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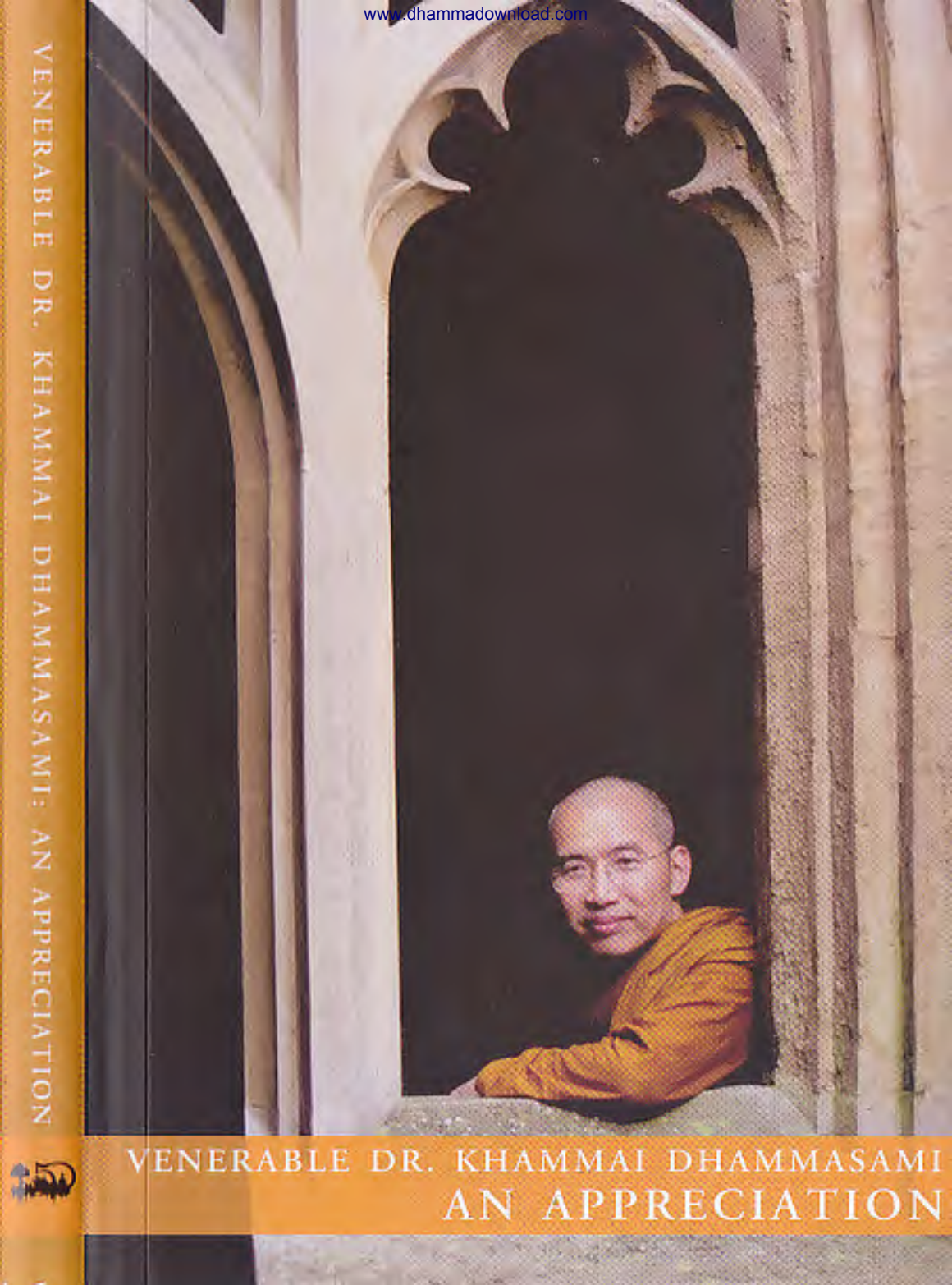

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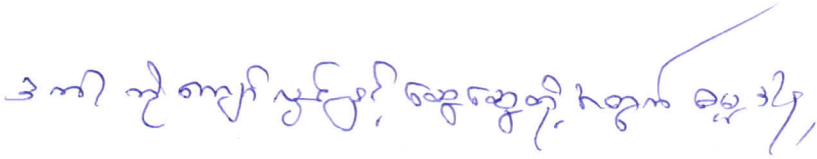

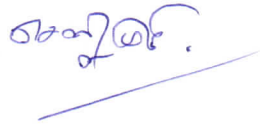

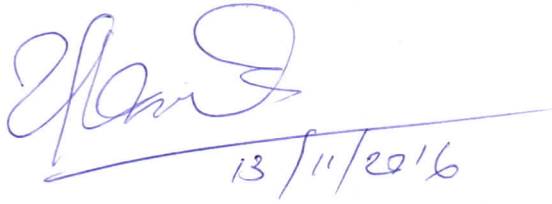

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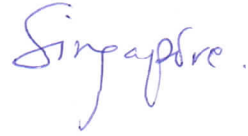
An Appreciation



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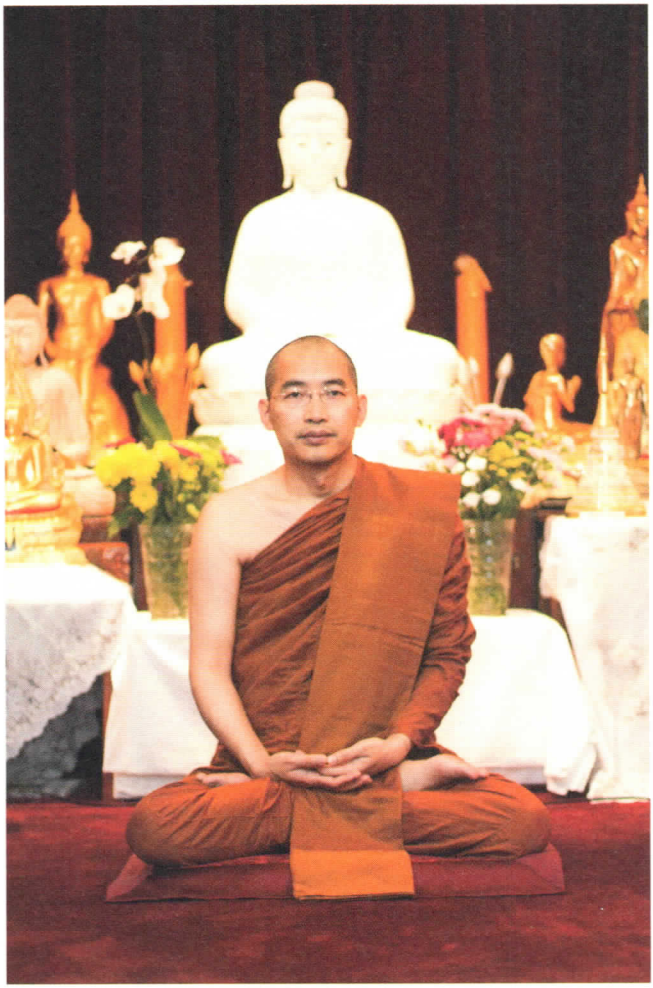

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* The wonderful contribution of distinguished international scholars, as well as friends and students of the Venerable Dr. Khammai Dhammasami. Without them, this project would not have been possible

* Our admiration for the dedication of Venerable Phramaha Sena Suraseno (Pettai), a patient coordinator who has worked indefatigably with scholars, artists, and sponsors to bring about this book commemorating the golden jubilee of our Founder-abbot

* Our heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Dipli Saikia, for her close and consistent editorial advice through every stage of the volume, ensuring a standard worthy of the occasion and of the many voices marking it

* Our true appreciation of a group of three artist friends: Rerngrit Thichan (RRR) for book design; Wichaya Mukdamanee for pencil and charcoal sketches; Niroot Puttapipat for his creation of the Sheldonian-Bodhi Tree silhouette

* And, last but not least, how we rejoice in the generosity of Mrs. Sermsook Patmastana, former Manager at Standard Chartered Bank,

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Bangkok, and her Dhamma friends – for seeing to the financial needs of this publication.

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Oxford Buddha Vihara

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FOREWORD

Professor Lord Harries of Pentregarth
Bishop of Oxford, 1987–2006

Wordsworth wrote about a "Central peace, subsisting at the heart of endless agitation". Many people today are looking for such a peace. The endless agitation of the modern world – the pressure people experience at work and tension in their relationships, together with anxiety about life itself – leads them to wish for an inner calm. So it is that a good number are taking up different forms of meditation and contemplation, or are embarking on mindfulness programmes. For some this is a rediscovery of the mystical strand in their own religious tradition.

Yet it is possible for this quest to be misunderstood as an escape from the pain of the world, a way of shutting it out. What stands out in the tributes in this *festschrift* to the Venerable Dr. Khammai Dhammasami is the way he combines an inner repose and joy with a real concern for those around him. When T.S. Eliot was baptised as a Christian, he wrote 'Ash Wednesday' as a mark of where he found himself and what he prayed for now. In it we have the lines:

Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still.

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That combination of a care for others with a detachment from personal vanities, a combination which can only come from a central quietude, is a wonderful ideal which the Abbot exemplifies to those who know him.

Tributes are paid to his scholarship, all the more remarkable given his journey from a humble Shan village in Burma to an Oxford D. Phil. and further valuable research. But scholarship, as we know, can be just another battleground for the expression of arrogance or insecurity, or it can float high above anything that is real or rooted. Khammai Dhammasami is obviously deeply rooted not only in his original culture, but in the practice and experience of the Buddhist way. The tributes in this *festschrift* come across as heartfelt and real. As has been written: *"He is the real deal: an actual bhikkhu – someone who wants to share, has worked out how, and is seriously going about it"*. This sharing has taken the form of the presence of a *Vihara* in Oxford, a valuable bridge in a world where such bridges are so much needed.

Richard Harries
Professor Lord Harries of Pentregarth
(Bishop of Oxford, 1987–2006)
UK

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INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

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SURVIVAL OF BUDDHISM IN 21st-CENTURY INDONESIA THROUGH BUDDHIST SCHOOLS

Lauw Acep

Indonesia is an archipelagic country, of about 17,508 islands, stretching across the equator in Southeast Asia. Of these islands, 6,000 or so are inhabited. The country's strategic sea-lane position has fostered inter-island and international trade, which in turn has fundamentally shaped Indonesian history. The country, populated by peoples of various migrations, is home to a diversity of cultures, ethnicities, and languages. The archipelago's landforms and climate have significantly influenced agriculture, trade, and the formation of states. While most people in Indonesia are Muslim, Indonesia is not an Islamic country. Its many religions include Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, as well as local traditions based on God-centred beliefs. In the 7th century, Indonesia included the Buddhist kingdom of Sriwijaya, followed by the Majapahit kingdom. Buddhist temples built at the time Buddhism flourished in Indonesia include:

1. Kalasan Temple, Yogyakarta, AD 778
2. Sari Temple, near Kalasan
3. Borobudur Temple, Magelang, AD 826
4. Mendut Temple, to the east of the Borobudur, AD 809
5. Pawon Temple, located between the Borobudur and the Mendut, AD 826

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6. The Ngawen Temple complex, Muntilan, Magelang
7. The Sewu Temple complex, Central Java
8. The Plaosan Temple complex, Central Java

In the 14th century, Buddhism disappeared from Indonesia. It would return in the 20th century.

In 1934 Venerable Narada, a *Dhammaduta* (Buddhist missionary) from Sri Lanka, came to Indonesia for the first time on a visit of Southeast Asia. In Java he visited Batavia, Bogor, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Solo. Venerable Narada blessed the planting of the Bodhi Tree at the Borobudur Temple in Magelang, and ordained a few *upasaka* in Yogyakarta.

Venerable Narada's visit in 1934 was key to the spread of Buddhism in Indonesia. Twenty-two years later, on Buddha Jayanti day of 1956, certain Buddhist organisations in Indonesia marked the 2,500th anniversary of the passing away of the Buddha. Amongst them were: KASI (Konferensi Agung Sangha Indonesia); WALUBI (the Indonesian Buddhist Council, Perwakilan Umat Buddha Indonesia); MAGABUDHI (organisation of Theravadin priests and laypeople); MAJABUMI (organisation of Mahayana Buddhism); Buddhayana (which includes Mahayana, Theravada, and Tantrayana); and other Buddhist organisations.

In 1968 Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara, the Supreme Patriarch of the Thai Sangha (Venerable Suvaèdhano Mahāthera) – in the capacity of President of the Mahamakut Buddhist University and with the permission of the Sangha Supreme Council – went on a study tour of religious affairs and education in Indonesia. In Indonesia, the head of the Buddhist community and Buddhists everywhere were delighted to welcome His Holiness. They requested him to send out Thai Buddhist

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monks to revive the status of Theravada Buddhism in their country. A year later, the Training Institute for Dhammaduta Bhikkhus Going Abroad and the Department of Religious Affairs dispatched four Thai monks to revive Buddhism in Indonesia upon request. Following this, a series of Thai monks took turns going out to Indonesia over a period of ten years, after which time Theravada Buddhism came once more to be well-established here. Today, there are a large number of Buddhist temples all over Indonesia, and Indonesian Theravada Buddhist monks have come to occupy a firm position in this country as once their predecessors had 600 years earlier. During the period Buddhism was undergoing this revival in Indonesia His Holiness, while maintaining the title of Phra Sasanasobhon, presided over the ordination ceremony of Indonesian men for the first time in 1970. The venue was Borobudur. This event signalled the first full establishment of *Siamvongsa* Buddhism – i.e., that of the Siamese lineage – in Indonesia. It was the first of several ordination ceremonies His Holiness was to attend. It can thus be said that His Holiness is the founder of the Indonesian Theravada *sangha* in the contemporary period.

The government of Indonesia has a policy that requires every student, and every Indonesian citizen, to choose a religion to study while at school. This calls for a need to prepare teachers in Buddhist Studies for Buddhist students in every school. Until the late 1970s, there had been no colleges in Indonesia dedicated to Buddhist Studies. Due to this, certain Buddhist groups organised themselves in 1979 to establish the first Buddhist college in modern Indonesia, the Nalanda Buddhist College, whose main mission was to train teachers in the field of Buddhist Studies. In time, several other Buddhist colleges followed. Today, there are no less than 13 Buddhist colleges in Indonesia. These include:

1. Nalanda Buddhist College, Jakarta
2. Smaratungga Buddhist College, Boyolali, Central Java

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3. Kertarajasa Buddhist College, Malang, East Java
4. Syailendra Buddhist College, Kopeng, Central Java
5. Raden Wijaya Buddhist College, Wonogiri, Central Java
6. Sriwijaya State Buddhist College, Banten, West Java
7. Maha Prajna Buddhist College, Jakarta
8. Dharma Widya Buddhist College, Tangerang, West Java
9. Jinarakkhita Buddhist College, Lampung
10. Dutavira Buddhist College, Jakarta
11. Maitreya Buddha Missionary Institute, Jakarta
12. Bodhidharma Buddhist College, North Sumatra
13. Samantabhadra (Nichiren) Buddhist College, Jakarta

Some of these colleges offer a Bachelors degree and a Masters degree, accredited by the Government.

Furthermore, Indonesia has about 46 Buddhist schools from the elementary level till senior high school, organised under the Co-ordination Board of Buddhist Education BKPB (Badan Koordinasi Pendidikan Buddhis).

Venerable Khammai Dhammasami has contributed immensely to the development of Buddhism in Indonesia. During his visit to Kertarajasa Buddhist College in Malang in 2006, he invited representatives from other Buddhist colleges for a dialogue in order to ensure Buddhist education in Indonesia was on the right track. During his time here, Ven. Khammai Dhammasami also visited other Buddhist colleges, including Nalanda Buddhist College, Dutavira Buddhist College, and Maha Prajna Buddhist College. Ven. Khammai Dhammasami has helped Indonesian Buddhist colleges join the International Association of Buddhist Universities (IABU and ATBU). This has enabled most Buddhist colleges in Indonesia to cooperate with Buddhist universities around the world. Consequently, lecturers and other representatives

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from Indonesian Buddhist colleges have been invited to join in on international seminars and the United Nations Day of Vesak. Indonesia's Executive Member of the IABU is Lauw Acep, while Indonesia's Executive Member of the ATBU is Ven. Ditthisampano. International collaboration is especially vital with the coming of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015, as it will allow us to exchange lecturers and students freely across the ASEAN Member States. As most Indonesian Buddhist colleges lack doctoral-degree lecturers, in order to improve our academic standing and establish doctoral programmes, there is a profound need for cooperation with Buddhist universities overseas.

I speak for all Buddhist colleges in Indonesia in the expression of my gratitude to Ven. Khammai Dhammasami that we, Indonesia's Buddhist colleges, have been invited to join the International Association of Buddhist Universities, allowing us to learn from our more experienced colleagues and brothers overseas in the promotion and implementation of the Dhamma.

Lauw Acep, M.Pd.B.
Chairman, Nalanda Buddhist College
Chairman, Indonesian Association of Buddhist Higher Education Institutions (IABHEI)
Indonesia

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'LAI-KHA TO OXFORD'

Sai San Aik

In the 1970s, Burma, not to mention one of her smaller towns Lai-kha, was not much heard about in New Zealand. When I went to Massey University for my M.Phil in 1978, I was surprised to find that some Kiwi individuals did not know where Burma was; for them Thailand was India's neighbour. I was also surprised when an Indian part-time lecturer said: "Yes, Burma is between Thailand and India; in the *Mahabharata* the word 'Burma' came from 'Brahma desh'". Like Cambodia, Burma has had much Indian or Hindu influence.

From 1948, Shan State – which had previously been a part of Surkhanpha's Tai Empire between 1311 and 1369 – became a part of the Union of Burma. Prior to that, there had been the Lu-Chao (Hook Mong Long), and later the Nan-Chao (Southern Prince) Period (650–1253), which were led predominantly by the Shan or Tai people. Southern Shan State Shans moved from Lu-Chao about AD 800; they moved farthest to the west. Of the Shan groups, the Mong-nai (whom the Burmese called the Moe-nae) were the strongest, often fighting the Burmese.

Later, with a Burmese garrison and a Tax Collector stationed at Mong-nai, Lai-kha (which the Burmese call Le-Char) was drawn into wars, and could not escape taxes and conscription.

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Within the Khmer Empire in Cambodia was the Mon Kingdom. The Mon people moved from Dvaravati to Hongsavati (Pegu) in AD 573. Already Buddhist by then, they had their own Mon script, comprising 35 characters. Lanna, too, became Buddhist and had their religious Yuan script in the 7th century (made up of 42 characters). Wat Bajie, in Chiang Hung, started in AD 615. Connected across borders by the Tai language, Buddhism spread fast to Yunnan and to all the Shan States. From the Yuan script, an 18-character Tai script was developed for secular use in Mong Mao by the end of the 8th century. The Burmese derived their 33-character script directly from Mon monks and their script in AD 1056.

The Burmese pronounce the Sanskrit sounds of 'Sa' and 'Ra' as 'Tha' and 'Ya' respectively, unlike others. Where the Mon, the Shan, and Sri Lankans say '*Sāsana*', the Burmese say '*Thathanar*'. Where Sri Lankans say 'Gautama', most Indians say 'Gautam'. In this instance, the Mon, Burmese and Shan follow Sri Lanka.

Up till the 11th century, the Southern Shan States – Mong-nai and Lai-kha included – were known to chant in Yuan. Later, Buddhist chanting from Burma was to come to Mong-nai and Lai-kha, during Anuruddha and Purinaung's time. Consequently, both Yuan chanting (using the 'Sa' sound) and Burmese chanting (using the 'Tha' sound) came to be practised simultaneously. In time, the Burmese 'Tha' gained ground there.

In AD 1603, Mong-nai was attacked by the Burmese Army during Lin Pin's revolution. Later, in AD 1886, almost all of Lai-kha was set on fire.

Venerable Dr. Dhammasami learnt Shan in a Shan environment, and studied the Burmese *sāsana* in Burmese temples. His grounding

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within such a complex background is no doubt an asset in all his work. Ven. Dhammasami initiated the International Pali Conference in Myanmar in 2014. A carefully thought-through initiative of firm international standing, it is something not many could have undertaken.

Because of Dr. Dhammasami's religious and scholarly work, Lai-kha is now much more widely known, with more people visiting the town, including many first-time visitors. Lai-kha has come to symbolise not war or hatred, but a modern space of giving and forgiving. Dr. Dhammasami is well loved by both Shans and non-Shans alike.

Burma's earlier dictators promoted Nationalism and a closed-door policy, resulting in the country being avoided by many, but U Thant and Aung San Suu Kyi have brought much needed credit to Burma (Myanmar), showing the world that there are able people in Myanmar. Dr. Dhammasami, too, has done his part – shining a light on Lai-kha, Shan State, and Myanmar. Not many from Myanmar, not to mention Shan State or Lai-kha, have had the opportunity of meeting and shaking hands with world leaders, as Dr. Dhammasami has had, thanks to his achievements within the Buddhist *sāsana* and to his promotion of meditation. In Lai-kha and Shan State, too, Dr. Dhammasami's personal journey has helped many learn about the University of Oxford.

May I take this opportunity to salute Dr. Dhammasami on his 50th birthday, and wish him a 'Happy Birthday and Many More to Come'. May he lead us to peaceful co-existence and a much-needed inter-faith understanding.

Best wishes,
Sai San Aik

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KHAMMAI DHAMMASAMI: AN APPRECIATION

Geoffrey Bamford

I have for some years known the Venerable Dr. Khammai Dhammasami as a tireless collaborator and enterprising partner, a calm hand in a tight spot, a wise counsellor and sensitive guide – and a true friend, a *kalyāṇamitta*. Of his personal qualities and spiritual accomplishments, many will speak eloquently; let me here mention only in passing his loyalty, his humility, his quiet confidence, his subtle appreciation of interpersonal relations (including power relations), his determination and his honesty – personal, emotional, and intellectual. With that, let me try to explore what I have learnt from being with him about the tradition that he upholds.

Post-industrial societies are prominent in our global culture. Most of them developed without Buddhist influence, and even those with a Buddhist heritage retain few of the old ways.

In such societies, people are educated into a scientific, rationalist worldview. Less helpfully, we are also conditioned into abstract, binary thinking.

Coming to the Theravāda, we notice how our context differs from that

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which we find in the Pāli texts, and also from that of contemporary societies which do uphold this tradition. Spontaneously, we see two sides to the tradition:

a. There is that which seems of direct, existential relevance to everyone, everywhere, (e.g. to people like ourselves)

b. Then there are historical and cultural features peculiar to the societies in which the tradition was handed down over the centuries.

We also assume that ***a.*** must be much the same all across the Theravāda and indeed in other Buddhist traditions too, whereas ***b.*** may differ even between Theravāda countries.

Our perspective on the Theravāda is thus split. Our challenge is to understand and live with that split.

The riches of the Theravāda are immediately apparent:

- In the lively, unpretentious Pāli *sutta*s, the character of early Buddhism emerges clearly:
  - the fellowship of the 'wanderers' (*paribbājaka*)
  - their hard, *dhūtaṅga*-style life, exposed to the elements and to chance; their directness and urgency; their down-to-earth cast of mind
  - the human scale of their practice and their philosophy, which not so much invite as require significant 'user input' (so that their understated, seemingly matter-of-fact formulations disclose on reflection layer upon layer of meaning, both analytical and above all experiential)

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- their patience and skill in relating with all sorts and conditions of people; and so on.

- There is often an attractive, 'what-you-see-is-what-you-get' simplicity to Theravāda social forms: village housewives doing *pūjā* in the afternoon; novices on the morning alms-round; a bevy of monks blessing a newly constructed house; white-clad *upāsikās* and *upāsakas* sitting apart from the temple throng on an *uposatha* day...

- Also, this tradition has exhibited great adaptability. Reformed and reinterpreted, it has helped populations undergoing painful processes of colonisation and industrialisation; and in the new, global society, it has stimulated the development of valuable movements such as that for secular mindfulness.

So, many people from diverse backgrounds have developed an affinity with the Theravāda, in which they have found resources that can help them in confronting existential challenges. They have of course also noticed that this, in common with every other tradition, is a human construct, hence replete with fairly random accretions and indeed (whisper it softly!) traces of political compromise.

If you come to it as a social scientist, that is obvious. The texts were redacted under an imperial state, the Mauryan. The interpretative framework was fixed (by Buddhaghosa) under a later state church, the Mahāvihāra in Anurādhapura. The early Siṅhala state, forged in a context of quasi-ethnic war, set the tone for Southeast Asian kingdoms which raided each other to wreak devastation and make off with costly *Buddha-rūpas*. Ah, humanity!

Fortified by the stern realism that we find in, for example, the story

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of Kisagotamī, we may take this in our stride. In context, we can see how the Theravāda was bound to get identified with ethnic identities. And, after all, the tendency for state structures sometimes to subsume Buddhist institutions, regrettable in principle, nonetheless allowed these peripheral, rice-growing societies to maintain the tradition.

The story of Duṭṭhagāmiṇī is not pretty, but without such brutal compromises we would almost certainly not have the Pāli canon today. Yes, the powerful have exploited popular Buddhist loyalties to further some distinctly non-Buddhist goals – but if Theravāda doctrine and practice had not at times been used as a means of social control and as an adjunct to state power, then the rich heritage of early Buddhism would have been attenuated, even to an extent lost.

Yet, today, in a global perspective, all this seems more problematic. Consider our young people, across the world. The best of them, who would naturally be attracted to the straightforward practicality of early Buddhism, are egalitarian and democratically minded. They will not readily accept if different capacities for *dāna* at different income levels are taken implicitly to legitimate existing hierarchies, or if the *kamma* teaching is used to justify social inequity.

There is a similar question about the nature of the *sāsana*. When, historically, the Theravāda was adapted to provide an identity for ethnicities and states, it was clearly helpful that it should offer a complete, closed system. Thus it came to be supposed that the *Buddhavacana*, as found in the texts, had been committed to a definitive, fixed form in the very moment when it fell from the lips of the *Bhagavā;* that its language was immutable, indeed transcendent, i.e. precisely translatable across all cultures and historical periods, without losing any of the original meaning; that every last word was strictly consistent with every other, (as demonstrated by many voluminous lists or *mātikās)*; and hence that

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it offered a total, absolute 'answer to everything'. Today, educated people find this approach implausible in principle, and in practice may also notice that it can go along with some rather superstitious-seeming attitudes and a certain attachment to ritual.

Still, abstract analysis does not meet existential needs. How we understand the tradition is one thing, how we live that understanding to reduce suffering is another.

What is more, abstraction can and often does get in the way. Thinking about the history of the Dhamma does not necessarily motivate us to work with it, and at times may indeed sap our motivation. Whereas simple devotees may exude sincerity, calm, and a living wisdom.

So my experience and that of others, as we explore the Theravāda, throws up contradictions that do not go away. It is a challenge; and, like all the big questions, it is not resolved by finding the right words and concepts. It comes down to living.

This is where I have at least started to learn from Ajahn Khammai's example. Observing him, I am regularly reminded that it is not so much the form of what you think, say, and do that matters, more the spirit in which you go about your life.

Some of this surely comes from his strand of Theravāda: among the Shan, where communities have been fairly self-sufficient and power structures limited in scope, formalism has not flourished. It is also a question of personal intelligence and integrity.

I have understood that if a group of us in the Oxford Buddha Vihāra repeat the formula of the *Tisaraṇa*, we may not all think about the meaning in an identical manner, but that is not what matters. What

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matters is that, for each of us, the experience of saying it should somehow support us on the way.

Many people are, with some sincerity, seeking to move along the way. It is possible to recognise others' commitment, and respond to it, without necessarily agreeing with everything that they think, say, or do. Indeed it is only natural. To behave otherwise would be to impose your private concerns onto the public space, to no good effect. That would just be tripping yourself up.

Skill in means, *upāya-kosalla*, is first and foremost a question of not tripping yourself up. The Venerable Dhammasami has greatly strengthened my appreciation of that truth.

Skill, he has. I have seen him relate intensively with some quite problematic people without ever losing balance.

At the same time, he has an open channel to a deep place. This is a man who can be and often is flooded with a true light and warmth that spills over.

The problem of our self-conscious, abstracted global culture is perhaps quite well expressed in Groucho Marx's dictum "Sincerity – fake that and you've got it made!" This suggests that:

1. The instantaneous quality of experience is what it is. It cannot be disguised or changed by anything one thinks or says. There is no point in pretending.

2. We do nonetheless pretend. Indeed, pretence is endemic in our outward-oriented, materialistic, success-obsessed culture.

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Well, our birthday boy does not pretend. He is the real deal: an actual *bhikkhu* – someone who wants to share, has worked out how, and is seriously going about it.

Geoffrey Bamford
Founding Chair of the Board of Trustees, Oxford Mindfulness Centre
Founder, Society for the Wider Understanding of Buddhism (So-Wide)
Former Executive Director, Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies
UK

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VENERABLE DHAMMASAMI

Harrison Blum

I had the pleasure of meeting Venerable Dhammasami in March of 2014, when he hosted me and two other Buddhist chaplains from the United States. We had gathered to participate in the event 'Building a Bridge Through Spiritual Friendship: A Conference of Buddhist Chaplains from the UK and US,' held at Oxford University. I had several e-mail exchanges with Ven. Dhammasami before my arrival, as he and I were among those helping to plan the conference. Prior to my meeting him, I had begun to develop a sense of Ven. Dhammasami's wisdom and warmth through these planning emails. Happily, my appreciation of Ven. Dhammasami was confirmed, and it greatly expanded upon meeting him face to face. He was at once a gracious host, a strategic conference planner, a sage Buddhist teacher, and a joyful person.

Perhaps what made the biggest impression on me was the impromptu conversation and Dharma teaching I had with him and one of my American colleagues, Richard Torres. The three of us were in one of the Oxford Buddha Vihara's shrine rooms around 9pm on the Saturday night of the conference. We had all just finished a very full day of listening to panelists and engaging in breakout group discussions. Another full day of conference activities awaited us the next morning. Aware that the *vihara* was not only our guesthouse,

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but Ven. Dhammasami's home, both Richard and I were hesitant to take up too much of our host's time. To our surprise and pleasure, Ven. Dhammasami welcomed and engaged with our thoughts and questions about compassion, sympathetic joy, and non-self. The three of us spoke from experience, and compared notes. At two points, Ven. Dhammasami guided us through brief meditations towards our having a taste of a point of Dharma to which he was speaking. The time was rich and inspiring, and Richard and I later spoke with each other about how it felt like a gift – a gift to be humans connecting around our shared interest in living well amidst, or aside from, our roles as teacher and practitioner. This gift has continued to blossom in me in the months since this encounter, and I trust it will continue to do so. To conclude this brief reflection, I'll say that my time with Ven. Dhammasami can perhaps be spoken of as the Dharma: good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end.

