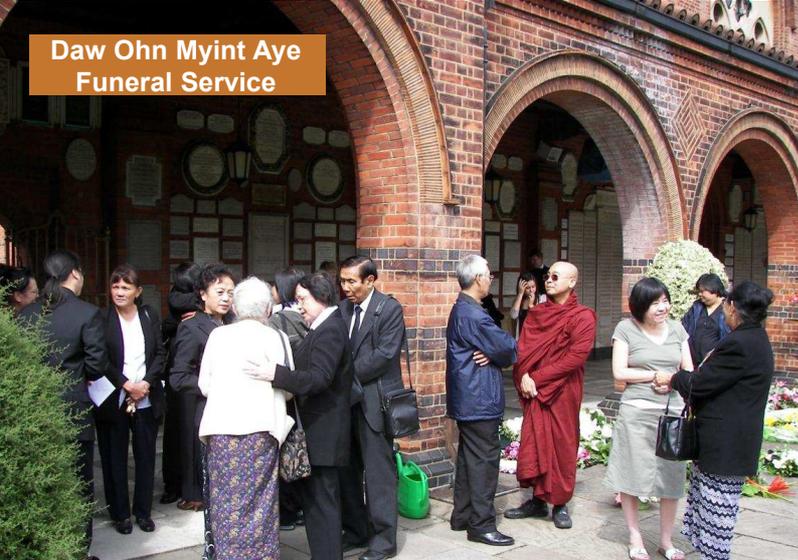
Buddha Day,
Museum & Art Gallery



Learning to meditate



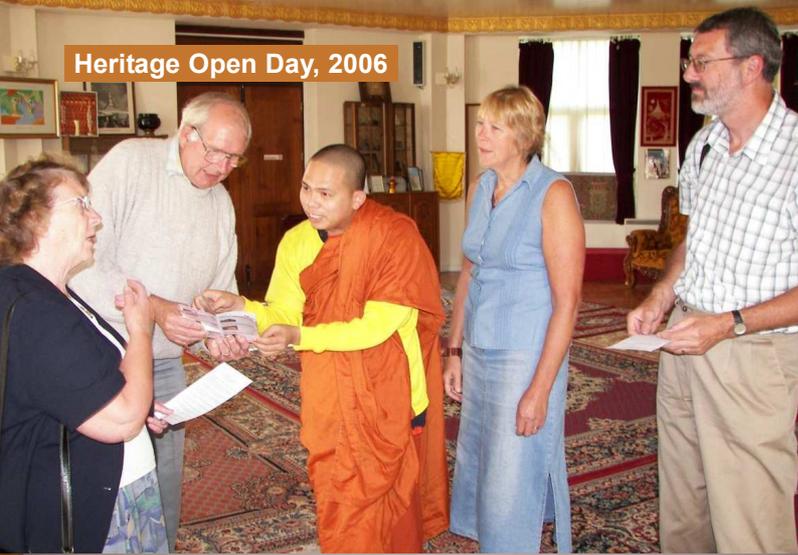
Daw Ohn Myint Aye
Funeral Service



Faith Leaders



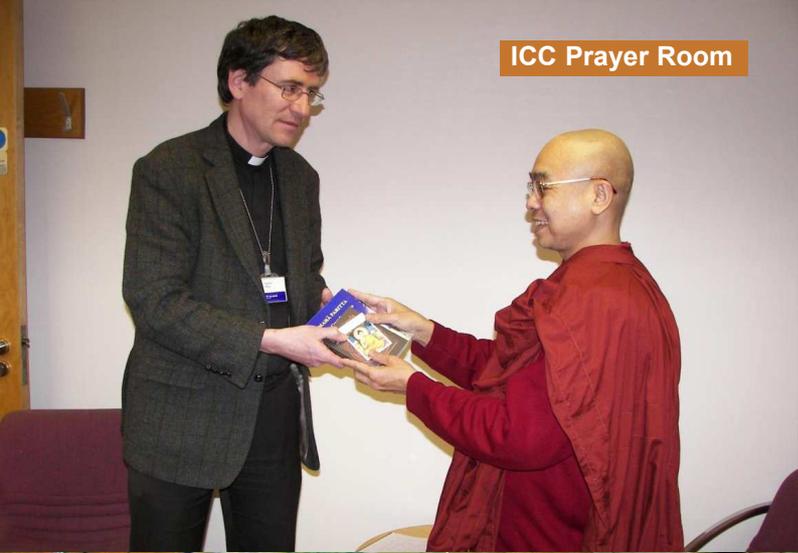
Heritage Open Day, 2006



Holocaust Day, 2007



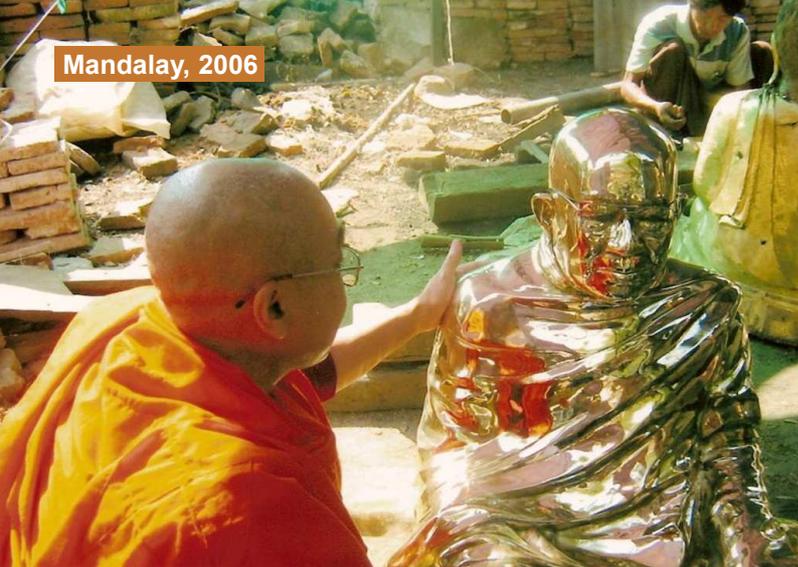
ICC Prayer Room



Kathina Day, 2006



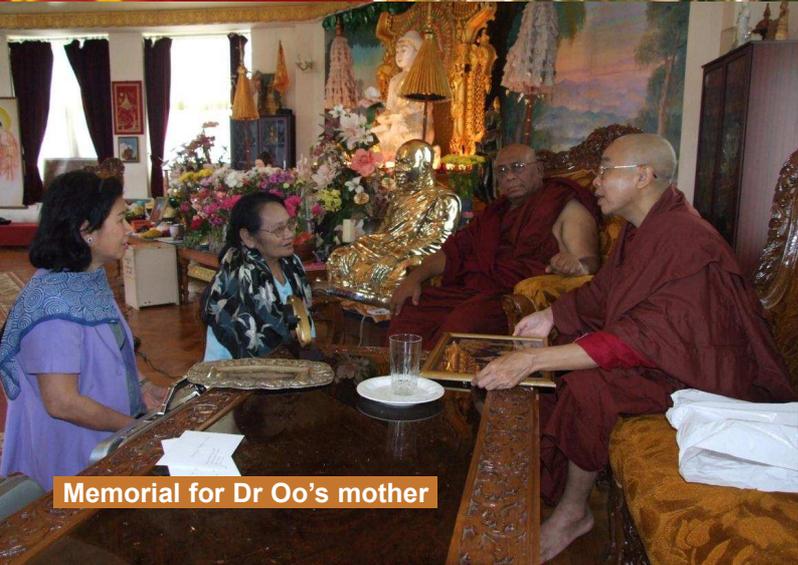
Mandalay, 2006



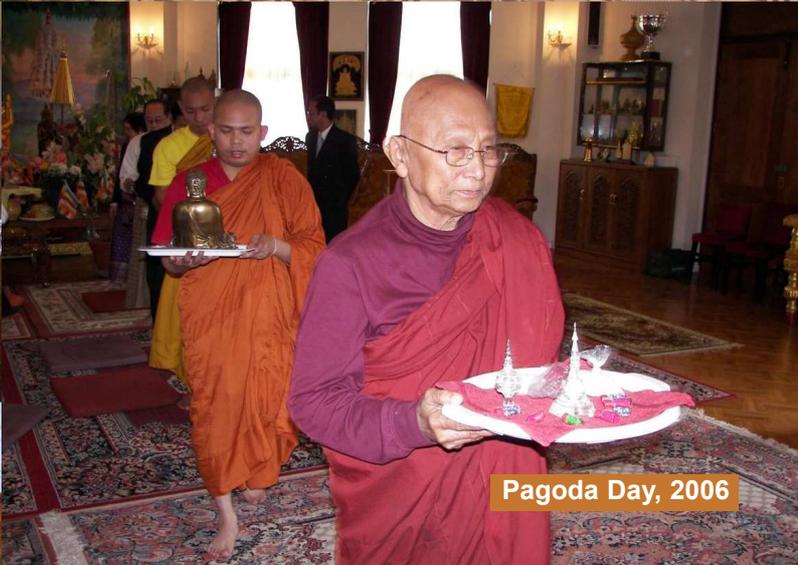
Mandalay, 2006



Memorial for Dr Oo's mother



Pagoda Day, 2006



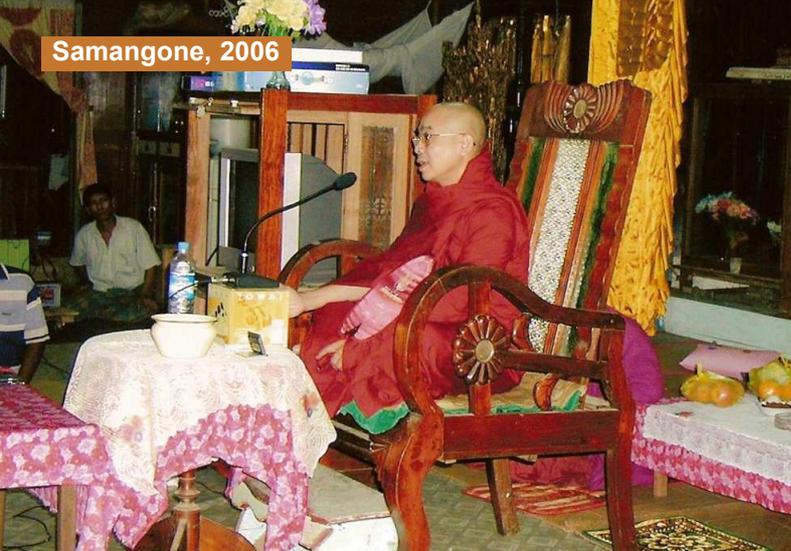
Daw Ohn Myint Aye
Funeral Service



Rinpoche's Visit, 2006



Samangone, 2006



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Samangone, 2006

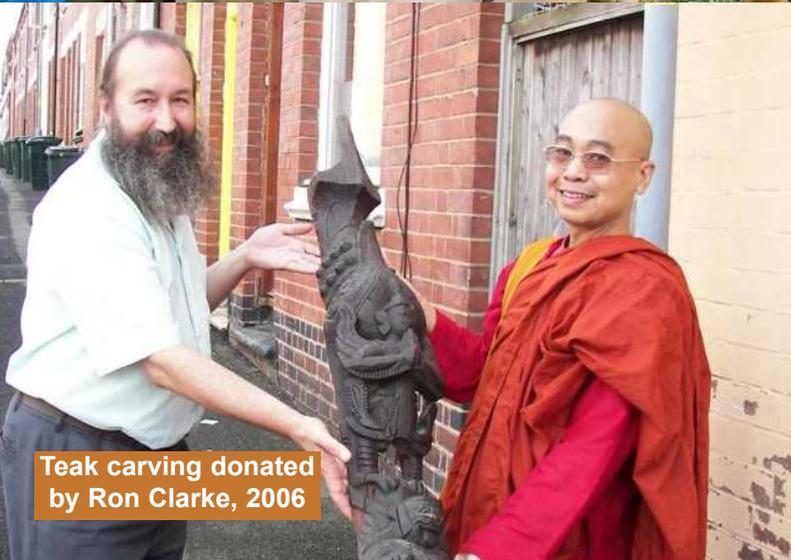
Entering Samangone
by bullock cart



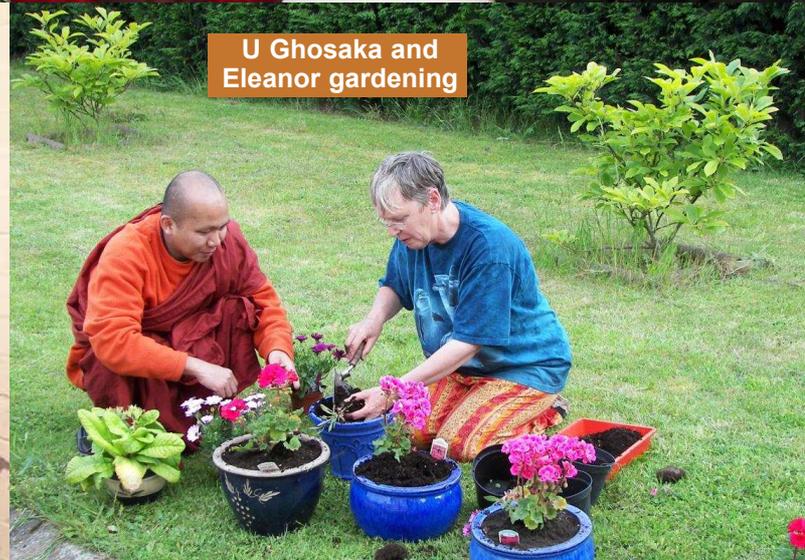
SRB6 Presentation



Teak carving donated
by Ron Clarke, 2006



U Ghosaka and
Eleanor gardening



Functions of The Mind

Citta - Kicca

In Abhidhamma, the workings of mind (*mano*) can be analyzed from various viewpoints either as a type of consciousness (*viññāna*) or as a state of mind (*citta*) determined by its function (*kicca*).

