



# *Special Lotus*

*Dhamma Talāka Peace Pagoda  
25<sup>th</sup> Silver Anniversary Edition*

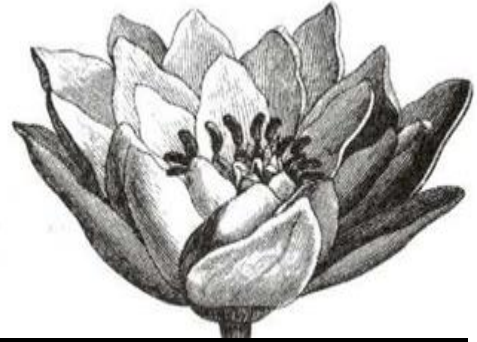


# Contents Page



Content	Page No
Message from the Spiritual Director	3
The Construction of Dhamma Talaka Peace Pagoda	4
Venerable Dr. Rewata Dhamma	6
An Abbot of Audacity and Ability – Our Sayadaw’s Odyssey	7
Bhamo Sayadaw passes away	9
Rev. Saïdo Kennaway passes away	10
A letter from Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi	11
Dr. Rewata Dhamma & The Myanmar Democracy Movement	12
Buddhism and Lists (By Bhikkhu Subhuti American Monk)	19
Marie-Cecile Forget - Painting and Meditation	23
Photo Essay of Peace Pagoda	24
Dhamma Talaka Peace Pagoda Project Report	26
Vihara News	27
Our Patron & Our Trustees	29

# LOTUS



JOURNAL OF THE BIRMINGHAM BUDDHIST VIHA

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## Message from the Spiritual Director

In 1990, a site on Osler Street was offered by Birmingham City Council to build the Pagoda. This was opened in 1998 and Venerable. Dr. Rewata Dhamma decided that it should be known as the Dhammatalaka Pagoda, the Reservoir of Truth. Since then, as well as our general activities, we have

- Facilitated Buddhist classes, meditation retreats and Buddhist festivals
- Hosted groups of school children and adults from many different institutions for Religious Education purposes.
- Taken part in interfaith activities
- Established and opened Birmingham Buddhist Academy in 2013

The Dhamma Talaka Peace Pagoda is celebrating its Silver Jubilee today. This is only possible because of your continued support, devotion and generosity. The duty of care for the Pagoda falls on all of us so that our Buddhist heritage can continue for years to come.

Part of the preparation for the 25th Anniversary included a major renovation and repair of the defective concrete system of the stupa, a Gold Robe offering, regilding of the Umbrella together with Vajira, publishing of the special edition of Lotus Magazine, and last but not least is the publication of Dr. Rewata Dhamma's biography.

In celebration of the Pagoda 25th Silver Anniversary, speakers from Buddhist and multifaith backgrounds will lead an academic session focusing on "Buddhism and World Peace".

In conclusion, I would like to thank all writers who have contributed to this special issue of our magazine and dhamma friends from near and far who have very generously donated and supported our Peace Pagoda and Vihara. I would like to express my special gratitude to Ashin Ratthapala for regilding of the Pagoda umbrella together with Vajira. I must acknowledge as well Yann Lovelock and Dr William Myint for all their hard work in translating and editing Dr Rewata Dhamma's biography. Furthermore, let me mention my great thanks to Theingi Thant who has both designed and formatted the book of essays and this publication of special Lotus 57 and Dr Rewata Dhamma's biography.

*Ven. Dr Ottara Nyana  
Birmingham Buddhist Vihara  
Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2023*



## ***The construction of Dhamma Talāka Peace Pagoda***



The Dhamma Talāka pagoda in Birmingham was planned by U Rewata to fulfill three main objectives: to serve as a place for Buddhists to perform religious ceremonies; as a place for people from other religions to come and learn about Buddhism; and as a venue providing inner peace for all human beings.

In 1985, Sayādaw wrote to the Birmingham City Council requesting them to grant him a building that could be refurbished, or a piece of land on which to build a structure. Eventually Council officials offered a suitable site on favourable terms. The site on Osler Street was where several terrace houses were once situated at the back of the Edgbaston Reservoir and only a five minutes' walk from the Carlyle Road vihāra.

It was sold at only ten percent of valuation to the Birmingham Buddhist Vihāra Trust, which had the management responsibility to build the pagoda. At Yann Lovelock's suggestion to give the pagoda a name appropriate to its location, Dr. Rewata Dhamma decided to name it Dhamma Talāka (Reservoir of Truth) in reference to the city reservoir behind it.

The architect David Jones was given the responsibility to draw up a basic plan of the land and Sayādaw brought a design of the pagoda from Myanmar. In 1994 two special architects from Myanmar, U Win Tin and U Khin Zaw Oo, arrived to begin the project as previously arranged. Unfortunately, in January 1997, U Khin Zaw Oo had a motor accident and had to return to Myanmar, his place being taken by U Aye.

### **Buddha's Relics and cultural handcrafts**

Originally pagodas were built in India as receptacles for relics left from the Buddha's cremation and were known as cetiya (zedi in Myanmar), meaning reminder or memorial. The significance of those in Dhamma Talāka was the fusion of new and old Buddha relics. Firstly, there were small particles in a special container, originally given to two monks by King Thibaw, the last king of Myanmar, after he was exiled by the British government and under house arrest in Ratanagiri, India. These were then passed on to other monastics until U Rewata received them in 1964. Ten years later, when U Rewata came to England, he gave the relics for safe keeping to the ex-prime minister U Nu, who was living in India at the time. Later they were brought to England when Sayādaw started his pagoda project.

Devotees donated more and more items to be enshrined with them in the pagoda, as had been the ancient custom. These were distributed about the pagoda in parts nominated the noble bird perch (at the tip), the bell and also within the pagoda. Sayādaw had also brought back a piece of the overthrown Berlin Wall in 1998 as a reminder of the pagoda's peace function.

The Buddha statue inside the pagoda was donated by the sculptor U Taw Taw and family from Myanmar and is seated serenely on a golden throne with a golden awning made in traditional Myanmar style above it. Around the rim of the central dome are representations of the twenty-eight previous Buddhas specially crafted and painted on site by the builders. There were also both new and old Buddha statues from many Buddhist cultures stored inside, as well as bookcases filled with Tipiṭaka books, and examples of ancient scriptures painted on boards or inscribed on parchment. The magnificent carved teak doors and the parquet teak floors were also donated from Myanmar. In accordance with the Myanmar tradition, the two lion statues at the entrance of the pagoda were to ward off any dangers.

Donations for the pagoda were received from devotees all over the world. Since the land for the pagoda was allocated, the news of Dr. Rewata's pagoda project was widely disseminated. People from Myanmar living in the UK were the main donors, but devotees from Europe, America, Australia, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia also contributed.

By the time the pagoda's foundations were completed a big problem was encountered. The budget was overspent and it was doubtful at first whether the project could continue. But due to the continued efforts of U Rewata and the extraordinary benevolence of donors, despite further setbacks, the pagoda was eventually built. Therefore, the names of all the donors and supporters over the years have been recorded as a memorial.

### **Collective efforts for the Vihāra**

It was clear that the key to the success of the Vihāra was due to the collective efforts of everyone involved. The local people who helped Sayādaw in different ways were Nath Kottegoda, Denys Richards, Mark Skan and Bill Strongman. Children's classes were taken by Ellen Parker. For adults the classes were led by Vajira Bailey, who was helped by Ramona Kauth and Yann Lovelock. The Vihāra newsletter was at first taken care of by Mike Regan and by Karunā Bodhi.

We should also thank those devotees who helped Sayādaw since the beginning of his missionary work in England. They included Daw Ohn Myint Aye, one of the first Trustees; U Khin of the BBC and Daw Ay Mya Khin; Dr. Aung Myin and Daw Thein Thein; U Sein Tun Aung and his wife Daw Hla Hla; and Dr. Mar Mar Lwin. The Trustees of the Vihāra at the time of writing were, Ann Lovelock, Malika Kottegoda, Brian Lester, Dr. Mar Mar Lwin, Dr. Kyaw Myint Oo, U Maung Maung Than, Lesley Gray and Mr. Samsari Lal.

Among the volunteers who lived locally and worked diligently for the vihara's success were the following:



### **Samsari Lal**

Born in the Punjab, he was originally a follower of Dr. Ambedkar and a disciple of Dr. H. Saddhatissa, who came to Britain in 1956. In 1975, when Dr. Rewata Dhamma came to England, he was among the people who went to greet Sayādaw.

### **Dr. Mar Mar Lwin**

She was born in Myanmar and obtained a degree in Medicine. She has been a friend of the Dhamma, studying Abhidhamma and practicing Vipassanā meditation, and has donated substantially to the Vihāra.

### **Ann Lovelock, MRPharmS**

She was born in England and became a Buddhist in 1967. Since U Rewata came to the Carlyle Road monastery, she was Sayādaw's disciple. A hospital pharmacist by profession, and the daughter of an accountant, she was the Vihāra's long-standing treasurer.