Harrison Blum
Buddhist Chaplain
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VENERABLE DHAMMASAMI

Venerable Bhikkhu Buddharakkhita

I deem it a great honour and pleasure to write my message of felicitation on the auspicious occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Venerable Dr. Dhammasami. Inspired by his life – his experiences, his hard work for the *Buddhasāsana,* academic achievements, academic contributions, community activities, teaching, meditation practice, and other accomplishments – I would like to convey my congratulations upon his success within such a short time. I first met Venerable Dr. Dhammasami at the United Nations Day of Vesak in 2007, in Thailand. Since then, he has been a true spiritual companion in the Holy Life. Through our association, I have found him to be very kind, generous, and wise. Moreover, his Venerable embodies some qualities of a true Buddhist missionary.

The qualities of a Buddhist missionary

The Buddha said before 'sending forth' the 60 fully enlightened beings to various places to propagate the Dhamma.

He said, "Free am I, O Bhikkhus, from all bonds, whether divine or human. You, too, O Bhikkhus, are freed from all bonds, whether divine or human."

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"Go forth, O Bhikkhus, for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, benefit, and happiness of humans and gods.... Let not two go by one way."

"Preach, O Bhikkhus, the Dhamma, excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent in the end, both in spirit and in the letter. Proclaim the Holy Life, altogether perfect and pure."

"There are many beings with little dust in their eyes, who, not hearing the Dhamma, will fall away.... There will be those who understand the Dhamma."

"I, too, O Bhikkhus, will go to Uruvela in Senanigama, in order to preach the Dhamma."

"Hoist the flag to the sage. Preach the Sublime Dhamma. Work for the good of others, you who have done your duties."

The above passage provides us with the framework for the Buddhist missionary to follow in the spreading of the Buddha's teaching. In order to effectively spread the Buddha's message of happiness, peace, harmony, and freedom to the rest of the world, it is important to uphold four indispensable guidelines – the four Ps – as encapsulated in the Buddha's message for a true missionary, namely:

- Purification of one's mind
- Purpose of spreading the Dhamma
- Propagation of the true Dhamma
- Patience

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Purification of one's mind

The first step is to purify the mind by removing all bonds (greed, hatred, and ignorance). One needs to cultivate the virtue of purity of mind at the outset in order to be free from suffering and its causes. Such a degree of freedom, even on a temporary basis, is necessary for spreading Buddhism to the rest of the world. And in order to get rid of the 'bonds', it is necessary to undergo mental purification or development (meditation practice). Of course, the act of going forth will help to accelerate this process of mental purification. Likewise, the Venerable Dr. Dhammasami went forth as a novice monk and undertook the necessary meditation training and practice under the tutelage of experienced meditation monks for the purpose of purifying his mind. Certainly, purifying the mind is an ongoing process. Furthermore, his Venerable is an accomplished scholar who earned a Doctorate in Philosophy from Oxford University. For that matter, his Venerable is an excellent role model of a true Buddhist missionary.

Purpose of spreading the Dhamma

The second step is to ascertain the purpose of spreading the Dhamma. A true missionary spreads the Dhamma not for financial gain, fame, and honour, but rather for the happiness, welfare, and benefit of all beings who are willing and able to internalise the Dhamma. A true Buddhist missionary does not spread the Dhamma in order to convert others but to convince followers about the true Dhamma. Depending on their openness to listen to the Dhamma, the latter may either accept or reject it. Furthermore, a true missionary should not only be motivated by wisdom but also by compassion – the mental quality of heart and mind that trembles when faced with the suffering of others. It is out of such compassion for all beings that his Venerable has been selflessly teaching the Dhamma and leading meditation retreats around the world.

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Turning to my fondest memories of associating with the Venerable, I would like to mention a few. In 2009, when I met him at the International Association of Buddhist Universities conference in Sagaing Hills, Burma, he donated a statue of the Buddha made of beautiful teak wood. I happily brought it to the Uganda Buddhist Centre. Furthermore, in order to commemorate his teacher's fiftieth anniversary, he requested me to facilitate the translation of the *Dhammapada* into Portuguese for the benefit of Portuguese-speaking nations such as Brazil, Portugal, certain countries in Africa, and others. I found out that there already existed a great translation by a Portuguese monk. Out of his generosity, Venerable Dhammasami sponsored the publication and distribution of the *Dhammapada* to Portuguese-speaking countries. Once again, I was touched by his meritorious action of dedicating the *Dhammapada* to his Burmese teacher.

Beyond any doubt, the Venerable is an asset to the Uganda Buddhist Centre (UBC). In 2010, there had been an attempt on my life in Uganda. Out of his compassion and generosity, he raised a large donation through his worldwide network of friends and sent it to the UBC for the purpose of not only building a fence around our temple property but also beefing up my security in Uganda. In fact, he is the only Buddhist monk in the entire Buddhist world who responded to this emergency. Therefore, I am eternally grateful for his generosity. Furthermore, the Venerable wrote a foreword to my book: *Attempted Murder of a Buddhist Monk*. I was moved not only by his uplifting message and constructive advice, but also his deep compassion regarding my safety and well-being in Uganda. In 2011, the Venerable facilitated the translation of my book, *Planting of the Dhamma Seeds: The Emergence of Buddhism in Africa*, from English into Thai. This bilingual edition is expected to appeal to many young people since it was translated by a young Thai student of Venerable Dr. Dhammasami.

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Propagation of the Dhamma

The Buddha advised us to propagate the "excellent Dhamma: excellent in the beginning [virtue], excellent in the middle [mental training], excellent in the end [penetrative wisdom]". How can we proclaim this teaching? We have to demonstrate the Holy Life in its perfection and purity. In other words, we have to teach by example and precept, not by words alone. A true Buddhist missionary has to simultaneously practise and teach the three trainings, namely: virtue, concentration, and wisdom. And followers, in order to gain faith and confidence in the Dhamma, need a role model, a monastic or a Buddhist mendicant. The Venerable is a well-qualified, fully ordained monk of over thirty years' experience. As an accomplished monk and scholar, he has spread the Dhamma not only to the United Kingdom but also to the rest of the world. Certainly, his loving kindness, compassion, and wisdom appeal to many wherever he goes. Author of *Dhamma Made Easy, Mindfulness Meditation Made Easy*, and other Dhamma books, the Venerable is the founder of the Oxford Buddha Vihara, UK, with branches in Singapore and Malaysia. He has assumed several duties and responsibilities, including: Trustee, the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies, Oxford University; and Chair, International Buddhist Secretariat for UN Vesak Celebrations, Bangkok.

Patience

Another key quality is patience. When spreading the Dhamma, one needs to be patient with others. The ability to understand the Dhamma varies from person to person. Therefore, one has to be patient in order to accommodate the views of others. The Buddha said: "Enduring patience is the highest austerity", and "Nibbana is supreme". He is not a true monk who harms another or a true renunciate who oppresses others (*Dhammapada*, 184). Personally, I believe that the Venerable

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Dr. Dhammasami is an embodiment of patience. On many occasions, I have listened to his speeches as a panelist, organiser, and moderator at various conferences. He is always patient with the views of others.

Having explored the four qualities of a true Buddhist missionary – purification of the mind, purpose of spreading the Dhamma, propagation of the excellent Dhamma in its pristine way, and patience with people's receptivity of the Dhamma – it becomes abundantly clear that the Venerable Dr. Dhammasami is a living example of an excellent *Dhammaduta* who has inspired me and many other people around the world.

I wish you a happy birthday.

May the Triple Gem bless you with a long life in order to continue serving the Dhamma.

Sincerely Yours in the Dhamma,
Ven. Bhikkhu Buddharakkhita
Abbot and founder
Uganda Buddhist Centre
Uganda

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VENERABLE DHAMMASAMI

Mrs. Victoria Contreras Candel

I met Venerable Dhammasami for the second time during a short retreat in Madrid, in the home of Mario Carrillo.

I was at that time worried about my practice, and my plan was to meditate for several hours and ask many questions about this and that.

When we arrived (I was with my partner), we found a relaxed ambience. There was not the typical retreat atmosphere in which everyone is serious, trying to concentrate.

Ven. Dhammasami tried to sing, but his voice was quite hoarse. It was funny to hear the Buddhist chants being sung by a group of 15 Spanish people not very well trained.

The next two days progressed in the same manner: everything quiet, people relaxing, chats, walks in groups ... A part of me thought: "Ohh, I want to work deeply and take advantage of this time".

On the last day, we went down to the river. Ven. Dhammasami was very interested in being connected more closely with nature and

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meditating in a group close to the river. We went into a forest with many fallen trees. It looked like an old forest growing according to its own will; a little mysterious. We arrived at the shore of the river, and a circle was created. Ven. Dhammasami spoke about Just Doing Nothing ... and we closed our eyes and started to meditate. Nothing, Do Nothing, and at the same time everything was moving about us: the sound of the river, the wind, the trees, the presence of the companions around ... and Nothing.

We finished the meditation and Ven. Dhammasami did something that looked crazy to me, and at the same time tender and beautiful. He started to work the soil with his hands, and created a small mound. He was doing it with a naïve energy, while we were watching him with a serious attitude. But little by little we let go within ourselves this serious, adult energy, and we started to play with him. The group as a whole created a Stupa, and the river's shore was decorated by a naïve monument that had an internal message: "Nothing, do nothing."

Mrs. Victoria Contreras Candel
Spain

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PHRA DHAMMASAMI

Susan Conway

I first met Phra Dhammasami in London, on my return from teaching Southeast Asian Studies at the New School University in New York. The purpose of our meeting was to explore ways to teach Shan Studies within a Higher Education programme, and to encourage academic research into the religion and culture of the Shan people – both those living in the Union of Myanmar and the community in exile throughout the world. My book entitled *The Shan: Culture, Art and Crafts* was published in 2006, around the time of our meeting. Since then, I have taken part in many Shan projects that Phra Dhammasami has led as well as others where my colleagues and I have worked with his approval and encouragement. One example is his support for my successful application for a grant from the MacArthur Foundation, which enabled us to run a course in Shan studies for BA and MA students at SOAS.

The work of Phra Dhammasami ranges far beyond his role as Buddhist Chaplain to Oxford University; Executive Secretary, International Association of Buddhist Universities; and Professor at the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University in Yangon. He travels extensively and has networks across South and Southeast Asia. Phra Dhammasami acknowledges all branches of the Tai family living in the Union of Myanmar, Sipsong Pan Na (Southwest China) Yunnan,

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Arunachal Pradesh (India), Lan Xang (western Laos), Europe, USA, and Australia. Everywhere I go in Southeast Asia, he is admired and respected.

In the UK, Phra Dhammasami has a special role as Chair of the Shan Cultural Association that works closely with scholars in Shan studies at SOAS Library, the Centre of Southeast Asian Studies and the Southeast Asian Art Academic Programme (SOAS), and with colleagues at the British Museum and the British Library. We are grateful to him for his interest in all our work.

Phra Dhammasami is a distinguished academic who has published papers on Shan Buddhism, Shan Buddhist texts, and Shan monastic education. He has participated in conferences held by the Association of Southeast Asian Studies (ASEASUK) in Swansea, Cambridge, and Brighton, where Shan panels have convened. With his blessings, we have given presentations on Shan studies at The European Association of Southeast Asian Studies (EUROSEAS), and presented papers on Shan culture in Thailand and in the USA at the Burma Studies Centre (Northern Illinois University), and at Denison University (Ohio).

In 2006, the Oxford Buddha Vihara began holding meditation retreats with communal chanting. The advanced study of Buddhism is encouraged among resident monks, and a spiritual centre is provided for the lay community living in Oxford and the outlying areas. The *vihara* is represented on the board of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies and the Oxford Mindfulness Centre. Phra Dhammasami resides at the *vihara* and, under his guidance, lay people gather to celebrate Buddhist festivals and important family events. He has established similar centres in Singapore and Malaysia.

If there is one festival that represents the continuing dedication of the

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community to Phra Dhammasami and the monks, it is the Shan New Year festival when we come together to celebrate Shan heritage in all its forms, both religious and secular. There is an air of excitement when Phra Dhammasami is able to attend in person but we all listen with respect to his message when his duties abroad mean he is not present in person.

I feel very honoured to have been asked to write this dedication to Phra Dhammasami, and to congratulate him on his 50th birthday. I understand that his latest venture is in his birthplace of Laikha, Shan State, and I wish him good luck and good health in all his work now and in the future.

Susan

Dr. Susan Conway
Centre of Southeast Asian Studies
School of Oriental and African Studies
London
UK

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MY FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF VENERABLE DHAMMASAMI

Most Venerable Dhammavamso

I first met Ven. Dhammasami on the occasion of a Buddhist conference in 2007, at the invitation of Sitagu Sayadaw, who was voted President of the Association of Theravāda Buddhist Universities (ATBU) at the end of this historic conference.

Ven. Kusalaguṇa, one of my *dharma* brother's disciples studying at the ITBMU in Yangon, had told me a few things about Ven. Dhammasami before I met him in person. At that time, I remembered one detail about Ven. Dhammasami: that he had spent eight years reading for, researching, writing, and defending his D.Phil. thesis. The number of books that he had had to read was about 1,000! *The most careful and systematic working style I have ever seen!*

Ven. Dhammasami welcomed me into a small room, used for both working and resting in. Seated amongst books and in discussion with his assistants, he stood up and greeted me with clasped hands upon my sudden entrance together with Ven. Kusalaguṇa. Being aware of my higher *dharma* age, he invited me to have a seat on a chair and then respectfully paid obeisance to me three times according to the rule of Theravāda traditional discipline. *A rare, modest, and respectful attitude from a young monk who had had early success in the* sangha

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with favourable diplomas, and had graduated from one of the world's leading universities, Oxford.

After the traditional greeting, I too sat down on the floor to have a close conversation with Ven. Dhammasami. I admitted that Vietnam Theravāda Buddhist College in Hue City was still fairly new and hence the training programmes were unstable, especially with regards to Buddhist language. For instance, my college was teaching its students not only Vietnamese and English but also old Mandarin and Pāli. I asked him for his advice on this issue. He suggested that a Theravāda college should focus on Pāli language development, and that the four-year Pāli course should be divided into two stages: the first two years for Basic Pāli and the last two years for Advanced Pāli. *What an honest and constructive idea from an experienced and professional educator.*

During the last few days of the conference at Popa Mountain Resort, having witnessed his work, organisational, and managerial style closely as Sitagu Sayadaw's second self, my respect and sympathy towards this scholar increased.

From then on, I have had complete confidence in Ven. Dhammasami, his propagation of Buddhism, and in his life's work in education; and hold him in high esteem. The Buddhist conferences of ATBU or IABU (International Association of Buddhist Universities) launched in Myanmar and Thailand in recent years, that Ven. Dhammasami has participated in as an organiser, are strong evidence of my feelings.

On this occasion of Venerable Dhammasami 50th birthday, I would like to express my sincerest love for my respected Dharma friend!

Most Ven. Dhammavamso
Principal, Vietnam Theravāda Buddhist College
Vietnam

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IN CELEBRATION OF THE 50th BIRTHDAY OF VENERABLE DR. K. DHAMMASAMI

Richard and Wangmo Dixey

Dear Most Venerable Dr. K. Dhammasami,

On this auspicious occasion of your 50th birthday, we send you our very best wishes from America. You were the first Theravada monk we met when we were beginning to develop our plans towards rebuilding the *Buddhasāsana* in its heartland of India. The *dharma* talk you gave in 2007 under the Bodhi Tree on the importance and history of the chanting of the teachings of the Blessed One has continued to be an inspiration to us. Furthermore, you have been a source of wise advice and inspired guidance on the many occasions that we have sought your counsel.

Dearest Venerable, you are a shining example of the importance and relevance of the ancient traditions of the Theravada in the modern world, combining as you do wide and sustained scholarship, immaculate conduct, and a compassionate engagement with everyone who meets you. It has been a true blessing to have met and collaborated with you, and an honour to celebrate your birthday.

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May you have a long life filled with many great blessings, good health and joy, and continue to be a source of wisdom and inspiration to all of us.

Yours in the Dhamma,
Richard and Wangmo Dixey
Directors, Light of Buddhadharma Foundation International
USA

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A BRIDGE BETWEEN TWO WORLDS: REFLECTIONS IN HONOUR OF VENERABLE DR. KHAMMAI DHAMMASAMI

Nancy Eberhardt

I had the privilege of meeting the Venerable Dr. Khammai Dhammasami and of visiting the Oxford Buddha Vihara, which he founded, when I attended the first Shan Buddhism and Culture Conference in London in 2007. Since then, I have followed his career with interest. I am delighted to have this opportunity to say a few words on the occasion of his 50th birthday.

First, I would like to draw attention to the significance of his scholarship. As an anthropologist with longstanding research interests in Shan religion and culture, I am grateful for the meticulous and insightful research that Venerable Dhammasami has conducted on the history and development of the Buddhist *sangha* in Burma and Thailand, as reflected in his 2004 doctoral thesis, *Between Idealism and Pragmatism: A Study of Monastic Education in Burma and Thailand from the Seventeenth Century to the Present,* as well as his work on the Shan *sangha* in particular (for example, his 2009 article 'Growing but as a Sideline: An Overview of Modern Shan Monastic Education'). It is extremely helpful to have the monastic developments in this region treated as a whole, rather than by nation-state, especially given the historic (and continuing) movement of monks throughout the area.

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When one considers the difficulty of conducting this sort of research in the Shan State of Burma under the current circumstances, as well as its importance for contextualising contemporary Buddhist practice in the region, our debt to Dr. Dhammasami is clear. In addition, his dual perspective on the Shan *sangha* as both an 'insider' and an academic is simply invaluable.

Second, there is the Oxford Buddha Vihara, founded over ten years ago by Venerable Dhammasami and now a flourishing centre and refuge for Buddhists of many different ethnic backgrounds, especially those from Southeast Asia. When I visited the centre in 2007, I recall wondering whether it would be able to survive – a small island of Buddhism surrounded by a sea of religious and ethnic diversity. I needn't have worried! Today, through a lively series of retreats and ongoing outreach efforts, the Venerable Dhammasami has made the OBV a centre for Buddhist education that provides comfort and compassion, instruction and inspiration to anyone who is interested in learning more about the Buddha's teachings. This is truly a gift of great value.

Finally, I would like to say something about the importance of Venerable Dhammasami in Southeast Asia, where he has a huge following and is accorded something akin to rock star status among Shan Buddhists. In the course of conducting fieldwork in the area over the years, I find that I encounter his name and image frequently – whether it is while chatting with monks in Taunggyi, perusing Shan items in a local market, or attending a religious ritual – everyone seems to know about him. Most recently, while attending a novice ordination festival in early April of 2014 at Wat Pa Pao, the Shan monastery in Chiang Mai, I found a vendor selling a booklet of Buddhist prayers

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that Venerable Dhammasami had compiled in Shan and Thai, along with campaign-style lapel buttons bearing his photograph!

Venerable Dr. Khammai Dhammasami is simply one of the most respected Shan monks alive today. With one foot planted firmly in his rural Shan homeland and the other now in Oxford, England, he embodies the struggles, challenges, and opportunities that characterise contemporary Buddhist teachings and practice. Through his remarkable life experiences, he has forged a unique perspective that has positioned him to serve as a bridge for a new generation of Buddhists – Asian and European, Theravadins and others – who turn to him for help in figuring out what it means to be Buddhist in a rapidly changing global context. For his tireless efforts in this regard, we can all be grateful.

Nancy Eberhardt
Professor of Anthropology
Knox College
Illinois
USA

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VENERABLE DR. KHAMMAI DHAMMASAMI

Peter Estakhrian

The gentle ring of the pyramid meditation timer informs us that our 45-minute sitting is over. I slowly open my eyes and immediately feel the warmth of the meditation room at the Oxford Buddha Vihara (OBV). Venerable Dr. Khammai Dhammasami turns on the lights with his remote control, and we bow to pay homage to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the *sangha*. He then invites us to share our experiences and ask questions, as he leads the discussions...

I first came across meditation and Buddhism in June 2008, when I attended a ten-day silent retreat at the Suan Mokh Meditation Centre in the south of Thailand. It was on the first day of the retreat, during the first Dhamma talk, that my life changed, and brought me to a new way of thinking, acting, and living. I chose to move to Oxford that November, after discovering that Oxford had a Theravada-tradition *vihara*. Then the *vihara* was a small, three-bedroom house in Old Marston. I have been attending the OBV regularly for the last six years. From the very beginning, I was warmly welcomed by the Venerable Dhammasami, the other monks, and the community. Ven. Dhammasami has been a consistent presence at the *vihara* and has led the community from strength to strength.

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Ven. Dhammasami, who is originally from Shan State in Myanmar, is known as *'Sao Khu'* to the Shan; *'Sayadaw'* to the Burmese; and *'Ajahn Khammai'* to the Thai. I prefer to call him *'Sao Khu'*, which I believe means 'Great Teacher'. He is indeed a great teacher, and well loved by everyone who has ever met him, listened to his Dhamma talks, or read his books. Over the last six years, I have had the opportunity to attend several of his Dhamma talks, teachings, and retreats, and get to know him at a personal level. His immediate warmth, energy, *metta* (loving kindness), and his teaching style enable him to be understood clearly by any audience. He is a very accessible individual, always welcoming new visitors. We are exceptionally fortunate in that we benefit directly from his open-minded invitations to monks and nuns from various Buddhist traditions, who then visit the OBV. This allows us valuable opportunities to meet such visitors and learn more about other Buddhist traditions. Despite all the differences, aren't we all followers of the teachings of the Enlightened One?

Having met *Sao Khu*, other monks, kind brothers and sisters from Southeast Asia (specifically Thailand and Myanmar), and seeing their kindness and generosity, I was encouraged to visit these two countries, and observe and experience closely their generosity and their *metta*. I have made numerous friends in Myanmar, and have even met some members of *Sao Khu*'s family when I visited Shan State. His family members are some of the kindest people I have ever met, and I can see that this runs in the family.

I have been one of the devotees at the OBV who offers help – by way of my DIY and my handy-man skills – whenever needed. *Sao Khu* is not only the Abbot of the OBV, and a great teacher and scholar, he is also happy to turn his hand to all manner of tasks including decorating, gardening, digging and, very recently in preparation for the *Sima* ceremony, he even mastered bricklaying!!

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I am sure we all agree that *Sao Khu's* presence is a blessing to us and we are lucky to have him in Oxford. I wish him a very Happy 50th Birthday. May he enjoy good health for a long time that we may all benefit from his presence.

May anyone who reads this article be happy, and at peace.

Peter Estakhrian
Oxford
UK

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ON LYING–DOWN MEDITATION

Mrs. Kamonip Evans

Mindfulness meditation is so versatile: it can be practised while one is sitting, standing, walking, or lying down. Though lying-down meditation is one of the postures, guided lying-down meditation tends to be omitted from the teachings in temples. This may be due to the extra level of comfort it creates, as a result of which one can easily let go of mindfulness and nod off. Secondly, during such a state, our arms and legs may stray into awkward positions, thereby seeming disrespectful and out of place. Thirdly, given that human nature tends to yearn for comfort, we may easily become attached to the lying-down posture and the tendency to nod off, and thus not progress further in our practice.

The former Ven. Kawesako wrote about "breathing through one's feet" during lying-down meditation; and Ven. V. Vajiramedhi talked about how enthusiastic devotees were when he offered it at his temple. However, without proper guidance on how to go about it, people often wonder how to practise lying-down meditation, and whether they are doing it correctly on their own. Chances are, they may choose not to do it at all.

When Pra Ajahn Khammai announced we were going to practise lying-down meditation, I was delighted. My body was aching from the

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journey to Oxford, and the practice from the previous day, so lying-down meditation sounded like heaven. The only concern, shared by most meditators, was that the meditation took place soon after lunch, when there is a tendency for drowsiness.

When the meditation began, we all tucked in under our blankets – preventing any unsightly postures should we doze off. After 15 minutes, the snoring began all around. Meditation before sleep has been found to produce melatonin, the sleep-aid hormone – so they must have been having quality snoozes. Those who remained awake were able to use the sound of others snoring as their meditation object, labelling it as 'hearing, hearing, hearing' before returning their mind to the guided meditation instruction.

The biggest challenge was to remain mindfully awake while the body was completely relaxed. The fear of falling asleep and missing out on Pra Ajahn's teaching somehow helped me stay awake and mindful. All the aches and pains, experienced earlier, disappeared as the body became comfortable and warm under a blanket. When we finished the session, I felt recharged, rejuvenated, and able to complete my weekend retreat, staying on for the evening chant and another session of meditation before returning to London.

Pra Ajahn Khammai reminded us that meditation practice is like playing a stringed instrument: if the strings are too tight, they break easily; if they are too loose, they cannot produce a sound. In our practice, we should listen to our body: let it rest when it needs to, but not so much that it encourages laziness! In other words, we should follow the Middle Way.

Lying-down meditation can be adopted into one's daily routine at home. There is no excuse for not practising it when we can do so at

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bed-time, before sleep. Studies show that the brain reviews, during sleep, whatever we focus our minds on prior to sleep. So, if we worry about this or that, chances are we will dream about it and wake up restless. But if we put our minds to rest and feel at peace with lying-down meditation, we will sleep better, with no bad dreams, waking up fresh for a new day. Anyone who suffers from insomnia and sleep problems would benefit from learning this practice at the Oxford Buddha Vihara. Thank you very much, Pra Ajahn Khammai, for pointing the way and letting us rest our body while following the Middle Way!

Mrs. Kamonip Evans

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A TRIBUTE TO OUR OXFORD SAYADAW

Mon Mon Gale

When a good friend of mine told me that Venerable Mahasena was inviting contributions for a book on the Oxford Sayadaw ('*Sayadaw*' being the Burmese word for 'Venerable'), to mark his forthcoming 50th birthday, I grabbed the opportunity with both hands.

Afterwards, it dawned on me that it would be an injustice to write only a few pages about Sayadaw's outstanding qualities and innumerable achievements over the past five decades. Therefore, I am not even attempting to do so. As a mere scratch on the surface, I have composed some of my thoughts and views based on each letter of Sayadaw's name. It is my shortcoming if important facts have been omitted; and for any mistakes made, I sincerely apologise to Sayadaw.

DR. K. D H A M M A S A M I

DR.

In 2004, Sayadaw obtained his D.Phil. from St. Anne's College, Oxford. This is just one of the many degrees and diplomas Sayadaw has obtained from various religious institutions in several countries. During his years of doctoral research at Oxford, Sayadaw withstood

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considerable hardship. He was the first Buddhist monk from Burma to have achieved such a success. For that, we are infinitely proud of our Sayadaw.

K

is for Kindness. Sayadaw is always kind and treats everyone, young and old, with kindness and respect. The entry for the word 'kind' in the thesaurus lists these synonyms: considerate, concerned, friendly, generous, obliging, charitable – and they all apply to him!

D

is for being a Distinguished Dhamma teacher. He explains things lucidly, and in simple terms. He has a distinct style of getting an important point across to the listener in just a few words. He has to rest his vocal cords often due to his chronic laryngitis. Hence, he does not waste his words. When he speaks, every word counts.

H

is for Humility. Sayadaw treats everyone with humility. Although he is well known, and respected by some of the world's most venerated monks – including the Most Venerable Murng Phong Sayadaw of Shan State, Rector Sayadaw Dr. Nandamarlar Bhiwantha, Thidagu Sayadaw of Burma, Ajahn Sumedo of the Forest Tradition, and senior Thai monks – he remains respectful and kind towards those who have neither fame nor status.

'H' is also for Happiness. One of the meditation methods he teaches us is *Piti* meditation, which involves rejoicing in one's own *kusala*. *Piti* is one of the *Jana* factors and, as such, is a pre-requisite for higher mental

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states. Most of us tend to remember the bad that has happened to us but we forget the good, and the wholesome deeds we have performed. Therefore, *Piti* meditation is essential for the cultivation of a happy state of mind.

A

is for being Approachable. Sayadaw encourages everyone to ask him Dhamma questions, giving each of us his undivided attention. He helps us all to feel we are special to him. I still remember the very first time my parents and I went to the monastery to offer him '*Sone*' and listen to his sermon. Before the sermon, he asked us if we had any queries that he could clarify for us. We were not used to being asked that, because the usual practice is to just listen to a sermon. Now, several years on, we are familiar with this format and really look forward to Q&A time!

M

is for *Metta* meditation. Sayadaw teaches us how to practise *Metta* meditation systematically. This is fully explained in his book *Mindfulness Meditation Made Easy*. *Vipassanā* and *Metta* meditation being complementary to each other, it is very important to be able to practise *Metta* meditation properly.

M

is also for *Mudita* – to rejoice in the success of others. *Mudita* is quite a difficult mental state to cultivate and yet is very useful in conquering jealousy. If we can feel truly happy about someone else's achievements, we too get to enjoy it all at no cost to ourselves!

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A

is for Academe. Being the Executive Secretary of more than one international association of Theravada Buddhist universities, as well as a Trustee and Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies, Sayadaw is closely involved with Buddhist institutions all over the world.

S

has got to be for *Sati* (mindfulness). My very first encounter with Sayadaw was at a friend's house many years ago, when he came in a group of four or five monks. Each delivered a short sermon, and Sayadaw spoke for just a few minutes. I still remember that discourse. He stressed the importance of *Sati*. Quite often, people put too much emphasis on *Samadhi* (concentration) in *Vipassanā* meditation. In actual fact, *Sati* is more important. As the Buddha said, ***"appamadena sampadetha"***.

Of course, 'S' is also for Shan. Sayadaw, very fond of his birthplace, is now building a Dhamma hall for the Wat Ho Loi monastery at Laikha, the village where he was born. Sayadaw's 50th birthday celebrations will take place there.

A

is for being 'All Together'. Sayadaw does not like segregation. At the monastery, everyone practises the same Buddhist chanting – be they Burmese, Thai, Sri Lankan, English, or of any other nationality – no matter what their practice at home. This instills a feeling of oneness

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among the supporters, whatever their nationality, the colour of their skin, or even their religion. My Muslim friend who came along to one of the meditation retreats was surprised to find there was a Muslim joining in just like the rest!

M

is for Sayadaw's Mother, Madam Nang Swe (1926 –2008). Sayadaw was very fond of his mother who, sadly, passed away fighting cancer. One cannot really imagine how excruciating it must be to cope with the pain of cancer, but coped she did. Moreover, she did it without any traditional painkillers such as morphine. Madam Nang Swe practised meditation on *Anatta* (non-self) until her last breath.