Here the functions of mind are treated as the process of cognition (*citta-vīthi*) occurring in time dimension, and as various realms of experience in their structural perspective that is process-free (*vīthi-mutta*). The structural approach discerns 31 worlds that belong to the plane of suffering (*apāya-bhūmi*), the sensuous blissful plane (*kāma-sugati-bhūmi*), the plane of sublime forms (*rūpa-avacara-bhūmi*) and the formless plane (*arūpa-avacara-bhūmi*). All these planes are experientially accessible to a human being. Painful experiences and mental illnesses put him in the lower worlds of suffering; performances of rituals and meditation methods open up access to higher realms of sensual and supra-sensual happiness. There are usually ten stages of the cognitive process repeatedly arising in a rapid sequence. This is the case though only while we cognize a clearly distinctive object of mind (*vibhūtam ālambanam*) and assuming to it a definitive attitude. While perceiving an object of one of the five senses, there may be up to sixteen stages of cognitive process where the perceived object is gross (*mahantam ālambanam*). When the object is limited (*parittam ālambanam*), there might be only seven, or even less, cognitive stages. An object which has a very slight impact (*atiparittam ālambanam*), would cause only a quivering within the continuous stream of becoming (*bhavanga-sota*) of the presently running process of experiencing. For the advanced practice of meditation it is important to understand these differences in order to learn how to control the cognitive process.