### **Experts U Win Tin and U Aye**

The religious art museums and showrooms of Myanmar contain polychrome works by U Win Tin. After his arrival in Britain in 1994, he worked on decorating the pagoda. U Aye was a famous sculptor who had decorated monasteries in Myanmar and Singapore. He arrived in Britain in 1997 and worked in place of U Khin Zaw Oo.

### **David Jones BSA. (Hons), B. Arch RIBA**

David Jones studied architecture in Cardiff and received a degree with distinction in architecture in 1972. He was responsible for the supervision and management of the Dhamma Taḷāka pagoda construction project.

### **Martin Walker, LLB**

Martin Walker obtained a degree in law from Hull University in 1981. Just a couple of years before arriving in Birmingham in 1992, he became interested in Buddhism. Since his arrival in the city he was involved as a voluntary legal adviser for the Dhamma Taḷāka project.



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30<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Dear Dhamma Friends

Birmingham Buddhist Vihara Trust (BBVT) is grateful for the generous donations made by the devotees. All your donations towards BBVT are being used for the Pagoda maintenance, vihara running costs and offering requisites to Sangha. All of this will not be possible without your donations. May this good deed bring you peace, happiness in your life.

Sadhu Sadhu Sadhu  
Birmingham Buddhist Vihara Trust





**VENERABLE Dr. REWATA DHAMMA**  
**4 Dec. 1929 - 26 May 2004**

Syadaw Dr. Rewata Dhamma was born in Hanthada District, Myanmar, son of U Lu Khin and his wife Daw Pyant Gyi. He studied Theravada Buddhism from childhood under several eminent scholar monks. He passed the highest examination in scriptural studies at the age of 23 and was awarded the prestigious title of Sasana-dhaja-siripavara dhammacariya in 1953. Partly as a result of his attainment he was included among the young monks who helped with the arrangements for the 6th General Sangha Council held in Yangon between 1954-6.

He was then given a state scholarship to study in India and went to the Sanskrit University in Varanasi. He obtained an MA in Sanskrit in 1964 and a Ph.D in 1967 from Benares Hindu University. He was now proficient in Hindi and began to write in that language. One of his books, a translation of the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* with his own commentary was awarded the Kalidasa prize from the Hindi Academy as one of the outstanding books of the year in 1967 and is still a standard textbook. He also edited a three-volume edition of *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)* with commentary, published by the Sanskrit University. In 1969 he was appointed Chief Editor of the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhist Technical Terms* and later edited the *Paramita* magazine in Hindi and English.

In 1975 he moved to England where he established a Buddhist Vihara in Birmingham as his base. In 1998 he accomplished the building of the Dhamma Talaka Peace Pagoda, which has been a harbour for many Buddhist followers and is visited

by thousands of visitors each year.

Up to his death in May 2004 Dr. Rewata Dhamma taught Buddhism and Vipassana meditation at various centres in Europe and the United States of America.

Dr. Rewata Dhamma has written numerous articles and essays on Buddhism (a comprehensive though not yet complete bibliography, skillfully compiled by Yann Lovelock, is included in this publication (see p.40). It reflects something of the extensive range of his writing). He was a recognized author on Buddhism and his academic scholarship was internationally respected.

All of Dr Rewata Dhamma's activities were in the service of spreading the Dhamma. This was done not only through his teachings but through the example he set for all those who met him. As is reflected in the tributes gathered in this publication, he is remembered for not only for his gentleness, humour, compassion and wisdom but for his unfailing kindness to everyone he came into contact with. Though he is sadly missed, his valuable example lives on in those who were privileged to have come into contact with him.

*He will not be forgotten.*





# **An Abbot of Audacity and Ability – Our Sayadaw’s Odyssey**

*By Dr Kyaw Myint Oo*



Future greatness is often manifested in an inborn aptitude from childhood. Born the third child of a traditional farming family from a little known hamlet in the Irrawaddy Delta region, this youngster showed even then that he possessed all the necessary attributes for becoming a future Burmese Buddhist champion. During the years prior to World War 2, well before becoming a novice at the age of the thirteen, the young schoolboy was well versed in Buddhist literature, paving the way for later success in the official religious examination.

Having attained higher ordination as Ashin Rewata one year after Burma gained independence, the twenty year old studied so diligently that in 1952 he achieved the most coveted title of Dhammacariya at the age of just twenty three.

Opportunity knocked at his door unexpectedly, after he had already taken up teaching duties, when the government of the day awarded him a state scholarship to study Sanskrit and Hindi in India. For the four years after completing his studies in Burma, his evenings had been taken up in teaching young novices and monks preparing for their respective religious examinations, while during the day he himself was studying English and Hindi at Dhammaduta College in Yangon - burning the candle at both ends!

In 1956 a new chapter opened as Ashin Rewata set foot in India, fulfilling a yearning to pursue scriptural learning in the land where the Blessed One was originally enlightened and had taught. As a prerequisite for enrolment at the university, where the official language is Hindi, he studied that language in a high school till he gained proficiency in it.

Sanskrit was another language he had to master, since that was the language in which the majority of the treatises he had come to study were written. That hurdle too was overcome when he obtained a BA in Sanskrit from the Sanskrit University in Benares in 1962. In 1964 an MA in Sanskrit and Indian philosophy was awarded him from the Hindi University (BHU). There also Mahayana Buddhism was a required facet of his studies.

In 1967 Ashin Rewata Dhamma received his doctorate from BHU for his dissertation analysing the Visuddhimagga. During those years in India he wrote, translated and edited several books in Pali and Hindi, most of them published by the Sanskrit University. One of his works in particular, the Sanskrit text of the Abhidhammattha Sangaha with a Hindi translation and his commentary, was awarded the Kalidasa Prize by the Hindi Academy in 1967 and is still a prescribed textbook in many Indian universities.

On a number of occasions too, while he was living in India between 1956-1974, Sayadaw also met and talked with former Prime Minister, U Nu, in Bhopal, where he and some of his family were staying through the courteous hospitality of then Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi.

The year of 1975 was the most significant milestone on his continuing journey, when he ventured out of Asia for the first time to settle on Birmingham's foreign soil. Persevering over initial natural vicissitudes with unyielding mind of steel, his one and only goal was the dissemination of the Exalted One's sublime teachings in their pristine purity, of which the construction of a 'cetiya' (Stupa), Vihara and Dhamma Hall was an essential part. Having overcome hardship in his early years in the U.K, Sayadaw took on the challenge of setting up the first Theravada Buddhist centre outside London, eventually settling in Edgbaston with the support of both Indian and Burmese Buddhists.

Vividly I can recollect Bhante telling me one day in 1992 that he had brought a letter from U Nu to Lord Mountbatten of Burma, asking him to render any possible assistance, to which he never received a reply. His long-standing dream was fulfilled in July 1998 when Dhammatalaka Peace Pagoda was inaugurated, followed by the opening of the Sangharama Vihara in 2002. The Dhamma Hall named after him followed in 2009 under the leadership of his hand-picked and capable successor, Venerable Dr Ottaranyana. So, now the triple gems of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha coexist on this once barren piece of land for the benefit of all people.

In the Peace Pagoda are enshrined Buddha relics once belonging to the Burmese Royal Family and taken by the last King Hsipaw into exile in 1885. A portion of the relics was entrusted to the Burmese monk, U Katti, in India when he visited the deposed king in Ratangiri; later they were passed on to another Buddhist monk, U Usara, and from him to Ashin Rewata in 1964. The Peace Pagoda is therefore 'Dhatuceti', serving three cardinal purposes – as

- A sacred place of peace and tranquillity to practice 'sattipatana', with the added benefit of observing particularly mindfulness of every bodily movement in its vicinity; and also to perform traditional religious ceremonies along with significant events in the Buddhist calendar.
- Provider of reservoirs of knowledge to those non-Buddhists who are keen to learn and understand what the Buddha taught.
- Preserver of the Sublime Teachings, a treasure trove to younger generations.

Dr Rewata Dhamma was without any doubt in the vanguard of the Buddha's dispensation and one of the few monastic Burmese Theravada Buddhist teachers in the Western Hemisphere, and also a bridge towards multi faith understanding in the UK and further afield. He was humble and hardworking, self-effacing and, above all else, vividly visionary and an embodiment of unflinching loving kindness.

Sayadaw travelled far and wide across the globe, conducting retreats, delivering speeches and giving lectures. The audience for his talks ranged across the broad spectrum from national governments and members of the United Nations to ordinary devotees. Honouring him with the profoundly deserved and long overdue prestigious title of Aggamahapandita in recognition of his excellent scholarship did not occur in the land of his birth until year 2000, chiefly due to his connection with those protesting the undemocratic military regime.