I

is for Inspiration. Sayadaw was born in a rather small village in Shan State. He studied English only in his late teens. (He completed the *Dhammacariya* as a *samanara*!) Sayadaw is a shining example of how anything is possible if one has the dedication and the will to succeed. As I said at the beginning, we are indeed very fortunate to have had the opportunity to know him and be the recipients of his excellent teachings of the Dhamma.

IN SUMMARY, I AM VERY GRATEFUL TO SAYADAW FOR ALL THAT HE HAS DONE FOR US. MAY HE CONTINUE TO HAVE GOOD HEALTH, SUCCESS, AND HAPPINESS IN THE YEARS TO COME, THAT HE MAY CONTINUE TEACHING US THE BUDDHA DHAMMA.

Dr. Mon Mon Gale

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VENERABLE DHAMMASAMI: AN APPRECIATION

Richard Gombrich

Over the past fifteen years, the presence in Oxford of the Venerable Dr. Dhammasami has greatly enriched my life. Since a lot of my teaching concerns Buddhism, and in particular the Theravada tradition, it is invaluable to have living and working here in Oxford a monk who can serve as a model of the ideal *bhikkhu*. I am sure that my sentiments are shared by the wider communities in which he is prominent: the University, the city of Oxford, Theravada Buddhists (especially those from SE Asia) from a wide area of southern England, and many Buddhist communities overseas.

The Ven. Dhammasami's personality and his talents are equally remarkable. Few scholars resemble him in being as much at home with people as with books. He has the ability to reach out to anyone he encounters, Asian or Western, and make them aware of his delicacy of feeling. He is unfailingly polite but never unduly formal. He listens carefully to what others are saying, never imposes his views, but forms his independent judgement. In brief, he manages to combine warmth and friendliness with tranquillity, both to soothe and to encourage.

His array of talents is quietly manifested in an astonishing range of

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activities. As Abbot, he guides his monastery through various projects – and finds the money to pay for them. His mission to help others engages him in pastoral visits to local Buddhists; in working for Buddhist university chaplaincies in and beyond Oxford; in building up and at times running the International Association of Buddhist Universities and the Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities; in supporting the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies as Trustee and Research Fellow; in giving numerous courses on meditation, many of them abroad; in helping and taking part in international academic conferences; and doubtless in many other activities of which I am only sporadically aware. This constant activity, especially the international travel, sometimes tells on his health, and his friends and supporters hope that he will learn to conserve his energies more rigorously.

The Ven. Dhammasami has published in the Pali medium, and probably knows the language better than I do. Of course, he also has a deep knowledge of Buddhist monastic life in Myanmar, Thailand, and Britain, and could – should! – certainly write on this topic with authority. As an academic myself, I cannot but regret that he never puts himself first, and therefore publishes less than he is capable of. But one cannot have everything, and no one can deny that he gives all who come into contact with him a memorable experience of Buddhism in action.

On his anniversary, let me wish him many more years of the service he renders to mankind.

Professor Richard Gombrich
Former Boden Professor of Sanskrit
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THE SPANISH TRANSLATION OF *MINDFULNESS MEDITATION MADE EASY*

Ricardo Guerrero

I would not like this little article to result in a simple acknowledgement of the many good qualities of the Venerable Dr. Khammai Dhammasami whom we all know, but I will say only one thing that sums up my appreciation and admiration for him: I wish I had known him long before, ALWAYS.

I was introduced to Venerable Dhammasami for the first time in Bangkok by my master in May 2012, at the 9th United Nations Vesak Celebrations and the 2nd International Association of Buddhist Universities (IABU) conference, of which body he was and remains Executive Secretary.

I was honoured to participate in a meeting of the organisation which Dhammasami was chairing and moderating. Without knowing anything about his life or his activities, the first detail that caught my attention was his youthful ways and his natural sense of ease in carrying out his task in a forum that, *a priori*, everyone had described as solemn and very formal given the age and dignity of many of the monks and lay people gathered there. The Venerable handled the meeting with immense skill, never losing his smile and good humour despite having

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to combat the audible problem of laryngitis that characterises him. I had then attributed that little problem to the interminable sessions of preparatory work ahead of this event.

The main purpose of my participation in Bangkok was to present, to the international Buddhist community, the project of the Buddhist Centre that we intended to create in Madrid. Depending on their response and the support received there, we were to decide to either undertake this adventure or not, resigning ourselves – in the event of a 'No' – to accepting the presence of Theravada Buddhism in Spain to be sporadic and discontinuous due to the small numbers that we comprise. So, in this spirit, I told the Venerable about our project. His years of experience as Abbot of a Buddhist monastery in a Western country would undoubtedly be of great help to us, so his opinion was crucial. But what we got from him was much more than that; it was an injection of optimism, encouragement, and support. His sincere interest together with a truly magnetic personality made me realise how much I wished to rely on his feedback and to develop a joint project in the future.

The next opportunity I had to meet the Venerable was at the Oxford Buddha Vihara. For those who do not know the Oxford Buddha Vihara, it occupies a set of two semi-detached houses of traditional English architecture whose exterior does not reveal any recognisable Buddhist element other than a schematic outline of the Buddha placed in the frontage. The Oxford Buddha Vihara exudes a special atmosphere of peace and familiarity. I think the Venerable Dhammasami and his community have successfully managed to combine the comfort and warmth of an English home with Buddhist rationality and simplicity. Going a little further, I would say that the monastery perfectly reflects the solar personality of its Abbot. In few monasteries have I felt such a sense of intimacy and openness and at the same time devotion without solemnity; it is as highly visited as it is quiet, and it inspires respect,

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trust, and closeness. It is an ideal place for devotion, meditation, working, and coexistence.

During that stay at the Oxford Buddha Vihara, there were many moments for conversation and many others for meditation and Buddhist practice. The Venerable Dhammasami facilitates the exchange of ideas and one is immediately aware of his academic grounding, his erudition, and his wide-ranging interest in several subjects. I received many good tips for achieving our goals: I learnt from their experience of the setting up of their monastery in Oxford, I had the opportunity to meet other Ph.Ds and several of his faculty colleagues and, of course, we talked about books, a passion we share.

That was the first time I had in my hands *Mindfulness Meditation Made Easy* which, read in bits and pieces, grabbed me immediately. All meditators have the experience of having read many books on meditation in which something is missing; they are just not sufficiently clear or not deep enough. The purpose of this book was unlike anything I had read to date. I remember that the very next day I proposed to the Venerable that I translate the book into Spanish. It was a necessary task in a publishing scenario in which, in regard to this genre, there is more mediocrity than needs be described. The Venerable accepted and I went back to Spain feeling a very lucky man because this book would fill several aspirations: bringing meditation to the general public, providing a useful tool to Spanish-speaking meditators and, personally, allowing me to analyse the text further to unravel its deeper meaning while carrying out the task of translation.

I must start by saying that the translation of the book has been one of the most rewarding experiences I have had in recent years. As I was working on it, I was discovering every one of his many virtues. The first is the approach itself: a transcription of a series of Dhamma talks

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given to a group of individuals during a six-day meditation retreat. Understandably, oral delivery is more direct than written language since the presence and reactions of the interlocutor condition the speech so that it can be wagered directly for kind understanding, leaving aside other considerations. However, although it was a transcript and not a text, only an individual with a truly deep understanding of meditation could speak thus on this very complex practice without a note of scholarly arrogance. The Venerable Dhammasami, possessing such knowledge of meditation at both the theoretical and the experiential level, has the virtue of explaining in plain words the more abstract elements without undermining the depth of the same.

Throughout the work, I tried to combine my role of translator with my condition of meditator, therefore experiencing personally what I was reading and translating. Thus, I believe that I have achieved a better understanding of the text and hence been able to further refine the translation. Arguably, the Venerable Dhammasami guided my hand during the translation process through the 'voice' contained in his book.

The translation of the book has also given me a different perspective on mental structure and human nature. One tends to never take the place of the Other, although it should be a regular practice for the development of compassion; but what is even harder is to know the feelings and mental reactions of others. As it so happens, the group that the meditation retreat was intended for comprised individuals of different origins and cultures, which could have posed a difficulty in translating the book, but did not. All men feel the same way and have the same ability to practise mindfulness to achieve the same objectives.

I wish to end by thanking the Venerable for the opportunity he gave me, and by sharing with him the many compliments I have received

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from so many – both regular meditators and novices, Buddhists and non-Buddhists, mental health professionals, doctors, and housewives. Now his work has taken life in Spanish: *Meditación Mindfulness, Fácil* is available to over 500 million people.

Thank you.

May the Triple Gem bless you.

Ricardo Guerrero
President
Asociación Hispana de Buddhismo
Spain

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A MOMENT TO REMEMBER

Jenny Ko Gyi

The rear staff stayed behind at the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University (ITBMU) that day, with not much to do. The University's elders had all left for the Great Cave at Kaba Aye, and we were relaxing and chatting; we were not aware of a guest in the adjacent room until a colleague came to whisper that a venerable monk was paying the University a visit. While my fellow teachers began asking our colleague who the guest was, I went into the next room and encountered, for the first time, the Venerable who was to become a pivotal figure for conferences and seminars that our fledgling University would soon host and take part in.

Given the ITBMU has overseas students and occasional guests, and was at that point hosting an international gathering, I thought I would greet our guest in English but decided instead to do so in Burmese. With our Asian guests, it is not always easy to tell who is Burmese and who is not – or who speaks Burmese and who doesn't – until one starts a conversation. To our pleasant surprise, we made the acquaintance of Dr. Dhammasami who by then was already a well-known and much-respected scholar in the UK. We immediately all crowded around him, the atmosphere becoming noisy and happy, everyone asking him questions.

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All gratitude and credit go to the Venerable Sitagu Sayadaw for bringing Dr. Dhammasami out to the World Buddhist Summit held in Myanmar that year (2004). The ITBMU would soon proudly become a member of the Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities (ATBU), and it is thanks to him that we now have opportunities to present our papers at other Theravada universities which, though, are not many in number.

Those of our University's teaching staff working for their doctoral degrees are to be given close guidance and scrutiny by Dr. Dhammasami, even if briefly.

We would be grateful for the Venerable's patience, and for his understanding smile at our ignorant and often childish questions, and for his wise and prompt responses.

We are all proud and happy to think the Venerable is one of us, and I, for one, shall remember and cherish the moment I first met the Venerable in that room at our University that day.

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A YOUNG MONK LEAVES HIS PARENTS AND HIS HOME FOR OXFORD

Sao Pannyabhoga Herngseng

This article is an offering to the Venerable Dr. Khammai Dhammasami on his golden jubilee, which will be celebrated in Laikha, a village in Shan State now known as his birthplace.

Ven. Dhammasami, a Theravada Buddhist scholar-monk based in Oxford, has been working tirelessly for Buddhism both locally and globally, including in the UK, Spain, Serbia, Hungary, Poland, and Canada. Besides being Executive Secretary of the International Association of Buddhist Universities (IABU) and of the Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities (ATBU), he has: set up overseas branches of the Oxford Buddha Vihara in Singapore (OBVS), Malaysia (OBVM), and Yangon (OBVY); teaches Buddhist Studies at universities; and leads meditation retreats in several countries.

This article looks at his early years, and how he left his parents and his hometown at a very young age for his education at a monastic institute. I analyse the place where he first studied Buddhism, and briefly examine his life overseas as a simple monk from a humble family going on to study at the University of Oxford.

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To begin with, Ven. Dhammasami was born into a big Shan family of ten children. Their parents were Loung Jang Kham O and Pa Jang Hswe. Thus, Ven. Dhammasami has nine siblings, five brothers and four sisters: Sai Khattiya, Sai Kanna, Nang Mya, Sai Sa Tun, Sai Ton Lu, Sai Ood, Sai Kham Mai (later Ven. Dhammasami himself), Nang Yen, Nang Khin Nu, and Nang Kham Noan. (Note: 'Sai' refers to a male while 'Nang' to a female.) One can imagine the struggles the family must have faced, given Laikha's occasional exposure to civil war. Later, they moved to other places, including Pan Kan (20 km away) and Taunggyi. Laikha's population is largely an agrarian one, with rice paddy fields surrounding the town.

In his contribution for the 75th birth anniversary of Ven. Vijaya, Aggamahāpaṇṭita, Taunggyi (2013: 17), Ven. Dhammasami mentions leaving his parents and hometown at the age of nine, together with the youngest of his elder brothers Sai Ood, two years his senior. The reason for their leaving home was a search for a better education. At the time, both were young novices. His brother had been ordained as a novice at the Wat Ho Loi Temple, while he had been ordained at the Kyaug Pang Temple. Before they became novices, both had been temple boys studying at the temple of Sirimangala Kyaung Oud, Laikha, learning how to read and memorise a few short Buddhist texts such as the *Paritta* and the *Mangala Sutta*, for the purpose of rituals.

One day, *circa* March 1972, after the family had stored their rice seasonally from the paddy fields, the parents sought the permission of the Ven. Kesara, Sirimaṅgla Kyaung Oud Temple, to send the two novices to the Pitaka Translation Temple in Panglong, well known to us as the Centre of the Shan State *Sangha* Council. To this centre come hundreds of young monks from all around for a sound monastic education in Pali and in the *suttas*. Today, the Pitaka Translation Temple in Panglong has over 600 student monks.

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By that time, the other two elder brothers had already been novitiate students at the Pitaka Translation Temple. So that year, four brothers from one family came to study at the Wat Pitaka Translation Temple. The two elder brothers were very good students. The four siblings had been sent to the same temple because their compassionate parents thought if they studied at different temples and in different places, it would be difficult both for the family to go and see them and for the boys to look after themselves. Therefore, in March 1973, all four brothers were at the same temple in Panglong.

In the summer of 1973, after their annual examination, the two elder brothers Sobhita and Nandadhaja planned to move to the Kan Gyi Temple, Ywanghwe ('Nyaung Shwe' in Burmese). As mentioned, both were good students, always praised by their teachers. Understandably, some students could not keep their eyes off the four brothers. This was one reason why, later, the two elder brothers decided to take their younger brother elsewhere.

It was the lecturer Ven. Cintita (*Dhammacariya*) who had introduced the Kan Gyi Temple to the four brothers as Ven. Cintita, himself, had studied at Kan Gyi. There was great hope that the four brothers, too, would go on to higher education like Ven. Cintita, and return as teachers in the future. Soon, the four brothers were heading for Ywanghwe via Taunggyi, to continue with their education in a better place.

Unfortunately, after the four brothers arrived in Taunggyi, they came to stay at the Veluvan Temple, where the lecturer who had introduced them earlier said: "Among the four brothers, the younger two should stay on in Taunggyi for this year because they cannot speak Burmese well enough. Next year they can follow the two elder brothers." Therefore, the four brothers were now separated into two groups: the two older brothers moved to the Kan Gyi Temple in Ywanghwe, while the younger two remained at the Veluvan Temple, Taunggyi.

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Thus, the novice Dhammasami came to study at the Veluvan Temple in Taunggyi, the capital of Shan State, together with the youngest of his elder brothers Sai Ood. The Veluvan Temple is located on a hill where water is difficult to obtain. The current Abbot of the Veluvan Temple was one of the original teachers of Ven. Dhammasami. Two years later, Ven. Dhammasami moved to Kan Gyi as planned.

Thus, before moving to Thailand and Sri Lanka, Ven. Dhammasami had studied in at least six different monasteries, in towns such as Laikha, Panglong, Taunggyi, and Ywanghwe in Shan State; and at the Sasana Mandai Institute and Visuddharama of Mandalay in mainland Myanmar. In Laikha, at the age of seven, he had learnt some basic chants such as the *Mangala Sutta* and the *Metta Sutta*. It is important to the Ven. Dhammasami that he has had a close connection with several well-known temples in Shan State.

Thus had he moved to the capital, Taunggyi, where he studied for two years at the Veluvan Temple, which imparts teaching in both Burmese and Shan. Ven. Dhammasami says that before he came to Taunggyi, he could not read Shan well. It was under the Ven. Vijaya (*Dhammacariya*) that he learnt to read and write Shan well. Furthermore, Ven. Dhammasami and his three brothers were closely connected with the temple. This would provide them, in the future, with certain opportunities to approach seniors.

Two years later, around 1975, Ven. Dhammasami moved to the Kan Gyi Buddhist Institute, Ywanghwe, where he finished the government examination *Pathama Lat* at an unusually young age. He remained in Kan Gyi for five years, inspired by the environment to work hard, before moving to the Sasana Mandai Institute in Pegu.

Subsequently, he completed the *Pathama* level of the *Vinayadinuggaha*

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in the first year; the *Dutiya* level in the second year; and the *Pathama Nge* in the third year. In the fourth year, he failed the *Pathama Lat*, but passed it the following year, when he moved to Pegu where he stayed for the next five years.

Sometime around 1979–80, he moved to the Sasana Mandai Buddhist Institute in Pegu. By this time, the Sasana Mandai had been renamed the Pali Buddhist University, with government recognition. This institute was unlike Buddhist institutes in Shan State, as most of its students came from different parts of Myanmar. Now, the Ven. Dhammasami was to attend the *Pathama Gyi* at the age of 16.

As Ven. Dhammasami mentions in the *Journey of Sao Sra Mongkut in 50 Years* (2012: 53), he studied the *Dhammacariya* while still a novice, in 1984. In short, he completed his *Dhammacariya* while a novice. Nevertheless, he failed the *Dhammacariya* in the first year. The following year, he successfully cleared the *Dhammacariya*. He was then appointed a lecturer at the Sasana Mandai Institute. It was very rare at the time to find a lecturer who was still a novice. Thus, before moving to Mandalay, he was already teaching monks whilst still being a *samanera* himself.

In Myanmar, it is strongly believed that holding a *Dhammacariya* degree is not enough. If possible, one should try to take the *Abhivamsa* examination, accepted by all communities. Big monasteries may choose to prepare their students for the most famous examinations in the country such as the *Sakyasīha* and the *Cetiyaṅgaṇa*. In fact, all candidates must be under 27 years of age. If they are over 27, they are barred from taking this examination. It is important to take these examinations as the big monasteries compete with one another for prestige, both locally and nationally (Dhammasami, 2004: 55–60). Candidates who pass these examinations are awarded the title

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Abhivamsa. So, if the Venerable were to pass this examination, his name would be Ven. Dhammasamībhivamsa. Thus, like many monks, Ven. Dhammasami was determined to take the *Abhivamsa* examination. However, the examination was only held in Mandalay.

One hoping to hold this degree needed to move to Mandalay and choose a special temple. The reason is that the *Abhivamsa* is a private examination. The committee members of the concerned organisation are mostly scholars. Therefore, the questions for their students are necessarily difficult. Of the hundreds of students who take the exam, only a very few pass. If students are lucky, around 15 pass each year.

With the intention of taking the *Abhivamsa* examination, Ven. Dhammasami moved to Mandalay around 1986, just two years before the uprising of 1988. He was allowed to stay at the Visuddhārāma Institute. Unfortunately, he was unable to sit for the examination due to poor health. Moreover, many monks and students had to return home as several universities, schools, and other institutions closed down. So it was that his student life in Myanmar stopped at this point, and would revive again after his move to Thailand and Sri Lanka. He left Mandalay for Thailand in 1987, because of ill health. By March 1988, he was already in Thailand, a few months before the uprising.

In 1989/1990, it was time for him to get a passport for going overseas for his studies. However, it was a very difficult time for everyone. There was a new government in place, and much had changed.

Ven. Dhammasami applied for his passport, and was kept waiting for seven or eight months. At the time, not many monks went to study in Sri Lanka. Only a lucky few who got their passports could go to study in India and Sri Lanka. Many did not even know how to apply for a passport.

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When the time was right, Ven. Dhammasami got his passport, to the disbelief of many. He now consulted his senior monks and devotees as to whether he should go to study in Sri Lanka or India. Without much knowledge and experience, they were uncertain. Note that by this time, communication systems were strictly blocked from international communities.

In 1991, Ven. Dhammasami moved to Colombo and enrolled at the Buddhist and Pali University there, to pursue a Master of Arts in Buddhist Philosophy. Later, he completed his M.Phil. at Kelaniya University. His thesis was entitled 'The New Critical Edition of the *Apheggusāradīpanīṭīkā*'. He was then working for the Burmese Buddhist temple, Makutārama, having been appointed one of the management committee for temple innovation.

He still dreamed of doing a Ph.D. somewhere. From 1993 to 1996, he was invited to teach at the Young Men's Buddhist Association in Borella and Colombo for four years. (Later, he would be invited to teach at one of the Buddhist temples in London.)

By this time, he was spending more time on temple activities than on studying. However, it seems to us now that in his own way he was preparing for study at the University of Oxford. He was accepted by Oxford to do his D.Phil, resulting in his study: *Between Idealism and Pragmatism: A Study of Monastic Education in Burma and Thailand from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*. He officially started his doctoral research around 1998/1999, overcoming countless struggles and difficulties.

Most remarkably, he not only obtained his D.Phil. from St. Anne's in 2004, he also established the Oxford Buddha Vihara. A Korean doctoral student at Oxford used to ask him how he managed his

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emotions and his time to achieve both, despite the acute levels of stress each involved. The answer to that secret rests with Ven. Dhammasami.

Today, many Buddhist scholars, Buddhists from different sects, and devotees from around the world come to the Oxford Buddha Vihara. The journey of that young novice, who left his home and his parents over 30 years ago, has made possible this centre where Buddhism now spreads its teachings.

Sao Pannyabhoga Herngseng
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LEARNING PALI AND TAN KHAMMAI

Saisampan Hilton

Having studied the *Abidhamma* for seven and a half years, I was keen to learn Pali. I knew that Tan Khammai had studied Pali, so I asked him to teach me. About four years ago, he told me about the annual 12-day Pali course offered by his teacher in Oxford. I naturally knew about Professor Gombrich, as anybody interested in Pali does. I had used one of his books when studying Buddhism at SOAS, so I was most excited at the prospect. Tan Khammai offered that I should stay at the Oxford Buddha Vihara (OBV), as staying in the Oxford Brookes dorm would incur costs. Being keen and a little stupid, I refused, saying that I wanted to be near the classroom and didn't wish to commute.

When I arrived at the Oxford Brookes dorm, I found it in such a poor state that I just could not stay there. I asked my friend Betty Kunjara, a supporter of the OBV who happened to be there then, to help me find a B&B as I knew the OBV was full of children attending a summer camp. When I arrived at the OBV to fetch Betty, Tan Khammai was there, and surprisingly free! He should have said, 'I told you so', but he was so kind, I was really touched. He asked my poor friend to vacate her room for me. He also said that one of his students was coming to attend the course, too, so I would have a companion.

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The course was a short, sharp shock for me. Many of the students were previous attendees, being gluttons for punishment. Others were professors in related fields from Canada and the USA, and students of Sanskrit at Oxford.

The most interesting student was a Professor of Philosophy at Oxford, just as famous in his field as Gombrich is in his. They had a continuous sparring match in class, and while I could not follow everything, Gombrich must have given as good as he got. The Philosophy Professor student had a bottle of red wine next to him from which he continuously took a swig. (This really shocked me, as I try to be an observant Buddhist.) He smoked, drank, and was in very bad health. One day, I saw him on a bench near a bus stop wheezing away, so I waited with him. As we entered the classroom together, he said something like "Back to the Monster"!

Tan Khammai arranged a room and provided lights where the two Pali students at the OBV could do their homework quietly. However, the course was heavily front-loaded and, on the fourth day, I went crying to the Abbot, saying that it was really hard and I couldn't do it. He thought I was going to quit so promised to help. Several other students had given up already, including my temple-mate. Apparently, this is not unusual. Tan Saeng, the Deputy Abbot at the time, now promoted to Abbot at a temple in Kent, was so sweet. He said: "You have to hang in there because I need you to come back and teach me afterwards". Tan Khammai helped as promised. He gave me tips, extra books, taught me how to pronounce words. We had a lot to memorise.

While at the OBV, Tan Saeng and another monk prepared breakfast and I helped with the fruits. During the first week, there were children in novitiate to learn about Buddhism, so there were a lot of us. At breakfast, Tan Khammai placed me after the monks and novices, so

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I was one of the *dāna* recipients. When we chanted '*Bhavatu sabba mangalam*', my eyes welled up. It was the first time that I had received *dāna*; usually, I am the donor.

All the monks at the OBV were so supportive that I became the beneficiary of unbelievable kindnesses and, for the first time, was at the receiving end of the humility of observant Buddhist monks. This was a new experience for me. In Thailand, the laity serves the monks; the OBV monks did everything for everybody, regardless of their status. I was not allowed to do the clearing and cleaning after breakfast, and was told to get to class. In the evenings, I tried to be back by 7pm for the evening chant and meditation. But my mind was preoccupied with my studies and could not meditate. Nevertheless, living in the temple, joining in on the evening chant, and having a formal opportunity to meditate did have an effect. On the last day, and on days when I was sick with a bad cold (everybody else had it, too), I had new meditational experiences that I had never had before, and the opportunity to discuss them with Tan Saeng and Tan Khammai.

After that breakdown on the fourth day, the pressure eased off. I already knew many of the *suttas* and their approximate meaning, but of course I didn't know the grammar or the declensions. Just looking up words in the huge Pali Text Society dictionary became a painstaking business. As part of pre-course homework, we had been told to and I did learn the order of the alphabets, but I didn't really know it. Fortunately, one of the alumni students made several bookmarks with the order of the alphabets written on it, which he presented to us newcomers. The fact that I had taken Latin for my GCE and that there were no exams to pass saved me. On the last day, I felt so relieved having survived it. [Tan Khammai said that what I had learnt was equal to, or better than, the 3rd-level equivalent in Thailand. There, after passing this 3rd level, the graduate is addressed by the honorary title '*Maha*'. So,

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Tan Khammai gave me a pseudonym, '*Maha Moo*' (the latter being my nickname) which became known and stuck around OBV circles.] After this course, my appreciation of the *Buddhavacana* has grown immeasurably. I continued with Pali on my own for a while, but the practice soon took precedence.

Subsequently, I attended a lecture on the *Anatta-lakkhana Sutta* that Tan Khammai gave at the Young Buddhist Association in Bangkok, as well as other lectures. Over the years, I have seen him on many other occasions at the OBV and in Thailand. He is the quintessential monk/teacher: learned, kind, and patient. I have been present on occasions when people have asked him really brainless questions, but he always answers kindly and with wit. If anyone has not been to a Friday meditation session with him, they should go. One by one, he asks all attendees about their meditational experience, and always offers helpful comments and advice. I am impressed not only by his learning, which is taken for granted, but also by his personal qualities. His thoughts are always for others, he is one of the best representatives of the Buddhist monkhood. A temple is as good as its Abbot, and the OBV is a prime example. My only concern is that he spreads himself too thin. His voice has weakened. He has already achieved more than others, but I believe he could achieve even more, in the long term, if he would only preserve himself a little. Those of us who have supported the OBV and Tan Khammai, we rejoice, for we are supporting monks who are true followers of the Buddha.

ANUMODANA

Saisampan Hilton

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DHARMA GATE
BUDDHIST COLLEGE

THE DHAMMA COMES TO HUNGARY

H.E. Janos Jelen

The Venerable Prof. Khammai Dhammasami most probably first heard about the strong determination of Hungarians to learn about the Dhamma from Mr. Pal Farkas, the former Rector of the Dharma Gate Buddhist College.

Mr. Farkas had spent two years as an *anagarika* at the Amaravati Monastery between 2001 and 2003. He had visited Professor Gombrich in Oxford to report about translations of the key *suttas* into Hungarian and discuss issues related to the *curricula* at the DGBC in 2002. Professor Gombrich introduced the Venerable Dhammasami as someone under his supervision who was soon to defend his D.Phil. thesis on the history of Buddhist education in Myanmar and Southeast Asia, and also about to establish a new *vihara* in Oxford.

Mr. Farkas was deeply impressed by his exchange of views with both these outstanding scholars on Buddhism. Mr. Farkas invited the Venerable Dhammasami to visit Hungary at a suitable time.

Venerable Dhammasami was one of the key facilitators of the creation of two new organisations, the IABU and the ATBU. During the preparatory phase in October 2006, the Ven. Dhammasami visited

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the Dharma Gate Buddhist College to advise them about the future activities of these new international organisations. Thanks to him the DGBC was among the founders of the IABU and remains an active member of the Executive Committee, as well as an involved participant in conferences, workshops, publications, and other projects.

I myself had the privilege to meet the Ven. Dhammasami when I was appointed Rector of the DGBC in 2010. I have since then been attending all meetings of the UNDV and the IABU, and have been a member of the ExCo. for the UNDV since 2013. I also had the great and most sincere honour of attending the *Vipassanā* retreat the Venerable organised during the 2nd Budapest Buddhist Summer School in 2012, and was the translator of the lectures given by the Venerable on the history of Buddhist education in Myanmar and religious reforms in Thailand during the 19th century.

Through all of these experiences, I have never stopped admiring the energy, determination, wisdom and, more importantly, the diplomatic skills and political sensitivity of the Venerable. All of those institutions – including the accreditation of the DGBC as an affiliated partner of the MCU – could not have been accomplished and sustained without the constant attention and advice, as well as guidance, of the Venerable. Every year, about 25 Hungarians enjoy the *Vipassanā* retreat given by the Venerable. How much effort and energy is given to a small but proud country like Hungary to understand better and emerge into a deeper understanding of the main teachings of the Buddha!

It is a great opportunity to avail myself of this immense honour to salute the Venerable Khammai Dhammasami on his 50th birthday, with the most sincere gratitude, on behalf of the Dharma Gate Buddhist College and myself as a humble Hungarian overwhelmed by the blessings and

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compassion, as well as the wisdom of the Venerable. We all wish you a long life and good health to remain our torchbearer and guide in our humble quest for the Dhamma.

Yours sincerely in the Dhamma,

H.E. Janos Jelen
Rector, Dharma Gate Buddhist College
Budapest
Hungary

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VENERABLE DHAMMASAMI

Sarah Matheson

Rising, falling, rising, falling ... now what shall we have for supper? Rising, falling, rising ... should use up those tomatoes ... rising, falling ... itching, itching ... rising, falling ... itching, itching, ITCHING! Rising, falling ... ITCHING, how long is this going on for? Has the timer broken? Itching, itching, aching, ACHING, ACHING! Am I doing this right? Does Venerable Dhammasami know what he's doing? Is he a sadist? He seemed so kind ... rising, falling, rising, falling ...

Some monks inspire with the simplicity of their presence which is a teaching in itself. Other monks have an astounding academic knowledge but have not themselves engaged in the practice that the Buddha taught.

