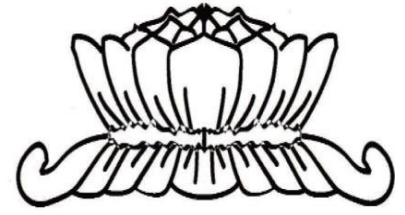


LOTUS



JOURNAL OF THE BIRMINGHAM BUDDHIST VIHARA

ISSUE No.53 Winter 2020

KATHINA ROBE OFFERING CEREMONY

*Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Kathina ceremony was held on Zoom (online video conferencing).
It was a "Bon Kathina" ceremony donated by all devotees of Birmingham Buddhist Vihara*

Sunday 1st November 2020



Day trip to the Buddhism Exhibition in London.



The British Library held an exhibition on Buddhism (25th October 2019 - 23rd February 2020) exploring the roots, philosophy and contemporary relevance of one of the world's major religions, from its beginning in north India in the 6th century BCE to having over 500 million followers across the world today.

The exhibition featured rare and colourful scrolls, painted wall hanging and folding books (parabaiks), Buddhist manuscripts, and early printed works. Also featured were scriptures written on tree bark, palm leaves and silk to gold scrolls of major sutras from countries like Myanmar, Thailand, showing how Buddhism was pivotal in writing and printing techniques. There were also artifacts from Sri Lanka, Tibet, China, Nepal, Japan, etc.

On 18th Feb 2020 Ven.Uttaranyana and I took the 09:30 train from Birmingham New Street Station to Euston Station, London, and walked across a couple of blocks to the British Library. A devotee, Daw Khin Myo Thant and Ashin Nandacara from London Buddhist Vihara were waiting to meet up with Ven.Uttaranyana. Another young devotee, a family friend of Ven.Uttaranyana also joined us at the exhibition.

We spent almost 4hours at the exhibition looking at every exhibit that was on display and

taking photos of almost all of the exhibits. We were glad to see that the exhibition had attracted a lot of interest and that there were also groups of schoolchildren in attendance as well.

In the section where they showed how Buddhism was pivotal in developing writing and printing techniques that started with sacred scriptures written on tree bark, a display of two Maunggan gold plates were the centre of attraction. They were the oldest extracts from the Pali canon to be found in Myanmar, dated to the Pyu Kingdom, 5th century or early 6th century by thirteen scholars who examined them. Each plate had a popular Buddhist verse that summarises the Buddha's teaching, "Ye dhamma hetuppabhava". Made in the pothi format, one gold plate had passages from the Vinaya Pitaka and the second one had text in praise of the Three Jewels hammered into the metal. They were excavated at Maunggan village in 1897. The set of gold folios are also known as Maunggan Khinba-gon gold plates after the villager U Khin Ba's "gon" mound in whose field they were discovered. The shape of the gold foils suggests that the tradition of recording Buddhist texts on palm leaf must have been established in the Pyu era. According to the experts these gold foils were not meant for study but to serve as a "dhamma relic" to be encased inside a stupa.

As the text had a close link a silver reliquary found in the relic chamber of an ancient stupa also found in U Khin Ba's field. In addition there was also a silver pothi manuscript displayed. On display were Kammavaca manuscripts in pali written on ivory sheets, cloth and palm leaves. The World Tipitaka Foundation handed over the recently published 120 volumes of Buddhist canon in Pali to the British Library as a gift for the Buddhist Exhibition. They were also on display. The exhibition also explored the three main schools of Buddhism - Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana - spanning across 20 countries over 2000 years, highlighting the theory, practice and art of Buddhism.

Buddhism continues to inspire diverse artistic expression and lifestyles and, with the concept of mindfulness becoming mainstream, we are excited to host the British Library's largest ever display of Buddhist collections, shining a light on the Library's lesser-known treasures from across the world.' - Jana Iguma, lead curator of Buddhism at the library. Planning on a visit to the next Buddhist Exhibition...after the pandemic dies down!

MMKy

COVID-19 Pandemic A GREAT DANGER IN 21ST CENTURY

COVID-19 infections started in China around November, December 2019 and it spread around the world with unbelievable pace and created or is still creating a real threat and danger to mankind in our lovely world. Its dangers are:

It kills both young and elderly people especially those with existing medical problems. Many people have died prematurely due to COVID-19 infection. Therefore it caused a lot of sorrow in a lot of families and friends, also anxiety and fear of death too.