May Dhamma Talaka Peace Pagoda, brainchild of our single-minded late Sayadaw, the most Venerable Dr Rewata Dhamma and embodiment of the Tathagata, bring reconciliation among the armed conflicts raging across the globe, followed by perpetual peace, the one embracing the other along this long stretch of Samsara.





*State Sangha Maha  
Nayaka Committee  
Chairman*

*Bhamo Sayadaw  
passes away*

*25<sup>th</sup> May 2023*



BHAMO Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa, Chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, 94 years old, vasa 74, peacefully passed away at Bhamo Monastery in Mahaangmye Township in Mandalay at 11:11 pm on 25 May.

The venerable Sayadaw received medical treatment for liver and stomach diseases at the hospital in Bangkok, Thailand in March. Then, Sayadaw was moved to Mandalay General Hospital from the hospital in Bangkok, and two months later, Sayadaw passed away.



Sayadaw was born to parents U Po Thit and Daw Aye Thaik in Yabe Village in Taungtha Township of Myingyan District in Mandalay Region.



Sayadaw was offered Agga Maha Pandita, Agga Maha Ganthavacaka Pandita, Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru and Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika titles as well as D Litt by the State Pariyatti Sasana Universities management central committee, Yangon University and Sehan University of Korea. Sayadaw served as Chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee - SSMNC and as Pro-Rector of the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University.

## ***Rev. Saido Kennaway***

***14 March 1950 – 3 March 2023***



Though there is sadness in announcing the passing of the exemplary Zen monk, Rev. Saido Kennaway, there is also joy in reviewing his long association with us at Dhammatalaka Pagoda and, indeed, in the West Midlands region generally. After being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer earlier this year, his illness progressed swiftly during his last few weeks. He died on 3 March after a one-night stay in the Princess Royal Hospital, Telford, just short of his 73<sup>rd</sup> birthday.

Saido was born David Kennaway on 14 March 1950 in Cheshire. Following scientific training at university, he worked in the field of water treatment and purification. Later he trained under Rev. Jiyu Kennett at Shasta Abbey in California and ordained into the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, a Soto Zen order, in 1977. Back in Britain, he continued his training at Throssel Hole in Northumberland. During that time he was accepted as a chaplain by Angulimala, the Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy Organisation, initially visiting prisons in the North East. Then in 1993 he took over as Angulimala's Co-ordinator, interviewing chaplaincy candidates along with Ven. Khemadhammo and assigning them to where they were needed by the prison service.

From now on Saido began undertaking senior monastic responsibilities as well. In 1990-91 he was the founding prior of Reading Buddhist Priory, then returned to Throssel Hole as vice-abbot before taking over from Rev. Master Alexander Hardcastle at Telford in 2000. By that time too he had joined the committee of the Network of Buddhist Organisations, of which he eventually became its long-standing treasurer. In addition to holding trusteeships in all these organisations, he acted in a similar capacity elsewhere and was also kept busy visiting the centres to which he acted as advisor.

We in Birmingham saw Saido often because of his connection with the local Serene Reflection Group which practised regularly in the pagoda. He and his group would also chant at the annual Buddha Day celebrations in the Birmingham Art Gallery and on other Buddhist occasions in the city and in the pagoda. He was diligently occupied with his many activities to the end, working with efficiency, wisdom and self-deprecating humour. May his rebirth be as fortunate and active; his qualities will always be needed!

**Upasaka Nyanaloka**

## *A letter from Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi*



I congratulate the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara on the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Dhamma Talaka Peace Pagoda in Birmingham. The pagoda was built under the direction of the late Ven. Rewata Dhamma Sayadaw, who I regard as one of my long-time kalyana-mittas (spiritual friends) in my life as a monk.

When I was compiling the Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma in the early 1990s, Ven. Rewata Dhamma was my primary consultant, who checked my commentary on the root text and provided additional material for the explanatory guide and the introduction. Another eminent Burmese Abhidhamma scholar, Ven. U Silananda, resident in San Francisco, provided the tables and charts for the book.

I had met Ven. Rewata Dhamma several times when I was living in Kandy, Sri Lanka, but my most memorable meeting with him was my last. This took place in Singapore at the very end of 2001. At the end of December, Ven. U Silananda came to Singapore and conducted a series of lectures on the Abhidhammattha Sangaha, using the “Comprehensive Manual” as his source book. At the same time, Ven. Rewata Dhamma arrived in Singapore to participate in a commemorative event at the city’s Burmese Buddhist Temple.

Ven. U Silananda concluded his series of Abhidhamma lectures on December 31st, and that night, as the year 2002 arrived, all three of us sat at the same table signing copies of the “Comprehensive Manual” for all the students of Abhidhamma who had attended U Silananda’s lecture series. By the end of the night, our hands were tired from signing so many books, but everyone experienced great joy at this auspicious gathering. It seemed to me that the invisible hand of kamma was working behind the scenes to bring together the three contributors to the “Comprehensive Manual” in a city-state that none of us considered his homeland.

As I commemorate Ven. U Rewata Dhamma, I hope that all who learned from him will cherish his memory with deep veneration and with gratitude for his contributions to the Buddha Sasana.

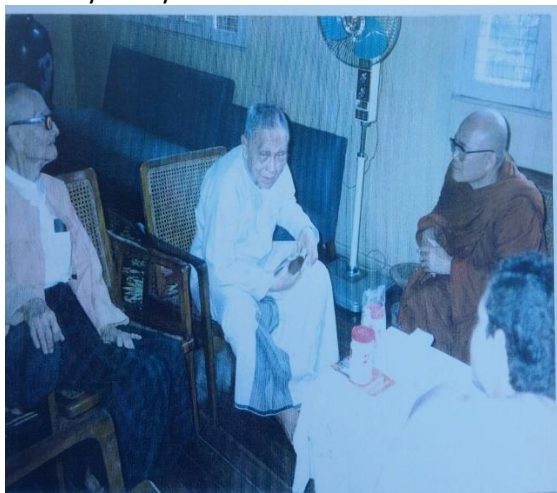


# *Dr. Rewata Dhamma*

## *&*

# *The Myanmar Democracy Movement*

When describing the democracy movement in Myanmar, we could not omit Sayādaw Dr. Rewata for his efforts to restore democracy in Myanmar. Like many Myanmar Buddhist monks, Dr. Rewata had a deep sense of patriotism and responsibility for peace and stability in Myanmar.



Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) was put under house arrest in 1989 by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), or simply known as the Myanmar military junta. After a few years of her house arrest UN and interested countries were quite keen for ASSK and the junta to have a dialogue to move the country's political situation forward. Dr. Rewata was in a unique position to act as a mediator between ASSK and SLORC, since Dr. Rewata had known ASSK and her family for some time. UN officials knew this and approached Dr. Rewata to try and set up a meeting between the two parties.

The peace organisation led by Sayādaw had an office in New York, so as to be able to communicate easily with the UN. Based on that connection, Sayādaw was quite friendly with Mr. Francesc Vendrell, UN Director of Political Affairs for the South Asia and Pacific region. Sayādaw had an intention to negotiate between the opposition politicians and the Myanmar Military Government and believed

that the UN could give a lot of assistance. He explained to Mr. Vendrell what his intentions were and Sayādaw also met with UN ambassadors from the Western countries and asked their views on the situation.

With their encouragement, Sayādaw decided to try and promote negotiations between the military government and the opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as to invite the various armed factions in Myanmar to the meetings. Despite scepticism from democracy activists abroad Sayādaw Dr. Rewata returned to Myanmar a few times to try and mediate between ASSK and the military junta.

On 5 August 1994, when he met Lt. General Khin Nyunt for the second time he urged on him that the whole world was hoping that the military government would release Aung San Suu Kyi and hand over power to the National League for Democracy (NLD). If they were unable to release her, he urged that the government should at least meet with her to negotiate. During their first discussion, Lt. General Khin Nyunt explained in detail to Sayādaw the reasons they could not release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Sayādaw did not press him further.

On a second visit Sayādaw was able to see Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. For many years she was neither allowed to see anybody nor to talk to anyone outside her household, including her family members. She appeared to be pleased to see an outside person after five years of isolation. She even invited Sayādaw for lunch, having known him well in the past.

The following article written by Dr. Rewata in a Japanese magazine called *This is Yomiuri*, published by Yomiuri Shimbun, described in detail, his attempts to get the leaders of SLORC and ASSK to meet.

## **MYANMAR'S FUTURE HINGES ON SLORC-SUU KYI RECONCILIATION** **By Ven. Dr. Rewata Dhamma**



The very first time I met Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of the late Gen. Aung San, who was the hero of the struggle for Myanmar's independence from the British, was during the early 1960s at the Deer Park in Isipatana, near Varanasi. This park is the place where the Buddha Gotama preached his First Sermon. Suu Kyi had come to Varanasi with her mother, Daw Khin Kyi, the Myanmar ambassador to India at that time.