Venerable Dhammasami is that special kind of monk who speaks with authority from both personal experience and also from a vast knowledge of the Buddhist texts. As we complain about our aching knees, our restlessness and doubt, our boredom, worry, and disappointments, he tackles it all, incorporating the scriptures in a way that feels perfectly natural and obvious. Yes folks, it's all in the texts, but you've got to experience it for yourself. He never seems to tire of the same old stuff

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that comes up again and again – Why is this so hard? I was expecting to see lotus blossoms unfolding by now! What am I doing wrong? I must be the only one feeling this way! His warmth, humour, and knowledge are always there to guide and support us, reassuring us that yes, this is all worthwhile.

Sarah Matheson

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MY LIFE IN THE UK AS VEN. DR. KHAMMAI DHAMMASAMI'S ASSISTANT

Sai Mein

On 22 November 2014, my mentor Ven. Dr. Khammai Dhammasami turned 50. As his devotee, and as one of his assistants, I feel compelled to mark his 50th birthday by reflecting upon his guidance and support.

Having spent a major part of my adult life in the UK, I have had the opportunity to both study in its tertiary institutions and get to know Ven. Dr. Khammai Dhammasami. My first encounter with him was in midsummer 2001, in the Sri Lankan Buddhist Temple in Kingsbury, London, soon after my arrival in the UK. I can still recall the memory of my first visit, later, to Oxford where he was working on his Ph.D. I lost my way trying to find his address, and went into a nearby cottage in Crotch Crescent seeking help with directions. I was offered a cup of tea and biscuits by the hosts, while consulting the A-to-Z directory. After that, an elderly South Asian gentleman who happened to drive by gave me a lift. That was my first taste of British hospitality. Eventually, I found where Ven. Dhammasami lived, in Old Marston, Oxford.

From then on, I was to take part in almost all activities and events spearheaded by the Oxford Buddha Vihara, which Ven. Dhammasami

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founded in 2003. Since its inception, the OBV has become a melting pot of the international Buddhist community, students being one of its main support groups. The majority of the students come from East Asian countries like Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Korea. They, like myself, contribute as volunteers during events such as the annual Kathina Ceremony and the Buddhist Lunar New Year.

These cultural and religious events held by the OBV provided me with opportunities to mingle with students, as well as with the OBV's devotees of different nationalities and academic and career backgrounds. I have kept up regular contact with those I befriended at the OBV. Getting to know them was a great exposure, given my humble background where most of my peers work in the logistics, import-export industry between Muse[1] and Mandalay. It was such a great honour to have a chance to know them through the OBV.

The OBV has also served as a meeting place for both students and young professionals. During my struggles with an application for a postgraduate programme in 2010, and again while preparing my thesis in 2012, Ven. Dhammasami came to my rescue. He wrote me a reference in support of my applications, advised me on how to write a Personal Statement, and helped me choose the title of my thesis. On 16 July 2005, along with two of his devotees, I had the great privilege of accompanying Ven. Dhammasami to his Graduation Ceremony at the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford. The opportunity of taking part in the ceremony and witnessing his achievement gave me the boost needed to pursue my dreams. In hindsight, if I may say so, without Ven. Dr. Dhammasami's support and encouragement during those years, I would have a different story to recount to my future grandchildren!

[1] *Muse, northern Shan State, Myanmar. It borders with Ruili, Yunnan Province. It accounts for 75 per cent of border trade volume in Myanmar.*

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As mentioned earlier, the OBV also addresses our social needs. The Shan Cultural Association in the United Kingdom (SCA–UK) was formed in 2005 by Shan/Tai individuals studying and working in the UK, with the blessings and supervision of Ven. Dhammasami. I was appointed a Secretary, and taken under his wings. I volunteered as Secretary of SCA–UK until my return to Myanmar in 2013. This has altered my life, improving my communication skills and helping me mature in the process.

Highlights of my life as Ven. Dhammasami's assistant include co-organising the first international conference on Shan Studies in collaboration with SOAS's Centre for Buddhist Studies in 2007. Over 15 scholars from around the world participated in the event. The conference was held in conjunction with the Shan/Tai New Year celebrations, which SCA–UK organises annually. The songwriter Dr. Sai Kham Leik, and the late Sai Htee Hseng, honoured the celebrations with their presence. Without Ven. Dhammasami's complete trust in me, I would not have developed the ability to balance my studies and my part-time work with my volunteering activities. The role afforded me the opportunity to get to know wonderful individuals from various backgrounds.

The most important lessons that I learnt from Venerable Dr. Dhammasami were to do with a positive attitude and mindfulness. "Don't get carried away with your emotions" is what he would advise in the face of difficulties. This continues to have a profound positive influence on my daily endeavours. Equally important, I have learnt to fathom the imperfect nature of life through volunteering. In an ideal and perfect world, whatever we do, things will always fall into place – certainly not the case in the real world in which we live. His message to me is very clear: do not wait until everything is perfect; you have to do what you need to do, but carry it out with awareness.

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Ven. Dr. Dhammasami has not only helped me pursue my academic goals, he has encouraged me to lead a balanced life through *Vipassanā* meditation – an exercise in mindfulness first taught by the Buddha. Perseverance, and an ability to focus on my studies, I derived from the application of *Vipassanā* in my daily life.

"Register and then release" – Ven. Dhammasami's summing up of the fundamental concept of *Vipassanā* meditation – resonates in my ears every time I sit down to meditate. *Vipassanā* has changed my perception: both the way I perceive myself and those around me. Viewing the world through *Vipassanā*, and daily applications of meditation, has enhanced my understanding of the Dhamma, the teachings of the Buddha. Gradually, with guidance and support from mentors like Ven. Dr. Dhammasami, I have been learning to live and value the present moment bestowed upon me. If life is a long journey, I have found a priceless tool, *Vippassanā* meditation, which will lead me through all the ups and downs that I will inevitably encounter on the way. Understanding the fundamental concept of the Dhamma has instilled in me a capability and courage to cherish the journey.

My parents first sowed the Dhamma seed of *Vipassanā* meditation in me a decade or so ago. In the UK, a great being like Ven. Dr. Khammai Dhammasami supported me through and through, and enhanced my understanding of the Dhamma – the way of nature – the teachings of the Buddha. Subsequently, to humbly make a bold claim, I returned home wiser, a little more knowledgeable about the way of nature, the Dhamma.

Sai Mein (also spelled Jai Merng)
Research Analyst
Myanmar

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THE REVERED QUALITIES OF MY ESTEEMED TEACHER

Thiri Nyunt

Regarding the qualities of a competent teacher, the Buddha points out in the *Dutiyamitta Sutta*:

> *Piyo garu bhāvanīyo, vattā ca vacanakkhamo,*
> *Gambhīrañca kathaṃ kattā, no ca'ṭṭhane niyojako ti*
> (*Anguttara Nikāya*, Vol. IV: 32)

It means: "He is adorable, respectful, and praiseworthy; he knows how to admonish others and he is ready to accept the admonishment of others; he utters profound speech and he does not urge without a reason." A good teacher, skilful and distinctive, is one endowed with the aforementioned qualities. One who possesses such wonderful qualities enables those who associate with him to be crowned with success in the mundane and supramundane levels. Of all the masterful qualities of the experienced teachers I have had, I would like to express some excellent qualities of my teacher, Dr. Dhammasami, the Oxford Sayadaw.

He is one of **amazing abilities –**

> Who loves, and takes care of, his **books** as one's own **babies**

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Who has **compassionate concern** for elders

Who **devotes** himself **diligently** to all his work

Who **elevates** his mental status **enthusiastically**

Who **fulfils** the promise of his **blessings**

Who treats others **graciously** and never hesitates to **glorify** the good in others

Who behaves **honourably** and **humbly**

Who **implements** with **immediate impact** when promoting the *sāsana*

Who **joyfully joins** hands with the elders and the young

Who is of a **keen** mind as well as **kind-hearted**

Who keeps **loving kindness** and **light-heartedness** in his mind

Who looks **mercifully** at the poor and weak, with **motherly** love

Who **nurtures** the capacities of his students by supporting their **needs**

Who overcomes with **optimistic** view when faced with **obstacles**

Who tries to be **positive** when dealing with **problems**

Who possesses perfect **qualifications** and **quick-witted** wisdom

Who is **regarded** by his pupils as a **revered** teacher due to his compassion

Who undertakes **solemnly** the academic path as a **sincere scholar**

Who keeps the good **title** for his motherland as one **loyal to** Myanmar

Who is an **upright** teacher **unaccustomed** to dishonesty

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Who treasures the **value** of this short human life by trying to avoid **vain thought**

Who **works out** the propagation of the *sāsana* in an alien environment through his **wonderful** activities

Who is a great scholar of **zealous** purpose in his promotion of the Buddha *sāsana*.

Paying respect to these revered qualities, I humbly and sincerely pay obeisance to My Teacher.

His student,
Dr. Thiri Nyunt
Assistant Lecturer
ITBMU
Yangon
Myanmar

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VENERABLE DHAMMASAMI

Isabel and Hannah Pack

I would like to pay warm tribute to Venerable Dhammasami on his 50th birthday.

I have known him for many years since he has been in Oxford, and have met him on many Buddhist as well as on more informal occasions. Most of these have been in contexts where he has been teaching or leading meditation sessions – and without fail he has spoken in an illuminating way for all those attending, whatever their existing level of understanding. His Q&A sessions at his meditation meetings demonstrate a remarkable level of individual and personal response and sensitivity, in addition to an in-depth understanding of meditation practice and the human psychology of those practising.

More than this, the qualities of mind – the warmth and wisdom that consistently shine through in his own demeanour and in his response to others – embody directly what fruits of practice can be. This has been of huge benefit to me – simply being in his presence.

My daughter and I will never forget the great kindness, sensitivity, and understanding he has shown to both of us at difficult and painful times. I also remember with great warmth his explanations to my then

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12-year-old daughter, who was embarking on a life of vegetarianism, of how important it was to maintain also a sense of self-care, maintaining her own health, precisely in order to be best able to promote care for others.

We are extremely fortunate to have the resources of the *vihara* and a monk of such calibre in Oxford. We wish him a very happy and healthy birthday, and look forward to many more years of association.

Isabel and Hannah Pack

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ARJIA RINPOCHE SPEAKS ABOUT VENERABLE DHAMMASAMI

My attendant Chunpay and I experienced a slight culture shock during the winter term of 2013. I was a Visiting Scholar at the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies (OCBS) and, at the invitation of Ven. Khammai Dhammasami, we stayed at the Oxford Buddha Vihara. For the first time, Chunpay and I became closely familiar with the Buddhist Theravadin tradition and experienced directly their practices, such as daily silent meditation (group-style) and having only two meals a day. Chunpay and I are monks in the Tibetan branch of Buddhism, and it was interesting for us to discover gradually through our interactions with Ven. Dhammasami and his monks that even though our customs were somewhat different, all of us followed the exact same teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha.

When I think of Ven. Dhammasami, the most outstanding qualities I recall are three Buddhist virtues. The first is Wisdom. This attribute includes his knowledge and his studies but, above all, his integration of the teachings of the Buddha into his life. I could soon see that he practised all of the vows taken by a Buddhist monk. In particular, he was careful not to engage in idle talk or chatter and customarily engaged with others by first looking at them kindly and then giving them a quiet smile. Whenever we went on a visit to some place or

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another, Ven. Dhammasami would spend any leisure time in the car in prayer. Watching him, I was able to reflect clearly on the conduct of Buddhist practitioners of ancient times. When I was with him, I realised that when we 'yada yada yada' and criticise others, we create negativities that are obstacles to our own enlightenment and result in suffering for others. Venerable Dhammasami, like Lord Buddha, wisely controlled his speech most carefully.

In addition to his profound understanding and practice of Buddhism, Ven. Dhammasami is a learned scholar. Not only was he familiar with the ancient traditions of his monastic life, he was also closely familiar with modern studies. He has completed his university degrees, including a D.Phil. from Oxford University. That degree in itself is a testimony to his intellectual achievements.

During my sojourn in England, I was fortunate to visit Shakespeare's birthplace accompanied by Ven. Dhammasami. In the space of the two- to three-hour drive to Stratford-upon-Avon, we shared many things with each other. That was a warm and friendly time. Most of all, I was struck by his flair in being able to explain some English terms that he had learnt. For example, when we saw that a bed in Shakespeare's home was on a square frame with ropes tied across in a sort of weave, he described to me how in the olden days beds didn't have springs, and the ropes on the bed were pulled tightly to prevent it from sagging. He explained, "This is how we got the good night wish: Sleep tight." I most definitely learnt a great deal from this simple but knowledgeable monk.

Second, I found that the virtue of Loving Kindness or *Metta* is second nature to him. His commitment to true loving kindness – compassion towards everyone – was evident from his actions. Of course, we know that every religious school of thought has its own understandings,

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but being open-minded is not always one of them. Often we find ourselves being exclusive instead of inclusive. For instance, because of the cultural backgrounds of our three different Buddhist traditions (Theravadan, Mahayana, and Vajrayana) and because of transportation and communication limitations in the past, often we have had little understanding of each other. As a result, we have been distant with each other, clinging to our own ways, ignoring the rich contributions of others. In contrast to this narrow view, Ven. Dhammasami is very open-minded, a quality that provides a wide window for compassion, understanding, and sincere hospitality.

Ven. Dhammasami not only treated Chunpay and me in a hospitable manner, he also hosted many persons from other traditions. For example, he had profound conversations with a Mahayana monk from Taiwan's Fo Guang University and hosted him nobly. Also, he was warm and respectful to professors from the USA and Europe. He not only shared his own traditions with us and with others, but was also kind enough to ask me to give talks to his students, not just once but a number of times.

Since he already had a good rapport with Tibetans, it was through me – a Mongolian by heritage – that he wanted to bring about a close association with Mongolians. To achieve this end, he asked me to give him a Mongolian prayer book. I contacted one of my friends who soon managed to have one available for us. Then Ven. Dhammasami saw to it that it was used by the monks of the *vihara* in their prayer practice.

Not only did he and his monks learn to pray Mongolian prayers, they also raised money to support my charity in Ulaanbaatar. During the celebration of the Buddha's birthday, his *vihara* held a fund-raising event involving Mongolians and their community. His wonderful efforts resulted in more than a great deal of money being raised to

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support the construction of the Cancer Care Treatment Center for Mongolian Children in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Finally, I wish to note Ven. Dhammasami's virtue of Mindfulness, one of the key points of Buddhist practice.

Mindfulness meditation is a critical topic in society today. Mindfulness retreats are popular all over the western world and whether you are a Buddhist, a religious person, or a non-believer, you know from reports in the media that it is important to be mindful. While I was at Oxford, we visited a recently organised mindfulness society that focuses on training doctors, nurses, and psychologists who are learning to teach their clients how to combat stress and enhance their health through practising mindfulness meditation. Even as I write this testimonial, my centre in Bloomington, Indiana, is hosting a Contemplative Psychotherapy Institute to help train professionals in mindfulness practices.

Ven. Dhammasami, a man whose feet straddle both the modern and the ancient worlds, is well acquainted with *samadhi* from his practice of the Buddha's teachings. But he also draws upon modern scientific discoveries as he gives teachings on mindfulness or a meditation course to students and visitors to his *vihara*. In addition, he has written a book about mindfulness: *Mindfulness Meditation Made Easy*.

Aside from this formal acknowledgement of the benefits of mindfulness, I noticed that in his daily routine, Ven. Dhammasami was always remembering what he was doing, why he was doing it, and what would be the predictable outcome of his actions. Sometimes, because of his busy schedule, he would get a little behind in his practice. Then he would berate himself and strive to practise more diligently since he

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believed that mindfulness would surely have a positive effect on his life and that of others.

I congratulate Ven. Dhammasami on his accomplishments. He is very experienced – both in Buddhism and in the field of philosophy. He is a real mentor for 21st-century monks and practitioners. I am so happy to have been able to know him. He is a simple Buddhist monk and a true friend.

Arjia Rinpoche
Tibetan Center for Compassion and Wisdom
Mill Valley
California
USA

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HAS THIS HAPPENED TO YOU?

Natpapon Saranrom

Have you ever felt that life has been passing by, day after day, without any happiness? Or that, whichever way you turn, there is misfortune, misery, sorrow?

Four years ago, I faced a terrible problem in adjusting myself to my studies. I was unable to concentrate or carry on learning. This had a serious impact on my eating, my sleeping, and everything in my daily life.

What's more, I was unable to get myself back on track. I was constantly in misery and grief, reacting negatively to anything that came to me. I kept burying myself deeper in pain. I looked terrible and appeared emotionally crippled.

I decided to withdraw socially, and went to the Oxford Buddha Vihara for its serenity and tranquillity. I felt comfortable and warm when meeting the other Thais who came to make merit at the temple. It helped soothe greatly my feelings of homesickness. Most importantly, the kindness I received from Pra Ajahn Khammai, Pra Ajahn Saeng, and the other monks at the temple helped immensely in calming the confusion in my mind.

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The day that changed my life had come. I started unloading to Pra Ajahn Khammai my suppressed problems and the pressures derived from the failure of my studies. He gave me valuable advice by simply suggesting I look at it from a different angle. It was a new perspective that I had overlooked and honestly never thought existed! He called it '*Mudita* to oneself' (*Mudita*: appreciative joy at the success and good fortune of others).

My initial thought was what '*Mudita* to oneself' really meant. Did it actually exist? Surely, I had only heard about *mudita* to others – the joy and appreciation upon seeing others succeed. But to oneself?

Pra Ajahn Khammai asked me: "When waking up and opening your eyes in the morning, your eyes can see things as normal. Would you appreciate it?"

I answered: "No, sir."

Pra Ajahn continued: "Why not? Our eyes still work well."

I answered: "Because that's an ordinary occurrence that always happens, to everybody."

Pra Ajahn then said: "But why should things that we normally have, which are similar to others, not be appreciated?"

Pra Ajahn continued in this manner, with many examples, trying to point out the very many things happening to me that were worthy of appreciation. For instance, I had normal limbs that functioned well, sufficient food to eat, and so on. I finally agreed. Yes, there is much that is worthy of appreciation, happening all the time. Only, we do not see them because we are always comparing what we have to what others have, who either do not have the same or have more or better than ours.

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That was the day that changed my life. Since then, I have been able to appreciate more the moments in my life. Whenever anything unfortunate happens, I become mindful, and try to bring my focus back to the appreciation of the ordinary, the simple pleasures. This enables me to let go of sorrow over life's many disappointments.

Pra Ajahn Khammai had introduced me effortlessly to this simple Dhamma that I had heard about many times since I was a child but never put to use. He showed me how simply looking at life from a different perspective can help me discover other dimensions of truth that I had never before seen. He illustrated it clearly, using examples from actual situations. But, most of all, he taught me how to put it into practice. With this one *dhammic* principle, he changed my life completely. Once drowning deeply in sorrow, I was now a new person who could easily find happiness and enjoy life.

'*Mudita* to oneself' was not the only example of Dhamma that Pra Ajahn Khammai demonstrated through putting to good use. Under his guidance, I gradually learnt about and understood better other *dhammic* principles such as the *Brahmavihāras*, the four Buddhist virtues: *metta* (loving kindness), *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (appreciative/ empathetic joy), and *upekkha* (equanimity). As Pra Ajahn suggests, start doing this to yourself first. In addition to these, I learnt how useful mindfulness is for a calm awareness of change, particularly in our feelings.

Meeting Pra Ajahn Khammai was the best thing that happened in my life during my studies at the University of Oxford. Although I may not have received much from my studies, establishing this shift in my life through this new perspective was the most valuable thing I experienced. My life became lighter and much more comfortable. It was as if I had been immunised, with new strength to tolerate any

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problems that came to me. Pra Ajahn Khammai, who planted in me my faith in the Buddha's teachings, was the one who made me realise what the Buddha taught was true. Outcomes received from practice clearly appeared as the Buddha had described.

Natpapon Saranrom
(Translated by Dr. Kwansuree Jiamton)

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I REMEMBER WITH JOY

Ricardo Sasaki

As Venerable Dr. Khammai Dhammasami, Chief Abbot of the Oxford Buddha Vihara, has turned 50 this November, I remember with joy my first acquaintance with him. It was in 2008, during one of the annual United Nations Day of Vesak, which he is actively involved in organising.

That particular year the UN Day of Vesak was being held in Hanoi, Vietnam, in the month of May, and I had the honour to sit beside him on the panel of the conference on Buddhist Education. The panel was called 'Buddhist Education: Continuity and Progress'. I presented two papers: 'Buddhist Education at a Crossroads' (in which I discuss the responsibility of Buddhist educators to be a critical voice within the tradition, to help it reflect upon itself, its history, and its compromises); and 'An Experiment on Distance Learning in Spreading Buddha's Teachings in Brazil' (in which I share my experiences of teaching Buddhism in Brazil, and present a learning model in contemporary education as a skilful means to deliver the *dharma* to people in areas that would otherwise not have any living guidance or experience of a *dharma* community in the Portuguese language). Venerable Khammai Dhammasami was the chair moderator of the panel, whose papers were later published by the Culture and Information Press of Vietnam. We

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had a wonderful time there where we were able to exchange ideas among all the panelists.

Later that year, I presented a paper called 'On the Relationship of Teacher and Student from the Perspective of Traditional Societies – with Examples from the Buddhist–Hindu–Greek–Christian Traditions' at the IABU conference on 'Buddhism and Ethics' held in Thailand, in September 2008. Venerable Khammai Dhammasami, Executive Secretary of the IABU, was present and instrumental at an event personally important for me: the joint signing of an agreement for the propagation of Buddhism, and working together for educational purposes, between the Nalanda Center for Buddhist Studies, Brazil (of which I am director), and the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara and the K.J. Somaiya Centre for Buddhist Studies – both renowned educational institutions in India.

Thus, from the beginning, the relationship with Venerable Khammai Dhammasami has been one full of Dhamma, goodwill, and joyful events. Originally from Shan State, Myanmar, Venerable Khammai Dhammasami combines erudition and a heart willing to help. He has a D.Phil. in Buddhist Studies from Oxford, teaches Pali and meditation at the School of Oriental and African Studies, and is research associate at the University of London. He holds a professorship at the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University, Yangon, Myanmar, and is Distinguished Professor at the Postgraduate Institute for Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. He is also a visiting lecturer in Indonesia, India, and Thailand.

Besides his extensive academic curriculum, he is also active in his Dhamma duties. As a Theravada Buddhist monk, he offers Buddhist teaching and *Vipassanā* meditation internationally, has an active role at the UN Day of Vesak celebrations and its academic conferences, as

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well as at the International Association of Buddhist Universities.

I am glad to have two of his talks on our website (http://nalanda.org.br), translated into Portuguese:
http://nalanda.org.br/ensinamentos/como-melhor-honrar-o-buddha
http://nalanda.org.br/vida-do-buddha/vida-e-filosofia-do-buddha

In 2013, we included another of his articles in an anthology called *Joias Raras do Ensinamento Buddhista*, where key Buddhist teachers present their views on Buddhism. Presently, our team of English–Portuguese translators is working on his book *Mindfulness Meditation Made Easy*, to be distributed widely.

Another enduring memory I will always cherish of Venerable Khammai Dhammasami is that he was the first to inform and congratulate me about the conferring of the title of *Mahasaddhammajotikadhaja* upon me by the Myanmar Ministry of Religious Affairs on 4 January, 2010. His kind words on that joyous occasion were deeply felt.

On this occasion of his 50th anniversary, I am glad to count him as a mentor and as a friend. Happy Birthday, Venerable!

Ricardo Sasaki
Nalanda Institute
Brazil

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VENERABLE DHAMMASAMI

Sarah Shaw

A very happy birthday to Venerable Dhammasami on his half centenary.

When Ven. Dhammasami came to Oxford as a D.Phil. student, we all saw something about him that was distinctive: his integrity and commitment to the Buddhist path really does shine from him, and 'what you see is what you get'.

Over the years he has been here, I have seen him doing the following things: leading discussions on complex issues of *Abhidhamma*; addressing teenagers so each feels the Venerable is talking just to him/her; explaining to a group of small giggling children how to pay respects to a shrine, joking with them so they are happy as they do it; giving lectures to undergraduates in Balliol College; participating in Buddhist Studies meetings at the university; helping students who are unhappy, giving precise and, for one American teaching student, revolutionary information on how teaching the young is arranged in Buddhist contexts; organising conferences in Thailand and Britain; leading all manner of situations involving quite different groups of people so that all felt comfortable; chairing committees; and of course, welcoming people to his temple.

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These are very varied activities! For each occasion he acts appropriately to the situation, with creativity and humour. As I am a little forgetful, I am always surprised at how good he is at remembering everyone's names (I wonder if this remarkable ability is the result of the strong oral-memory traditions of chant he works in, or in his case perhaps more a genuine interest in everyone he meets). His academic work, on the monastic system of education in Burma/Myanmar and Thailand, has made a distinguished and significant contribution to scholarly studies in this field. In work with the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies he has provided a constant sense of the true, and the Buddhist path. This accompanies a great enjoyment of the skilful way that uses morality creatively and with a sense of search for opportunities for people: he looks for new and sometimes unusual ways of making this happen. He often makes the suggestion that sees a 'middle way' that steers through and out of a tricky or difficult situation.

His contribution in so many fields has been considerable. But it is in dhamma talks, of course, that he is so helpful, understanding, and experienced with different audiences. One of the most memorable talks I have heard him give was on the Divine Abidings, the Factors of Awakening, and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. It was at the Buddhist Chaplaincy conference in 2014 in Balliol College. He led meditations on the Saturday evening, and first thing on the Sunday morning. As always, he gave a fresh and slightly surprising element to his dhamma investigation, putting familiar lists in an entirely new way. He said that the most important Divine Abiding to cultivate in chaplaincy work was sympathetic joy. This, linked with compassion, was what was needed to find the balance in life and practice between them. He said you needed to be able to take pleasure in what was good about people and their achievements, as well as having compassion for their difficulties. Loving kindness is the basis underneath both these two; equanimity, a product of their ongoing balance. The practice he

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led on them both was memorable and, in a context where suffering is the more obvious theme and interest, the way he emphasised sympathetic joy on the Saturday evening, and taught ways that it could be peaceful, by extending it carefully outwards from oneself, showed how this practice could be used to settle the mind, and allow appreciation and encouragement of joy in oneself and others to arise. Tranquil extension of the practice to all beings allowed the possibility of peace and happiness to arise for many others, as well as oneself. This was, he said, a good way of ensuring that the near enemy of sympathetic joy, excitement, would not arise. The next morning, the exercise focused on the cultivation of compassion, avoiding sadness, the near enemy of that. For chaplaincy work, this sense that each person, with help, might find and develop their own solution to their problems, was important, and he stressed that: as that also allows an attitude of equanimity to occur.

The two qualities of sympathetic joy and compassion were, he said, differing responses to differing situations: where there is suffering, compassion is needed and arises; where happiness, sympathetic joy. Equanimity, in awareness of the different *kamma* of different beings, and that there is something that they can do about it in any situation, is then the result of this. For chaplains working with many people, in many conditions, his talks and meditations introduced just the sense of space needed for those who sometimes have to steer a very careful course in their professional work and daily life, in an ongoing middle way between intervention and acceptance, encouraging a sense of joy in achievement and happiness, and being aware of sorrow and suffering. He said that anyone involved in such work needed to know the difference between sympathetic joy and compassion, and be able to move between them.

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I am sorry if I have not communicated well his teachings. I did though find them very helpful, and I know others did too. He is also a genuinely modest person. We are just so lucky to have him in Oxford. There are many in Oxford who go to the OBV in times of trouble, or happiness, and I am one of them.

Dr. Sarah Shaw
Department of Continuing Education
University of Oxford
Oxford
UK

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MY EXPERIENCE OF THE OXFORD BUDDHA VIHARA AND VENERABLE DHAMMASAMI

Laurence Smith

I started *Vipassanā* meditation about ten years ago, and have noticed many benefits from keeping up a regular practice. I have always been fascinated by the potential of *Vipassanā* meditation to improve one's understanding of the reality that is constantly unfolding within and without. Upon moving to Oxford five years ago, I was delighted to discover the Oxford Buddha Vihara, and started to attend the regular meditation sessions and Dhamma talks. Upon meeting the Venerable Dhammasami, I instantly appreciated the simple and clear explanations he gave on practical aspects of the Dhamma and, in particular, the concise and logical interpretation of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

The guidance provided by Venerable Dhammasami has been extremely valuable over the years and I am very grateful for the kind support and *metta* that I have received. In particular, meditating together with the *sangha* at the Oxford Buddha Vihara has helped me to maintain daily sittings to overcome difficulties as they arise. The library at the *vihara* has also proved a great resource for improving my *pariyatti*, and the Venerable Dhammasami is always ready to answer questions in a clear and compassionate way.

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Venerable Dhammasami was also able to arrange a visit to a temple during a visit I made to Bodhgaya in 2010. The monks there took me to see some of the well-known Buddhist sites in the area such as the Maha Bodhi Temple with the Bodhi Tree under which the Buddha had meditated before attaining Enlightenment, and the Dungeshwari Hills. I shall always remember this trip and be grateful to the monks at the Khuva Boonchum Temple and to Venerable Dhammasami for making this possible.

I intend to keep visiting the Oxford Buddha Vihara for as long as I remain in Oxford. I hope that more and more people can come to visit and meditate, to benefit from the wonderful atmosphere and the company of the *sangha* there.

Laurence Smith
Ph.D. student
Oxford
UK

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VEN. DR. KHAMMAI DHAMMASAMI'S WORLDWIDE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BUDDHIST UNIVERSITIES, THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS DAY OF VESAK, THE UNION CATALOG OF BUDDHIST TEXTS PROJECT, AND THE COMMON BUDDHIST TEXT PROJECT

Phillip Stanley

I have had the honour and pleasure of working with Ven. Dr. Khammai Dhammasami since the founding of the International Association of Buddhist Universities (IABU) in 2007. He has displayed exceptional tact and interpersonal skill in working with scholars and representatives of diverse Buddhist institutions and traditions, to accomplish significant tasks together.

In 2005, the Most Venerable Prof. Phra Dharmakosajarn (now Phra Brahmapundit), Rector of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University in Thailand and chair of the International Council of the United Nations Day of Vesak (ICUNDV), invited Ven. Dr. Dhammasami to help develop the ICUNDV that had been launched in 2004. Ven. Dr. Dhammasami served as Executive Secretary for the ICUNDV for a number of years, playing a central role in organising the yearly UNDV celebrations. He continues to serve as a member of the ICUNDV.