Due to COVID-19 infections, there has been a great burden on the health service and healthcare workers, with a direct danger and threat to the health and well-being of healthcare professionals. Not to mention the cost of equipment such as PPEs, Masks, ITU services, extra hospital and quarantine facilities. Setting up a “Test, track and trace” system is expensive and all of this put together is a costly burden to any government during the pandemic.

Secondly, due to this contagious infection, people are scared of each other and misunderstandings take place that can develop into animosity and hatred between friends and even family members. That is also a great danger to our society.

To prevent the infection spreading quickly through the population, lockdown measures have to be carried out and that leads to redundancies and economic downturn. Hence financial problems will ensue and lead to poverty, poor nutritional and mental health status in the community. This in turn will in turn result in a society with more health issues.

Mental condition of people will be affected by anxiety, worry, poor nutrition, redundancy, poor finance, uncertainty, divorce etc,. As a result the younger generation will be severely affected.

Education of young and even older people have been affected by this infection and lockdown. It will seriously affect our younger generation as proper education as in person teaching, classroom activities, etc, have been severely curtailed and their academic year shortened.

With the combination of all of the above, every country will definitely be affected. Crime rates could be on the rise in the post COVID-19 pandemic era.

Without a vaccine being developed, COVID-19 or another kind of flu, will come back every year and threaten our world and society with a great financial, mental, physical, educational impact.

Owing to its persistent danger, altered people's mental status and effect on jobs in every walks of life, it will affect our environment and weather which will result in worse effects in agriculture, food production, etc., thereby the local and world economy. These are the clear and present danger to mankind.

Finally, in the current world of terrorism and radicalism, terrorists and radicalised people could possibly develop more contagious and dangerous biological weapons similar to COVID-19 and threaten and further endanger our current peaceful world.

We all should be more vigilant, careful and organised to protect our world in this 21st century by practicing Buddha Dhamma and overcome the danger of this dreadful COVID-19 infection.

Dr Kyi Toe

Do you think that you can attain peace of mind by meditation?

Indeed I can! Human beings are living with suffering or discontent (both mentally and physically) whether we like it or not. To manage a balanced life in the four areas of my life: “physical, social, mental and

spiritual”, I need to attain inner peace in order to manage my life rightfully. This can be attained through meditation.

After going through a 10 days meditation retreat at the age of 19 and attending two more sessions in Myanmar, I would resonate “meditation” as “mind-training” in order to attain inner peace in a sustainable manner. The immediate benefit is a reduction of stress, control of anxiety, promotion of emotional health and intelligence, enhancing self-awareness, reducing age-related memory loss. The long-term benefits among others are focusing on self-awareness (sati) (in my terms as “carrying own weather” regardless of external influences), enhancing concentration (samādhi), cherishing metta bhāvanā (loving kindness experiences). The ultimate benefit is an attainment of nibbāna (eternal peace of mind/mindfulness, i.e. extinction of the threefold fire – raga, dosa, moha) after comprehending the three natural truths.

Vipassanā meditation can guarantee permanent inner peace and mindfulness, as it focuses to concentrate on one’s own mind and matter, and the attainment of vipassana wisdom. During the second time attending the meditation centre in a rural setting, I could vividly experience the “mind” and “matter” and enjoy the freedom from sufferings (vedanā). I also gained the real wisdom of anicca (impermanence) and anatta (non-self) as my corporeality perished whilst my mind separated from matter. I also enjoyed observing my “mind” and kept concentrating only on my mind in the white open sky. After taking a break from long hours of sitting meditation, I found I had no suffering physically or mentally. I came to realise that there’s only mind and matter, i.e., no more self and thought that my state of mind was in nibbāna during the last two days of the sessions. The feelings I had then were inexpressible and felt that I had experienced the truth of the realities inside. During the moments of keeping awareness and maintaining deep concentration, I felt like I was flying sometimes without corporeality (i.e., flying only with the mind) in tranquil peace of mind. If I practise meditation regularly the more I can maintain mindfulness and the happier I am in the state of mind in running the daily routines. I feel I can make the right decisions and be really focused. Certainly, I can “carry my own weather” no matter what I encounter in life. I can live my life with inner peace by being mindful as much as I can by concentrating throughout the day.