They were there to perform personal religious duties. I and my fellow monks thought ourselves quite fortunate to be able to meet the family of the late Gen. Aung San. Suu Kyi's mother generously invited the monks to come to visit her residence in New Delhi.

So whenever I went to New Delhi, I would visit Daw Khin Kyi and I used to see her daughter, Aung San Suu Kyi, from time to time. The one thing I did notice about her was that despite her youth, she was already a remarkably determined and self-possessed person. In 1978 I met her again, this time in Oxford when His Holiness the XVI Karmapa of Tibet came to visit the Oxford Buddhist Center at Oakenholt, where I was living at the time. Aung San Suu Kyi, her husband and their two small sons were among the guests. She spoke to me in Burmese and told me she was Aung San's daughter and gave me her address in Park



Town, Oxford, and I used to go to visit her there from time to time. Whenever I was lecturing in Oxford she would always come by bicycle to see me. My first impressions of her character as a young girl remained unchanged as I came to know her somewhat better over a period of about five years.

In 1988 a mass uprising against the military government occurred in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. Just before this mass revolt Suu Kyi returned home to Myanmar to care for her ailing mother. Subsequently, she joined in the demonstrations against the government and became the leader of these protests. On Sept. 18, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) staged a coup against Maung Maung's government. This was condemned outright by a number of Western governments. The United States and the then EC immediately withdrew all financial aid to Myanmar as a protest against the coup's bloodshed. It was their hope that this action would cause the economy and the government to collapse. However, this did not happen. Some of the Western governments, Germany in particular, admitted that this policy had failed. This was because Myanmar has such a wealth of natural resources that it is able to attract a great deal of foreign trade, worldwide, especially with its neighbouring countries. The fact is that Myanmar has been

thriving since 1992. The main reason for its prosperity is that SLORC allows an open market system to operate throughout the country and this policy strengthens the economy and makes it prosper.

### **Suu Kyi put under house arrest**

On July 20, 1989, Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest because of her open criticism of the Myanmar Army and of Gen. Ne Win in particular. SLORC therefore declared that she was a threat to national security and unity. Although she was under house arrest, her political party the National League for Democracy (NLD) won more than 80 percent of the seats in the National Assembly in the 1990 election. Many governments in the rest of the world and many in the Myanmar democracy movements demanded the immediate release of Suu Kyi and the transfer of power to the winning NLD. But SLORC ignored these demands. These events served to make Suu Kyi the focal point for Myanmar's democracy movement. Moreover, since she has been under house arrest, she has been awarded many honors and prizes, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. It would seem that her detention has served to make her an admirable and popular figure. Since she was put under house arrest the governments of the United States, Japan, Australia and those of the European Union have urged SLORC to release her and hand over power to the NLD. The United Nations had passed five resolutions designed to put pressure on SLORC to hand over power to the legally elected NLD and to free all political detainees. The member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations merely chose to follow a policy of "constructive engagement." None of the aforementioned pressures or requests were effective.

In November 1993, I went to the United States to lecture at Harvard and Columbia universities. While I was in New York, I went to see Francesc Vendrell, director of political affairs for South Asia and the Pacific countries in the United Nations, and complained to him that when the two things which were being asked of SLORC—the freeing of Sun Kyi and the

transfer of power to the NLD—were not granted, the Western governments canceled their financial aid programs for Myanmar and by doing so totally isolated themselves politically from SLORC. SLORC then turned to China, Thailand and Singapore for business and trade. I then told Vendrell that according to the Buddhist way of doing things, if I were to ask another person to do something and if that person did not do what I had asked, then I ought not to feel angry or make any hasty decisions at first. Instead it would be better if initially, I were to find out why the person could not do as I had asked, what is his or her problem or difficulty. If I knew this at the outset then a solution to the problem might be found.

I then told him that an isolationist stance toward Myanmar was not a good policy to follow and that "friendly dialogue" would be the best means to use to deal with such difficult and sensitive issues. Vendrell then suggested I should express these views to diplomats of the Western countries and the U.S. government. Acting on his advice, I traveled to Washington the next day and met with some officials from the State Department and expressed my ideas and view to them. I then went back to New York and met with some diplomats representing Australia, Germany, Britain and Sweden. I spoke to them about these matters. They remarked that any suggestions were new ideas and that a reasonable way was to approach and deal with SLORC. However the British diplomat was of the opinion that the idea of using "friendly dialogue" is too soft an approach and it would be preferable to employ "critical dialogue" instead and after that various governments would try to find different ways to communicate more effectively with SLORC. They then asked me, if I, as a Buddhist monk, could find out for myself, the reason SLORC was reluctant to free Suu Kyi and transfer power.

### **Talks with SLORC Leaders**

There were times when I thought it was unlikely that I should ever be able to return to Myanmar in this lifetime. In fact, after



discussions and consultation with friends and well-wishers from all over the world, I was able to return last year. Shortly after my arrival on May 4, 1994, I went to see former Prime Minister U Nu, and we discussed his Buddhist works and publications. On the second day of my visit, I met with former President Maung Maung and a number of retired generals. During the course of my visit, I met with Maung Maung three times. He encouraged me to teach the people, implying SLORC, about reconciliation while I was in Myanmar. Sadly, Maung Maung passed away not long after I returned to England. Just before I left, I also met with Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt, the secretary-1 of SLORC. This meeting was an opportunity for me to tell him that it was the rest of the world's opinion that SLORC should free Suu Kyi and transfer power to the NLD. Having heard my comments, Khin Nyunt explained to me at length in confidence why SLORC could not free Suu Kyi or hand over power to the NLD. Nonetheless, our discussion was quite amicable and cordial, and he was careful to impress upon me that whatever SLORC was doing was for the sake of establishing democracy in Myanmar.

He also made the point that the idea of democracy could be interpreted differently in the East in contrast to how the West defined this concept. Two days later, I left Myanmar and returned to England. In mid-June, I went to the United Nations in New York and gave an account of my discussion with Khin Nyunt. In response to this report Vendrell and some other Western diplomats queried: if SLORC could not free Sun Kyi and transfer power why then would they not talk to her at all. I returned to England and then on Aug. 5, I went to Myanmar for just one week. When I arrived at Yangon airport I was escorted by the Myanmar authorities to the Government Guest House on Inya Road, which is a five minutes drive from Suu Kyi's home on University Avenue. When, Khin Nyunt came to see me that afternoon explained to him that it was the United Nations' wish and that of other world powers for SLORC to engage in dialogue with Suu Kyi, if SLORC was not able to free her. He said that if she were willing to talk to them, they would be willing to talk with her. I

then asked if I might go to see her, and all the necessary arrangements were made.

### **Meeting with Suu Kyi**

On Aug. 7, I was invited by Suu Kyi for a meal. Early that morning, before I left for her home, Col. Kyaw Win, the deputy director of intelligence, called on me to tell me that I could visit her for as long as she might wish me to. After lunch everyone, including her husband Michael Aris, who was at that time visiting her, left the room and we were left alone to talk.

She told me that she was not angry or hateful and added that "when you keep anger and animosity in your mind, it is like keeping a cobra in your heart and this is very dangerous." Another point she made was that she herself did not need to be freed, as she was living in a very comfortable house, but she wanted freedom granted to those people who had been detained in jails throughout the country. She also said that if she would be able to have dialogue with SLORC then her personal freedom was not a matter of necessity. On the subject of democracy, she also spoke her mind, saying that democracy was not something you can beg from someone else, rather, it is something you had to build for yourself.

In the course of the rest of our conversation, she also said that because her father had been the founder of the Myamnar Army, she regarded all members of the military as her brothers. To my mind, this is absolutely true, as she was brought up in her father's home in which the army and army life was a predominant feature so it was quite easy to understand how from an early age she could regard the military as her "family." After she told me of her feelings about the army I told her that even members of SLORC regard her with respect because of her late father's and her family's strong links with the army. So whatever differences and problems she and SLORC both had could indeed be solved as brothers and sister. She answered me by saying that only the Myamnar people could understand Myanmar's problems, and so whatever differences we had must be sorted out among ourselves, and she added that she

was willing to talk with people from SLORC. I left her home at 3P.M. and returned to the Government Guest House. I was visited later that afternoon by Gen. Khin Nyunt and I told him about my conversation with Suu Kyi and he was quite pleased. The next day he called on me again together with Senior Gen. Than Shwe and they said that they would like to meet with Suu Kyi in the very near future. I left Yangon for England on Aug. 10, and before I left for the airport, I called on Sun Kyi and told her that the generals would be talking to her soon. She was pleased.

### **Suu Kyi meets with SLORC**

Immediately upon my return to Birmingham from Yangon, I rang the BBC World Service's Burmese Unit and let it be known that I had met Suu Kyi. The officer I had spoken to said, "This is very hot news. Please wait for a few moments as I want to arrange an 'on the spot' interview with you for our Burmese listeners." Within a few minutes, the interview was set up and I was able to briefly explain how I had come to meet with her, and then I broke the news that SLORC was now willing to talk with Aung San Suu Kyi. This news was quickly spread around the world.