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In 2007, while already serving as the Executive Secretary for the ICUNDV, he was named the Executive Secretary for the Executive Council of the newly formed International Association of Buddhist Universities (IABU) and has had a major role in creating the IABU. Ven. Dr. Dhammasami continues to serve as the Executive Secretary of the IABU. I have worked with him as a member of the IABU Executive Council since its founding in 2007. In these capacities, I have also had the opportunity to witness his effectiveness on the ICUNDV, since the IABU and ICUNDV meet together on a regular basis. Both the ICUNDV and the IABU were founded in an ecumenical spirit, with the intention of bringing together regional representatives of the three major forms of Buddhism of the present day – Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana – from both Asia and the West. Ven. Dr. Dhammasami has been very skilled in promoting cooperation among these diverse representatives.

In his role as Executive Secretary of the IABU, Ven. Dr. Dhammasami was instrumental in organising the first two academic conferences held by the IABU, in 2008 and 2012. The theme of the 2008 IABU conference was 'Buddhism and Ethics', with eight panels and 74 papers on Buddhist Ethics in relationship to: 1) the Economy 2) Education 3) Literature 4) Mind Culture 5) Politics 6) Science 7) Social Development, and 8) the Youth Today. The theme of the 2012 IABU conference was 'Buddhist Philosophy and Praxis', with six panels and workshops with 116 papers on: (1) Buddhist Philosophy and Meditation Practices (2) Unifying Buddhist Philosophical Views (3) Teaching Dhamma in New Lands (4) Buddhist Psychotherapy (5) Buddhist Texts and Commentaries in Traditional and Contemporary Contexts, and (6) the IABU Planning Workshop (the latter being chaired by Ven. Dr. Dhammasami).

During this time, I had further experience of his effectiveness as a

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leader by serving under him in his role as Chief Editor of the Editorial Committee for the Journal of the IABU, publishing three volumes in 2008, 2009, and 2012, with 25 articles – drawn in significant part from the best papers presented at the two IABU conferences. The topics of these articles range from Buddhist psychology, meditation, doctrine, and ethics to Buddhist views on education, globalisation, consumerism, politics, science, and the use of digital technology. Through these IABU activities, Ven. Dr. Dhammasami has helped make contributions to all the subject areas mentioned above, all the more so if one were to include all the papers given during the ten years of the UNDV celebrations that he also helped organise.

Ven. Dr. Dhammasami has also served as the Chair of the Compilation Committee of the Common Buddhist Text (CBT) project of the ICUNDV. The CBT was inaugurated at the 3rd UNDV conference in order *"to promote better understanding of Buddhist principles amongst the wider public by compiling scriptures into a single text that reflect the richness of the Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhist traditions and address the needs of today's society. It is to be freely distributed to hotels worldwide. The first edition will be in English and it is expected that it will be completed by the end of 2014. Future editions will include translations into other languages of the world, both Eastern and Western."*

He has also played a major role in the creation of the Union Catalog of Buddhist Texts project (UCBT). For several decades, a number of institutions had invested significant resources into creating electronic catalogues, text scans, and searchable text files of the texts in the Buddhist canons in Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, and Mongolian. It has become clear that (1) there would be significant synergistic benefit in linking these projects together through a single online catalogue, and that (2) this could be accomplished with a modest amount of

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additional effort relative to the tremendous amount of work already invested in these individual projects. Dr. Lewis Lancaster (University of California, Berkeley) has actively advocated such collaboration and originally proposed the idea of creating an online 'Union Catalog of Buddhist Texts' to link these projects. At the first meeting of the IABU Executive Council in 2007, I proposed we create an Electronic Committee and pursue, among other projects, the creation of the UCBT. Ven. Dhammasami was then instrumental in getting approval by the IABU Executive Council and the International Council of the UNDV to hold a Buddhist E-Resources and Network Workshop at the 6th UNDV celebrations in Thailand, in 2009, for the purpose of creating the UCBT. He was also extremely helpful in arranging for Dr. Lancaster to help co-convene the workshop with me.

At the conclusion of the workshop on 5 May, 2009, 31 scholars and technical experts from 16 nations involved in creating electronic resources for Buddhist texts from the range of canonical languages signed a resolution to jointly create a Union Catalog of Buddhist Texts, which was announced publicly at the closing plenary session of the 2009 UNDV. Since then, through the continuing generosity of the Royal Thai Government, the IABU and MCU have hosted three more major meetings of the UCBT, all held at the MCU Wang Noi Campus in Thailand: (1) the 2nd General UCBT Meeting on 10–12 October, 2010 (2) the 3rd General UCBT Meeting from 31 May to 23 June, 2012, as part of the 11th UNDV Celebrations and the 2nd IABU Conference, and (3) a Special Meeting with the MCU IT and Pali Staff, during the January 2013 meeting of the Executive Council of the IABU and the ICUNDV. Venerable Dr. Dhammasami was instrumental in getting approval to hold all three of these UCBT meetings. I served as the Chair of the Interim UCBT Organising Group for the first year, after which Venerable Dhammasami and I were named Co-Conveners of the formal UCBT Organising Committee at the 2010 meeting and

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we have continued to jointly lead this project since that time.

During these UCBT meetings, it was decided that the project would have two major components in its Phase I: 1) developing the online UCBT catalogue itself, and 2) developing a separate website for three editions of the Pali canon – Thai, Burmese, and Sri Lankan – since the latter needed technical support to prepare them to link to the UCBT. In addition, the core technology for the Union Catalog was selected, namely, the open-sourced Collex software system developed by Performant Software Solutions in the US, which is a world leader in creating such collaborative catalogue websites. (See their nines.org website catalogue that links over a hundred projects on nineteenth-century English Literature.) In 2011, the UCBT Technical Committee completed the metadata framework for linking all the Buddhist canon projects together. The extreme flooding in Thailand in 2011 caused extensive damage to the Thai economy, and this has naturally slowed down funding for the UCBT project. However, once again with the strong support of Ven. Dr. Dhammasami, the IABU and MCU have publicly affirmed their continuing support of the UCBT project during the yearly UNDV celebrations, and they hosted the 2012 and 2013 UCBT meetings. Meanwhile, the member projects of the UCBT and Performant Software Solutions have continued to develop their respective resources in preparation for the eventual launching of the UCBT.

The UCBT Organising Committee has also discussed additional future plans for the UCBT. For Phase II, we have discussed adding additional regional editions of the Pali and other Buddhist canons, as well as adding systematic bibliographies of translations of these canonical texts into modern languages, so that individuals of any modern language group could find all the translations available in their native

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tongue. Whereas Phase I will be valuable primarily for scholars and translators who have knowledge of the original canonical languages, Phase II will benefit lay Buddhists, the interested public, and scholars around the world, even if they do not know a canonical language.

The activities described above will be of benefit to the development of Buddhism and the study of Buddhism for decades to come and beyond. It is thus a pleasure to express appreciation for the major role that Ven. Dr. Dhammasami has played in the development of all these institutions and projects.

Dr. Phillip Stanley
Naropa University
Boulder
Colorado
USA

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A BRIEF NOTE ON DR. K. DHAMMASAMI

Andrew Tan

Ven. K. Dhammasami was in Singapore in 2004. Being quite new to the environment, he was fortunate then to obtain accommodation in the Burmese Buddhist Temple located at Tai Gin Road. While he was here, he made a deep impression on the current Secretary of OBVS, Mary Ng.

She persuaded Ven. Dhammasami to give a series of talks spread over ten nights at BDMS, a Buddhist Centre at Balestier Road. The subject was *Paticca Samuppada,* the Theory of Dependent Origination, which is both complex and profound. The general participants and audiences were happy in their reception of the talks, and of the principles contained in the teachings. Mary managed to organise a group of devotees to lend support to Ven. Dhammasami.

In 2006, a small group of devotees toured the UK, and visited Venerable Dhammasami to see in what ways they might further assist him. Later, at the suggestion of Ven. Dhammasami, a larger group of devotees was formed to attend a pilgrimage tour to India. The year was 2008. It coincided with the auspicious opening ceremony of Ven. Phra Khuva Boonchum's temple (Murng Phong Sayadaw).

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The Ven. Phra Khuva Boonchum gave his assurance and support to our Sayadaw. This motivated Ven. Dhammasami to float the idea of a *vihara* in Singapore. The same group of devotees then came together and established themselves as committee members. After much brainstorming, the Society was finally registered as OBVS (Singapore).

When Ven. Dhammasami was in Singapore in 2008, he conducted an eight-day *Vipassanā* retreat at the Sri Lankaramaya Temple. He also conducted a ten-day retreat at a *Vipasssanā* Centre at Cameron Highlands in Malaysia, in 2009, and another eight-day retreat at a Chinese temple located at Ava Road in Singapore.

Andrew Tan
OBVS management committee member
Singapore

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ESTABLISHING THE OBV
A RECORD FOR POSTERITY

Kyaw Thinn

The Oxford Buddha Vihara (OBV), currently located at 356–358 Abingdon Road, Oxford OX1 4TQ, is the first Theravadin Buddhist monastery or *vihara* to have been established in Oxford. The OBV first started in rented accommodation of a two-bed-roomed end-terrace house in the Marston area of Oxford in September 2003, and moved to 33 Cherwell Drive, Marston OX3 0NB, in September 2004. Within two years of moving, it became apparent that the five-bed-roomed, semi-detached house was too small for the growing needs of the OBV, and so informal discussions and planning commenced to look for suitable and affordable larger premises within the city of Oxford, which was quite a daunting task. The current property was found in 2009. Formerly the Homelea Guest House, a ten-bed-roomed house, it is actually two semi-detached houses that had been unified and extended on one side, with a small parking area and garden at the back. The added attractions of the property were that there was the Redbridge Park and Ride nearby, just a three-minute walk away, and its being on a major bus route meant it would take just a few minutes' bus ride from the city centre. After negotiating the price, it was bought and the move into the new premises was carried out on 22.05.2009.

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Dr. Khammai Dhammasami came to the UK in 1996, and took charge of the teaching of Buddhism to young boys and girls at the Sri Saddhatissa International Buddhist Centre in Kingsbury, London. He gained a D.Phil. from St. Anne's College, Oxford, in 2004 and it was while studying in Oxford that he started to express a desire to stay on in Oxford and establish a Theravadin monastery. He insisted the monastery should be within the city limits of Oxford so that college students could gain easy access and he would also be able to continue his links with the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies.

What follows below is a concise factual record of the meetings that took place to plan the initial setting up of a committee to establish the Oxford Buddha Vihara and how it reached its current location.

OBV MEETINGS

01.12.2002 Dr. Kyaw Thinn's residence, Birmingham

- Decision to establish a *vihara* in Oxford taken and a committee/trust set up to implement this
- To request Venerable Khuva Boonchum (Murng Phong Sayadaw) to be patron

17.05.2003 Dr. Kyaw Thinn's residence, Birmingham

- OBV committee set up: Ven. Dhammasami as chairman, Ven. Jotika as secretary, Dr. Kyaw Thinn as treasurer, and seven other lay members
- Draft constitution of the OBV scrutinised and accepted
- OBV Bank Account with HSBC opened

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22.06.2003 Mr. Suthat Bua-In, Chiengmai Kitchen, Oxford

- OBV Charity status applied for

27.07.2003 Drs Nyunt Nyunt Shwe & Hla Bu's residence, Abergavenny

- To enquire for a mortgage. Dr. Tin Maung suggests contacting Dr. Richard Htun Nyunt who has experience with Triodos Bank which provides mortgages to charitable institutions

25.08.2003 Mg Tun Win & Khin Phyu Phyu Soe's residence, London

- Amended constitution of OBV unanimously approved

28.09.2003 U Kyaw Zin & Dr. Nwe Nwe Wynn's residence, Surrey

- OBV granted charity status (Reg. No. 1099361)
- 34 Croft Road rented as temporary OBV space while search for a suitable house to purchase continues
- Approved production of OBV Newsletter which has been undertaken by Venerables Jotika and Sumana
- Triodos Bank to be used for the mortgage when a suitable property is identified
- OBV website established

07.12.2003 Meeting postponed to 07.03.2004 due to Ven. Dhammasami's ill health

08.02.2004 Extraordinary meeting at Mr. Geoff Brooker's residence

- To discuss the proposed functions of the *vihara*, size of property required, location and affordable price range, and fund-raising activities

07.03.2004 Dr. Tin Tin Lwin's residence, Croydon

16.05.2004 OBV 34 Croft Road, Oxford

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28.08.2004 Mg Tun Win & Khin Phyu Phyu Soe's residence, London

- Purchase of 33 Cherwell Drive OX3 0NB agreed for £340,000 with mortgage of £250,000 from Triodos Bank

07.11.2004 AGM Kathina Ceremony, St. Michael Primary School, Marston, Oxford

- OBV incumbent committee re-elected for 2004–2005. Ven. Jotika resigned due to need for time to study for his doctorate and Ven. Pannyawamsa elected as secretary

27.02.2005 OBV 33 Cherwell Drive, Oxford

- Decision to build a meditation hut in the back garden (£11,345) and a seat for the new *Buddharupa* in the shrine room

19.06.2005 OBV 33 Cherwell Drive, Oxford

30.10.2005 AGM Kathina Ceremony, Mortimer Hall, Marston, Oxford

- OBV committee re-elected for 2005–2006

11.03.2006 OBV 33 Cherwell Drive, Oxford

- £50,000 mortgage capital repaid to Triodos Bank
- Fund-raising delegation from Bangkok to be welcomed on 28.05.2006 at Mortimer Hall

06.08.2006 OBV 33 Cherwell Drive, Oxford

- Ordination of five novice monks at OBV

29.10.2006 AGM Kathina Ceremony, Mortimer Hall, Marston, Oxford

- Mortgage from Triodos Bank repaid fully
- Need for bigger OBV premises highlighted
- A new OBV project to build a meditation centre in Bodhgaya, India, mentioned

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03.02.2007 OBV 33 Cherwell Drive, Oxford

17.06.2007 OBV 33 Cherwell Drive, Oxford

18.10.2009 AGM Kathina Ceremony, Tingewick Hall, JRH, Oxford

NOTABLE DATES & EVENTS

17.05.2003	OBV Committee elected
October 2003	34 Croft Road, Marston, Oxford, rented to start OBV (two-bedroomed, end-terrace)
11.10.2004	33 Cherwell Drive, Marston, Oxford, purchased for £340,000 with £250,000 mortgage from Triodos Bank (five-bedroomed, semi-detached)
29.06.2006	Mortgage loan of £250,000 from Triodos Bank repaid in full
22.05.2009	Moved into 356–358 Abingdon Road, Oxford OX1 4TQ (ten-bedroomed, detached) Purchased for £690,000 with a mortgage loan of £200,000 from Triodos Bank Two log cabins constructed at a cost of over £20,000 to serve as library and meditation hut
24.01.2012	Mortgage loan from Triodos Bank repaid in full.

Dr. Kyaw Thinn
Treasurer
Oxford Buddha Vihara
Oxford
UK

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A TRIBUTE TO THE ATTRIBUTES OF SAYADAW

Hla Myat Thu

"It is one of the greatest blessings to Honour those who are worthy of Honour" (*Mangala Sutta*). It is indeed a noble task to write a small article to honour Sayadaw, Venerable Dr. Khammai Dhammasami, on his 50th birthday. To express all the significant contributions Sayadaw has kindly rendered for the propagation of the *Buddhasāsana* and the spread of Buddha Dhamma internationally is actually beyond my capability. I would like to pay my profound reverence to Sayadaw by my humble writing on some of his attributes, his tremendous contritutions, and his commitment towards the growth of Theravada Buddhism.

Management and organisational skills at Buddhist conferences

Since joining the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University, Yangon, four years ago, I had heard a lot about Sayadaw, his wonderful academic achievements in Buddhist Studies, and his teachings at home and abroad. Sayadaw is the only Myanmar scholar-monk to have obtained a D.Phil. in Buddhist Studies from the University of Oxford. He now holds honourable positions at the two Buddhist University groupings: Sayadaw is the Executive Secretary of the International Association of Buddhist Universities (IABU) and the

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Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities (ATBU). I am deeply impressed by his astounding scholarly calibre as well as his commitment and goodwill towards Buddhist universities, especially towards ITBM University and its welfare.

Many important events are held at ITBMU annually, one of them being the International Conference on Buddhism. During my time here, these conferences have been conducted successfully with the participation of scholars from other countries, owing to the proper guidance, support, and careful supervision of Sayadaw. We, the teachers, have been greatly inspired by his enthusiasm and zeal. He is indeed an inspiring, well-experienced leader. We have also received valuable suggestions and admonishments from Sayadaw. It can be said that the annual conference is dynamic and fruitful due to his steady support. His experience, and his management and organisational skills raise the standard of Buddhist conferences held at ITBM University. Often, he attends in several capacities, as organiser, emcee, moderator, and speaker. I revere his skills as a good leader and wish to highlight first and foremost one of his special attributes: at one conference, Sayadaw even neglected his severe sore throat and vigorously administered the conference from the opening to the closing ceremony.

Sayadaw is very systematic in planning and organising things, and has taught us how to allocate the time needed for the readings, the break, and the Q&As. He has also taught us how to deal with any unexpected inconveniences, or things needing to be altered for some reason (as an emcee). When I had to perform as a co-emcee for some part of the day at a three-day conference, Sayadaw guided me closely. I had just concluded the second day of the conference as usual at which point Sayadaw reminded me to invite the audience to come and attend the conference the following day, and I promptly did so. Sayadaw's commitment, adaptability, and flexibility when moderating any event on Buddhism is formidable. Furthermore, Sayadaw has performed as an organiser of a Pali conference in Thailand, chairman of a plenary

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session at the Second World Buddhist Forum in China, and as principal organiser at the conference of the Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities in Sagaing, Myanmar, in 2009.

Preaching and presentation skills

Sayadaw has helped bring together Buddhist universities around the world through conferences, seminars, and workshops on Buddhism where Venerables from many countries, international scholars, and lay teachers are given a wonderful opportunity to exchange ideas and thoughts on teaching Buddhism and meditation. Apart from taking part in them, Sayadaw also offers Buddhist teaching and Dhamma talks at home as well as abroad. On 3 June, 2012, I was privileged to attend in Yangon one of his Dhamma lectures on the first sermon of the Buddha, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. The audience of over 500 Buddhist devotees was fully engrossed in his clear and lively lecture, and we were inspired by the essence of the *sutta* seen through his down-to-earth perspective. We were deeply moved to hear the Shan Venerable chanting the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* in the traditional way of Venerable Murng Phong Sayadaw. I am convinced that Sayadaw is a born Dhamma preacher. His Dhamma talk is plain, precise, and practical. He uses a lively and comprehensive approach for different Dhamma audiences, to expound the salient points vividly within a short time. Indeed, Sayadaw is endowed with the sublime attribute of being a very *efficient Dhamma preacher and presenter*.

A polyglot and an author

Sayadaw can speak Shan (his mother tongue), Myanmar/Burmese, English, Thai, and Pali fluently. Furthermore, he has a fair command of Laotian, Sinhalese, and Sanskrit. It is thus no wonder that Sayadaw contributes considerably towards the spread of Theravada Buddhism throughout the world. Sayadaw's mastery of several languages helps expand the scope of his Buddhist teachings and his instructions on

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Vipassanā meditation to the public in many parts of the world. His noble commitment towards the propagation of Theravada Buddhism is evident in his unceasing efforts to not only learn the Buddha Dhamma but also acquire competence in many languages, which allows him to break the language barrier wherever he goes.

Sayadaw has written numerous books, articles, and academic papers, translated several books from Thai into English, published two books on *Vipassanā* meditation, and a book on the *Mangala Sutta*. His book *Mindfulness Meditation Made Easy* has been translated into several languages, including Korean, Thai, and Spanish. Sayadaw's Buddha Dhamma web pages had been visited by over 1,422,950 visitors as of July 2014.

In conclusion:

- I would like to take this opportunity to wish Venerable Sayadaw Dr. K. Dhammasami the best of health from this auspicious Golden Jubilee onwards
- May the missionary work of Sayadaw reach far and wide for the benefit of all beings, and for the propagation and promotion of the *Buddhasāsana*
- I warmly wish Sayadaw well in his taking of the Theravada message to every corner of the world as a distinguished Theravada Buddhist scholar-monk.

Dr. Hla Myat Thu
Department of English
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HONOURS ON SAYADAW DR. DHAMMASAMI'S 50th BIRTHDAY

San Tun

Brief though the period of my contact with Sayadaw Dr. Dhammasami has been thus far, it has nevertheless been of immense benefit for my academic life in the field of Buddhist Philosophy. I met Sayadaw at the Department of Philosophy, University of Yangon, Myanmar, in 2006, when Sayadaw had been invited by the University to deliver a lecture. At that time, I was an associate professor, and Sayadaw was sharing his knowledge of research methods and academic writing with the Ph.D. students in our department.

When Sayadaw went back to Oxford, we kept in touch with each other. Once, Sayadaw invited me to submit a research paper for an International Conference of Buddhist Teaching at one of the Indian Universities. I sent a paper but could not go to the Indian University to read it because of very strict rules and regulations then for University teachers in Myanmar. However, in 2013, I finally had a chance to travel abroad to an international conference of the ITBMU (International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University, Yangon, Myanmar).

Sayadaw kindly gave me an opportunity to present a paper and chair his session. As chair, I read out a brief bionote on Sayadaw, pleased

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again and again by his contributions to Dhamma teaching and research in several countries.

Afterwards, I told Sayadaw about my own imminent research plans at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, Hungary, and requested Sayadaw to introduce me to his disciples in Hungary. From January to March 2014, I was in Budapest and Sayadaw introduced me via e-mail to his Hungarian disciples at the Dharma Gate Buddhist College. It was thanks to Sayadaw that I was invited to give lectures on Buddhist Philosophy and Culture at the Dharma Gate Buddhist College. I met with Mr. Pal Farkas, founder and former Rector of the Dharma Gate, and H.E. Janos Jelen, Rector of the Dharma Gate. Both gentlemen have a strong will to promote Theravada Buddhism in Hungary, and have established a Theravada Buddhist Monastery on a hill in a small town near Budapest. H.E. Janos Jelen proposed to sign an MoU between Dagon University, Myanmar, and the Dharma Gate. This is all due to the support I have received from Sayadaw Dr. Dhammasami in my academic life.

When in Hungary, I met a few of his disciples. One was Mr. Branko Kovacevic, who works in the Archive Department of the CEU and is a part-time Theravada Buddhist meditation teacher in the CEU. Every Wednesday evening, from 5:30 to 6:30, we seven Myanmar CEU Fellows joined in with a few CEU students to take part in his group meditation class. Mr. Branko Kovacevic said that he had met with Sayadaw Dr. Dhammasami in England and learnt his meditation methods from Sayadaw and from other Theravadin monks.

I also met a Hungarian lady named Mrs. Dobos Andrea. She was also a meditation teacher and founder of a meditation centre in Budapest. She invited me to give a lecture before her meditation students, on

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the relationship between the mind and the body based on Theravada Buddhist Philosophy. Before I gave the lecture, Sayadaw delivered the opening Dhamma talk through Skype from England.

Let me wish Honourable Sayadaw Dr. Dhammasami a Happy 50th Birthday. May Sayadaw be healthy and happy for a long time to come, to promote the teachings of the Buddha.

Professor Dr. San Tun
Head of the Department of Philosophy
Dagon University
Yangon
Myanmar

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SAYADAW DR. KHAMMAI DHAMMASAMI

Ninithet Than Hlaing

I am honoured to participate in this commemorative volume marking Sayadaw's 50th birthday.

I was introduced to him by my friends, Dr. Kyaw Min Tun and Dr. San Dar Aung, quite a few years ago. However, I did not really know him until I moved to Buckingham in 2013.

Coming to the Oxford Buddha Vihara is soothing. I am most fortunate in that I live not far from the vihara, and am able to attend Sayadaw's Dhamma talks and retreats. His teachings support me in my work as a General Practitioner. I apply his guidance and his advice in my daily life, sharing with others this gift whenever and wherever possible. Occasionally, I commit his teachings to paper so as to not forget his words, as they are a source of wisdom and succour when I see patients with mental health issues.

Sayadaw makes everyone feel welcome. He listens to each individual, helping him or her feel special. I was particularly involved with two events at the vihara in 2014: the Sima Consecration Ceremony and the

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Ordination Ceremony. Drawing out the best in each of us, he helped us to contribute towards the events. Identifying the strengths of his devotees, and helping them participate in different roles, is just one of his very many strengths. Although relatively new to the Oxford Buddha Vihara, I have never felt left out on any occasion.

I wish Sayadaw Dr. Khammai Dhammasami continued good health for his inspired teachings.

With respect,

Nini
Dr. Ninithet Than Hlaing
Buckingham
UK

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VENERABLE DR. KHAMMAI DHAMMASAMI, THE ONE I REALLY RESPECT

Venerable Sayadej Vongsopha

I first met Venerable Dr. Khammai Dhammasami in 2006, at the preparatory meeting for the International Conference of Vesak. At the time, I was studying at Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University at Wat Mahathat, Bangkok. I was impressed, and humbled by his giving me a chance to represent Laos on the International Organising Committee. It brought me to the wider world of international Buddhist relations.

In 2007, he invited me to Myanmar, where I spent 22 days before the 1st International Conference of the Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities. He helped me with my English, and encouraged me to write about Buddhist education in Laos to present at the conference on behalf of the two *Sangha* Colleges in Laos. It was my first paper at an international conference.

Since then, I have seen him at many international conferences, for the success of which he is mostly responsible. He is an inspiring and kind monk who is learned, and wise in both worldly and Dhamma circles. He is an important force for Buddhism who has united Buddhists from around the world to come together and work for the benefit of the many. He is also a monk who works for Buddhist diplomacy.

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On the occasion of his 50th year, I wish him strength, health, prosperity, and continuing success in his Dhamma life.

With my great respect,
Ven. Sayadej Vongsopha
Lecturer, *Sangha* College
Vat Ongtue Mahavihara
Vientiane
Lao PDR

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GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS

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MEDITATION GROUP: HUNGARY

Celebrating Venerable Khammai Dhammasami

I have been to Asia and visited several monasteries since 1992. I have met dozens of monks and teachers. However, I did not meet Dhammasami in Burma, but at the Dharma Gate Buddhist College, in Budapest, Hungary, ten years ago.

I was very surprised to see his direct and very open attitude, his clear, simple, yet Western way of teaching.

I haven't met a teacher so far who knows the resonances of the soul of the Western people so well, and reflects the essence of the Buddha's teachings so precisely.

I can still remember the meditation he guided us through at that time. He has since visited us and delivered talks. But for me, the events closest to my heart occurred when he stayed with my family and initiated my children.

He has always been a great inspiration for our meditation community.

May we have him, his personality absorbed with *metta*, and his clear mindfulness with us for a long time!

Dobos Andrea Beáta
Buddhist Vipassana Foundation

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On the 50th Birthday of Venerable Khammai Dhammasami

I was already in my forties when I met the Buddha. Reading *Yoga and Psychotherapy: The Evolution of Consciousness* by Swami Rama, Rudolph Ballentine, MD, & Swami Ajaya, MD, I realised the limits of the psychoanalysis I had been undergoing for six years. By that time, I had tried several Western therapies, and had received a lot of help in my life from both teachers and methods. But there was something I was missing. Having read the book, I realised what I had been missing was taking my life into my own hands and not expecting others to help me with my everyday fears and conflicts. I went to a course held by Andrea Dobos, one of the founders of the Buddhist Vipassana Society in Budapest, Hungary, whose courses were based on her experiences in Burma. That was it.

That summer, I attended the Summer University of Dharma Gate Buddhist College and met Venerable Dhammasami. His wisdom, fascinating manner of lecturing, patience, and wonderful energy changed my life entirely. Suddenly I could see things hidden before, which had gone unnoticed until then.

Ever since, I look forward to meeting him again and again, and have been organising others' getting to know him. He is an all-in-one master, a therapist and a teacher whose life is an example for those who are lucky enough to live around him.

I will always be grateful for his talks. He is one of those people whose guidance creates peace and happiness in my heart.

With all my gratitude and *metta*,
Klára
Buddhist Vipassana Foundation

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To Venerable Dhammasami,

I would like to thank you for the three days we had together in Gyapa, Hungary, in 2013. The experience and energy of those days have been of everlasting edification for me. I do hope to have the opportunity to develop my mindfulness in your presence in the future.

I think of you with respect and gratitude.
Ágnes Vándor

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IN APPRECIATION OF THE MEDITATION RETREAT IN KARWICA, POLAND (SEPTEMBER 2013)

Ewa Huggins
(with contributions from Sarah, Aska, and Junie)

The decision had been made; we were going to build a house in Poland. Personally, it would be a homecoming for me after 45 years away. It was a dream which, for years, had seemed like an impossibility. But by now the Communist rule was over, Poland's fortunes had changed to a reality only dreamed of by my dying father in 1996.

I was aware I was not coming back to the Poland of my childhood. A new political order had been established, Poland had entered the European Union, the borders had been flung open, and freedom in all areas of life was being celebrated.

A Polish house was to be established, to help me and my English family – of two daughters and their spouses and six children between them – to connect with our Polish roots. It was to be a place for them to get away from the urban claustrophobia of town-living. A place to find physical and mental space conducive to letting go.

There is a tendency when revisiting old, long-forgotten places to fall into the past roles of who we were at the time, the baggage of the past

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firmly on our shoulders, the return inescapably a confrontation of the past with the present.

Those who had known me in the Poland of my childhood remembered me as the seven-year-old convent girl whose ambition in life then had been to be a Christian saint, eager to redeem the downfall of the first sinner Eve, or as the ardent teenage atheist of my later age. My return as a Buddhist required a certain amount of adjustment from all concerned. Hopefully, the Polish house would become a bridge between the past and the present; a place where the saint, the atheist, and the Buddhist made peace with each other.

The house is set in the Masurian Lakes, in the little village of Karwica, surrounded by an ancient forest, the silence only interrupted by the occasional bark of a dog or cry of a blue jay. It seemed to me to be the perfect place for a Buddhist meditation retreat.

That is why, two years later, my sister and I found ourselves at the airport in Warsaw greeting Venerable Dhammasami and others, all looking forward to a week of meditation.

We settled into a routine, and the rain fell gently around us as we practised our walking meditation outside the house, sometimes venturing further afield, exploring the pine forest with its giant mushrooms and the changing colours of the autumnal oaks.

Each day we continued with our sitting and walking, sitting and walking.

> *The timer chimes three times and we open our eyes. Venerable Dhammasami sits in front of us before our little makeshift altar. Behind the altar is a window, and through this window we can see the trees.*
>
> *"We are surrounded by forest" says Venerable Dhammasami. "Can you destroy the forest without damaging the trees?"*

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At night, we sit around the log fire and talk. On our final night, we make a bonfire outside and it lights everyone's faces as we chant in Pali for the evening puja.