The Diagram 1 shows how links of becoming go on in time till a consciousness of an object impinges

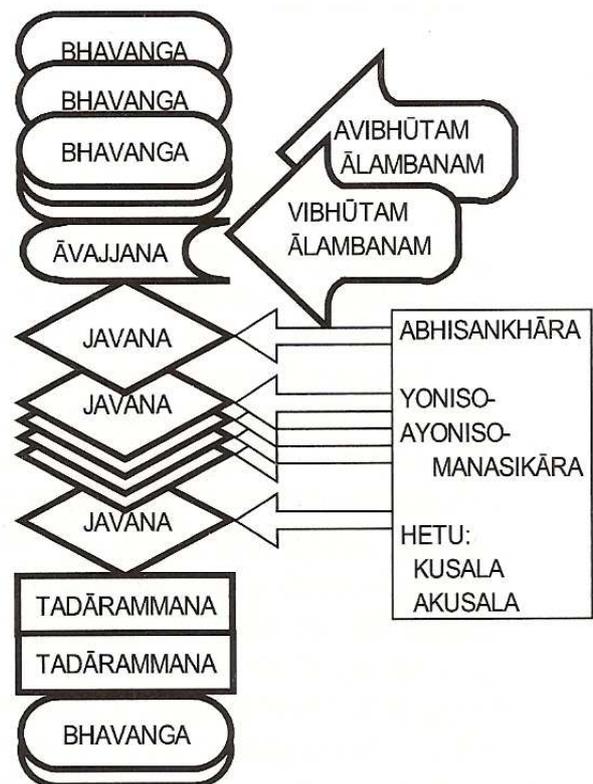
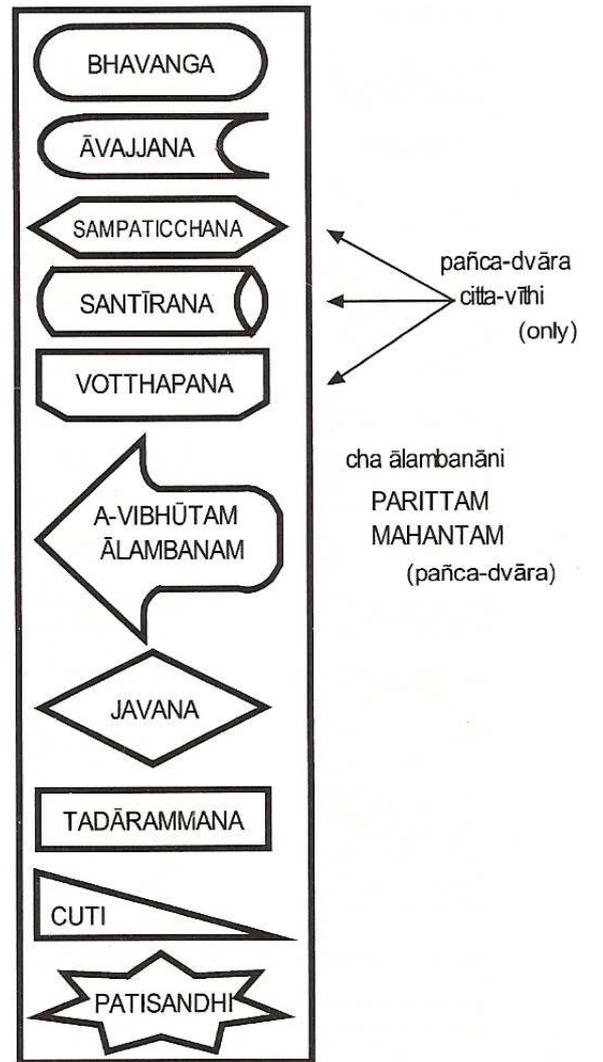


Diagram 1: The Stages of Cognition

on the continuity of becoming (*bhavanga*) and causes it to quiver (*bhavanga-calana*) and - when the object is distinctive (*vibhūtam*) - to stop (*bhavanga-upac-cheda*). Thereupon the stage of advertizing (*āvajjana*) follows, which opens the mind door for the object present at the outer base (*bahiddhā-āyatana*). Then comes the stage of seven times repeated influencing (*javana*), in which either wholesome or unwholesome mind.action (*kusala- akusala-kamma*) takes place. If the whole cognitive process is clear enough, then the object-registration (*tad-ārammana*) comes twice.

The functions of becoming (*bhavanga*), interrupting (*cuti*), and re-linking (*pati-sandhi*) work also outside the time dimension as the structural switches. Those cognitive processes that are interrupted can be resumed after any lapse of time.

Uncountable beings exist in all various realms of existence; they either have become or are still due to become (*būtā vā sambhavesī vā*). Uncountable processes of becoming go on or are interrupted due to being re-linked. It is just a question of past deeds' results (*kamma-vipāka*), what is going to be re-linked when the situation gets auspicious for it.

The Diagram 2 shows interrupted processes - one cut without re-linking, the other at first getting less distinctive and ending in the stage of receiving (*sampaticchana*), thereafter cut off and, in no time, re-linked.

As already mentioned, uncountable processes of becoming go on all the time and, in the mind that is scattered (*asamāhitam*), there is rapid switching between them. This opens up possibilities for various types of re-linking. Nevertheless, there is also switching between the *bhavangas* in a well functioning mind. The stage of influencing (*javana*) is borne by a cognitive process (*citta-vīthi*) that arises from a past becoming (*atīta-bhavanga*) that became shattered by the impinging object. The new one is a visiting becoming (*āgantuka-bhavanga*). When there are two processes running parallel, one cognizing a gross (*mahanta*) sense object in a regular course of perception and the other one is naming it (*vitakkana*), then there is a root becoming (*mūla-bhavanga*) and a surface becoming (*pittha-bhavanga*). Each of the becomings is a continuity of con-

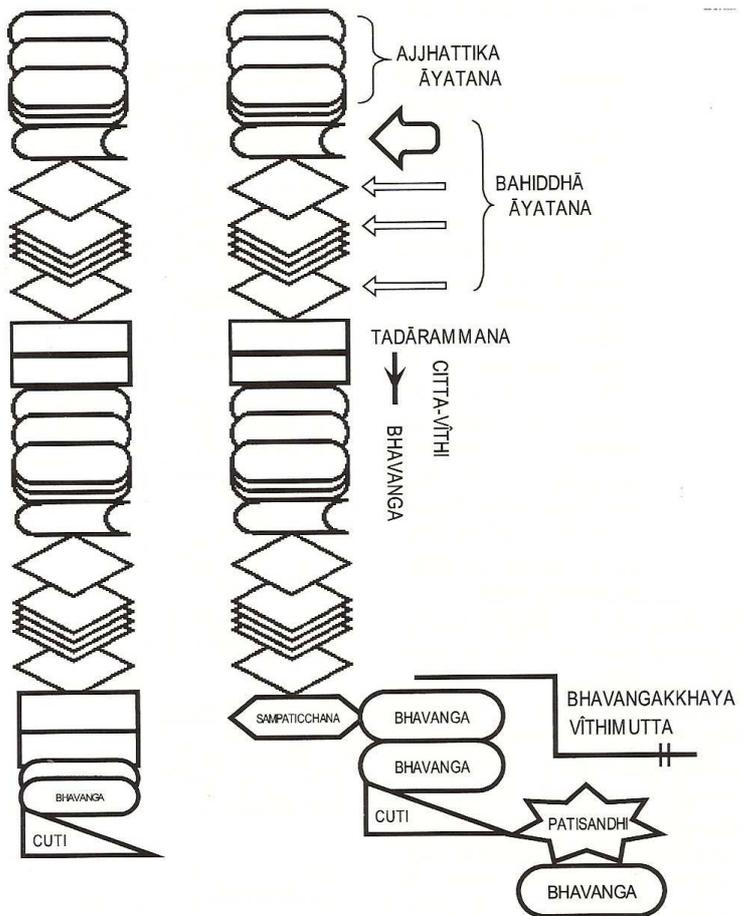
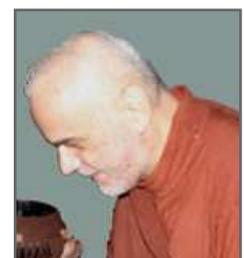


Diagram 2: Interrupted Cognitive Processes

sciousness defined by one and the same object (*ārammana*). There is no one *bhavanga* that would function in a person all his life as an unchangeable entity, as say some scholars who in this way subscribe to the belief in a lasting self (*atta-ditthi*).

All the discernments between the stages of cognition and the switching between the experiential realms do serve the practical purpose of mind development (*bhavana*). To study them only theoretically would not do, however, one has to learn to mindfully see them - at best during the walking meditation (*cankamana*) and during the mindful everyday life mastering. ❖



Ayukusala Thera:
Abhidhamma Notes 2004

Planning a Buddhist Academy



Yann and Ann Lovelock review the November 2005 conference and its background



It is not uncommon for English viharas to be directed by respected academic scholars. Dr H. Sadhatissa, who became head of London Buddhist Vihara in 1958, later served as a lecturer at London University and as professor at Toronto University. While Professor of Pali and Buddhism at Benares Hindu University, immediately before coming to England, he had taught a promising student by the name of Rewata Dhamma. By the time they met again, some twenty years later, that student had a reputation as a scholar himself and had left his university position to set up in Birmingham the very first Buddhist centre outside the capital. In later years Dr Rewata Dhamma lectured on Buddhism at several universities, notably in the US. He also began to think in terms of setting up an institution of his own but this was a dream he had to put aside while he involved himself with planning the Peace Pagoda and raising funds to build it.