Sandar Thy

Birmingham Buddhist Vihara - Birmingham Heritage Week

10th September 2020 - 20th September 2020

<https://birminghamheritageweek.co.uk/10-sept/birmingham-buddhist-vihara/>

Birmingham Heritage Week 2020 consisted of eleven days of varied events, from exhibition and displays to talks, walks and open days. This year, for the first time, the festival explored Birmingham’s heritage through virtual events and in person visits.

It was organised and funded by Birmingham City Council and supported by Birmingham Museums Trust.

Birmingham Buddhist Vihara took part in the event. We had a fairly good number of in-person visits despite the ongoing pandemic. We adhered to COVID-19 safety regulations and Ven.Nagasena looked after all the telephone bookings and the visits. Small groups of 5-6 or family groups were shown around the pagoda and a brief talk on the pagoda and Buddhism given. It was well received and very complimentary comments were recorded in the visitors’ book.

Birmingham Buddhist Vihara will take part in next year’s Birmingham Heritage Week again. We plan to have a virtual event in place by then as well.

NB. Birmingham Buddhist Vihara is listed in the survey of Buddhist Buildings in England. It was prepared for Historic England by Professor Emma Tomalin and Dr Caroline Starkey (Associate Professor now), The Centre for Religion and Public Life University of Leeds June 2016.

Birmingham Buddhist Vihara

Dhamma Talaka Peace Pagoda, Sangharama Vihara & Rewata Dhamma Hall

Repair and renovation projects in the second half of year 2019.

Project 8:- Repair of wall behind the Buddha statue in Pagoda Hall

Work started 02/07/2019 - Finished 13/07/2019

The mural behind the Buddha statue was stripped off the wall as the wall was showing water damage. The water damaged plasterboards were removed and the brickwork behind was allowed to dry off. New plasterboards were installed and the wall skimmed. The wall was then painted white and the decision was made to leave the wall bare for now. The repair finished in time for the Pagoda Anniversary & Dhammacakka Day ceremony held on 14/07/2019.

Project 9 :- Renovation of the dining area in the Rewata Dhamma Hall

Work started 17/09/2019. Finished 15/10/2019

Kathina Ceremony on the 20th October 2019. 1981 Class of doctors were the main donors for the ceremony and they met two thirds of the cost of the renovation of the dining area. Additional £1000 was donated by Dr. Aung Hpyoe and Dr. Thin Thin Yee. It was their wish that the dining hall was ready in time for the Kathina Ceremony. Birmingham Buddhist Vihara Trust thanks the class of 1981 for their generosity.

1. The original ceiling was treated with mold removal spray.
2. The ceiling was then insulated with insulation quilt, thus leaving an air-space for ventilation, It was then boarded up with insulated plasterboards. The ceiling was then skimmed and painted.
3. Exposed wires and fluorescent lights were removed and the ceiling rewired and hidden as per regulations. Eight LED downlighters with two light switches were installed,
4. Five downlighters were installed over the existing food serving area along the wall.
5. Two emergency backup fire lighting and fire exit signs were installed.
6. The main door was renovated into a fire exit door.
7. Sewage pipe and wooden uprights/columns were all boxed in.
8. Skirting boards installed all around and the place decorated.

Project 10: Shrine room ceiling repair and renovation of the en-suites bathrooms in the Sangharama Vihara.

Renovation started 03/12/2019 - 05/02/2020

The ceiling in the shrine room started showing a crack due to a slow water leak from one of the bedrooms upstairs. There had been previous water damage in the ceiling before about 4-5 years ago. The damaged plasterboard was replaced with a new one and skimmed and repainted. The cause of the water leak was to be addressed when the en-suite bathrooms upstairs were to be renovated.

On stripping down one of the en-suite bathrooms upstairs the slow water leak was identified and a new connection fitted to stem the leak. Four en-suite bathrooms were stripped out and fully refurbished with new units. In two of the en-suite bathrooms the old baths were removed and new shower units installed.

One of the visitors' room en-suite bathroom was also fully refurbished.

The visitors' toilet downstairs had new units installed.

(Three en-suites bathrooms remain on the future renovation list.)

Vihara News

Spiritual Director Dr Ottaranyana

Events and Donations

Birmingham Buddhist Vihara and the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara Trust are grateful for the generous donations made by the devotees. **Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu**

Retreats

Dr Ottaranyana would usually travel to Belgium for Metta retreat. As a travel ban was being imposed the retreat was held via SKYPE video link in August 2020.