Two weeks later I once again went to the U.N. headquarters in New York, where I made a verbal report on the extent to which the Myanmar situation had improved. While I was still in New York, news from Myanmar emerged that SLORC was planning to meet with Suu Kyi at the end of the year. The overall reaction to this news abroad was one of great disappointment as it was thought that waiting until December was far too long to wait for such an important dialogue to take place. So I suggested to SLORC that the promised dialogue with Suu Kyi should take place as soon as possible. Subsequently, on Sept. 20, 1994, a dialogue did take place between her and SLORC, and a second one was held in October. After staying in New York for a week, I returned to England. It was then that I decided to return to Myanmar once again as Suu Kyi had asked me to do so in a letter. However, on reflection, I decided it might be better if I were to first meet with

some of the U.N. officials and diplomats and some Japanese government officials in order to hear their views and suggestions regarding the then prevailing situation in Myanmar. So yet again, I set off for New York in mid- November.

Upon my arrival I was able to meet with many diplomats. Some U.N. officials also were of the opinion that whatever problems she had had with the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) between 1988 and 1989 were attributable to specific circumstances.

Nevertheless, one day she might well find that she could cooperate with the Tatmadaw and they could work together effectively. On the morning of Nov. 23, I had breakfast at the U.N. Plaza Hotel, with the special U.N. rapporteur for Myanmar Prof. Yozo Yokota. As we conversed, it soon became clear to me that he held a similar view to those of the previously mentioned U.N. officials. Moreover, he told me that SLORC was absolutely determined to carry on with its present National Convention agenda. For this reason it was of the utmost importance that Suu Kyi should work together with SLORC. He also expressed the view that she ought to accept whatever assignment or post they might give her, and if she were to do so she might gradually succeed in helping to change her country's overall situation for the better and in constructing a truly democratic constitution for Myanmar.

I left New York on Nov. 25 for Japan. While staying in Japan, I met with about 70 members of the Diet and several senior foreign officials. I learned that all of them were of the same mind and wanted Suu Kyi to be freed so that she might work alongside SLORC and toward achieving democracy for Myanmar. After having several meetings with various other Japanese officials, on Dec. 14 I left Tokyo for Bangkok. Once there I took the time to go to Cambodia to see for myself what the latest Buddhist situation was there. I then returned to Bangkok, where I made an impromptu change to my itinerary and traveled to Chaing Mai in northern Thailand to meet Bo Mya, the chairman of the Karen National Union. Our discussion was confidential and comprehensive. He made it quite clear that he

very much wanted to reach a cease-fire agreement with SLORC so that peaceful negotiations might begin. I conveyed his wish to Khin Nyunt when I again met with him in Yangon in December.

### **Talks with Japanese officials**

I arrived in Yangon on Dec. 18. On Dec. 19. Khin Nyunt called on me at the Government Guest House, and we talked for about two hours. During that conversation I expressed the opinions and ideas I had recently heard when I met with the various U.N. and Japanese government officials prior to my return to Yangon.

I then told him that I would like to see Suu Kyi. He responded by telling me that Than Shwe would be calling on me, and afterward arrangements could be made for me to see her. On Dec. 27 Senior Gen. Than Shwe came to see me along with Gen. Maung Aye, the chief of staff of the army, and Secretary-1 Khin Nyunt and Secretary 2 Lt. Gen. Tin Oo. Our discussion focused on Buddhism in Myanmar and abroad. Just before they left Than Shwe asked Khin Nyunt to make the necessary arrangements for me to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi.

He immediately remembered that her husband, Aris, and their two sons were already there, visiting her and he then said that it was best if they were left alone as a family for a while and that I should defer my visit for a while. I remarked how concerned he was that their family life should not be intruded upon.

On Jan. 22, Aris left Yangon for Bangkok, where he gave a press conference, during which he issued a statement on behalf of Suu Kyi. Her statement annoyed SLORC because it stated that she was not about to do any secret deals with SLORC, but that she would negotiate with them only after she had consulted with the senior members of the NLD and the various pro-democracy movements etc.

When, at last, I met with her on Jan. 30 her attitude seemed to have changed significantly and she did not seem so eager to see

me. Nonetheless I told her that it was the general consensus among these officials I had spoken with abroad that she should cooperate with SLORC. She then told me that I had come too late as she had already issued a statement on Jan. 22. On hearing this, I refrained from discussing the matter further and turned the conversation toward more general topics. However, before our visit came to an end, she did ask me when I returned to England if the press or anyone else were to ask me about her situation then I should repeat what she had said in her statement released on Jan. 22. On Feb. 1, I left Myanmar. At both Yangon and Bangkok airports, I was approached by many journalists keen to question me about Suu Kyi and what she thought. In response to their questions I repeated the gist of what she herself had said in her most recent statement.

### **Suu Kyi finally released**

On Monday, July 10, Suu Kyi was freed from house arrest. The whole world was surprised at her release as there had been no indications that she would be freed on that day. Many people speculated on the reasons for her unexpected release, in fact she was freed not as a result of any international pressure being imposed on SLORC, but because SLORC had to abide by its own rules as it had declared that Sun Kyi could only be detained according to the law for just six more months that was from Jan. 10, 1995, until July 10, 1995. The other reasons for her release were that SLORC was confident that it could handle any situation that might arise in the wake of her release. Moreover, they no longer regarded her as a threat so that she was freed unconditionally but in fact there is yet no guarantee that any dialogue aimed at reconciliation will take place in the future. Therefore, Suu Kyi herself stated, " I have been released, that's all. There's nothing else." Her numerous invitations to SLORC for dialogue for reconciliation were always answered by silence.

Many of us are aware that simply releasing Suu Kyi will not necessarily lead to any positive changes in Myanmar's political situation. She herself said a few days after her release, "We've got to continue our work. We've to



walk a long road." Immediately upon her release all international pressure and suspicion and tension connected with SLORC abated, and some countries were now willing to resume financial aid to SLORC.

However, Suu Kyi urged the World Bank and other international lending institutions to take a cautious approach saying: "They should wait to see whether there is a genuine move toward reconciliation and a truly democratic system of government." On the subject of "constructive engagement" she said, "I cannot say at this moment whether foreign investment has helped our cause or not. Within one day of Suu Kyi's release, however, Japan announced that it would resume aid to Myanmar. Similarly the ASEAN member countries, especially Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, welcomed SLORC's decision to free Aung San Suu Kyi as it effectively opened the door for Myanmar to join ASEAN. Suu Kyi's response to these developments was: "I wonder why the government of Japan feels a need to hurry about it ... I don't think there is really such a need." Concerning the ASEAN countries' enthusiasm for Myanmar to join it she said, "I will ask them to support the cause of democracy; nothing has changed yet, apart from my release." She also said, "I think they should go on observing the situation very closely and accept that we are nowhere near democracy yet."

We have to think carefully whether or not the ASEAN nations and Japan will heed her remarks. The ASEAN member countries on the whole only want Myanmar to improve its human rights record, abolish use of forced labor and allow freedom of the press. If SLORC complies and makes these reforms then they will not hesitate to support SLORC further.

### **A delicate dilemma**

After her release Suu Kyi found herself in a very delicate position and faced with the dilemma of which path to follow. If as a "daughter of the

Tatmadaw" she were to cooperate with SLORC totally, then her followers might become divided in their loyalty, and she would lose their valued and vital support. On the other hand, if she were to struggle on supported by the Western countries and if carefully calculated pressure strategies were used in the name of "democracy," then without a doubt SLORC would not entrust her with any power what-so-ever. Bearing these things in mind we can then say that at a tactical level, with the liberation of Suu Kyi, the struggle for the democracy movement and SLORC have entered a new phase. This is a very crucial time for Suu Kyi, requiring courage, patience and understanding. Although she had been involved in Myanmar's politics for just 11 months prior to being put under house arrest, this is the ideal time for her to work for her fellow countrymen who admire, respect and trust her to help them to build a democracy and bring peace to Myanmar. I sincerely hope that she walks on well with loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, principles taught by the Buddha, which the majority of the people of Myanmar appreciate.

These principles are known as the Brahma Viharas, the Divine Abidings and have been principles the people of Myanmar have followed for centuries. If Suu Kyi and the members of SLORC abide by the principle of the Buddha's teachings and solve their problems, then they will succeed in building a democracy fit for Myanmar, and peace and stability will be restored to the land.

This article was originally written for the October issue of "THIS IS Yomiuri", a monthly magazine published by The Yomiuri Shimbun, 25 September 1995.