The idea of establishing a Buddhist academy has therefore taken a long time to come to fruition. About 2001 a small planning group was set up to work out with Dr David Cheetham some plan of co-operation between the Theology Department at Birmingham University and the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara. Those involved included Ramona Kauth, John Beard for the Trustees, and Ven. Nagasena. The conference held in the Pagoda in November 2005 was one result of their meetings and was originally intended to take place three years earlier. Dr Rewata Dhamma thought it too premature then. Indeed, when it finally took place it was only a matter of weeks after funding was at last assured of for the teaching hall.

Dr Rewata Dhamma's successor at the Vihara, Dr Ottara Nyana, is himself an academic, having been Professor at the International Missionary University in Yangon. There could have been no one fitter to revive Bhante's idea of a Buddhist university and he too has been discussing its feasibility with David Cheetham. It is the good fortune of the Vihara to have aspired to an academic function at this time when universities are diversifying and the idea of multiple campuses away from the main centre are being encouraged. The Vihara is therefore in a position to fill a gap in the Theology Department's function that has existed since the start of the 1980s.

It is clear that both the University and the Vihara have much to learn from each other and there is a fruitful field of dialogue here for some time to come. One of Dr Rewata Dhamma's final letters back in 2004 foresaw a kind of bridge between the missionary enterprise in Yangon (with which he too was connected) and the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara's aspirations for the future of Buddhism in Birmingham. It is possible that at first the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara may provide the base for a Postgraduate Centre for Buddhist Studies. Exactly what will be studied, who will teach there and when such courses will begin are still matters being worked out.

Buddhism is not going to flourish in Britain until it engages with national institutions and takes on something of the national culture. It is impressive, too, that an institution like Birmingham University can envisage co-operation with a Buddhist monastery as a practical possibility. Both can benefit from such contact and beyond that so will a new

generation of scholars and all those they will influence in their turn.

In November 2005 a conference was held in the Pagoda, a joint venture between Birmingham Buddhist Vihara and Birmingham University's Department of Theology and Religion, with some 60 people attending it. After welcomes by Dr Ottaranyana, John Beard on behalf of the original planning group, and Dr Martin Stringer for the University, Clare Short M.P. opened the conference. In her Ladywood constituency, she explained, there are places of worship for all the major world faiths (of which the pagoda is one) and the key to their getting on together is to learn about each other. There could be no peace in the world without justice, but it is important to be tolerant of each other too and to understand the moral ethic contained in the scriptures of all faiths.

The first speaker was Dr Rupert Gethin, Director of Buddhist Studies at the University of Bristol and a former member of the Samatha Group. Taking "Developing Skilful Qualities" (kusala) as his topic, he enumerated and clarified the 19 listed in the Abhidhamma and concluded his talk by explaining that these are qualities to be developed: we shouldn't just rest content with those we think we have.

Dr Elizabeth Harris, the second speaker, received her Buddhist training in Sri Lanka; she is an Honorary Lecturer in Buddhist studies at Birmingham University and Interfaith Advisor to the Methodist Church. In addressing the question "What can Buddhism offer a Violent World?", she said that Buddhism understands that violence is the norm and that it is the result of greed and hatred which are rooted in ignorance. Secondly, Buddhism cuts through the symptoms and looks for the causes of actions. If craving does not arise, there is no greed and hatred. The third benefit that Buddhism offers is preventing conflict by offering alternatives.

She said that the West often interprets the teaching on Kamma as fatalism, but this stereotype is incorrect. Buddhists need the insight it brings so as to know when they can change a situation.

After lunch there were two workshops, one on what teaching is presently taking place at the Vihara and the other on possible future developments. Then Peter Harvey gave the final talk of the day. Professor of Buddhist studies at the University of Sunderland, he is yet another who originally belonged to the Samatha Group. The title of his talk was "Buddhist Approaches to Cultivating the Mind". He started by discussing the four Noble Truths and the practice of the eightfold path. The object is to develop a clear mind and avoid occasions of attachment. He went on to talk at some length about the practice of chanting as this is the most widely practised form of meditation in Buddhism and used by both monks and laity. Then he talked about samatha and vipassana meditation, which he said were complementary, enabling one to learn to let go. Finally he talked about the teaching on non-self and pointed out that if there was a permanent self there would be no opportunity to grow and develop.

A lot of the ensuing discussion revolved round whether or not one could teach Buddhism without meditation. It was pointed out that an academic course could provide an opportunity for meditation but one couldn't make people meditate if they didn't want to. It was hoped that students would see the benefits and want to experience the practice. Everybody was very positive about developing teaching links between the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara and Birmingham University and finally thanks go to John Beard, Ramona Kauth and David Cheetham for organising such a stimulating event. ❖

This is a revised and abbreviated version of separate reports first published in Lotus 18



The Dhamma Hall foundation stone being laid.

John Beard



Completion of the Dhamma Hall

The final stage of Dr. Rewata Dhamma's vision, which he explained to me when I first became involved with the Vihara in 1998, was to add a Dhamma Hall. Dr. Rewata Dhamma told me that his aim, from his earliest days in 1975 when he first came to England, was to establish a Buddhist University here in Birmingham. In 2002, at the ceremony celebrating the completion of the Vihara, Dr. Rewata Dhamma emphasised his wish to "...add a Dhamma Hall to this new complex".

On Saturday, November 26th 2005, in association with the Department of Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham, a conference was held at the Peace Pagoda which was the launch of the Buddhist Studies Centre at the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara and Pagoda. Since then we have been working very closely with the City College and Birmingham University to ensure that we will deliver quality and universally recognised programmes. We now have the building and the university that Dr. Rewata Dhamma wanted is very close to fruition.

We still have lots of work to do such as setting a curriculum that the university will be happy to validate. Also we are approaching many organisations for funding to cover some part-time and full-time staff to assist Dr. Ottara Nyana with the administration required by the university. Once the university is up and running the Pagoda will have secured its future for many years to come, but we still need assistance with financing the final stage.

Unfortunately, it was after Bhante passed on that the City Council awarded a grant of £120,000

towards the building of the Dhamma Hall, on the understanding that we input the remaining £180,000 ourselves. This being the case we started work on the building after we had secured a mortgage of £100,000 in the hope that we could raise enough money to complete the building. Fortunately we have enough money to complete the building but are still left with a slight shortfall and of course a mortgage of £100,000 (*see below Dhamma Hall Finances*).

This is rather a large amount of money to have to pay back each month, so we will have to continue to rely upon the generosity of everyone until this venture can become self supporting. Consequently, may I ask everybody to continue to help out by making whatever donations they can afford or, if possible, set-up a regular standing order which would help enormously in assisting us to complete Dr. Rewata Dhamma's vision.

Sunday 29th of July is the grand opening ceremony. As I mentioned earlier, it is the completion of stage one: the building. Stage two will be when we officially launch all the programmes of the Buddhist Academy. We will also be helping the community in many other ways; assisting more schools, colleges and universities by providing first hand experience of another culture and faith. Whether it is as part of a specific topic within a curriculum, or just general fact finding, we believe that this kind of work is vital for the people not only of our city but also of the world. It is ignorance that creates fear. It is our belief that the more people understand what other faiths teach and what their aims are, the less intimidated they will be. We will also be working with businesses to create a trickle down effect so that

employers become more aware of the impact that they have on people's lives. Finally, we will also be able to have more seminars on how to get the best out of our community and assist in getting the right life-work balance.