Sarah

Never before or since have I experienced such calm and stillness of mind as I did during the retreat in Karwica. Thank you, Venerable Dhammasami.

Aska

During the journeys between Warsaw and Karwica I eagerly took the opportunity of explaining the complexity and the tragedy of Poland's history. When in Warsaw, there was time to explore the city; the choice of the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising and the Old City was purposeful, a shortcut to the understanding of what I was trying to convey. Ven. Dhammasami, with his customary patience, was paying quiet attention. Before their departure, he told me: *"Every day I chanted a hundred times* Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa *for your land and your people."*

Thank you, Phra Ajahn, from the bottom of my heart, for spanning that bridge.

Looking back, I now realise how important it is for one to make time for meditation, and to live in the present moment. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ven. Dhammasami for his wonderful teaching, Ewa for her great hospitality, and the rest of the group for making this retreat such a memorable one. I am sure we will all remember picking mushrooms near the Masurian Lakes in Poland.

Junie

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MEDITATION GROUP: SERBIA

Our small but dedicated group of Buddhists, gathered around the Theravadin Buddhist Society 'The Middle Way', is privileged to have Ven. Dhammasami as a teacher and a guide. Since 2010, he has been visiting us regularly, on a yearly basis. We have benefited enormously from his skilled teaching, knowledge of the Dhamma, and his lovely personality. With great excitement, we are about to publish a translation of his meditation manual *Mindfulness Meditation Made Easy*.

As a humble gesture of appreciation for his dedication and generous support, we hereby offer the following reflections.

Happy 50th Birthday Bhante, and may you reach the final peace of *Nibbana* in this very life!

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Biljana Milovanović

ART OF LISTENING

Rare are those who know,
Such a one is not born in every place.
Where such a sage is born,
The community gains happiness.

(***Dhammapada***, verse 193)

I saw Venerable Dhammasami for the first time on 28 August 2011, at his lecture 'Freedom – Buddha's Message for the 21st Century' in Novi Sad, at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Two years later, in August 2013, I had the privilege of attending a course of meditation led by Bhante Dhammasami. After that first lecture, I had introduced meditation into my daily routine, and my life gained a whole new dimension. During our meditation course, Bhante taught us the art of Buddhist meditation and explained Buddhism in a very erudite and competent manner, showing patience and courtesy towards all participants, irrespective of their skill and existing knowledge of the topic. I remember advice he gave me during one of the interviews, during the course, but most of all that special feeling that I was speaking to a teacher who knew how to listen. This is, nowadays, an extremely rare virtue. It speaks well of the master who has developed his mind completely and thus has the ability to teach others by his own example.

I am immensely grateful for everything that he did and still does for individuals, and for the general growth of Buddhism in Serbia. He is a master at presenting the true teachings of the Buddha in an environment where not much is known about it. By being consistent, not dogmatic, in his presentations he manages to connect and balance different approaches to the teachings. This teaching skill, combined

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with his gentleness, represents for all of us a wonderful living example of how to enrich our lives. This gift of pure Dhamma exceeds all other gifts!

Al-Ammar Kašić

THE LIGHT

I have read somewhere that people easily forget what someone has said, but find it much more difficult to forget how they feel about someone. When I first spoke to Venerable Dhammasami, I had that strange feeling that the individual facing me felt the same as I did. I had never experienced anything like that before. It was a kind of empathy I had never felt with anybody else. This strange sense of connection, and at the same time separation, had a strong impact on me. That impact of direct contact with the teacher was stronger than anything I have read so far. Because, unlike texts or stories that for a moment ignite the flame somewhere in my being, that sense of understanding and compassion that I felt at the first interview with Ven. Dhammasami is still alive somewhere deep in myself. He showed me that light is in each of us. Since then, I am able to easily see and feel it in contact with other people, because it is easy when you know where to look.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to have met him. Thank you, Bhante, for all that you do.

Metta!

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Dalibor Stojšić

OUR BUDDHA

It is very difficult to, and almost no words can, explain the feeling of bliss deep within me at every meeting with Ven. Dhammasami. However, there is an anecdote from one of our meditation retreats in Serbia in 2012, which reminds me every day of those meetings. During the retreat in Horgos, one of our friends – now deceased Dusan – could not remember the Bhante's name. Almost every day, although we tried to be silent and not disturb the others, he would ask: "And what is the name of this Buddha of ours?" We would answer him in a half-voice, a whisper, but when he asked for the third or fourth time, it took a lot of self-control to not burst out laughing.

This anecdote has stuck in my memory. Every day when I see the statue of the Buddha in my room, I remember that anecdote and our Bhante. Therefore, when I met Ven. Dhammasami at our retreat the following year, I greeted him with the thought: "This is our Buddha".

Mladen Ivanović

SUFFERING IS POSSIBLE TO AVOID

From the day we were born, when the midwife's rough hands touched our soft skin, until the day we pass away, along every inch of our path we encounter suffering. Suffering is an integral part of our lives, and from my perspective it is important to try to accept and solve it. If we do not succeed, we will at least be on a right path, which will make us better human beings, and we will see the world a little more clearly.

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At a time when I was suffering acutely, I decided to go on a meditation retreat led by Bhante Dhammasami. I just wanted to get rid of my problems. Not knowing almost anything about meditation and even less about Buddhism, I headed on a journey of some 500 kilometers (310 miles) that would change my life. I can say that, at the time, I was so 'closed', or even blind, that I did not even want to admit to myself that I was suffering. And then, during the meditation, in my mind started to appear something I like to call 'black boxes'. Of course I did not dare to rush in on them. I just watched them from a distance. As they began to grow, the suffering was reaching a point where it became unbearable.

I remember that it was the third day of the retreat, when the eye-opening individual talk with Bhante Dhammasami took place. I now had a recipe for overcoming suffering. During the next session of meditation, I realised that these 'black boxes' were nothing other than the things which I had fled from, not only at that point but throughout my entire life. I returned from the retreat to my hometown purified, although not completely healed.

Now, with the passing of time, I can confirm from my own experience that my suffering was not permanent, as unwisely I had thought back then. I can also testify that if only we are not attached to things, it is possible to avoid suffering and to live in peace with oneself.

Srđan Gojković - Gile

"IS THIS THE BUDDHA?"

I met Bhante Dhammasami for the first time in Bangkok, during Vesak 2013. He was participating in a conference on 'Buddhism and

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Education', held in the United Nations building. He was very gentle, but when anybody talked too much, he did not mind reminding the speaker to get to the point or ask his/her question. I was quite impressed.

Then I met him again when he came to Serbia in August 2013, to give a lecture about meditation and lead a retreat for the members of 'The Middle Way', our Buddhist society. I was really lucky, because Bhante was staying at my apartment in Belgrade and we stayed together in another one in Novi Sad. So I had a great opportunity to talk to him a little more and to learn more about the Dhamma and its practice.

I learnt so much from him over those few days. My sitting meditation, up to then, used to be 45 minutes. Then, the first morning at my apartment, when we woke up and did some chanting, I asked Bhante how long we should sit for. He said: "60 minutes". I commented that, so far, I had never sat that long, but that I would try. His answer was: "But it's only 15 minutes longer". With that, he immediately changed my perspective. Suddenly it was so easy. Yes, it is only 15 minutes longer, not a big deal. Before that, my perception had been that 60 minutes was a long span, and I was not sure if I could manage it. He also gave me some very practical advice when I asked him how to introduce my five-year-old son to meditation.

But perhaps the most influential thing, for me, was the peace and calm radiating from him. It has really inspired me to learn and practise more in order to get closer to the state of mind he is in.

Then we went on a retreat and that was simply fantastic. It was my first retreat; I could not have hoped for a better teacher. We have all learnt so much about meditation practice from him. For me, one thing was especially important. It was when he taught us about pain management. Before that, one of the biggest obstacles in my sitting meditation had

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been that sometimes my body hurt so much after longer sittings that I felt completely distracted. I have now learnt that I can just register that pain in my mind, release it, and return to my breath, the primal object of my meditation. It was a revelation when I realised that much of that pain was only my thoughts about it and me struggling and fighting it. Bhante Dhammasami told us: "Accept it, do not fight it", and that was one of the best pieces of advice anyone has ever given me.

Now I just remember that and use it whenever needed, not just during sitting meditation when I have some physical pain, but in any life situation when I find myself in a mental state that I do not like. I just change my perspective on a situation; instead of fighting it I accept it.

Finally, I would like to share a little anecdote. When Bhante Dhammasami was staying in Belgrade at my place, we would have a long walk through the forest nearby. It is a forest called Kosutnjak, a favourite place for many for a weekend picnic or walk. It was a weekend and many people were there. I have to tell you that it is very, very rare to see a Buddhist monk in robes walking in Belgrade or anywhere in Serbia. So Bhante was a figure of attraction, and many people in the forest were watching us, puzzled by the scene. A little later, while we were passing a group of Gypsies, they were so interested that they approached us. The oldest of them came closer and said: "Hello!" We greeted them, too. Then he asked quite seriously: "Is this the Buddha?" I must admit that the question put a smile on my face. "No, but you are very close, this is a Buddhist monk". They were very happy to see him and asked if they could take a group photograph. Bhante Dhammasami accepted generously.

Nowadays, my sitting meditation is longer, usually between 70 to 90 minutes in one sitting. And I always remember Bhante's innocent comment: "But it's only 15 minutes longer".

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Branislav Kovačević

LOVE, NOT ATTACHMENT

In my conversations about Buddhism with various people interested in the subject, through the years, one question comes up regularly. It goes something like this: "Buddhists need to be emotionally remote from everything, not attached to any object or person. How is this possible? I love my family, kids, parents, and I cannot stop loving them. Therefore I cannot be a Buddhist!"

In different situations, I have tried to address this dilemma in different ways, appropriate to the interlocutor and his mindset. Still, not once have I felt that my answers were satisfactory. That made me think further on this topic, which I used as a kind of 'koan' in my practice. It seems that the source of this wrong perception of Buddhism, in general, is a rather widespread opinion that love and attachment mean practically the same thing, and that loving somebody means being hopelessly tied to somebody and at the same time tying somebody to ourselves. This cliché is embedded in our psyche by being endlessly repeated throughout history in innumerable stories, poems, love songs, movies, romantic novels, philosophical sayings, and proverbs. If we listen to the lyrics of most of the songs broadcast endlessly on the television or the radio today, it is always: "I love you, I need you, I can't live without you..."

To be able to solve the puzzle from the beginning, we need to make a crucial distinction between love and attachment. By observing our own experience, sooner or later it should become clear that attachment is not so much about the other, although it appears to be. It is much more about interest in ourselves, care for ourselves, while the beloved other is just a means for fulfilling our wishes. Attachment means that

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we want something: "I will love you if you are like this or that" or "If you love me, you will do this for me". No matter whether our partner, children, or friends are concerned, it is always: "I want you to agree with me on everything, to respect me, to love me and only then will I love you in return". Unfortunately, romantic love, sensual love, is very often tinted by attachment, which is self-centred, possessive, and limiting. "I love you" may often mean I want you to love me or I want you to do what I want you to do. The object of our love is still an object, something we expect to please us, to conform to our expectations and to be a source of our intensive sensual gratification. So, a relationship based on attachment is more a kind of business agreement. And, of course, that agreement exists as long as both parties fulfill what they 'signed'.

On the other hand, real love is completely the opposite. Real love or *metta* is unconditional. It means giving, rather than taking or expecting reciprocity. It means giving care, tenderness, affection, material resources, and time, wishing well for the benefit of close, dear, and distant ones. Such is the case mostly with parental love or love among close friends. I do not love you because you'll be as I wish you to be, but because I wish you to be happy, to prosper. Real love brings something positive, something we all long for in our heart. And we should also be able to share with others. That's why love is so powerful. It is an active interest in, care for, empathy towards, and desire for the well-being of the other person, usually accompanied by positive feelings about ourselves.

As is easily visible now, true love and attachment are two completely opposite tendencies in the mind, which in fact cannot exist together, but can sometimes turn one into the other.

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Dear Bhante,
Full of gratitude for your
warmhearted teaching, inspiration
and support, we wish you
very Happy Birthday
and many happy returns!

Members
Theravada Buddhist Society
"The Middle Way"
Serbia

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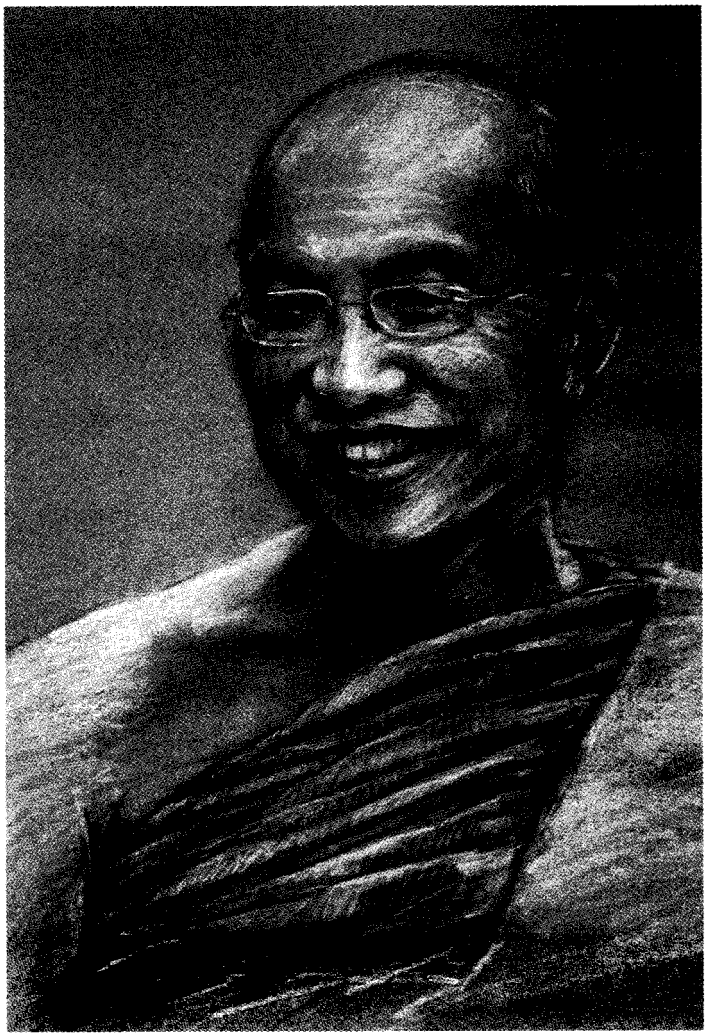

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SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS

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FEAR AND ANXIETY PSYCHOSES IN EARLY BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE

Ven. Dr. P. Gnanarama

Fear is defined as an unpleasant emotional state related to an impending threat of danger, pain, or harm. Words such as 'fright', 'dread', 'trepidation', and 'apprehension' are used to denote this particular emotional state, or a feeling involving something harmful which may happen sooner or later. In a way, it is more real than apparent. As the saying goes: *"Nothing is to be feared so much as fear itself"*. Nevertheless, we will try to determine whether fear is wholly injurious or harmful, or why one should fear *fear* itself. The fear-struck person imagines that he has to confront a detrimental situation causing unfavourable negative repercussions on his life. The different facets of this experience are expressed through terms such as 'anxiety', 'terror', 'horror', 'panic', 'consternation', 'dismay', and the like. When fear turns to anxiety, it is considered a nervous disorder marked by excessive unease. When a person is anxious, he is under some strain to do something for its alleviation. Anxiety is distinguishable from fear as it is often objectless, whereas fear originates due to a feared object, person, or event.

As depicted clearly in the *Vedas*, primitive man threatened by natural calamities like floods, earthquakes, typhoons, volcanic eruptions,

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droughts, epidemics, and diseases, deified the natural forces and prayed to them for help. The Buddha also says in the *Dhammapada*:

> *Being threatened by fear, there are many who go to the refuge of mountains, forests, groves, trees, and shrines.*
> *No such refuge is safe, no such refuge is supreme.*
> *Not by resorting to such refuge is one freed from all ill.*[1]

Healthy fear and Unhealthy fear

According to Buddhist philosophy, there are two facets to fear: Healthy fear and Unhealthy fear. The two can be distinguished one from the other. Healthy fear is advantageous to one's survival. We take precautions to save our life because we are afraid of death. When there is fear of an immediate danger before us, we become alert to the source of that fear and, most sensibly, we either fight with it or avoid it. That is how fear motivates us to save our life. In other words, certain glandular secretions enable us to run faster or to jump higher than we normally can, or to fight more bravely than we would under normal circumstances. In the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha speaks of three fears that can part mother and son. Fear arises when a great fire breaks out, burning villages, suburbs, and towns; or when a great flood is caused, inundating villages, suburbs, and towns; or when there is a raid by robbers who live in forests, causing people to run away or drive away in their carts.[2] What the Buddha says in the *Sabbāsava Sutta* in relation to '*āsava*' bears some relevance to our discussion. Among the diverse English renderings of the term, 'influxes' retains its original etymological meaning (*ā+shru* = to flow; flowing in; therefore influx). As described in the text, influxes are "destructive and consuming"

[1] *Dhp*. 188, 189

[2] *A*. I, p. 178

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(*vighātaprailāha*). One of the seven methods of getting rid of influxes is avoidance (*parivajjanā*). It is stated that upon seeing the impending danger one has to avoid it just as one avoids a wild elephant, a wild bull, a wild dog, a cesspool, or a sewer. Thus, healthy fears act as warning signals.[3] As stated in the *Cātuma Sutta*, the following four kinds of fears are to be expected by those who go down to the water: fear of waves, crocodiles, whirlpools, and sharks.[4] Furthermore, healthy fear motivates the forest-dwelling monks to be earnest, ardent, and resolute in their striving.

Let not Unhealthy fear conquer you

Replying to the brahmin Janussoni's inquiry as to whether life in the jungle thicket is hard to endure, seclusion hard to practise, and solitude hard to enjoy, in the *Bhayabherava Sutta* the Buddha explains in detail the arising and the alleviation of fear and dread. The Buddha clarifies:

> *While I dwelt there, a wild animal would come up to me, or a peacock might knock off a branch, or the wind would rustle the leaves. Then I thought: What is this? Are the fear and dread coming? What if I subdue that fear and dread while keeping the same posture that I am in when it comes upon me?*

Explaining further his allaying of unhealthy fear and dread, the Buddha describes how he never changes his posture of walking or standing or sitting or lying down until he has subdued the fear and the dread that arise in him, whatever the posture he is abiding in at the time. In order to make his point clear, the Buddha says further that although there

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[3] *M.* I, p. 71 ff.

[4] *M.* I, p. 459

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were some brahmins and recluses who took night as day and day as night, he differentiated clearly night as night and day as day. Due to delusion, those brahmins and recluses perceived wrongly. Dispelling fear and dread by thoughtful reflection, the Buddha says he aroused tireless energy and unremitting mindfulness thereby leading to the tranquillity and appeasement of the mind, which was concentrated and unified.[5] The *Upakkilesa Sutta* describes how the Buddha, on an earlier occasion, had fallen away from concentration due to a fear that had arisen in him, just as a man who has set out on a journey has to confront murderers from both sides of him. The Buddha, explaining his experience, says that light and the vision of forms had disappeared from him outright. Then he reflected that he should act so that neither doubt nor inattention nor sloth and torpor nor fear should arise in him again.[6] According to Buddhism, Unhealthy fear is harmful for one's progress. It is to be got rid of as swiftly as possible. Hence, in the *Ākankheya Sutta*[7] as well as in the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta*,[8] the Buddha advises monks to conquer fear and dread, and not allow fear and dread to conquer oneself.

Guilty fear leads to grief and mental torture

When a wrong-doer comes back to his senses after his misconduct, there will be a time when he is subjected to repentance for the evil he has committed. It is usually said that this emotional state is a result of the internalisation and transgression of the cultural and moral standards of the society of the person concerned. His conscience is instrumental in evaluating and finding fault in the act either performed

[5] *M.* I, pp. 20–21
[6] *M.* III, p. 159
[7] *M.* I, p. 33–4
[8] *M.* III, p. 97

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or contemplated by him. As the *Anguttara Nikāya* puts it, when an act of evil is done, *"Self [conscience] upbraids the self".*[9] Usually, this tendency is called 'guilty fear' or a 'guilty conscience'. The *Dhammapada* illustrates it thus:

> *Here (in the present life) he grieves, hereafter (in the next life) he grieves. In both states he grieves.* ***He grieves, he is tormented by perceiving the impurity of his own action.***[10]

> *Here (in the present life) he suffers, hereafter (in the next life) he suffers. (Repenting) 'Evil have I done' he suffers. Furthermore, he suffers having gone to a woeful state.*[11]

> *Since what is done cannot be undone, the consequence of the evil done – which is self-born and self-originated – grinds the foolish evil-doer, as a diamond grinds a gem.*[12]

Anxiety, Ego, and Repression

In the Oxford Dictionary, anxiety is defined as a nervous disorder marked by excessive unease. The Webster's Third International Dictionary (1971) defines it more explicitly as *"a state of being anxious or of experiencing a strong or dominating blend of uncertainty, agitation, or dread and rooting fear about some contingency".* Psychiatrically, anxiety is described as *"a diffuse, unpleasant uneasiness, apprehension, or fearfulness stemming from anticipated*

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[9] *"attā'pi attānaṃ upavadati"* – *A.* I, p. 149

[10] *Dhp.* 15

[11] *Dhp.* 17

[12] *Dhp.* 161

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danger, the source of which is unidentifiable."[13] The term 'angst' in Freud's writing has been rendered into English as 'anxiety'. It is the general anxiety or dread concerned with the state of the world or the human condition. In psychiatry, anxiety is discussed under three heads:

I. Separation Anxiety
II. Stranger Anxiety
III. Nocturnal Anxiety

Anxiety is described as a psychosis, comprising somatic, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural components leading to dread or uneasiness.

The first, Separation Anxiety, originates due to the loss of somebody one loves, or an object of love, or due to the loss of love for an object, which as described by Freud comes closest to the Buddhist assertion of *"piyehi vippayogo dukkho"*. It is also said that removal of infants from mothers or from mother-surrogates causes anxiety. The second, Stranger Anxiety, arises when children are confronted with strangers. The concept has some relationship to the Buddhist *"appiyehi sampayogo dukkho"*. The third, Nocturnal Anxiety, occurs in some due to darkness in the night.[14]

The psychological structure of the concept of anxiety is described in many ways.[15] Freud has much to say about anxiety. Dealing with anxiety he speaks about objects of anxiety, neurotic anxiety, signal of anxiety, reproduction of anxiety, sexual practice and anxiety, and repression and anxiety.[16]

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[13] Clarence J. Rowe, *An Outline of Psychiatry* (Eighth edition)

[14] *Op. cit.*, p. 51

[15] Adam Cash, *Psychology for Dummies* pp. 223, 224

[16] Sigmund Freud, *The Wisdom of Sigmund Freud: A Collection of Freud's Views*

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Padmasiri De Silva, writing on Ego and Anxiety, remarks:

> *Freud's new theory is that ego is the seat of anxiety and anxiety precedes repression. Repression does not lead to anxiety but anxiety leads to repression. The ego has the power of reproducing automatically a previously experienced fear. Thus anxiety is a signal given by the ego that there is danger.*[17]

Antidotes to fear and Anxiety Psychoses

Buddhism has several antidotes to help alleviate fear and anxiety. The most desirable would be reflection upon its origin *(yoniso manasikāra)*. Usually, the phrase is translated as 'rational reflection'. As the Buddha illustrates in the *Bhayabherava Sutta* above, reflection upon its origin is followed by its resolution as referred to in the discourse. In order to attain release from guilty fear, it would be more advantageous for one to go back to the root cause of one's evil action and try to eradicate it from the mind following the four methods prescribed in the explanation of 'right effort'. It is described thus:

I. By restraining the mind from negative thoughts that have not yet arisen (*saṁvara*)

II. By abandoning the negative thoughts that have already arisen (*pahāna*)

III. By developing positive thoughts that have not yet arisen (*bhāvanā*)

(Name of the compiler not given), New York.

[17] Padmasiri De Silva, *Buddhist and Freudian Psychology*, p. 117

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IV. By sustaining positive thoughts that have already arisen (*anurakkhanā*).[18]

Sociological significance of Moral shame and Moral dread

Buddhist teaching on 'moral shame' (*hiri*) and 'moral dread' (*ottappa*) provide criteria for abstention from committing evil. The *Puggalapannattai*, defining these two mental inclinations, highlights their moral value:

> *To be ashamed of what one ought to be ashamed of – performing evil and unwholesome things. This is called moral shame. To be in dread of what one ought to be in dread of – performing evil and unwholesome things. This is called moral dread.*[19]

They arise due to moral consciousness. These two are often coupled together in the canonical teachings. In the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha emphasises the importance of these two concepts:

> *Two lucid things, O monks, protect the world: moral shame and moral dread. If these two things were not to protect the world, then one would neither respect one's mother nor one's mother's sister, nor one's brother's wife, nor one's teacher's wife.*

Prima facie, fear is a negative concept. Grasping the term 'fear' alone some people evaluate the Buddhist interpretation superficially and say fear in any form is detrimental to human well-being. Evidently, the significance of Moral shame and Moral dread, however, cannot be underestimated. The two are recognised as two types of noble wealth,

[18] *A*. II. p. 66
[19] *Pug*. pp. 79, 80

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of the Seven types of Noble Wealth. In other words, moral shame is scrupulousness rooted in conscience. Bhikkhu Bodhi, explaining lucidly these two complementary qualities called *"the guardians of the world and foundations of morality"*, remarks:

> *Shame has the characteristic of disgust with evil, is dominated by a sense of self-respect, and manifests itself as conscience. Fear of wrongdoing has the characteristic of dread of evil, is dominated by a concern for the opinions of others, and manifests itself as fear of doing evil.*[20]

The psychotherapist Mark Epstein, throughout his work *Thoughts Without a Thinker*, speaks about the human predicament and shows how our ego contributes to self-love or narcissism that creates psychological problems. He says:

> *Freud recognised that the inability to tolerate unpleasant truths about oneself was essential to narcissism. The Buddha's teachings make this observation the cornerstone of his psychology. We are all subject to this tendency, taught the Buddha. We do not want to admit our lack of substance to ourselves, and instead, strive to project an image of completeness, or self-sufficiency. The paradox is that, to the extent that we succumb to this urge, we are estranged from ourselves and are not real. Our narcissism requires that we keep the truth about ourselves at bay.*[21]

Narcissus was a beautiful youth in Greek mythology, who fell in love with his own reflection in a pool and died admiring it.

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[20] *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Note 416, p. 1233

[21] Mark Epstein, *Thoughts Without a Thinker*, p. 48

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Remedial measures to be adopted to relieve the mind's narcissism linked to ego have been described in several discourses in the canon. The Buddha's admonition is to master the mind and not be under its sway.[22] Particularly at the beginning of *The Greater Discourse on the Foundation of Mindfulness,* in the *Digha Nikāya,* the benefits of cultivating the mind are given where – with the exception of the last, the realisation of *Nibbāna* – the other benefits are related to our discussion. They are:

I. The purification of beings
II. For the overcoming of sorrow
III. For the overcoming of distress
IV. For the disappearance of pain
V. For the overcoming of grief
VI. For the gaining of the right path

The techniques for overcoming unhealthy fear, anxiety, and psychoses are in our hands. Deplorably, we have not recognised their significance. Mark Epstein, remarking about Western meditators, who are vulnerable to using their practices defensively and trying in vain to solve their emotional problems by going after psychotherapists, stresses that the horizon of the third Noble Truth of Buddhism promises the real relief. Referring to *"too many examples of persons, who [have] gone round and round in therapy for years and years, dwelling in the contents of their individual stories but never breaking through"*, he highlights the vain attempts of visiting one psychotherapist after another, and quotes the satirical Sufi Nasruddin:

> *"One night, some of Nasruddin's friends came upon him crawling around on his hands and knees searching for something beneath*

[22] *Citta vasa vattati, na cittassa vasena vattati – M.* I, p. 214

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the lamppost. When they asked him what he was looking for, he told them that he had lost the key to his house. They all got down to help him look, but without any success. Finally, one of them asked Nasruddin where exactly he had lost the key.
Nasruddin replied, "In the house."
"Then why" his friend asked, "are you looking under the lamppost?"
Nasruddin replied: "Because there is more light here." [23]

While the remedy is right in our hands, we look for it wantonly further and further away from us.

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[23] Mark Epstein, *Thoughts Without a Thinker*, pp. 159–160

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WALL PAINTINGS FROM THE NYAUNGYAN AND KONBAUNG DYNASTIES

Alexandra Green

In December 1996, I went to Myanmar/Burma to look at wooden architecture, because I had just started my Ph.D. on the subject at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. The purpose of my trip was to confirm that I wanted to work on wooden buildings, rather than other forms of art, but while travelling around, I was quite disappointed with the poor state of repair of many sites and the replacement of wooden friezes with tin punch-outs. I have since revised my opinion of the rich material that wooden monasteries and other buildings in Myanmar/Burma provide, information which is now beautifully available in Sylvia Fraser-Lu's publications on the subject, especially her *Splendour in Wood: The Buddhist Monasteries of Burma* published in 2001 by Orchid Press. But, in December 1996, this was all still in the future; at the time, I felt anxious about defining a topic based on the wooden monasteries. As I travelled around, however, I encountered the late 17th-century wall paintings at Tilawkaguru Cave Temple in Sagaing, an event that completely transformed my life. I was entranced by the beauty of the wall paintings and was delighted with the clear narrative layouts. I longed to know what the stories were about. I spent the rest of the trip looking for other wall painting sites to visit, and upon my return to London, I changed the subject of my

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dissertation to wall paintings from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries in Myanmar/Burma.

Myanmar/Burma wall paintings of the late Nyaungyan and early Konbaung dynasties are distinct from their better known Bagan period counterparts (*c.* 11th to 13th centuries). The later paintings express a new configuration of ideas, one that became popularised in the late 17th century and was repeated extensively over the approximately 150 years that they were produced. I have found about 160 wall painting sites with late murals; some of these are in excellent condition, while others are very fragmentary. Presumably, there are many others. The wall painting sites are located mainly in the central area of the country, in the dry zone, which has helped to preserve them.

The buildings in which the wall paintings appear are mostly small – many are only about three-square-metres inside – and square, with a stupa form as the superstructure, and have one, three, or four entrances. They tend to be located outside the capital area in the vicinity of monastic communities, and particularly spectacular paintings are located in places that once supported major religious centres. Such mural sites are the donations of wealthy people seeking to improve their future lives and eventually reach *Nirvana*.