*Footnote: Some information was also based on an article published in Moemakha magazine, Myanmar edition, 29 September 2012, 'Sayadaw U Rewata and Myanmar Democracy'.*

# Buddhism and Lists

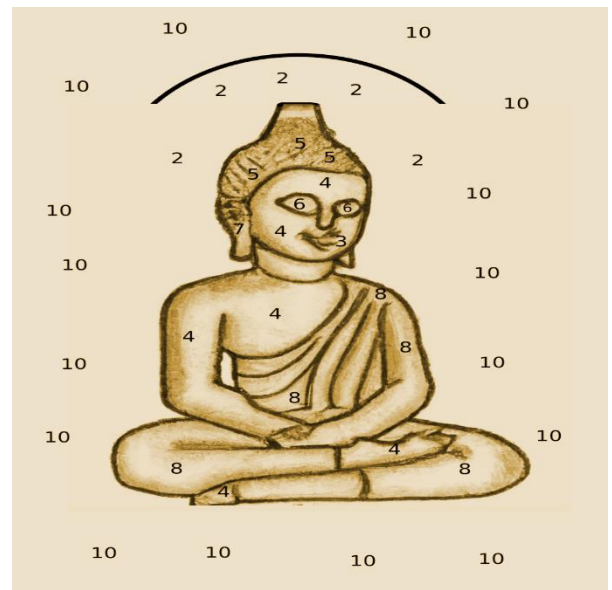
By Bhikkhu Subhuti (American Monk) on Feb 25, 2023

## Introduction

The Buddhist teachings are often organized by various lists. Various matrices of interlinked lists to organize the teachings are one of the distinctive features of Buddhism. In my studies, I find myself learning many different types of lists for memory. By doing so, I can see the benefit and how they can be expanded and interlinked. While it may seem like dry minutia and uninteresting at first glance, the lists run very deep when you start to understand how the whole system works.<sup>1</sup> It is a complete system, and once you understand the basics, you can understand that they are all connected to each other with only a few degrees of separation.

## Painting by Numbers

It is similar to painting by numbers as the picture above shows. You have an outlined form with numbers in each section. After you fill in the colors, you get a clearer and more vibrant colorful image of what was merely outlined before. The teachings were orally transmitted for the first 400 years until they were finally written down in the first century BCE. That was why the top-level discourses were brief and of a list nature. From the Four Noble Truths to six sense doors, to the five precepts and The Noble Eightfold Path, Buddhism has a list for everything and they are all interconnected. However, the lists must be expanded to fully understand the big picture.



## The Four Noble Truths (list)

Let's take a look at the two most famous lists, the Four Noble Truths, and The Eightfold Noble Path. You might have heard about this.

The truth of suffering (dukkha sacca)

The truth of the origin of suffering (samudaya sacca)

The truth of the cessation of suffering (nirodha sacca)

The truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering (magga sacca)

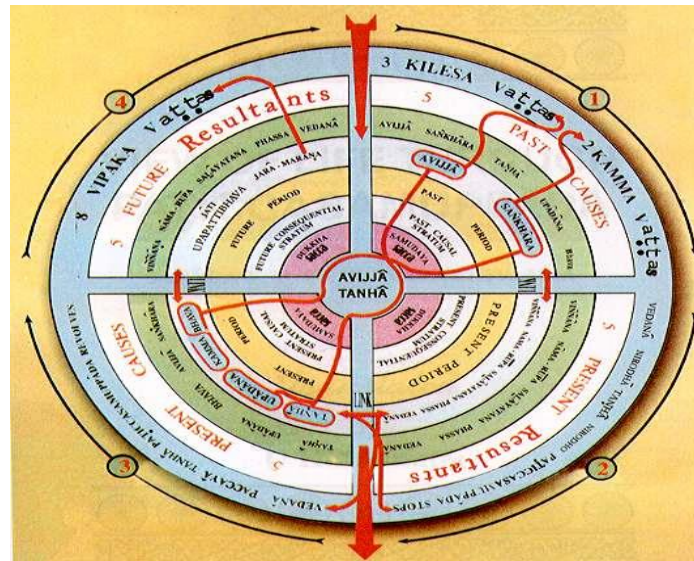
## The Four Noble Truths

The list you see above can encompass the whole of the teachings of Buddhism. However, it does need to be expanded and interlinked to live up to that statement. For instance, the first Noble Truth of suffering is quite wide. We can expand that to Samsāra which has 31 planes of existence that range from the deepest hells to the highest Brahma planes. That is a list. In those planes of existence, there are beings mostly with mind and matter (mind and matter are a list of 2). Mind and matter can be expanded to the Five Khandas; form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. That can be further expanded by the Abhidhamma with 89 types of consciousness, 28 types of materiality, and 52 mental factors. I'll spare you from the Abhidhamma lists but they are also very important and

should not be overlooked, which is what most Western Buddhists do. It should be noted that dukkha is part of the triad called tilakkhaṇa, or 3 characteristics of impermanence, suffering (dukkha), and non-self. It is all of these items and many more (not listed) that relates to the First Noble Truth.

### The Wheel And The Second Noble Truth

The second noble truth is often referred to as craving or desire (taṇhā) as being the cause of suffering. However, the real origin of the noble truths is referring to paṭiccasamuppāda or Dependent Origination. It is very wrong to say there is only one cause for suffering. Suffering is existing in the rounds of saṃsāra, rebirths. With dependent origination there is a list, as pictured below:



Most of you have seen the “Tibetan Wheel” before. While picturesque, you will see the word version of that wheel above. It is often called the Wheel of Saṃsāra because it explains how rebirth occurs. This wheel contains the 6 sense bases (saḷāyatana), 6 contacts (phassa), and the 3 types of feelings (vedanā). Or, since birth or life is considered suffering, it explains how that all happens. I discuss that in more detail in this article “Buddhism: What Happen After Death”



## The Third Noble Truth

The Third Noble truth is explaining that there is a way out. This is Nibbāna. While there are many different religions and terms for enlightenment, this is the real enlightenment for the Theravāda Buddhist religion. When one merely knows this truth, just for a moment, he always knows this truth. It is like knowing the Earth is round by going in a spaceship and seeing that just for a moment with your own eyes. Different classes of defilements get permanently destroyed along the way as one progresses to the last of the Four Stages of Enlightenment called Arahant<sup>2</sup> When an Arahant dies, there is no more rebirth and the goal has been achieved. There is nothing further, and he dies without remainder or any new creation. He does not exist or live any further than that according to Theravāda teachings. Westerners often have difficulties with that, and I explain this in my article “Does the Buddha Live In Nibbāna?”

## The Noble Eightfold Path

The last Noble truth is Magga Sacca or The Noble Eightfold Path. You may have heard about this before. This is the Way leading to the end of suffering. The way to Enlightenment and the way out of rebirth or the rounds of saṃsāra. The way out of, or the true escape from the conditioned element. This is: Right-view (sammā diṭṭhi), Right-intention (sammā saṅkappa), Right-speech (sammā vācā), Right-action (sammā kammanta), Right-livelihood (sammā ājīva), Right-effort (sammā vāyāma), Right-mindfulness (sammā sati), Right-concentration (sammā samādhi)

When we get to the last of the Noble Truths, we get to explore the threefold training such as: morality (sīla), concentration (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā). With morality, we can get other lists like the 5, 8, or 10 precepts or the 10 courses of right action or the 227 pātimokkha rules for bhikkhus. With right concentration, we can get the lists of the 4 satipaṭṭhāna (4 bases of mindfulness), or the 4 right efforts. We can also get the 40 samatha (calm) meditation objects, most of which lead to samādhi. Lastly, with wisdom, we go to right-intention and right-view which is found back in The Four Noble Truths.

The use of lists is not limited to the examples given above. There are countless other lists in Buddhism that cover a wide range of topics, from the Five Hindrances to the Seven Factors of Enlightenment. There is even a 3-volume or 11-sub-book set called, The Numerical Discourses (Aṅguttara Nikāya).

While the use of lists may seem overly systematic or rigid, it reflects Buddhism’s emphasis on the importance of clear and precise understanding. By organizing its teachings in this way, Buddhism provides a framework that is accessible and easy to understand, while also allowing for a deep and understanding of reality.

## *A Summary Poem*

*Buddhist teachings can come in lists,  
Each one can guide to find what fits.  
Four Noble Truths to make us sane,  
Eightfold Path to walk the middle lane.*

*The Five Aggregates make up our being,  
Three Poisons keep us from seeing.  
Six Senses help us sense the experiential world,  
Four Foundations of Mindfulness, a jewel unfurled.*

*Ten Kusala Kamma for wholesome deeds,  
Five Precepts for preventing kamma seeds.  
Nine Questions to ponder and reflect,  
Three characteristics to help us disconnect.*

*In Buddhism, the lists abound,  
Each one a jewel to be found.  
A roadmap to succeed in ending the quest,  
To find True Peace and reach The Very Best.*

*chatgpt and me*



## A Little Humor About Lists

There is a joke about numbers I remember long ago that a teacher once told me after we were getting some experience in Buddhist related material. He said to us, "You are all learning the numbers and getting familiar with the terms. Do you know what I mean about the numbers?" Then he told us the joke below:

A new prisoner arrives at a prison and notices that all the other prisoners seem to be saying certain numbers and then laughing hysterically just at the numbers. He decides to join in and says a number, but nobody laughs. Puzzled, he asks the person next to him why nobody laughed. The other prisoner tells him that they've all heard every joke there is, so they've cataloged them all and assigned each joke a number. Now they just call out the number of the joke they want to hear and they know what it means.