Easter retreat and 10 Days Vipassana retreats were also cancelled at Birmingham Buddhist Vihara because of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.



Pagoda Anniversary

Dr. Mar Mar Lwin, as she has done in the past years donated £1000.00 for the auspicious days of Waso (Vassa), Pagoda Anniversary and Dhammacakka Day even though Birmingham Buddhist Vihara was unable to hold any of those ceremonies. Birmingham Buddhist Vihara also received a total £4335 as Warso (Vassa) Robe donations from all devotees. **Sadhu,sadhu,sadhu**

Abhidhamma & Pavarana (31st October 2020)

Our celebration on Pavarana Day with offering of light inside and outside the Dhamma Talaka Peace pagoda was broadcast live via Zoom video link.

This was followed by Pathana chanting for World Peace and those who are affected by the pandemic! We dedicated the recitation to all beings. May all beings be happy and peaceful!

KATHINA ROBE OFFERING CEREMONY

Kathina ceremony was held on 1st November via Zoom video-link and a number of devotees joined the virtual ceremony. Total amount of £5380 was received for Kathina Robe donations. **Sadhu,sadhu,sadhu.**

Dr Kyaw Myint Oo, patron of Birmingham Buddhist Vihara Trust and his beloved wife Daw Ywe Ywe and family offered Dana and performed a merit-sharing

water libation ceremony via Zoom in memory of their dearly departed mother and mother in law. They donated £1000 towards Birmingham Buddhist Vihara Trust, £1000 to Lotus Children's Education Trust, £1000 to Dhammikarama Sheffield and £600 to Brighter Future Foundation. **Sadhu,sadhu,sadhu**



A dedicated memorial service ceremony for Ko Sonny Zan, who passed away one year ago, was arranged on 23rd August 2020 by Dr Mya Mya Aye and Dr Sai. The ceremony was also to acknowledge Ko Sonny Zan's will and intention to donate from his estate to the charities he was involved in: (1) Lotus Children's Education Trust (£4030.00), (2) the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara Trust (£2000.00) and (3) the Birmingham Sayadaw Education Project (£2000.00). **Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu.**



Bollard lights and uplights

In early part of November due to a generous donation by Dr. Win Myint Aung and Dr.Khine Thin Han, Birmingham Buddhist Vihara Trust were able to install five bollard lights for the footpath between the Dhamma Talaka Pagoda and the Sangharama Vihara. Additionally, two uplights for the two chinthes (lions), all timed to switch on at the same time as the spotlights for the pagoda were also installed. **Sadhu,sadhu, sadhu.**

In memory of late mother Daw Khin Hla Kyi, Ms Hla Myat Lwin & Dr Zayar Win donated £1000 for the maintenance of Dhamma Talaka Peace Pagoda.

Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu.

Transportation

Birmingham Buddhist Vihara Trust came to a decision that transport would be provided for the bikkhus. While in the process of acquiring a car a very generous donor Dr Moe Thant, Theingi Thant and son, Chris, from Newark on Trent donated a hybrid Toyota Yaris to the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara. A real bonus as the bikkhus can commute in comfort and safety especially during the COVID-19 pandemic period. Birmingham Vihara Trust would also like to thank Ellen Parker for her contribution towards transport. The previous car, donated by Ellen, provided a good almost 20 years service! **Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu.**



Robotic vacuum cleaner

In December 2020 to keep the Dhamma Talaka Pagoda Hall, Sangharama Vihara and the Dhamma Hall clean and dust free, Dr. Min Zaw Aung and Dr. Aye Aye Yee donated Robbie the robotic vacuum cleaner. It has been put to good use.

Birthday Dana

Dr Yu Yu Kyaw and Ju Ju celebrated their Birthday swan offering together at Birmingham Buddhist Vihara in July



Dr Kyaw Htun Aye and Dr Htet Nwe Win from Swansea offered lunch dana and donated £500 for Birmingham

Buddhist Vihara in celebration of Dr Htet Nwe Win's Birthday.