The subject matter and the arrangement of the murals became standardised very quickly in the early 18th century and were represented quite consistently until the early 19th century. The subject matter narrates specific stories of the life of Gautama Buddha and the lives of the Buddhas of the Past. All of the scenery is set within contemporary Myanmar/Burmese society, and the murals are therefore a valuable source of information about society, fashion, architecture, and so forth, of the time period.

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At the top of the walls are representations of the Buddhas of the Past attaining Enlightenment. Beneath them, sometimes, are short sequences of their life stories: living in a palace, making the great departure, cutting off their hair, becoming awakened, and residing in a monastery. Occasionally, the Buddhas of the Past are depicted making a prophecy in a previous life, of future Buddhahood to Gautama. All of these types of imagery are presented very repetitively, and this is in keeping with texts about the Buddhas of the Past, such as the *Buddhavaṃsa*.

The second section of the wall paintings displays scenes from the final life of Gautama Buddha. The most popular scenes are: those associated with his birth, including the birth itself; him being lustrated in a white cloth; his return to his father's palace; the placing of his feet on the head of Asita the sage; the four omens; the last look at his wife and child; the departure being stopped by Mara; being fed by Sujata; placing his food bowl on the Neranjara River where it woke the *Naga Mahakala*; and the Seven Stations after the Enlightenment. This sequence focuses attention on the process of becoming enlightened, a narration that accords with a Tai Khun text, the *Paṭhamasambodhi*. This text appears not to have been present in written form in Myanmar/Burma during the 18th century, but its presence in the wall paintings indicates the strength of oral transmissions of Buddhist biography and presumably of other texts as well. The movement of texts in this way relates to the religious and secular interactions between central Myanmar/Burma, the Shan States, and Lan Na over the centuries.

The lowest portion of the paintings narrates the ten great *jātaka* stories in which Gautama Buddha perfected the ten virtues *(pāramī)* necessary for enlightenment. These are arranged usually in a hierarchical order with the *Temiya Jātaka* closest to the floor and the *Vessantara Jātaka* appearing just below or just before the scenes

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of Gautama Buddha's final life. This accords with the cosmological arrangement of the Buddhist universe where spiritual advancement is plotted onto a vertical structure with the Hells at the lowest points and the realm of formlessness at the top. This organisation is also echoed in the arrangement of the wall paintings as a whole with the Buddhas of the Past at the top of the walls, the life of Gautama Buddha in the centre, and the *jātakas* below that. The viewer thus sees the efforts of Gautama to become enlightened followed by his inclusion in an illustrious lineage.

The peripheral areas of the temples – ceilings and entrances – are also filled with wall paintings. The imagery found here tends to be of guardian figures, such as ogres *(bilu)* and scenes of the Hells to warn devotees to engage in good behaviour. On the entrance ceilings can often be seen footprints of the Buddha that point towards the main, usually sculpted, image of the Buddha seated in *bhumisparsa mudra*, the gesture of enlightenment, against the west wall of the temple. The footprints are usually surrounded by *nagas*. Because they are placed on the ceiling and point towards the interior of the temple, the footprints demonstrate the superiority of the Buddha and assist devotees in proceeding towards enlightenment themselves. They also show the sacredness of the space within, and the 108 marks in the footprint provide protection. On the ceilings of the shrine itself, as well as along the edges of the narratives, are painted floral and geometric motifs that reflect the patterns of Indian trade textiles from Gujarat in the west and the Coromandel Coast of the east. These were luxury goods in 18th-century Myanmar/Burma, and therefore were perfect painted offerings, creating a space that was fittingly beautiful to honour the Buddha.

What can be seen in these wall paintings then are representations of particular Buddhist texts set into Myanmar/Burmese social and

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religious contexts. The teachings of the Buddha became clear through the easy cause-and-effect layout of the visual narratives, and would have felt relevant to devotees because of the contemporary setting. All of these aspects combined to house the main Buddha image in a sumptuous space befitting the acknowledgement of his supreme spirituality, and in so doing emphasised the importance of generosity in Myanmar/Burmese religious practices at the time.

The fantastic wall painting sites from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries in Myanmar/Burma deserve to be better known than they are, and they would benefit from a national programme of protection and maintenance. I have spoken about the need for preservation of these sites to the Venerable Khammai Dhammasami, and I remain deeply honoured by his invitation to join the conference on preserving Buddhist heritage in Nepal in November 2014. The Myanmar/Burmese wall paintings are a specific form of vernacular religious text, and, even if they are not in the best repair, are well worth preserving for future generations to study.

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HOW BUDDHISM LOOKS AT OTHER RELIGIONS

Y. Karunadasa

The Buddha referred to all other religious teachers as '*kammavadino*', those who advocate a moral life, who maintain that society should have a moral foundation. Accordingly, the Buddha recognised in no uncertain terms the right of all religions to exist, not only in different times and at different places, but more importantly in the same time and at the same place. In this connection we would like to refer here to two instances only, although there are many more.

One instance is found in the *Upali Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. As recorded here Upali, a well-known disciple of Nigantha Nātaputta, the founder of Jaina religion, had a long debate with the Buddha on the subject of *kamma*. At the end of the debate Upali became convinced that the Buddha was right and wanted to become a disciple of the Buddha. Then the Buddha told him: "You have been a longstanding disciple of Nigantha Nātaputta; it is proper for such well-known people like you to investigate thoroughly before you make a decision." Eventually, however, Upali became a disciple of the Buddha. Then the Buddha told him: "Householder, your family has long supported Nigantha Nātaputta. You should, therefore, continue to provide him and his followers with alms and other material benefits when they come to your home".

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The other instance we find is the Buddha's well-known admonition to Sigala, as recorded in the *Sigalovada Sutta* of the *Digha Nikāya*. In this discourse the Buddha tells Sigala that it is his duty to minister to all *samanas* and *brahmanas* in five ways: "by lovable deeds, by lovable words, by lovable thoughts, by keeping open house for them, and by supplying their material needs". What is important to remember here is that the two words *samanas* and *brahmanas* mean all religious teachers and practitioners, whether they are Buddhist or otherwise.

As recorded in the *Sandaka Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, when it comes to other religions, early Buddhism mentions four kinds:

1. A religion based on tradition or divine revelation (*anussava*)
2. A religion based on the claimed omniscience of the Teacher (*sabbannuta*)
3. A religion based on logical and metaphysical speculation (*takka-vimamsa*)
4. A religion based on pragmatism, with a sceptical or agnostic foundation (*amaravikkhepa*).

What is most instructive to note here is that Buddhism does not say that any of these four religions is 'false' (*miccha-ditthi*). As a matter of fact, all these four religions are called different types of the Practice of Higher Life (*brahmacariya-vasa*), a term used in referring to Buddhism as well. However, according to Buddhism's assessment, not one of them is satisfactory or consoling (*anassasika*), if not necessarily false.

On the other hand, as recorded in the *Sandaka Sutta*, there are four theoretical views which according to Buddhism negate the very possibility of practising the higher life (*abrahmacariyavasa*). The first is materialist annihilationism (*ucchedavada*), which reduces everything to matter. The second is moral non-consequence-ism (*akriyavada*),

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which denies any correlation between the act and its consequences and thus the effects of human effort. The third denies any condition for one's defilement or purification (both take place fortuitously). The fourth is an extreme version of pluralism with no possibility of interaction among them, moral or otherwise. What is common to all these four theoretical views is that they negate the possibility of a moral life and thus lead to moral nihilism. It is these four views that could be considered from the Buddhist perspective as the wrong view.

In this connection, it is equally instructive to remember here that in the early Buddhist discourses we do not get words corresponding to heresy and heretics. The Pali expression *anna-titthiya* does not mean heretics as generally understood. Rather, it means teachers of other religious persuasions.

The Buddhist attitude to other religions has to be understood in the light of what may be described as the Buddhist psychology of ideologies. The rationale behind this is that our desires and expectations have a direct impact on what we choose to believe in. We find this idea clearly articulated in the well-known Buddhist formula of Dependent Origination. Here, one of the causal statements is that with desire as condition comes clinging to sense-pleasures (*tanha-paccaya upadanam*). This clinging is described as fourfold, *viz*. clinging to sense pleasures (*kamupadana*), clinging to rites and rituals (*silabbatupadana*), clinging to metaphysical/theoretical views (*ditthupadana*), and clinging to self-theories (*attavadupadana*). For our present purposes, we need to be concerned only with the latter two. What both mean is that if we believe in metaphysical views as well as self (substance) theories it is because we are impelled to believe in them by our own desires. Accordingly, when it comes to ideological positions, Buddhism seeks to diagnose their origin by delving deep into their psychological mainsprings.

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The best evidence for what we maintain here comes from the *Brahmajala Sutta*, the All-embracing Net of Views, which is the first discourse in the *Digha Nikāya*, the collection of long discourses. Here we find listed some 62 theoretical views on the nature of the self (*atta*) and the world/cosmos (*loka*). They all have as their epistemological grounding either logic or pure reasoning (*takka-vimamsa*), or experience gained in meditative attainments, or a combination of both.

Among the 62 views are: (1) the notion of a Creator God (*issara-nimmana-vada*) (2) eternalism (*sassatavada*), i.e. the spirtitualist view that while the self is eternal, the physical body is perishable (3) annihilationism (*ucchedavada*), the materialist view that the self is the same as the physical body and therefore it comes to complete annihilation at the time of death, with no prospect for an afterlife (4) cosmological speculations, as to whether the universe is eternal or non-eternal in terms of time, or whether the universe is finite or infinite in terms of space (5) theories of fortuitous origination (*adhicca-samuppanna*), and (6) some versions of scepticism (*amaravikkhepa*), the view that with our limited faculties we cannot fathom the true nature of the self and the world, and hence its refusal to commit itself to any categorical stance.

What is most interesting about the Buddhist approach to the 62 views is that it is neither argumentative nor confrontational. In point of fact, not a single view is accepted as true, nor rejected as false. What we find here instead is a psychological diagnosis of how these views arise and why they persist in the world at large, and more importantly, how they can be transcended by identifying and eliminating their psychological roots.

According to early Buddhism, it is the notion of the self that serves as a base for all theoretical and metaphysical views. Accordingly the

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Buddhist monk Isidatta tells Citta, the householder:

> Now, householder, as to those diverse views that arise in the world – and as to these 62 views set forth in the *Brahmajala* [*sutta*], it is owing to the personality-view [self-view] that they arise; and if the personality-view [self-view] exists not, they do not exist (*Samyutta Nikāya* IV, p. 526).

Thus, from the Buddhist perspective, all theoretical/metaphysical views are ultimately due to the self-view. They all have the self as their point of view. As long as this view persists as one's ideational framework, there is the ingression of the ego-centric perspective into the sphere of the perceptual experience that results in what Buddhism calls 'distortional thinking' (*mannana*). This distortional thinking consists of our attributing properties not belonging to the objects of cognition.

Another way in which Buddhism keeps itself aloof from all other religious views is by adopting the principle of pragmatism. This consists of an examination of the logical and practical consequences of a given view, in the event of its being accepted. In other words, it is tantamount to asking whether its acceptance leads to situations which obstruct the path to emancipation. The best example for this comes from how the Buddha keeps himself equally aloof from the two views: "the self and the body are the same" and "the self is one thing and the body another". Referring to these two views, the Buddha says:

> Verily, if one holds the view that the self is identical with the body, in that case there can be no holy life. If one holds the view that the self is one thing and the body another, in that case, too, there can be no holy life. Avoiding both extremes, the Tathagata teaches the doctrine that lies in the middle (*Samyutta Nikāya* II, p. 156)

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It will be seen that neither of the two mutually conflicting views is judged as 'wrong'. All that the Buddha says is that he keeps himself equally aloof from both by adopting "the doctrine that lies in the middle". "The doctrine that lies in the middle" is another expression for the Buddhist Doctrine of Dependent Origination. As a matter of fact, it is mainly through the Doctrine of Dependent Origination that Buddhism steers clear of the binary opposition between many pairs of views. As recorded in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, among many such views are: all exists (*sabbam atthi*) and all does not exist (*sabbam natthi*). The first view represents an extreme form of realism which asserts that everything exists absolutely, while the second posits an extreme form of nihilism, which asserts that absolutely nothing exists. Then follows another pair of views: all are unity (*sabbam ekattam*) and all are a plurality (*sabbam puthuttam*). The first is to be understood as a monistic view that everything is reducible to a common ground, some sort of self substance, whereas the second encompasses the opposite radically pluralistic view that the whole of existence is resolvable into a concatenation of discreet entities, with no interconnection and interdependence.

Here it must be noted that according to Buddhism the factors that obtain through analysis are not discreet, independently existing entities, since they arise in dependence on many other factors. The factors into which a thing is analysed are synthesised according to the Principle of Dependent Origination. Analysis, when not supplemented by synthesis, leads to pluralism. Synthesis, when not supplemented by analysis, leads to monism. What we find in Buddhism is a combined use of both methods. This results in a philosophical vision which beautifully transcends the dialectical opposition between monism and pluralism.

Another pair of theoretical views which Dependent Origination

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transcends is Self Causation (*sayam kata*) and External Causation (*param kata*). The first view conjectures a complete identity between the agent-doer and the one who experiences. ***A*** does something and ***A*** himself experiences its results. This is based on the recognition of an unchanging self-entity that persists throughout time. According to the second view, there is complete otherness between the agent-doer and the one who experiences the results. ***A*** does something but ***B*** experiences its results.

When the Buddha was asked which of these alternatives is valid, the Buddha did not approve either as he taught the Dhamma by adopting the middle position. The Buddhist position is neither one of Complete Oneness (absolute identity), nor one of Complete Otherness (absolute diversity). If, as the first theory says, the same self-entity does and the same self-entity experiences, this will result in a situation where the process of doing and experiencing will not come to an end (*sassatam etam pareti*). On the other hand, as the second theory says, if someone does and someone else experiences, this will result in a situation where the consequence of moral actions comes to complete annihilation (*ucchedam etam pareti*). For the latter view fails to establish a causal correlation between the act and its consequences.

It will be noticed that in the examples we have cited above, no view is rejected as false. If Buddhism distances itself from these views, it is by taking into consideration the pragmatic principle, namely, the consequences that follow on their being accepted.

Buddhism's non-dogmatic, liberal attitude to other religions should also be understood in the light of its attitude to all views, whether they are Buddhist or otherwise. Although the Buddha draws our attention to Right View, he does not endorse dogmatic adherence to views even if they are right. "To be infatuated with the rightness of our own views

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and ideologies" is called *sanditthi-raga*, and "dogmatic attachment to views" is *ditthi-paramasa*. The idea, "this alone is true, all else is false" (*idam eva saccam, moghom annam*) is at the root of this kind of exclusivism. It is this kind of warped mind-set that provides a fertile ground for bigotry and dogmatism (*idam-saccabhinivesa*). The external manifestations of such a mind-set, as we all know, are militant piety and acts of fanaticism, indoctrination and unethical conversion, religious fundamentalism and persecution.

From the Buddhist perspective, dogmatic attachment to views is exponentially more detrimental and fraught with more danger than our inordinate attachment to material things. Inter-religious and intra-religious wars, wrongly referred to as holy wars, are a case in point. If Buddhism does not encourage dogmatic attachment to views, it is because, from the Buddhist way of looking at it, a view is only a guide to action. In his well-known discourse on the Parable of the Raft (*kullupama*), the Buddha says that his teaching should be understood not as a goal in itself, but as a means to the realisation of the goal; it is for the purpose of crossing over from the hither shore of *samsara* to the thither shore of *Nibbana*. The teachings are not for the purpose of grasping (*gahanatthaya*), but for the purpose of crossing over (*nittharanatthaya*).

As a matter of fact, according to Buddhism, what prevents our liberation from suffering is not the nature of the world *per se*, but our views which we superimpose on the world, the views which we construct through the lens of our ego-centric perspectives: our views and beliefs, our speculative theories and dogmatic assertions. The fact of impermanence is not a problem in itself. This fact becomes a problem when it is wrongly considered as permanence. This is what is called "perception of permanence in impermanence" (*anicce nicca-sanna*). In the same way, the absence of a self-entity is not a problem

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in itself. Its absence becomes a problem only when one considers what is not self as a self-entity. This is what is called "perception of self in what is not the self" (*anatte atta-sanna*)

This is precisely why the Buddha sometimes explains theoretical views (*ditthi*) using the same framework reserved for explaining suffering: views (*ditthi*), origin of views (*ditthi-samudaya*), cessation of views (*ditthi-nirodha*), and the path leading to the cessation of views (*ditti-nirodha-gamini-patipada*). 'Cessation of views' is the 'cessation of suffering'

When Vacchagotta, the wandering philosopher, asked the Buddha: "But has the venerable good Gotama a view of his own". The Buddha replied: "The Tathagata, O Vaccha, has given up all views (*ditthi*). However, the Tathagata has viewed (*dittha*) thus: this is materiality, this is its arising, this its cessation, this is feeling... this is perception ... these are mental formations, this is consciousness."

So the ultimate goal of Buddhism is not to have a view, but to *view*. When one has seen things as they actually are, then all views come to an end. What we call a view is a 'perspective' or a 'particular way of looking'. 'A particular way of looking' is not to look at things as they actually are.

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ATLAS OF MARITIME BUDDHISM: AN INTERIM REPORT

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We have long recognised a problem in the study of the spread of Buddhism from its homeland throughout the whole of the eastern portion of Eurasia. In the absence of written documents for a traditional historical account of India,[1] scholars fall back upon the written Chinese reports of travellers to India.[2] These sparse sources are repeatedly referenced for the published discussions of Buddhism as it may have existed centuries ago. There is a non-trivial problem with a methodology that attempts to explain the history of Indian Buddhism viewed through the eyes of foreigners, especially when we are without locally written material. The foreign reports are memoirs of travellers, some who visited a site for a few days. Tourist scholarship may have some interesting facts to describe but it lacks the depth that we expect from historical accounts. Another approach for cultural and religious studies, where documentation in written form is missing, is to explore contemporary practices and use them to reconstruct the past. However,

[1] The statements made nearly a century ago are still in play. See Vincent Arthur Smith, *The Oxford History of India: From the Earliest Times to the End of 1911*. Clarendon Press, 1920.

[2] Tansen Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600–1400*. University of Hawaii Press, 2003.

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in India we are dealing with a situation where there is no received tradition of Buddhism. If we turn to nearby Sri Lanka or to Southeast Asia,[3] where contemporary Buddhist communities exist, and assume that they are a reflection of the ancient Indian tradition, it is important to recognise definite limits to what can be surmised about activities two millennia ago. There have been changes over time that are significant, and the resulting contemporary practices may well represent aspects that were not present in earlier centuries. Reconstructing the way Buddhism developed in its widespread dissemination over long periods of time is complex at best, and close to impossible in certain respects.

The project called 'Atlas of Maritime Buddhism' is one attempt to seek for new ways of approaching the study of the history and development of the tradition. It is a 'trans-discipline' strategy.[4] That is, we identify the problem of constructing the 'story' of Buddhism where written documentation is missing. In the search for a solution to the problem, we call upon any resource, any discipline, any data to deal with the matter. There is no one discipline that can answer the call for a solution, certainly no one scholar can handle the breadth of content and skills that are needed.

The idea of an Atlas of Maritime Buddhism as one way of dealing with our problem arose more than four years ago. At that time, during a visit to Tamil Nadu, I visited Dr. D. Dayalan, a senior archaeologist at the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). While exploring the reports in the Chennai office of the ASI, I began to see what appeared to be

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[3] Thomas Suarez, *Early Mapping of Southeast Asia: The Epic Story of Seafarers, Adventurers, and Cartographers Who First Mapped the Regions Between China and India*. Tuttle Publishing, 1999.

[4] Wickson Fern, Anna L. Carew, and A.W. Russell, 'Transdisciplinary research: characteristics, quandaries and quality' *Futures* 38.9 (2006): pp. 1046–59.

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a pattern. It seemed that the data showed a clustering of Buddhist sites and artifacts at seaports.[5] The question then became how to have enough information to establish the presence or reality of the pattern beyond a vague impression and speculation. Working together with Dr. Dayalan, we devised a project to give some substance to the idea or dismiss it as untenable. Supported by funds from the Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative (ECAI), a research unit of the School of Information at the University of California, Berkeley, teams of archaeologists with GPS, cameras, and laptops spread out across Tamil Nadu and Kerala to visit every known Buddhist location.[6] When completed, we had for the first time a precise map of Buddhist remains in these two southern states. The dots on a map were precise latitude and longitude identification marks accurate to a few metres. The hypothesis that Buddhist sites cluster at seaport regions was supported by this spatial data aggregation. With this proof of concept in hand, we decided to proceed with the construction of the Atlas.

In lieu of written histories, we try to exploit records of all sorts and use them within the format of a digital and interactive 'atlas'. Among these resources are: archaeological reports, anthropological studies, maps, inscriptions, land-grant records, architecture, remote sensing data, climate cycles, minerals, mining sites, shipwrecks, ceramic kiln explorations, ship-building, art and its iconography.[7] The collection

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[5] A.S. Gaur, 'Marine archaeological investigations on the Tamil Nadu Coast, India: An overview.' (2011). D. Dayalan, 'New Light on the Location of the Ancient Seaport of Mamallapuram.' *Tamil Civilisation* 5 (1987): pp. 1–2.

[6] The report by D. Dayalan, 'Digital documentation of Buddhist sites in Tamil Nadu.' *Space, Time, Place: Third International Conference on Remote Sensing in Archaeology*, 17–21 August 2009, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India. Vol. 2118. *British Archaeological Reports Limited*, 2010. pp. 215–221.

[7] Examples of data being collected: K.H. Vora and K. Mohan, 'Submerged Pagodas of Mahabalipuram – Study based on underwater investigations.' (2006). Julia Shaw, 'Landscape, water and

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of the information is tagged with geo-spatial markup along with a timeline. In this way, the 'atlas' becomes a portal for massive amounts of information that can be used in an attempt to reconstruct the story of Buddhism in India and beyond.

Of course, not all Buddhist sites were found along the coastline. There are numerous sites in the hinterlands. We note from the location mapping that these inland sites often string out along rivers. This raises the need to study riverine culture and the Buddhism that follows the waterways as well as the evidence found at seaports.[8] Because of the tectonic activity of India, many rivers have changed their channels over the centuries and we must mark the paleo-channel as well as the current flow. The importance of the mapping of sites along the river banks is to demonstrate that Buddhist activities were part of a system of commerce and culture. Construction of large complexes dedicated to monastic life did not take place without careful choice of place. Thus we work with two types of imagery for the data collection. One is the clustering of the geo-registered sites and the other is the linear pattern of sites stringing across the landmass. The clusters belong to the seaport areas and the lineal to the riverine patterns.

From this first completed phase of the study, the decision was made to compile an *Atlas of Maritime Buddhism*. It will trace the evidence for the religious tradition and practice along the coasts from Western

religion in ancient India.' *Archaeology International* 2006 (2005): pp. 43–8. Sarah Kenderdine, 'Bai Jiao 1 – the excavation of a Song Dynasty shipwreck in the Dinghai area, Fujian Province, China, 1995.' *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 24.4 (1995): pp. 247–66. Li Jiao, 'Unprecedented excavation brings maritime Silk Road to life.' *Science* 328.5977 (2010): pp. 424–25.

[8] Pierre-Yves Manguin, 'City-states and city-state cultures in pre-15th-century Southeast Asia.' *A Comparative Study of Thirty City-State Cultures* (2000): pp. 409–416. This is a good model for looking at riverine issues and cultural patterns.

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India to Korea and Japan.[9] Such an enormous undertaking will require a large team of scholars, technicians, and designers. In addition to an internet atlas, our efforts are being extended to include a 3-D immersive environment installation of the full range of the mapping, images, and discussions. The latter extension of an installation is being developed so that the information can become part of the public domain. The sites for the installation will be in museums as well as galleries and other appropriate sites. Assisting with this endeavour is Professor Sarah Kenderdine of the University of New South Wales, who will be in charge of the process of constructing the 3-D material, including the filming of many of the sites.[10] She joins me as the co-editor for the *Atlas of Maritime Buddhism*.

A second phase of the *Atlas* work is underway. The collection of data from publications for more than 30 regional port areas is in itself a monumental task. Our initial procedure for this work is being done with the assistance of 26 graduate students at the University of the West in Los Angeles. Each of them is responsible for surveying published data for one regional port area. The coordinator for managing the efforts of the graduate students is Ven. De Hong. Assisting in the structure of the software and data collection are Jeanette Zerneke and Howie Lan who manage the technical work of the ECAI atlas projects. They are both at the Berkeley campus and help with the training of the graduate

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[9] Earlier attempts to deal with these issues include: Yün-hua Jan, 'Buddhist Relations between India and Sung China.' *History of Religions* 6.1 (1966): pp. 24–42. See also Roberta H. Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise*. No. 14. University of Hawaii Press, 2002.
Charles Holcombe, 'Trade-Buddhism: Maritime trade, immigration, and the Buddhist landfall in early Japan.' *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1999): pp. 280–292.

[10] See Sarah Kenderdine, 'Immersive visualization architectures and situated embodiments of culture and heritage.' *Information Visualisation* (IV), 2010 14th International Conference. IEEE, 2010.

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assistants. Results of the second phase are being released in January 2015. This early 'publication' of the data is part of a plan to make progressive publications available at all phases of the project rather than withholding the results until the *Atlas* is 'finished.' The structure of the software strategy is based on the thought that such an *Atlas* need never be 'finished' but should remain 'open' for additional data.

The third phase will start in February 2015, when the data from phase two is put into fusion tables, geo-registered for reference to specific sites, mapped, and analysed for temporal markup. The collection of data will be continued indefinitely depending on staffing and need. During this phase, we will be constructing the 'story' of the spread of Buddhism through the maritime routes using the geo-registered material. As part of the attempt to open the *Atlas* to the public domain, our third phase will explore the possibilities of making a documentary film for television.

ECAI has already held several workshops with scholars who are providing information, appraisal of collected data, and analytics. Panels have been organised in conjunction with the Computer Aided Archaeology Annual Meeting, Pacific Neighborhood Consortium, Space to Place Conference, United Nations Day of Vesak, plus ECAI workshops at University of California, Berkeley, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore. A formal secretariat has been set up at Nantien Institute in Australia with Louisa Lam staffing the operation.

From work done thus far, a new picture of Buddhist history is emerging. The tradition seems to have spread through three avenues: (1) Roads (2) Rivers (3) Seaports. The idea that the 'Road' leading through Inner Asia is the most important route is giving way to a more balanced view of the role of seaport and riverine activity. It seems impossible to avoid

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the expression 'Silk Road', even though textiles were by no means the only or even the most common product to be shipped through the trading communities. Currently, the Korean and Chinese governments use the term 'Maritime Silk Road' to identify commercial ventures being instituted from their borders among seaports of South and Southeast Asia.[11] The *Atlas*, in many ways, parallels the mappings being made of the so-called 'Maritime Silk Road'. The ancient patterns of trade and culture should have some uses for current commercial activities tracing the same routes. Use of the term 'Maritime Silk Road' for the sea trade of today shows us that the maritime has as much importance today as it did during the time being described in the *Atlas*.

While the conclusions of our research have not yet been reached, there are areas of interest that will be part of the 'story' that is going to be told about Buddhism and its development. Some of these initial findings that attract attention are:

1. Trade between Rome and Asia was directed towards South India where thousands of Roman gold coins are found, in contrast to China where only a handful have come to light[12]
2. Tibetan Buddhism had an important place in maritime activity, especially with the centres along the East Coast of India and the routes that led to Sumatra[13]

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[11] An early use of the term. Chen Yan, 'On the Maritime Silk Road.' *Social Sciences in China 1* (1983). Michel Jacq-Hergoualc'h, *The Malay Peninsula: Crossroads of the Maritime Silk Road* (100 BC–AD 1300). Vol. 13. Brill, 2002. Also see Harry G. Broadman, *Africa's Silk Road*. Washington DC: The World Bank, 2007.

[12] Christopher Howgego, 'The supply and use of money in the Roman world 200 BC to AD 300.' *Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992): pp. 1–31. See P. J. Turner and J. Cribb, 'Numismatic evidence for the Roman trade with ancient India.' *The Indian Ocean in Antiquity* (1996): pp. 309–20.

[13] HH Dalai Lama, *The Transformed Mind* (Hachette UK, 2011). In this work, HH the

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3. Theravada history requires a thorough account of the way in which sea travel linked Sri Lanka to Southeast Asia[14]

4. Chinese history of Buddhism needs a major revision to give due weight to the seaports of the south. It was through the southern seaports that Chan arrived;[15] there that the first record of Buddhist nuns and their ordination occurs;[16] and Tantric texts[17] and teachers came through these ports. The increased attention to the southern China portal for Buddhism will help to rectify the idea that the northern routes were the only important ones

5. The place of Avalokitesvara, Tara, and Guang Yin is closely tied to the sea and the protection of the voyagers.[18] It is probable that the gender shift from the male *bodhisattva* Avalokitesvara to the female Guang Yin is a maritime process[19]

6. Korean involvement in sea travel and the ensuing social patterns in China gives promise of a new look for the nation. Korean travel from the Southwest to both China and Japan allowed

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Dalai Lama gives credit to the Sumatran teachers of Atisha.

[14] The work of Tilman Frasch, 'Buddhist Councils in a time of transition: globalism, modernity, and the preservation of textual traditions.' *Contemporary Buddhism* 14.1 (2013): pp. 38–51 is giving new insights into the Theravada tradition and the sea voyages that took place.

[15] Jeffrey L. Broughton, *The Bodhidharma Anthology: The Earliest Records of Zen*. University of California Press, 1999.

[16] Ann Heirman, 'Chinese Nuns and their Ordination in Fifth-Century China.' *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 24.2 (2001): pp. 275–304.

[17] The best study is currently found in Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: Social History of the Tantric Movement*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2004.

[18] G.V. Saroja. *History of Tantric Buddhism in Tamil Nadu*. Vol. 2. No. 6. N.N. Bhattacharyya, *Tantric Buddhism*, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 1999.

[19] Chün-fang Yü, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*. Columbia University Press, 2001. Ann Shaftel, 'Kuan Yin: Tara or Avalokitesvara.' Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1974 (touches on these very issues).