In conclusion, I am truly grateful for the help and assistance that many of you have given and I am proud of what our community has achieved. I believe all of you should also be pleased with this achievement. In less than ten years this ground has changed from a building site into a prestigious holy site and I am deeply moved by your efforts and must say a huge thank you to all of you for making this possible. ❖

Dhamma Hall Finances

Building Costs	£ 270,000
Decorations, Furnishings & Fitments (estimated)	£ 30,000
Total Costs	£ 300,000
Non-repayable Grant	£ 120,000
Mortgage	£ 100,000
Donations (6th June 2007)	£ +61,000
Total Income	£ +281,000
Current Financial Status (shortfall + mortgage)	£ -119,000

Dhamma Hall Donations, 6th June 2007

Since the launch of the Dhamma Hall Appeal many people have made donations in support of this venture and at this point we would like to thank every one of them. Whilst these supporters are being specifically recognised and thanked, this does not diminish in any way the ongoing financial support that we receive for the day to day running of the Vihara. Although these people are not listed by name, without their support the Vihara would struggle and we thank them for their continued generous support.

Finally, we would also like to thank all those people who have donated their time and energies to this venture and other activities associated with the Vihara, and whose help would be sorely missed.

Donations of £10,000 plus

Dr Mar Mar Lwin
Mr Lin Yen Chen & Family

Donations of £5,000

Ven Dr U Ottaranyana
Dr U. Aung Thein Daw Than Than

Donations of £2,500 to £4,999

Dr Mehn Tin Thoung &
Dr Cho Cho Khin
Dr Lay Maung &
Mrs Than Than Aye Mg

Donations of £1,000 to £ 2,499

Dr Aung Myin & Daw Thein Thein
Britain Burma Buddhist Trust
Mr & Mrs Lovelock
U Myint Thauung &
Daw Soe Nwe Nwe
Dr Kyaw Myint Oo &
Daw Than Than Ywe
Daw Than Than, Molly Soe
and sons
Drs Win Myint Aung &
Khine Thin Han
G.S. Buray & A.K. Buray

Mrs K.M. Parker
Drs Aung Kyi Myint, Htay Htay Yee
& son Michael Myint

Donations of £500 to £999

Mr Ye Htut Kyaw &
Htay Htay Thauung
Dr Nwe Win Thein
Daw Yin May &
son Dr. Kyaw Nyein
Mg Myint Win, Aye Aye Mon
& sons (U.S.A.)
Arnold Kincaid

Donations of £250 to £499

Drs Chit Ko Ko & Khin Mar Win
Dr M Lwin & Mrs A.L. Lwin
Dr Htay Naing & S.T. Thant
Drs Tha Han & Shwe Zin
Win Win Nwe
S.R. Sampla

Donations of £100 to £249

Dr Sein Way Lwin
Dr Thaw Si Htin
Dhamma Group Brussels
U Ba Maw & Daw Kyin Wan
Mr Suraj Lal & family
Cynthia Ngwe
Drs Kyaw Zin Than &
Swe Swe Win
Mr & Mrs Johnstone
Dr Aye Aye Win
Mrs Simran Kaur
M. T.Y.Chiu & family
Mrs Khin
Mrs Pyone Pyone Myint &
Yin Yin Ohn
Mr & Mrs Zeyya
Kyaw Soe Lwin & friends
Than Htun Wai & family
Wai Moe Aung & Aye Shwe Sin
Dr Zeyar Win & Hla Myat Lwin
Paul Clement & family
Mr Will Thomas
Drs Mya Thauung & Khin May Sein
U Tun Lwin & Daw Khin Thwe Aye
Dr Thant Syn & Toe Toe Lwin
Drs Thu Ya Linn & Ei Ei Htwe
Dr & Mrs Kottegoda

Dr Ngwe Soe Min &
Daw Khin Mya Kyin
Drs K.M. Thauung & T.O. Myint
Drs Kyaw Min Thu & Sandar
Miss Ruby Oo
A.A. Thein (Mr)
Khin Mg Htwe &
Than Than Htay
Capt. Ko Ko Mg &
Dr Moe Wint Aung
Mr & Mrs Hewson
Keith Perks
A. Pradhan
Jitu Barua
Mrs Pamela Hirsch

Donations up to £99

Lesley and Pat Gray
Vivian Wang
B.S.M.R.E.
Aung Kyaw Soe & friends
Miss T.Y.W. Myint
Mr Bill Strongman
S. Rann Gabriel
Samatha Group
Dr Min Htut & friends
Brandon Rees
Buddhist Essential Support Trust
Mr Soe Than Myint & Mrs Win
Zaw Myint & Wynn Wynn Paing
Miss Ommar Chit Pan
Dr Myo Thu & Lynn Lynn Sein
Dr Aung Zaw Win
Mg Hlaing Kyaw Win & Htay Htay
Miss T.N. Thauung
Dr Soe Aung
Dr Myo Myat Lwin & Yi Yi Aung
Drs Thant Hlaing & Kay Thi Latt
Dr Kyaw Thet & Aye Aye Khine
U Mg Mg Than &
Daw Aye Aye Than
Naing Wunna & Lwin Lwin Kyaw
U Myint Oo & Daw San Myaing
Kyaw Kyaw Win
Daw Htay
Maung Maung Lay & family
Mr E.M. Waller
Mr John B. Michael
Dr Mg Mg Oo

Latza & May Sandar
Prince R.L. Sampla
Margaret Doonlag
Mr Saravut Lasomboon &
Mrs Kaythi Kyawt Soe
Daw Nan Nwe
Daw Tin Tin Win
Dr Htay Kyaw & Thida
Dr Khin Lay Thein
Mr Min Lwin & Khin Khin Gyi
Daw Nwe Ni Wynn
Mr Akar Htut & Thanda Aung
Dr So Pyi, Kathi Saw & daughters
Dr & Mrs Tint
Ei Kyu Pe
Drs Myint Thein & Myint Myint Tin
Mrs Ohn Myint
R.L. & E.A. Utton
Mr Davalata Bali
Richard Pe Win
Mr Aung Kyaw Zan
Mr David Ramsay
Drs Thant Hlaing Oo &
Thanda Win
Saw Phone Naing
Dr Ye Myint & San San Aye
Mrs Vajira Bailey
Jina Das Barua
Rupayan Talukder
Mr Liam Perdue
Nain Tun & Nway Nway
Mr & Mrs Chiu Kin Yuen
Drs Min Min Latt & Aye Mya Soe
Drs Zaw Min & Khin Myint Mo
Robert Black
Keith Jones
James Clement
Bethina
Daw Yin May (France)
Dr M. Weera Sooriya
Latt Latt Phyu Thein
Khine Soe Oo
Daw Khin Mya
A. Smith
Zaw Zaw Aung & Nilar

If you are aware of any omissions or mistakes in this list please let us know and accept our deepest apologies.



Student Visits

by Robert Black

Once again the Vihara has enjoyed a wide range of student visitors to the Pagoda. As always the range of ages and interests of our visitors is extensive, rang-



ing from Year 3 (seven year olds) through to the more mature student. Likewise, their reasons for visiting are also varied. Some want religious knowledge, others cultural information and others a combination of both, often combining a meditation taster along the way.

Obviously, with such a range of ages and interests, not only is what is taught tailored to the group but also how it is taught which, in the case of the younger students, is almost of equal importance. For this reason there has been a steady increase in the amount of hands-on activities employed during visits made by the younger groups. Even explaining to a group of Year 3 students about the significance and purpose of the parasols that are seen in the pagoda has less of an impact on their understanding than organising processions with and without mini-parasols. With a wide variety of such activities it now means that every member of a visiting class can usually become actively involved during their visit. The result is that such young students now end up leaving

the pagoda after a two hour visit asking when they can return again.

At the other end of the spectrum, the more mature visitors usually only require some formal teaching which generally quickly progresses to open debate. This is especially so where a group of visitors have thought about the sort of questions they would like answering before arriving at the pagoda. Obviously this can result in much of the visit being devoted to unravelling preconceived notions of what Buddhism is all about, but lends itself to many lively discussions.

By comparison, students in their teens can often present a completely different challenge from the start, which is trying to engage them in the first place. In such situations this will usually mean they start out with no interest in cultural information and



can quickly lose interest in dry facts about Buddhism. Any thought of teaching the dhamma in any sort of traditional manner has to be replaced by relating every single fact to everyday life in the UK, even if this requires considerable use of some lateral thinking during a session.

Although such teaching may seriously reduce the amount of information covered, what is conveyed is

well understood and remembered, which can easily be assessed by the flood of questions that ensue.

In addition to these individual groups the pagoda is used on a regular basis by the Ladywood Interfaith Education Project, which has an ongoing programme of teaching dhamma to schools local to the vihara.