The new prisoner is fascinated by this system and asks to see the book where all the jokes are listed by number. The other prisoners are happy to oblige, and the new prisoner spends hours reading through the book and memorizing the numbers of all the jokes.

The next day, the new prisoner stands up and confidently calls out "54!" But instead of laughter, he's met with silence. Another prisoner immediately yells out "54!" and is met with roaring laughter.

Perplexed, the new inmate turns to his neighbor and asks what went wrong. The neighbor responds, "Some people just don't know how to tell a joke."

Old numbers joke

## Conclusion

In summary, the Theravāda use of lists is quite extensive. It was an oral tradition first and then later written down. It was necessary to organize things into lists so that the teachings could be grasped, memorized, and then expanded with the general knowledge of the "Wholistic" System of Buddhism consisting of the Tipiṭaka (three baskets) and then properly expanded by the Commentaries. It is like a skilled chemist who not only knows the periodic table by heart but also how they all work and interact together along with the deepest levels of physics. By doing so he can break down any item into elements, and from elements find other related items by those elements. In the same way, the lists found in Buddhism are to be expanded, connected, and interlinked to fully understand the way to escape from suffering, which is Nibbāna supreme. May you find this way out safely and quickly.

<https://us12.campaign-archive.com/?e=eca1cc1ee6&u=7c335eb642b7af885dd0656fa&id=f47821c397>

## **Birmingham Buddhist Academy** ***Opportunity to learn Buddhist Literature***

BBA was formally opened and established in 2013 and offered Diploma and MA courses in Buddhism which designed to provide the student with an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Theravada Buddhism.

Third batch completed their course in May-23 and new batch will start from September 2023. Please join the course to learn Lord Buddha's teachings including Abhidhamma, Pali, Meditation and much more. Please visit <http://www.birminghambuddhistvihara.org/> for further details.

Please contact Dr Ottara Nyana (Program Director) at [venuttaranyana@gmail.com](mailto:venuttaranyana@gmail.com) if you would like to know more about the course.

## MARIE-CECILE FORGET

### Painting and Meditation



Initially, in 1972, there was no conviction or belief in anything. For about fifteen years, I devoted the best of my energy to painting.

I regularly went into the forest, pencil in hand, to look, select and analyze. The aim was not to imitate nature based on an arbitrary conception of beauty, but to plunge headlong into it, to discover it alive, not frozen. Superficial at first, vision gradually deepens and, after a while, you enter a more subtle world, free from concepts: ferns, branches and grasses are nothing but pure forms, colors and rhythms, existing only in the present moment, infinitely variable.

“Exploded” landscapes where nothing is recognizable, where only the essence of the subject is represented in its own dynamic – hot/cold, heavy/light, empty/full... Long journey made of trial, error and detours, confusion and clarity.

**It was the difficulties I encountered on my artistic journey that led me to meditation.**

"Zen Music" often accompanied my painting sessions. I didn't know anything about Buddhism, but I sensed that there was something important there. In 1985, a first experience of vipassana confirmed this intuition. The clarity of the Buddha's teachings would provide doctrinal support for the experiments I'd been intuitively carrying out in painting for a long time.

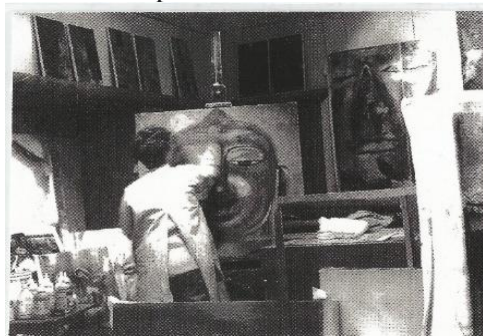
Little by little, I got to grips with this demanding practice. Retreat after retreat never let me down.

"Sit cross-legged... direct your mind to the abdomen... maintain your attention throughout the process... observe penetratingly..." When concentrated, the mind sees at a deeper level: outer forms fade away to make way for a more subtle reality: movement, heat,

hardness, vibrations... and all of this is constantly moving. There are similarities between painting and meditation: same type of effort, same hopes, same dead ends; on one side or the other, it is a question of purifying one's vision by a long and patient observation of what one sees.

#### **From painting to meditation**

It was after an extended stay in a meditation center in Myanmar that I returned to the image... the image of the Buddhas. Eastern wisdom and Western sensibility... The subject proved to be a rich and fruitful source of inspiration.



It is with the heart that I paint my Buddhas, always inspired by traditional works to avoid any slippage. To some, they're appealing; to others, they're sacrilegious: fragments of smiles, eyes or bodies; unrecognizable faces without gilding or serenity... But where is the Buddha?

The background against which the image of the Awakened One emerges is not the same in the East as in the West: traditional society on the one hand, with its models and ideals still intact, brimming with devotion. On the other, a society in disarray, torn apart, without reference points or laws.

Perfect, golden, intact Buddhas? No, that's not how Westerners feel.

Driven by an inner need, they seek the light and discover in the ashes of their shattered society, a piece of ear, the beginnings of a smile, remnants of gilding... "Let's go", they say, "there's light..." It's at this crossroads of Eastern wisdom and Western sensibility that I find myself.

Today, the brush has given way to the cushion, but the artist remains.

The Dhamma enlightens my life.

# Dhamma Taḷāka (World Peace Pagoda)

Photo



History







# Dhamma Taḷāka (World Peace Pagoda)



## Photo History 2023





# Dhamma Talaka Peace Pagoda Project Report

by Dr Maung Maung Kyi

The water ingress problem had existed in one form or another from the time the Dhamma Talaka Peace Pagoda was built more than 25 years ago. The fact that it was built like a layered cake in three sections together with the inclement British weather has never helped with the integrity of the cement system used. The water ingress was from the lower reaches of the Pagoda on the south-west side resulting in a big moisture patch showing inside the dome. Oliver Architecture was commissioned in January 2022 after the first company that was commissioned failed to provide us with a written report. The plan was that Oliver Architecture Ltd., would perform surveys and then provide us with detailed reports and plans. Oliver Architecture would then function as Architect and Principal Designer. They would call for tenders for the project, oversee the whole project of the repair and renovation. For their services there would be charge a percentage-based fee of 15% of the contract value. The fees would be in two parts in line with the industry standard RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Plan of work. Oliver Architect Ltd. are a company of conservation-accredited architects and historic buildings consultants with broad experience in relation to heritage buildings with a particular interest in ecclesiastical architecture.

## Executive Summary of the report.

**The Exterior:** The hand applied cement render forming the Pagoda roof is degrading at the constructional joints between the elements and realms, with noticeable cracking and spalling to the concrete faces, particularly on the West side. This now requires repairing to maintain its structural integrity. The present "Gold" paint system is an impervious system and through the passage of time U.V. radiation has considerable degraded the layers and it is subsequently failing flaking and powdering and requires renewing.

**The Interior:** The internal paint finish to the West quadrant of the dome is failing due to water ingress from above which implies that the pagoda dome is leaking on the West Side of the conical roof. As there appears to be no damage on the other quadrants it would appear, that there is little water ingress running down the central rod from the connection of the Umbrella and finial at the top.

**Recent Works:** The lower flat temple roofs were replaced in 2018 with GRP which appears to have resolved the lower leaks the perimeter of the octagonal temple building.

A further condition survey as a basis a further inspection via a cherry was done on the 12th of September 2022, Matt Faber, and Charlotte Arnold, two architects from Oliver Architecture performed the second survey of the Dhamma Talaka Pagoda via a cherry picker which confirmed the initial report.

Following the inspection, a schedule of works and tender documents were produced for contractors and a call for tender was made in January 2023. Four companies responded but one withdrew their tender. Suraj Lal, the Secretary and Architects from Oliver Architecture Ltd., and I had a meeting to review all the tenders during which it was decided to add the additional repairs that were sorely needed at the Vihara to the whole project, which the architects were to supervise and manage as well.

- Repairs to the tiles on the East entrance aisle with non-slip external tiles.

- The old side panels of the entrance aisle to be replaced with toughened glazed units in white.
- The recladding of the external wall of the dining hall and the outside toilets. Estimated to be additional £20,000.00.

With VAT the budget costs come to:

Company (A) £149,619.73

Company (B) £208,914.09

Company (C) £223,013.37

All tenders were compliant, and after the round table zoom vote at our trustee meeting, we opted for the most cost-effective option company (A). The architects interviewed Company (A) for two and a half hours and were satisfied that the company had full understanding of the concrete system and the work that entailed and were assured that the tender represented extremely excellent value for money and found no grounds to reject the tender. Company (A) was recommended to the trust.