Volunteers

Ashin Rahtapala acknowledged all dana towards the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara Trust on social media with beautiful pictures to inform all devotees with the latest activities at the Vihara. Especially with the ongoing pandemic COVID-19 restrictions, as most of the time devotees could only donate online, Bhante kept a social media diary of the donors together with his best wishes and blessings. We are all thankful for his IT skills. Ashin Pahtapala still looks after the grounds, both the security and the garden.

Garden Maintenance

Keith Jones, a trustee, has been tending the Vihara's garden with the Zen group on the last Sunday of every month. He is also going to buy garden equipment as a donation.

Ko Htet Hla and group of friends from London volunteered to trim the Peace Pagoda fence every year. Birmingham Buddhist Vihara Trust would like to thank them all for their commitment and contribution. Their hard work is very much appreciated.



Pagoda Repair Donation List 🙏🙏🙏

Dr Zeyyar Win + Daw Hla Myat Tun	£1000
Dr Kyaw Zin Cho + Dr Htet Htet Win	£100
Dr Than Htun Wai + Daw Nu Nu Wai	£200
Ko Nanda Myo Min + Ma Phyu Ei Thwe	£300
Dr Sai Swan Heine + Dr Mya Mya Aye	£200
U Sein Min + Dr Min Min Pike	£100
Ma Pan Pan	£100
Dr Htar Htar Aye (Germany)	£100

2565 BE/2021 EVENTS CALENDAR

BIRMINGHAM BUDDHIST VIHARA - DHAMMATALAKA PEACE PAGODA- BIRMINGHAM BUDDHIST ACADEMY

FESTIVALS

Buddha Day (Visaka)
Sunday 23rd May 10:30am

Dhammacakka Day & Pagoda Anniversary
Sunday, 25th July 10:30am

Abhidhamma & Pavarana Day
Wednesday 20th Oct. 7:00pm

Kathina
Sunday, 24th October 10:30am

FULL MOON

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

27th Jan, 26th Feb, 27th March, 26th April,
25th May, 24th June, 23rd July, 22nd Aug, 20th
Sep, 20th Oct, 18th Nov, 18th Dec

RETREATS

Easter Retreat
Friday 2nd April – Monday 5th April
Led by Dr Ottara Nyana

10-DAY Insight Retreat
Friday 20th Aug – Sunday 29th Aug
(experienced)
Led by Dr Ottara Nyana
Designed to enable meditators to experience the characteristic of impermanence and nature of non-selfhood as part of the process of insight meditation.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR RETREAT

SCHOOL VISITS

25th – 31st Dec (suitable for all)
New year patthana chanting every year 6pm – 8pm new year day.
Contact : Dr Nagasana
Email : uk.suriya@gmail.com

SCHOOL VISIT FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The number of school visits to the Pagoda is rising year on year and continues to provide students with invaluable experience to hear about the Buddha and his teachings and to meet Buddhist monks. For a school visit please contact:

Contact : Dr Nagasana
Email : uk.suriya@gmail.com;
Maxkyi@gmail.com

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY CLASSES

from 1pm - 3pm
Every Sunday except when it falls on Christmas Day and New Year's Day.
Suitable for 5 + years, but all welcome with or without children.

SUMMER COURSE FOR CHILDREN

(5th to 8th Aug.)
Please bring your children to the Vihara to stay here and learn about Buddhism. This five day course will include a Buddhist film as well as enjoyable teachings. Accommodation will be available in our Vihara and we look forward to our children's course. If you want to train your children with novice ordination, you are welcome to book with us during these children days.

For details please contact Dr Nagasana:
uk.suriya@gmail.com

MEDITATION CLASSES

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

PAGODA OPENING

Summer 9am – 6pm
Winter 9am – 5pm
The Pagoda is open most days but to avoid disappointment **please call or e-mail first** to ensure there will be someone available to welcome you and show you around.
Phone: 0121 454 6591 or
email: venuttaranyana@gmail.com
For school visit contact: uk.suriya@gmail.com

Birmingham Buddhist Academy

Diploma Buddhist Study one year course started in 12th September 2020. Classes are running weekly on Friday and Saturday from 7pm to 9pm on Skype. Students are learning Pali Grammar, Abhidhamma, Meditation (both Samatha & Vipassana) and Morality & Ethics. Student will complete their assessment in May, 2021. Certificate award ceremony usually held during summer (Peace Pagoda Anniversary). Further information about the course can be found at <http://www.birminghambuddhistvihara.org/about/>