The next venture, due to commence on Thursday, 26th July 2007, and scheduled to continue each Thursday throughout the summer, will be a Children's Dhamma Class run by Bhante Gawsaka assisted by Ellen Parker.

Finally, although the new Dhamma Hall has not been formally opened, it has already started to be used with many of the visiting groups and is expected to be regularly used in the coming autumn term. ❖



A haven of peace in the heart of the city

by Bill Strongman

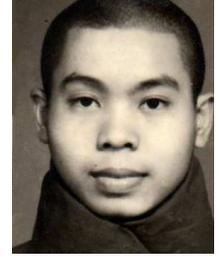


Our Birmingham Buddhist Vihara and Dhamma Taloka Peace Pagoda now exist because of the original vision of Ven. Dr. Rewata Dhamma. His life's work was to disseminate the Buddha's teaching and to encourage people of all religions to get together in peace and harmony for the common good. Now that the Rewata Dhamma Hall is finished and we have the beginnings of a Buddhist University in Birmingham, his work will continue and grow. Sadhu Sadhu Sadhu Bhante.

I am amazed how fast the Dhamma Hall grew once its foundations were laid but, although it was built quickly, it is obviously well built. Many members of the lay Sangha gave freely of their time and skills in its finishing and the tireless efforts of people in the background have not gone unnoticed by people like me who have just looked on. I feel we have a special debt of gratitude to someone who, although he prefers to take a back seat, we all know has been the prime mover in the success of these projects. I refer, of course, to John Beard, who has great ambitions for this site and beyond, and we wish him success in all his endeavours.

I talk to people who come to the Thursday meditation class and although some of them are not Buddhists and perhaps never will be, they are very aware of the peaceful friendly atmosphere here. The Pagoda is dramatic and beautiful; the Vihara and Dhamma Hall fine examples of craftsmanship; the grounds pleasant 'though yet unfinished'. We are grateful to Dr Rewata Dhamma and to all those who have brought his dream for us into being. Now it is up to us to maintain it as a haven where the dhamma is taught and where people can learn how to live a happier and more peaceful life. ❖

Religious Education in Myanmar



by U Uttama

Dear Venerable Sirs,

I am a Theravadin Buddhist living in Brazil where I had the opportunity to meet the late Ven. Rewata Dhamma. I am writing to ask for your help in trying to understand the title *Dhammacariya*. My findings so far are:

1. There are a number of examinations held by the religious authorities in Myanmar starting with *Pathamange (1st Grade)*, *Pathamalat (2nd Grade)*, and *Pathamagyi (3rd Grade)*. Next is the *Dhammacariya* degree followed by *Cetiyangana*? Is this correct and what studies cover each degree?
2. I believe there is a *Dhammacariya* and a *Maha Dhammacariya* given by the State *Pariyatti Sasana Universities (Yangon and Mandalay)* and by the State *Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee*.
3. I also understand there are a number of different *Dhammacariya* degrees, i.e., *Sasana Dhaja Dhammacariya*, *Pariyatti Sasana Pala Dhammacariya*, *Vakaya Pariyatti Dhammacariya*.

I thank you advance for your help,
With metta.

Buddhism is the national religion of Myanmar, practiced by almost 90 percent of Myanmar's population. Buddhism became the dominant religion of Myanmar after King Anawratha (Aniruddha) ascended the throne of Myanmar Kingdom in Pagan in 1044. There are nowadays about 400,000 monks, 40,000 novices, 30,000 nuns and 58,000 monasteries.

There are two kinds of Religious Examinations in Myanmar:

- (1) Examinations held by Religious Affairs (State level); and
- (2) Regional examinations founded by sangha and lay devotees.

(1) Examinations held by Religious Affairs (Old System)

Three Kinds of State Exams

- (A) Pali Education Board. (Three Levels founded in 1638)
- (B) Board of Dhammacariya Exam. (1937)
- (C) Tipitakadhara Exam. (1948)

Note: (A) and (B) is for any candidate: lay student, nun, novice or monk, but (C) is only for sangha (novice and monk).

A) There are three levels in the Board of Pali Pathamapyan Exam:

1. **Pathamange (1st Grade)**
 - i. Bhikkhu Pātimokkha (Vinaya-Disciplines)*
 - ii. Kaccāyana Byā karana (Pali grammar)
 - iii. Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha
 - iv. Tika-Duka Matikā and Dhatukathā (Abhidhammas)
 - v. Aṅguttara Nikāya (Eka-nipāta)
2. **Pathamalat (2nd Grade)**
 - i. Bhikkhu-Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha and Kankhāvitarāṇi Aṭṭhakathā (Part-I) *
 - ii. Kaccāyana Byakarana and Pada-rūpasiddhi (Part-I)
 - iii. Abhidhammattha saṅgaha and Vibhāvanī Ṭikā (Part-I)
 - iv. All item 1 section iv, above
 - v. Yamaka (Part-I, Abhidhammas)
 - vi. Aṅguttara Nikāya (Duka-nipāta)
3. **Pathamagyi (3rd Grade)**
 - i. Bhikkhu-Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha and Kankhāvitarāṇi Aṭṭhakathā*
 - ii. Kaccāyana Byakarana and Pada-rūpasiddhi
 - iii. Abhidhammattha saṅgaha and Vibhāvanī Ṭikā
 - iv. Yamaka (Part-II)
 - v. Paṭṭhāna (Kusala Tika, Abhidhamma)

- vi. Chanda (Vuttodaya) Alankara and Abhidhāna Padīpikā
(*Pali Metre, prosody and Pali Dictionary*)
- vii. Aṅguttara Nikāya (Tika-nipāta)

Note: *Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā for laymen and nuns

Aṭṭhakathā = Commentary, Ṭikā = Sub-Commentary

After passing three levels of group (A), a candidate must join group (B) Dhammacariya Exams.

(B) Three Levels of Dhammacariya Exam

- i. Sāsana dhaja Dhammacariya = BA (six papers and 65% pass mark for each paper)
- ii. Sāsana dhaja (Siripavara) Dhammacariya = MA (Honours) (only one paper but 75% pass mark)
- iii. (Dhīgha Nikāya) Pālipāragū (two papers for a Nikāya and 65% pass mark for each paper)
(A candidate can choose any Nikāya from 5 Nikāyas as a major subject for ii and iii)

Note: Dhammacariya. <dhamma = doctrine, acariya = master, teacher (Dhammacariya = MD); Dhaja = flag; Siripavara = Excellent one; Pālipāragū = Specialist in Pāli (Ph. D)

Texts for Dhammacariya Exams

(for Sāsana dhaja Dhammacariya)

- (a) Pārājika Pāli, Aṭṭhakathā (two papers from Vinaya Piṭaka)
- (b) Silakkhandha vagga Pāli Aṭṭhakathā (two papers from Sutta Piṭaka)
- (c) Dhammasaṅgānā Pāli Aṭṭhakathā (two papers from Abhidhamma Piṭaka)

If a candidate passes 6 papers in all, the government confers on him a degree certificate: Sāsana dhaja Dhammacariya = A teacher who is a flag of doctrine

Note: A Dhammacariya candidate can sit any Honours exam (ii & iii) together with (i) or after passing (i) Sāsana dhaja Dhammacariya. (It depends on his abilities)

C) Texts for Tipitakadhara Exam

- (a) Ubhato Vibhaṅga (Two vols. from Vinaya Piṭaka)
- (b) Khandhaka (Three Vols. from Vinaya Piṭaka)
- (c) Dhīgha Nikāya (Three Vols. from Sutta Piṭaka)
- (d) 6 Abhidhamma Texts (8 Vols)
- (e) Paṭṭhāna, 7th Abhidhamma Text (4 Vols)

Note: Each vol. contains 300 to 500 pages

A candidate who has already passed three levels of the Pathamapyan Exam, can sit the Tipitakadhara Exam but must take (a) as oral and written exams. (Only after passing the oral can he take the written exam covering three Pali texts, including Aṭṭhakathā and Ṭikā).

If he passes (a) he will get the title Ubhato-vibhaṅga dhara and Ubhato vibhaṅga kovida. (dhara = learned by heart, kovida = expert)

After that he must take (b) as both oral and written exams. If he passes these he gets the titles: Vinaya dhara and Vinaya kovida plus a free pass ticket for land and sea travel.