The works were to be conducted under a JCT contract and this would be administered via a schedule of work and approved invoices, post certification by the architects. Meaning to say there would be supervision at every stage of the renovation/repair work.

Most of the works were conducted by third party specialists in their fields and the schedule of work was as follows:

- Scaffolding with intruder alarm system according to regulations.
- Taking down Umbrella and Vajira for repairs and gilding.
- Stripping of gold paint by sandblasting.
- Dovetailing and repair of defective concrete with Kiem mortar repair and rendering. Cement to cure.
- During curing time cladding of the dining hall and renovation of the toilets.
- Two coats of Kiem solidat base paint (Red Ochre in colour) applied to the Pagoda.
- Two coats of Kiem Lasur (Dark Gold) applied. Kiem Representative sent for as the painters were not happy with the first two coats. The recommendation was to paint another coat of Kiem Lasur.
- Regilding of the Umbrella and Vajira undertaken by Ashin Rahtapala. The Vajira was cleaned and polished by Drs. Sai Lone Twee & Thida Htwe.

At the time of printing this silver jubilee edition of Lotus newsletter the project is running to schedule.

The Umbrella and the Vajira will be hoisted back up into place on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> June. Scaffolding will be down by the end of 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

To date the project has cost £107,408.35. We also had a contingency fund to cover for unforeseen additional items and the final detailed cost would be detailed by 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023. The Trust is obliged to pay 95% of the cost and hold back 5% for 6 months to see if any defects develop, if at all.

Birmingham Buddhist Vihara Trust is grateful to Mr. Suraj Lal, the secretary, for leading this project and giving up so much of his free time in holding meetings and coordinating the schedule of works with the architects and the subcontractors and keeping track of the cost.

All this work would not have been possible without all your generous donations!

Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu.

# Vihara News

## Spiritual Director Dr.Ottaranyana

7th May 2023

Buddha Day -Vesak Celebration was hosted by Dr. Myat Soe Aung, Dr. Thi Thi Oo & daughter, Thalynn Hninsi and Dr. Moe Thant, Theingi Thant & son, Chris Zin Maung Thant. A prayer session was conducted for the Coronation of King Charles III, which was attended by the King's emissary from the West Midlands Lieutenancy, Ms. Dawn Ward CBE DL.



17th April 2023

Birmingham Council of Faiths' "Faith and Reflection" session was held at Birmingham Buddhist Vihara and a scholarly presentation on "Impermanence (Anicca)" was given by Ven. Uttara Nyana.



14th April 2023

A group of trainee vicars from the Queen's Foundation, headed by Dr. Laura Johnson visited Birmingham Buddhist Vihara as part of the Christianity and Interfaith Engagement Program. The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education is an ecumenical theological college based in Birmingham, City of Faiths. Ven. Dr. Nagasena hosted the event.

3rd Feb 2023

Twelve undergraduates, attending teachers' training course in religious education, with Lecturer Imran Mogra from Birmingham City University visited Birmingham Buddhist Vihara for Religious Education purposes.

8th April 2023

Novice monk monastic ordination of Zar Moe Aung, father-in-law Dr Aung Myint and son Arthur was held at Birmingham Buddhist Vihara and Dhamma Talaka Peace Pagoda. The Dana was hosted by Dr. Aung Myint Kyaw and daughter-in-law Dr. Moe Moe Myint.

17th Nov 2022

During the school's Multi-Faith Week, Ven. Nagasena attended a Question & Answer Style Conference at Stuart Bathurst Catholic High School, Walsall with other religious leaders from the Jewish, Catholic, and Islamic communities.

18th Feb 2023

Polly Merrick and friends who practise meditation using Headspace methods paid a visit to Birmingham Buddhist Vihara. Ven. Uttara Nyana gave a talk to the group on Meditation.

21st Nov 2022

Ven. Nagasena hosted the visit by twenty-four undergraduates from University of Birmingham led by Honorary Senior Research Fellow, Department of Theology and Philosophy, Dr. Elizabeth Harris.



# Vihara News Continued

## Spiritual Director Dr.Ottaranyana



May 2023, Dr Lay Maung & Daw Than Than from Surrey donated the beautiful and colorful lights display unit on behalf of Daw Gin Su and Family, Yangon, Myanmar in the memory of Mr.Eng Swan,the Retired Head Mistress of Latha Primary School.

May 2023, Dr.Myat Soe Aung & Dr Thi Thi Oo family donated 3 benches for Vihara.



April 2023 Ko Thet Lwin & Ma Aye Myat Phyu donated an extractor fan in memory of Ma Aye Myat Phyu's father U Myat Aye.

"Arya" daughter of Mr Milinda and Ms Meghana ordained as a nun at Birmingham Buddhist Vihara on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2023.



### Dr Ottara Nyana Future Activities

- Sayadaw will travel to Milan, Italy for Metta (loving kindness) meditation from 2<sup>nd</sup> July to 12<sup>th</sup> July
- Dhammaramsi in Belgium Vipassana Retreat from 5<sup>th</sup> August to 11<sup>th</sup> August

### Dr Nagaseana's Future Activities

- Bhante will travel to Netherlands by the end of June and then travel to Ireland in early July for teaching Buddhism.

## Ten Days Insight Meditation Retreat

From 7:30pm Friday 18<sup>th</sup> Aug to 4pm 27<sup>th</sup> Aug  
with Ven. Dr. Ottaranyāna

Participants may come for the whole ten days, the weekend or single days.

Please sign below stating which days you wish to attend and provide a contact telephone number.

Meals will be provided so that all yogis can eat a communal meal together.

There will be no charge for the retreat but any donations made would help towards food expenses and the upkeep of your vihara.

Residency may be available for participants attending from outside the West Midlands.

Name	Dates Attending Retreat	Address	Contact Telephone Number

Future Events 2023  
Birmingham Buddhist Vihara

Abhidhamma & Pavarana Day  
Friday 29th Oct. 7:00pm

Kathina  
Sunday, 5th November 10:30am

Summer Course For Children  
8th – 13th Aug 2023

**OUR PATRONS**



**Dr Lay Maung**



**Dr Win Maung**



**Mr Yann Lovelock**



**U Maung Maung Than**



**John Maxwell**



**Mr R L Sampla**



**Dr Kyaw Myint Oo**

**OUR TRUSTEES**



**Ann Lovelock**



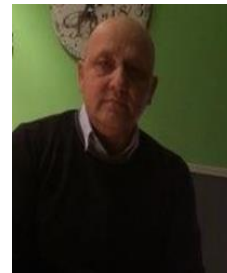
**Dr Maung Maung Kyi**



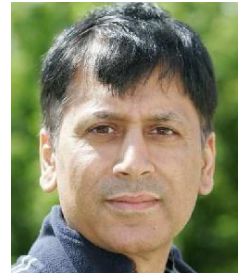
**Dr Mar Mar Lwin**



**Theingi Thant**



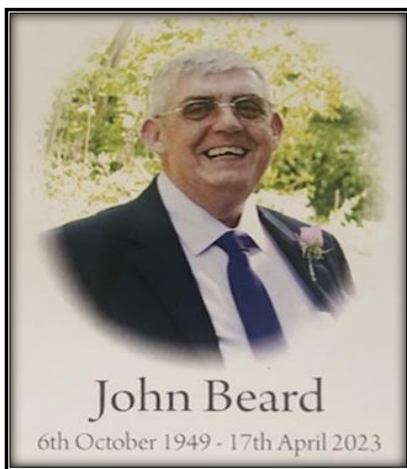
**Andrew Nicholls**



**Mr S Lal**

*Thank you & Good Bye John*

From Birmingham Buddhist Vihara Trust



*John was born in Manchester on the 6th October 1949 and sadly passed away on the 17th April. He was member and chair of Birmingham Faith Leaders Group and a trustee and chair of the BBVT. John took the chairmanship at the BBVT in 2005 and was very resourceful as John Beard helped build and create the Monastery building and the Dhamma Hall, he was also active with the Birmingham Karma Ling Tibetan Buddhist Centre and helped out with other religious and business organisations in Birmingham and across the world. John was a larger than life character and not only leaves behind his wife Renate his two daughters Sarah and Emma and four Grandchildren, but also a Religious, Business and Buddhist community which he has nurtured and helped throughout his life.*



**Goodbye Raksha Devi Lal**, the wife of one of the founder trustees of Birmingham Buddhist Vihara and one of the earliest disciples of our Founder Dr Rewata Dhamma, passed away in October 2022. Her ashes were scattered on 19th November 2022, and Dana was offered at the Thai Restaurant near Shakespeare's birthplace on Stratford's River Avon, attended by her children and grandchildren. May she find peace in the journey of samsara and may she lead her life with Dhamma towards nibbanic peace!





***Birmingham Buddhist Vihara  
Lotus Magazine***