After passing (groups a and b) candidates can choose any Piṭaka: Sutta or Abhidhamma; whatever they wish. The relevant titles are (c) Dhīgha bhānaka and Dhīgha Nikāya kovida; and (d and e) Abhidhammika and Abhidhamma kovida

After passing (a) to (e) of the Tipitakadhara Exam, the Myanmar government confers on him (monk) a special title plus a free pass ticket for land, sea and air travel.

Title: Tipiṭakadhara and Tipiṭaka kovida and Tipiṭakadhara
Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika (five years later)
(These are all from the Old Religious Examination System)



Ven. Vicittasarabhivamsa
Visittha Tipitakadhara Mahatipitakakovida
Dhammabhandagarika
Mingun Sayadaw (1953)

Modern Education System

When forming a new religious education system, the Myanmar government and State Sangha Council founded two State Pariyatti Universities (Yangon and Mandalay) in 1986 (only for sangha) and a Theravada Buddhist Missionary University (ITBMU) of Yangon in 1999 (for any candidate).

Note: A candidate who had passed (A) Three levels of Pathamapyan Exam, must take entrance exams (both written and oral) for the State Pariyatti Universities.

There are three degree courses:

- i. Sāsanatakkasīla Dhammācariya = BA (4 year course)
- ii. Sāsanatakkasīla Maha Dhammacariya = MA (5 years)
(Maha = Master)
- iii. PhD (3 years)

Subjects for Sasana Takkasīla Dhammacariya

(7 papers) Three major Subs. (Same as Old Dhammacariya Exam) and four minor subs: Pali Language, English and Myanmar language and missionary (history, geography, culture and religions).

Note: i. Takkasīla = University
ii. 50% pass marks for Minor and 65% pass mark for Major subs.

After passing (i) with a good 1st (75% and above in each paper) a candidate can join (ii) for a M.A. degree and choose any subject as a major from amongst the 7 papers.

International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University in Yangon (1999)
This university is for every student from Myanmar and outside countries. (For any gender, any nationality and any religion.)

Note: 1. A Myanmar candidate (lay or nun) may get any degree (BA/B.Sc etc.) and a monk candidate may get any kind of Dhammacariya degree.
2. A foreign candidate must pass O level or High school level.

Courses

- i. Diploma (1 year)
- ii. BA (2 years)
- iii. MA (3 years)
- iv. PhD (3 years)

Note: Old and Modern Education Systems run together still today in Myanmar.

(II) Boards of Regional Examinations

There are several Regional Exams, for example:

- (a) Sakyasiha Exam (at Sakyasiha Pagoda, Mandalay, 1903)
- (b) Cetiyanagna Exam (at Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon, 1905)

Note: There are two levels (a) Sarthentan (Lower level, similar to Pathamapyan Exams) and (b) Sarchatan (Higher level: similar to the Old Dhammācariya Exam.) in both Sakyasiha and Cetiyanagna Exams.

- (A) If a monk passes two levels of the exam, the Board of Sakyasiha confers on him the title: Abhivamsa and Sakyasiha Dhammācariya. Bhaddanta (Venerable) Kumarābhivamsa, Sakyasiha Dhammācariya
- (B) As above (a) the Cetiyanagna exam confers on him the title: Cetiyanagna Dhammācariya.

**** Most of scholars recognise these two exams as the Hardest and the Highest.**

- (c) Susamācāra Exam. (Mowlamyin)
- (d) Piṭakattaya Paragu Exam (Sathon)
- (e) Nikāya Exams. (Yangon, Mandalay etc.)

There are several regional Religious Exams in every district and township for sangha in Myanmar.

Note: i) There are no honorary titles for any religious examinations or universities in Myanmar and sitting examinations is necessary for any degree or title.
ii) Under Religious Affairs, there are some Board of Religious Examinations for nuns and lay people in Myanmar. For example: Abhidhamma Exam. Vibhāvanī Ṭikā Exam Visuddhimagga Exam and Samyutta Nikāya Exam.
iii) There are nationwide Summer Buddhist Courses and Buddhist Civilization Courses (run by YMBA and based on Mangala Sutta) for school children in Myanmar.

Dear student of Dhamma

This is a brief explanation to your question but if you have any further questions you may ask me or any other scholar. May you be well, happy and peaceful.

With best Metta

Ref. 1. Encyclopaedia of Myanmar, Vol.6, Sarpebiman, Yangon, 1960(P.210-212)
2. Samgha and State in Burma, E. Michael Mendelson, Cornell University Press, USA, 1975(245-246)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

10-DAY RETREAT (Experienced)

led by Dr Ottara Nyana

17-26 August (telephone to register and for details)

ABHIDHAMMA (PAVARANA) DAY

Friday, 26 October, 7pm

PARENTS & ANCESTORS COMMEMORATION

Thursday, 1 November, 7.30am

KATHINA

Sunday, 28 October, 10.30am

FULL MOON/MEDITATION/DEVOTEES DAYS

❖ FULL MOON

Chanting in the Pagoda at 7.30pm except on festival days.

Aug. 28, Sept. 26, Oct. 26,
Nov. 24, Dec. 24

❖ MEDITATION CLASSES

BEGINNERS

Thursday, 7pm

ADVANCED

Mondays, 7.30pm

❖ DEVOTEES DAYS

First Sunday in the month at 11 o'clock.

A chance to offer food to the monks and share a communal meal. This will be followed by chanting, meditation, teaching and discussion.

Birmingham Mail

www.birminghammail.net/mail

Faiths IN OUR CITY

WITH DR OTTARANYANA



The following are reproductions of three recent articles published in the Birmingham Mail

Busy time for Buddhists

ASSAYUJA - equivalent to October - is the sixth month in the Buddhist calendar and the end of Buddhist lent.

It's a busy month with the end of vassa (three months' retreat (heralding Abhidhamma day - Parents day and Pavarana - all celebrated on the full moon day (October 6 at 7pm). Two days later this is followed by Kathina day on October 8 at 10.30am.

Abhidhamma, the higher teaching of the Buddha, is the analysis of mental and material processes.

Abhidhamma day celebrates the return of Buddha from the Tavatimsa realm where he spent the vassa teaching the

Abhidhamma to his mother (now reborn as the deity Santusita) and other deities.

The traditional festival is the Light Festival, held over three nights, during which religious monuments, shrines, businesses and homes are illuminated.

The Light Festival celebrates the welcoming of the Lord Buddha back to Sankassanagara in the human realm.

From this tradition, Parents' day developed in the Buddhist culture. Parents' day is when family members visit parents and teachers to give presents and pay their respects. Children enjoy these celebrations as during the three days they receive pocket money from their grandparents!

The religious rite known as Pavarana

('Invitation to confess') is also held on this day. Having lived closely together during the vassa, the monks now gather in the ordination hall to perform this rite.

Each monk takes it in turn to ask his fellow monks if he has been seen, heard or suspected of committing any sin. If so, he asks them to reprimand him and he will confess and promise not to repeat the act. Lord Buddha introduced this rite to ensure unity and peace amongst the sang-

ha (community of monks and nuns). Each monk takes it in turn to ask his fellow monks if he has been seen, heard or suspected of committing any sin. If so, he asks them to reprimand him and he will confess and promise not to repeat the act. Lord Buddha introduced this rite to ensure unity and peace amongst the sang-

ha (community of monks and nuns).

The Kathina festival is celebrated within one month of the end of vassa, centres on generosity and could be considered the Buddhist Christmas.

After spending three months confined to the monastery the monks are presented by the lay people with all the things they will need to see them through to the next year before any missionary work is engaged upon. In Myanmar gifts are loaded on to carts and paraded through the town before being presented to a monastery.

Although a somewhat smaller event in Birmingham, the day is still enjoyed and celebrated by our many devotees.

Importance of Vesak Day

The first festival of the year in the Buddhist calendar is Buddha Day and will see celebrations throughout the Buddhist world.

The exact date of the event may vary slightly in different countries, Buddha Day being the full moon day of Vesak (April-May).

But this does not detract from its importance as a celebration of the major events in the life of the Buddha that occurred on this day.

He was born as Prince Siddhartha to Queen Maha Maya. He became enlightened after six years of austerity as a

recluse on this day. Finally, it was on the full moon day of Vesak that he passed away and entered parinibbana.

Celebrations at our pagoda will take place on April 29, and involve a service in the pagoda and communal meals.

By comparison celebrations in Myanmar will involve the ceremonial watering of the Bo-tree, the tree beneath which Lord Buddha achieved enlightenment.

The importance of this festival can also be seen by the coming together of various Buddhist groups for a joint celebration at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery on Saturday, May 5.

Following his enlightenment he spent 45 years, until his death at 80, teaching the Dhamma; centring on the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path. He also emphasised the fact that he did not teach with a closed hand, never keeping anything back from those he taught.

Despite this, many tried to question him about the deeper issues connected with the universe, to which he responded with the story of the poisoned arrow (Samyutta Nikaya).

This story tells of a man who, having been shot by a poisoned arrow, refuses to allow it to be removed until he knows

everything about the arrow, the archer and his motivation and so dies having achieved nothing.

In a similar way we often debate about why there is so much suffering in the world and how to overcome it.

However, trying to understand such things is only half the answer, doing something with that knowledge is what makes the difference.

Only when we stop debating and start acting can we and the world around us change for the better.

Join with us to celebrate the life of Lord Buddha

DHAMMACAKKA Day, celebrated on the full moon day of July, commemorates three significant events in Lord Buddha's life.

First, it was on this day that he left the Tusita realm (heaven) to be conceived in the human realm.

Secondly, aged 29, he renounced his home life, as Prince Siddhattha, to become a recluse.

Thirdly, on this day he delivered his first sermon in the Deerpark at Isipatana near Varanasi to five monks who had previously practiced austerity with him in the forest.

Upon hearing this discourse one of the five, the Ven Kondanna, gained his first glimpse of Nibbana and so gave rise to the beginnings of the noble Sangha (community of monks and nuns).

This first discourse taught the life philosophy of the Four Noble Truths, which explains life's problems (dukkha and tanha) and their solution (nirodha and magga). Very briefly these are:

All forms of existence are subject to

“All suffering, and all rebirth, is due to excessive craving.

suffering (dukkha); suffering because we do not have something and suffering for fear of losing what we do have.

All suffering, and all rebirth, is due to excessive craving (tanha).

The extinction (nirodha) of craving will result in the extinction of rebirth and suffering, leading to Nibbana.

The route by which this extinction can be achieved is known as the Eightfold Path (magga).

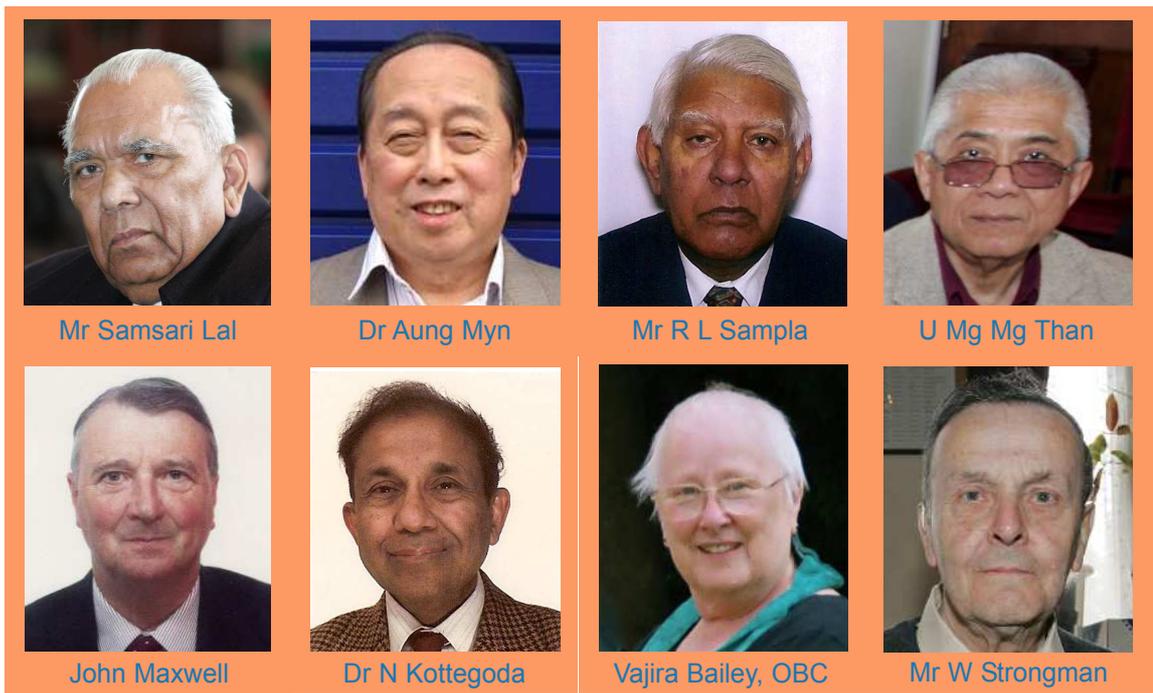
On this date, at the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, we also commemorate the building of the Dhammatalaka Peace Pagoda on the site.

The day's celebrations are open to all, commence at 10am tomorrow and are held in our Pagoda at 29/31 Osler Street, Ladywood, Birmingham.

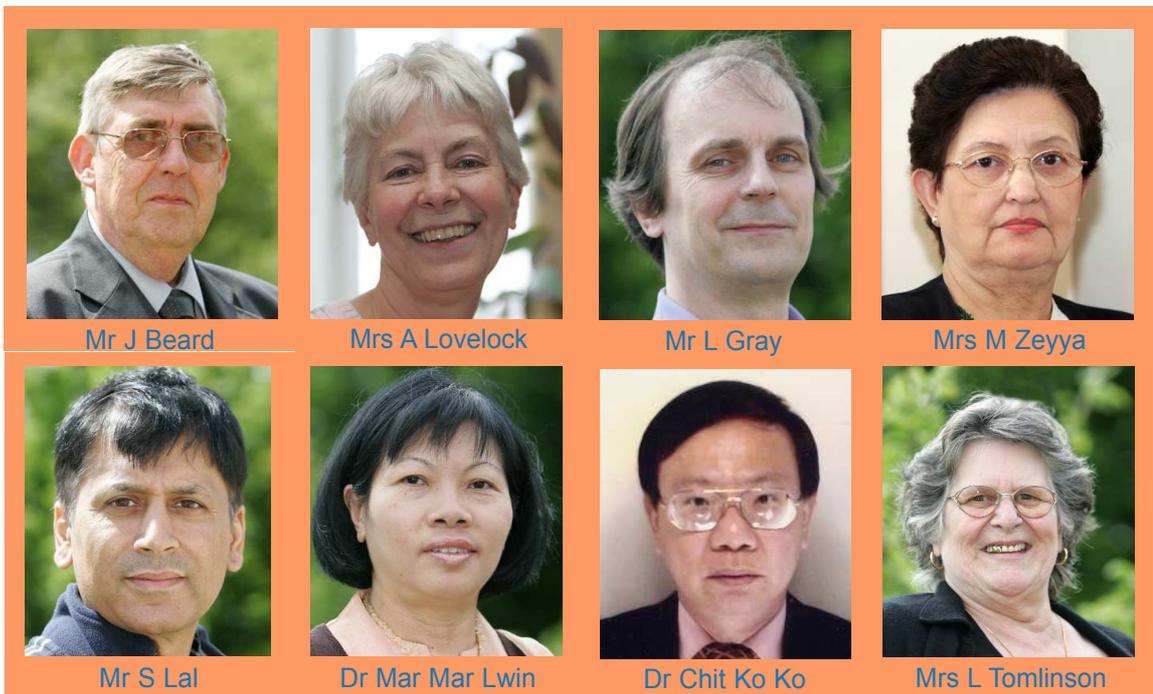
The day starts with offerings at the shrine and paying of respect to the Triple Gem: Lord Buddha, the Dhamma (teachings) and the Sangha.

Next is the offering of food to the monks (sanghadana) followed by a free communal meal for everyone present.

After lunch the day continues with a mixture of chanting, music, dhamma talks and a final transfer of merit will bring the celebrations to a close.



OUR PATRONS



OUR TRUSTEES