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them to become the translators and intermediaries for maritime activity. Korean settlements and Buddhist centres set up by them in China give a picture of Koreans abroad that is seldom discussed[20]

7. Inland capitals such as Angkor Wat should be seen as part of seaport and riverine cultural and economic systems[21]

8. Reading and writing in India seems to be first widely used by seaport merchants. It may be they who taught the Buddhists to use the technology of texts as opposed to oral transmission[22]

9. Buddhism along the Grand Canal of China provides a new vision of the international makeup of the tradition in China

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[20] Yung-Ho Ts' Ao曹永和, 'Pepper Trade in East Asia.' *T'oung Pao* (1982): p. 221–47 gives evidence of Koreans in the international maritime world.
See Michael L. Bosworth, 'The Rise and Fall of 15th-Century Chinese Sea Power.' *Internet Note* (1999). Ts' eng-yü, Wang, 'The Shipbuilding Industry in the Sung Dynasty.' *Chinese Sociology & Anthropology* 9.3 (1977): pp. 72–87 further evidence of Korean involvement in Chinese maritime activities.

[21] The work of Evans, Damian, and Arianna Traviglia, 'Uncovering Angkor: Integrated remote sensing applications in the archaeology of early Cambodia.' *Satellite Remote Sensing*. Springer Netherlands, 2012. pp. 197–230 is exemplary.

[22] Eivind Heldaas Seland, 'Networks and social cohesion in ancient Indian Ocean trade: Geography, ethnicity, religion.' *Journal of Global History* 8.03 (2013): pp. 373–390. Hemanshu Ray also gives a suggestion of literacy in 'Sailing to India.' [PDF] from panoreon.gr
Xu-ming Tan, YU Bing~ 2, WANG Ying-hua~ 1, ZHANG Nian-qiang~ 1 (1. China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research, Beijing 100038, China; 2. China Institute of Cultural Heritage, Beijing 100029, China); 'Characteristics and core components of the heritage of the Grand Canal in China [J].' *Journal of Hydraulic Engineering* 10 (2009).

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These are a few of the areas where maritime studies may give us new explanations for how Buddhism developed in its homeland as well as in destinations far and wide.

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SHAN TEMPLE IN THONGMAKHSAN, NORTHWESTERN THAILAND

Nicola Tannenbaum

I am very pleased to participate in this commemorative volume in honour of the Ven. Dhammasami's 50th anniversary. Most of what I know about Shan Buddhist practices comes from my long-term research in the Shan community of Thongmakhsan, Maehongson Province, Thailand. When I am in Thongmakhsan I attend ceremonies at the Thongmakhsan temple (*kyawng*). When I first visited the Oxford Buddha Vihara (OBV) I was very startled at the differences between the two. I will present a short history of the Shan temple in Thongmakhsan and briefly discuss the role it plays in community life. I hope this account will show why I was surprised by the OBV.

Having a temple is important in defining a community. People originally established Thongmakhsan some 180 years ago; settlers came from a community three kilometres to the south. I do not know how quickly they established the first temple; without it they were just an extension of the community to the south. Having a temple meant that the community would participate as an independent unit in attending village festivals and inviting others to attend their community-wide

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events. Because the community was poor, it was difficult to get monks to reside at the temple. Often it was staffed by experienced novices and often only during the rainy season retreat. People also liked to have monks at the temple because their presence and the chanting they did helped make the community peaceful.

In Shan communities in Thailand, temples are ideally situated on the community's outskirts. People want to separate the temple community from the village. The current community temple is the third one I have seen and the fourth in Thongmakhsan's history. It is near the foot of the community on the first temple's site. The second and third temples were located a little to the north and Thongmakhsan grew around it. When the road was built it ended up being higher than these temples and community members did not like that. Consequently the fourth temple was planned on the first temple's site. Land that had once had a temple is considered unsuitable for everyday usage by laypeople since the site itself becomes imbued with power from the monks' chanting. The community's school was built on the first temple's site and when the school closed, it again became available for the temple. The site of the second and third temples became a soccer field since the one in the schoolyard was no longer available.

The first three temples took a long time to be built since the community members did most of the work themselves, and it was a long slow process of fundraising within the community and from contributions at temple festivals to buy the construction materials they needed. People began collecting the materials for the third temple in 1976 and it wasn't finished until 1988. The fourth temple took considerably less time since there was a major donor and he hired the carpenter from Shan State. This temple is more in a Burmese style than the second or third ones, a consequence, I think, of the carpenter's experience. A number of the new temples in Maehongson are also more Burmese in

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style. While the major donor paid for the carpenter from Shan State, the community members contributed most of the labour.

As of summer 2013, the current Thongmakhsan temple had not completely finished but the only thing left was the window shutters. The previous Abbot, known for his skill in carving and sculpture, did the decorative wood-work on the doors and on most of the window shutters. However, he passed away before they could be finished. The temple belongs to the community as a whole; village meetings are held here or in an adjacent rest house and the temple has a large supply of dishes, glasses, tea pots, and large cooking pots that villagers can borrow for household ceremonies. The temple committee is in charge of the temple and it is composed of the village political leader and a group of respected elders; they make plans for festivals and construction projects in consultation with the Abbot, and these plans are reported back to a village-wide meeting. The committee is also in charge of the temple finances; at the end of a festival they publicly count the contributions and two or three of them take the money to Maehongson Town to deposit it in the bank. Three or four committee members are required to sign for withdrawals.

In the Shan communities I know best the main building is what Thais refer to as a *sala kan parien*, although to most people it is simply the *kyawng* or temple. The temple is elevated, ideally the tallest building in the community. Within the temple are a number of clearly differentiated spaces. The steps up into the temple end in a porch area; people may leave their shoes here or at the base of the stairs. The floor of the temple is a step higher than the porch itself. Most of the temple is open space although there are wooden pillars that provide the support for the roof. In the current Thongmakhsan temple, the altar area is at the northern end; it is another step up from the floor level and the main Buddha image is further elevated on a pedestal that makes

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it the highest object in the temple. Along the eastern wall is another elevated area; the northeastern corner is enclosed to make a room for the Abbot. The rest of the elevated area is the living and sleeping space for other monks. Novices sleep at floor level in a room behind the altar. Women do not go up onto the Buddha altar area or any other elevated area, while men go up onto the altar area to place offerings – both the women's and their own. Otherwise they only go up onto the elevated areas to prepare seating for monks or if a monk invites them,

Most of the time, only monks and novices are in the temple. Occasionally a layperson may come to invite the monks to a ceremony or ritual, and a visiting anthropologist may come to chat about the monks' biographies, ceremonies, and Buddhism.

Other activities at the temple depend on the time of the year. The busiest time is the three-month rainy season retreat, when monks are expected to stay in the temple. When the rainy season retreat begins, the temple is crowded. At all temple events people make offerings to the Triple Gem: the Buddha, his teachings, and the monks. These offerings are usually small – incense, candles, and flowers. But at the beginning of the rainy season retreat, people offer large candles to provide light for the monks to use while they intensify their study. There is electricity nowadays, but the candles are still offered to mark this period. The end of the rainy season retreat, Precept Day, is also crowded with people. During this three-month period, more people attend the temple services, particularly on the full and dark moon Precept Days which are seen as more important.

During this period elders will come to the temple to receive the eight precepts, and they will spend the Precept Day and night at the temple. Male elders will sleep in the temple itself while female elders will sleep in one of two rest houses. During this period, people in Thongmakhsan

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try to sponsor a major offering on the full moon days of each of the three lunar months. These offerings are prepared at the temple and often include a sweetened drink for the elders, monks, and novices who all refrain from eating solid food after twelve noon. In the early hours of the next morning, the decorated fruits, vegetables, and sweets, both homemade and bought, are cut up and placed in small banana leaf boxes on the altar for the Buddha, the Buddha altars in the rest houses, and are taken to the fields, gates of house compounds, and to other locations that have spirits associated with them. The elders also receive one of the offerings which they then offer to the Buddha image.

The last fortnight of the rainy season retreat is when people make merit for those who have passed away since the previous ceremony. Usually, households who have lost a family member that year work together to prepare the offering. On the morning of the ceremony, people erect memorial flags for the deceased. These beautifully decorated tall banners are placed outside the temple. Funerals and merit-making for the dead are ways to transfer merit to the deceased; this works because monks serve as the intermediaries, transferring merit to those who have died.

The end of the rainy season retreat marks the beginning of the temple festival season. Poorer villages may only offer this festival while richer communities may host other festivals. Thongmakhsan, because it has been seeking donations to build the temple and now the ordination hall, sponsors many more festivals than usual.

Village-wide ceremonies follow the agricultural cycle with most occurring when people are not busy in their fields. Life-cycle ceremonies occur when needed. The Thongmakhsan temple is quite different in its organisation and structure from the OBV. This is to be expected since the Thongmakhsan temple primarily serves Thongmakhsan people and

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the majority of them have grown up as Shan Buddhists. The OBV serves a different population with different needs and expectations. I hope my brief discussion has given you a little insight into the ways in which community temples function.

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EXPLAINING THE ABSENCE OF A SINGLE KEY TEXT IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM

Asanga Tilakaratne

I dedicate this paper to the Venerable Khammai Dhammasami Maha Thera, *on his 50th birthday. He combines both* pariyatti *and* patipatti *in a perfectly harmonious manner, reminding us of the great* theras *of yore who shouldered the responsibility of the* sāsana. *I wish the Venerable* Maha Thera *good health, longevity, and happiness!*

Introduction

In this essay, I ask the following question – Why is there not one single revered text in Theravada – and answer it by pointing to some doctrinal considerations and historical conditions specific to the Theravada tradition that may explain this absence.

Having a single text, or a distinct body of texts, as the focus or as the statement of one's key doctrinal position is characteristic of many Buddhist schools. For instance, at a very early stage in the history of Buddhism, a large group of the *sangha* decided to define themselves through the commentarial literature called *'vibhāshā'* which they

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wrote for the canon. This school came to be known as the Vaibhāshika, underscoring their reliance on this literature. Another major group, which accepted the validity of the discourses (*sutras)* alone, was known as the Sautrāntika – those who accepted the authority of the sutras.[1] Among the early Mahayana schools, both Mādhyamaka and Yogācāra – representing *śunyatā-vāda* and *vijnāna-vāda* – are centred around Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamakakarika* and Vasubandhu's *Vimshatikā* and *Trimshatikā* respectively. The latter was called 'sun lung' or 'three treatises' in the Chinese tradition, for it recognised three key texts including the *Mulamadhyamakakarika*. Similarly, in the Hinayana tradition that was brought to China, *Abhidhramkosa* served as the basis for the school that bore its name. Furthermore, this trend is clearly seen in the East Asian Mahayana tradition in which we find: T'ien T'ai basing itself on the *Saddharmapundarikasutra* (*Lotus Sutra*); Hwa Yen on the *Sukhāvativyuhasutra*; and Ch'an (Zen) basing itself on the *Flat-Form Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. Later in Japan, Nichiren-Shu, inspired by the *Lotus Sutra*, incorporated it as the key text.

An exception to this trend is the Theravada school. In the Theravada tradition there is not one single text identified as unique or as the 'measure' (*pramāna*). Even in the countries where Theravada has spread, although there are many sects that have arisen over time, there is no sect based on one particular text. This is so in Sri Lanka as well as in other Theravada countries such as Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos.

The absence of one single text as 'the text' in Theravada is as

[1] Although Sautrāntika, with its preference for the Basket of Discourses, comes close to this category, strictly speaking, they defined themselves by rejecting the *Abhidhamma* which was considered to be a later development. They accepted the entire Basket of Discourses and did not have a preference for any particular discourse.

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revealing as is the presence of such texts in other Buddhist traditions. The prominence given to one text within a tradition says much about its character. Likewise, the absence of such specific emphasis in Theravada may be read as evidence of its character. We will explore the significance of this absence in the course of this discussion.

Emphasis on the totality of 'What the Buddha Taught'

The key argument I develop in this discussion, in order to explain the absence of one revered text in Theravada, is that the tradition from the very outset focused on the entirety of what it considered to be the 'Word of the Buddha' *(buddha-vacana)*, and not on any particular aspect or discourse of it. This may be explained both historically and soteriologically.

As revealed from the early texts, starting from the time of the Buddha, the totality of the Word of the Buddha was intended when the teaching of the Buddha was referred to in a general way. The very concept of the 'Word of the Buddha' was understood as an open-ended phenomenon. This attitude has much to do with the absence of any one sacred text in the Theravada tradition, and therefore, in order to understand this characteristic of Theravada tradition we will examine how Theravada started and evolved.

The Word of the Buddha *(buddha-vacana)* or 'the teacher's message' (*satthu-sāsana*) was known as the doctrine and discipline, *dhamma-vinaya*. The totality of what the Buddha taught was encapsulated in this compound term. One instance that embodies this broad context is the Buddha's statement to Ananda, his chief attendant, on the issue of his successor once he is no more. As the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* of the *Digha Nikāya* records, the Buddha was concerned about the possibility of his disciples feeling helpless once he was no more:

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> Ananda, it is possible that the following thought could occur to you: "The teaching no longer has a teacher; there is no teacher for us." Ananda, it should not be understood in that manner. Ananda, the doctrine [Dhamma] I have taught, and the discipline [Vinaya] that I have prescribed, will be your teacher at my passing (*Digha Nikāya* II, p. 154).

In this statement, the Buddha lays emphasis on the Dhamma and the Vinaya which together represented the totality of his teaching. Furthermore, in this statement the Buddha placed on a par with himself that which he had taught. Accordingly, it is clear that this statement of the Buddha's suddenly changed the status of what he had taught: now it was the Dhamma and the Vinaya that were to be treated as the teacher. While the Buddha lived, there was no reason to consider the Dhamma as something separate from him. The Dhamma was what the Buddha uttered. In particular, if and where there was a problem or a doubt about any of his statements, the disciples could go to him and receive clarification. However, once the Buddha was no more, the disciples would suddenly be left only with what he had taught.

According to an earlier incident reported in the *Majjhima Nikāya,* Ananda (along with the novice Cunda) informs the Buddha about what has taken place among the followers of Nigantha Nātaputta after his demise, expressing concern: "Let no dispute arise in the *sangha* when the Blessed One has gone." Responding to him, the Buddha refers to the essence of his teaching – namely, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Four Right Kinds of Striving, the Four Bases of Spiritual Power, the Five Faculties, the Five Powers, the Seven Enlightenment Factors, and the Noble Eightfold Path – and assures him that there is no dispute among the *sangha* on the teaching. But this incidence highlights the sense of uncertainty in the minds of some of the leading disciples regarding the situation of the *sangha* after the Buddha's *parinirvana*.

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The expectation of many disciples, including Ananda, would have been that the Buddha would appoint a senior disciple as his successor. But the Buddha's advice was to have oneself as one's protection and refuge, and the Dhamma as one's protection and refuge, and no external refuge (*atta-dīpā, atta-saranā, dhamma-dīpā, dhamma-saranā, anañña-saranā*). This may not have been the answer Ananda and many other disciples had expected from the Buddha. As is clear from the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* statement above, the Buddha was aware of the possible state of helplessness that would be created by his absence. Nevertheless, being true to the attitude he had maintained throughout his life, he did not wish his disciples to depend on any agency other than themselves for their salvation. The Dhamma was the teacher. We are thus reminded of the story – well known in the Buddhist tradition – that the Buddha, immediately after his enlightenment, acknowledged the Dhamma as his teacher (*A*. II., p. 20).

The philosophy outlined in the statement from the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, cited earlier, is of direct relevance to the Theravada emphasis on the entirety of the teachings of the Buddha. The origins of Theravada as a discrete Buddhist tradition can be traced back to the First Council, convened three months after the *parinirvana* of the Buddha. The new role attributed to *dhamma-vinaya* seems to have been the key reason for holding the First Council. According to tradition, the reason for the First Council was the unpleasant remarks made by Subhadda who had entered the *sāsana* in his advanced age (*Cullavagga Vinaya* II, pp. 284–85). The more substantial reason behind the gathering seems to have been the need to organise the Dhamma and the Vinaya, i.e. the teacher–substitutes, in an orderly manner so that one could consult them in order to determine right from wrong according to the Dhamma and the Vinaya. Accordingly, at the First Council, the Dhamma was rehearsed and organised as the Basket of Discourses (the *sutta-pitaka*). This comprised, at this initial stage, four collections (*nikāyas*): the

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Digha, Majjhima, Samyutta, and *Anguttara*. (There was no mention then of the *Khuddaka* as a separate collection.) The Vinaya, too, was rehearsed and organised under four collections, namely: *Pārājiaka-pāli, Pācittiyaa-pāli, Cullavagga-pāli,* and *Mahavagga-pāli,*[2] the *Parivara-pāli* coming later.

It is not easy to determine precisely how much ground was covered at the First Council. We know for certain that the *Abhidhamma* was developed after this event, and that the other two *pitakas* also continued to develop for at least a few centuries more. The interesting phenomenon, however, is that the Theravada tradition would go on to incorporate all these later developments within what they considered to be the Word of the Buddha, and not distinguish different schools based on what they knew to be early and later texts in the Pali canon.

The effort at the First Council was to achieve a well-organised collection, both for easy reference and to serve the purpose of a reliable guide for the practice of the religion.

The notion of the Word of the Buddha came to be understood not in a literal sense – as what was really uttered by the Buddha – but as a concept exemplifying the unity of his teachings characterised by consistency and coherence. The criterion for determining what the Buddha said was not that they were actual words from the mouth of the Buddha, but that the content – whether the relevant statements had been made by the Buddha or by his disciples – was coherent with the rest of the teachings of the Buddha and that it was internally consistent. This criterion is highlighted in the idea of the 'great

[2] According to the *Cullavagga* account of the First Council, the elders rehearsed the Vinaya first and the Dhamma next. This was due to the belief that the Vinaya was the life of the *sāsana*. We will refer to this again.

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indicators' (*mahāpadesa*) mentioned in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (*Digha Nikāya* II, pp. 123–25) referred to above. According to this concept, one must neither accept nor reject any statement claiming to be the Word of the Buddha, on the following grounds: (i) the speaker claiming he has heard that particular statement directly from the Buddha, and hence "it is the Dhamma, Vinaya, and teaching of the Master"; (ii) the speaker claiming he has heard that particular statement from the *sangha* at a particular monastery; (iii) the speaker claiming he has heard that particular statement from a group of learned and well-known elders at a particular monastery; (iv) the speaker claiming he has heard that particular statement from a learned and well-known monk at a particular monastery. Instead, what one must do is test such a statement against the *Sutta* (i.e. the Dhamma) and the Vinaya (*sutte otaretabbani vinaya sandassetabbani*). If the statement compares well with the Dhamma and the Vinaya, then it must be accepted as the Word of the Buddha; if it does not, it must be rejected.[3]

The principle underlying this set of criteria is coherence and consistency. If any statement corresponds to the totality of the Word of the Buddha and if any such statement does not contradict what is accepted as the Word of the Buddha, such a statement may be accepted as a Word of the Buddha (*buddha-vacana*). This, in other words, shows that the source of an idea does not provide for its justification or lack of it. What is important is not the source but the consistency and the coherence in relation to the body of the teachings.

The four commentarial *mahāpadesas* (*Sumangalavilāsini*: Commentary

[3] This suggests that there already existed, in the time of the Buddha, an agreed-upon corpus of teachings known as the *sutta* and the *vinaya*. The lists appearing in discourses such as the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (*Digha Nikāya*) and the *Sāmagāma Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya*) seem to support this statement.

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to the *Digha Nikāya*, p. 576ff) also indicate the fluid nature of the 'Word of the Buddha.' They are: **i.** Discourses (*suttas*); **ii.** What is in conformity with the discourses (*sutta-anuloma*); **iii.** Experts' views (*ācariya-vada*); **iv.** One's own view (*attano-mati*). These criteria are presented in gradually descending order, the highest or the most reliable being the discourses attributed to the Buddha or to his immediate disciples, and the least reliable being the last, one's own view. The important point to note is that even one's own view has not been totally rejected.

The broad perspective within which the concept of the 'Word of the Buddha' was understood in the tradition is highlighted in an interesting statement occurring in the discourses. According to it, "Whatever is well said" (*subhāsita*) is the Word of the Buddha: *yam kinci subhāsitam sabbam tam tassa bhagavato vacanam* (*A.* IV, p. 164). This is a good indication of the non-absolute nature of the teachings of the Buddha. While this statement contains some interesting philosophical implications, it also explains why new ideas were not regarded as being extraneous or as belonging to any particular teacher other than the Buddha, but were considered, holistically, as the Word of the Buddha. In the very same discussion in which this statement occurs, the speaker, Uttara Thera, admits that whatever he or anyone else says has as its ultimate basis what the Buddha had said (*tato upādāyupādāya mayncanne ca bhanāma*). This has been explained through the metaphor of a person carrying a basket of grain that is understood to have been obtained from a great granary nearby. Commenting on this, George Bond says:

> Although a teaching had not been actually spoken by the Buddha, it could be considered the 'Word of the Buddha' because of the Buddha's boundless 'granary' of wisdom (Bond: 1982, p. 31).

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Significance of '*evam me sutam*'

With the exception of the discourses in the *Itivuttaka*, all the Theravada discourses begin with the phrase '*evam me sutam*' ('thus have I heard', or 'this is what I have heard') – attributed to Ananda Thera at the First Council. The significance of this expression has not gone unnoticed in the Buddhist tradition. Different schools have produced lengthy interpretations of each word of the expression and of the expression as a whole, and it has received much academic attention. The Theravada exposition is found in the *Sumangalavilāsini* (*Brahamajālasutta-vannanā*), the commentary to the *Digha Nikāya*. According to Buddhaghosa, the word '*evam*' is used in three different senses: **(i)** emphasis (*avadhāranattha*) – to stress that what the speaker is about to say is exactly what he has heard and not otherwise; **(ii)** demonstration (*nidassanattha*) – to denote that he is simply repeating what he has heard the Buddha say, and that it is not his own creation; **(iii)** mode of listening (*ākārattha*) – to indicate that his is one mode of hearing – "[among others] I too have heard; this is the way that I have heard". This analysis as a whole seems to imply that the role of Ananda in the process was merely that of one who recited what he had heard, and it clearly states that what he recited was not his own creation. What is emphasised is that the Dhamma belongs to the Buddha and not to anyone else, even though a particular discourse may be attributed to a disciple. The attitude behind this way of thinking, characteristic of Theravada, explains why there are no second Buddhas in the tradition.[4]

[4] Although the Mahayana *sutras* were written and compiled later, many of them too begin with this expression. For later writers it seems to have been a way to authenticate their texts. For the original Theravadins, this expression seems to have had a different significance. For Ananda, this expression defined his role in the process as one who kept these words in his memory and then reproduced them upon the request of the *sangha*, and no more than that.

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How this attitude has shaped the character of Theravada

In the history of Theravada Buddhism, we witness several trends and historical developments that could have led to the creation of new sects emphasising certain sections or texts of the Pali canon. Such trends, however, did not develop to the extent of creating separate schools owing to this emphasis on the totality of the Word of the Buddha. One such instance is the assignment of the four *nikāyas* and the Vinaya to *arahants* and their pupils in order to be protected and maintained. At the conclusion of the First Council, it is reported that the four *nikāyas* – the *Digha*, *Majjhima*, *Samyutta*, and *Anguttara* – were assigned to Ananda, Sariputta's pupils, Maha Kassapa, and Anuruddha respectively, and the Vinaya was assigned to Upali. It is from these traditions, in all likelihood, that the later *bhānaka* tradition evolved. Due to this holistic approach adopted in the Theravada towards the Word of the Buddha, even though there were *bhānakas* for different sections, they never constituted any group accepting or following that particular section alone. It is reported that the *Dighabhānakas* rejected the authenticity of *Cariyāpitaka*, *Apadāna*, and *Buddhavamsa*, and did not wish to include these three texts in the *Khuddaka Nikāya* (*Sumangalavilāsini* I, p. 15). This is the closest example we have in support of the kind of exclusivism being considered in this context. But that, too, in the final analysis, upholds the unity of the Three Baskets.

Had Theravadins had exclusivist tendencies, it might have resulted in the growth of *vinaya-vadins* at the expense of the Dhamma. As we learn from the *Cullavagga* account of the First *Sangayana*, the Theravada tradition started as one that gave prominence to the Vinaya. This emphasis is not without significance. We know that the foundation for the Vinaya is the Dhamma. The Buddha very clearly laid emphasis on the Dhamma. In the *Sāmagāma Sutta*, mentioned earlier, the Buddha

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says that any disagreement over the Dhamma is more serious than disagreements over the Vinaya.[5] The fact that the Vinaya started later, was necessitated by problematic situations regarding the *sangha* and *sila*, and initially provided the basis of good behaviour, all indicate the Dhamma was more important. This original position seems to have undergone a change at the First Council where the Vinaya came to be accorded greater prominence. In Sri Lanka, however, this attitude too seems to have undergone a change later. In the *pariyatti*-vs-*patipatti* (learning-vs-practice) debate between *dhamma-kathikas* (those who were learned in the Dhamma) and *pamsukulikas* (those who followed more austere ways of practice) during the reign of Vattagāmini Abhaya (29–17 BC), the relative prominence of the two was debated, and *pariyatti* was upheld at the expense of *patipatti*.[6] Nevertheless, there did not emerge a school based on this change of attitudes. What happened in this instance in Sri Lanka was that the Dhamma emerged as learning, and consequently the practice of it became less important. But it did not develop to the extent of causing the creation of any distinctive school among the *sangha*.

Another similar situation among the Theravadins was the elevation of the *Abhidhamma* to a very high position. Buddhaghosa defined the *Abhidhamma* as "the exquisite doctrine" (*abhi visittho dhammo*), and included it in the *nippariyāya desanā* (definitive teaching), contrasting it with the Basket of Discourses which is described as *pariyāya desanā* (contextual teaching).[7] The *nidāna* of the *Abhidhamma* says that the Buddha taught it in the world of gods, for it was difficult for human beings to understand. According to a Sri Lankan inscription from the

[5] See Tilakaratne (2000: i) I for a detailed discussion.
[6] See Adikaram (1946) for a discussion on this development.
[7] *Abhidhammakatha nama nippariyaya desana: Dhammasanagani Atthakatha* pp. 221–22 and 289.

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10th century,[8] at a leading monastic education centre in Anuradhapura, the teachers of the *Abhidhamma* were paid more than the teachers of the other two baskets. In spite of such a special standing, the Theravada did not develop a separate *Abhidhamma* school.

Soteriological perspective

The question as to why Theravada Buddhism did not develop separate traditions based on certain *suttas* or certain aspects of the Word of the Buddha can also be approached from a soteriological point of view. The purpose of the Dhamma is to bring an end to suffering. Whether one follows the Dhamma as a monastic or as a householder, the aim remains the same, although the latter's path may be more longwinded. The Vinaya is intended for the smoothening of the monastic life, which has termination of suffering as its ultimate goal. In this sense, the Vinaya is subordinate to the Dhamma. From our discussion of the *Sāmagāma Sutta* above, we know that what the Buddha took as the Dhamma was what subsequently came to be included in the 37 Factors of Enlightenment (*Bodhipakkhiayā Dhammā*). Although the discourses are large in number, ultimately all of them deal with these basic issues. In this sense, there is uniformity in the teachings of the Buddha: what is in the Dhamma is what is relevant for the ultimate soteriological goal. In one instance, the Buddha compares his teachings to the waters of the ocean, which is uniformly salty, and says that, in like manner, the Dhamma has only one taste, namely that of freedom (*Vimutti-rasa*).

One could use the same characteristic of the Dhamma to support an argument to isolate one particular discourse of the Buddha and highlight it (i.e. if the Dhamma has the same taste universally, then one may select from anywhere in the Dhamma without any reduction

[8] Mihintala Monastery inscription of King Mihindu (AD 956–972).

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of its essence!). Assuming that this is true, one may still argue that even if any particular discourse has an identical taste of freedom which is the core of this totality, that particular discourse may not be comprehensive enough in representing the path, hence isolating one particular discourse is bound to result in reception of only a partial picture.

Conclusion

In conclusion: Theravada Buddhism has not had patriarchs or individual teachers around whom special sects or schools have arisen. For example, even though the Arahant Mahinda who brought Buddhism to Sri Lanka is so revered by the Buddhists of that country, there has not developed any tradition that treats him as a teacher with his own particular teaching. History records that he introduced the teachings of the Buddha to the country by explaining the *Culahatthipadopama Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. What we know of this is that Arahant Mahinda explained what the Buddha had taught. But there is no evidence of the keenness of the tradition to record what Arahant Mahinda actually said. This is understandable, for what he taught was not his own teaching; it was the teachings of the Buddha. Therefore, there was no compulsion to think that what he taught was not found in the original discourses. As a result, today we do not have anything that can be described as 'Arahant Mahinda's teaching'. Although it would have been nice from a historical point of view if we had a transcript of Arahant Mahinda's first sermon, by not preserving such a transcript the tradition has been faithful to the original position of taking as the Word of the Buddha everything that is well-said.

Theravada's lack of any particular leading text and its taking, instead, the entire Word of the Buddha as its focus can be seen as saying something about the primeval nature of the tradition. It is interesting

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to note that the early schools, believed to have emerged during the first two centuries after the *parinirvana* of the Buddha, do not seem to have had any clear preference for any particular text. This is clearly seen among the earliest divisions of the Buddhist *sangha* known to us, and now extinct. Of these early 'schools' (for we do not know whether these groups could be described as 'schools' with clear-cut doctrinal or spatial positions), Theravada alone remains, and this characteristic that we have investigated may be taken as pointing to the possibility that Theravada is the oldest extant school among all the other Buddhist schools.

To repeat: the absence of preference in Theravada Buddhism for any one single text has both historical and soteriological reasons behind it, and it says much about the tradition just as the presence of any preference for a text says much about a tradition that has as its foundation a particular text.

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SCHOLARSHIP AND PRACTICE: SARVĀSTIVĀDA DEVELOPMENTS

Charles Willemen

If anyone represents the combination of scholarship and practice, it is Ven. Dr. Khammai Dhammasami. I have met the learned monk in Bangkok and in Mumbai, and every time I have appreciated his approach in every aspect. He is a fine monk, an objective and erudite scholar, and a practical organiser.

As he is a true representative of Buddhist culture, it is only fitting that I pay homage by presenting some views about a Sthaviravāda (actually a Sanskritisation of Theravāda) school, namely the Sarvāstivāda School.

This school was founded in Magadha during the reign of the Mauryan king Aśoka (*ca.* 264–227 BC). From this central area, Madhyadeśa, the school spread west, to Mathurā, and on to the Gandharan cultural area. In this direction it was followed by the Mahāsāṅghikas, who had split from the united *saṅgha* during the first schism. This most likely happened during the reign of the Nandas in Pāṭaliputra (Patna), immediately before the Mauryas came to power there. Both the Theravāda tradition and the Mahāsāṅghika tradition inform us about the early history of the schools (*nikāya*), about their Vinaya (*prātimokṣa*), and synods (*saṅgīti*). The Theravāda tradition was most likely established at the

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end of the first century BC in Śrī Laṅkā, reacting to the Mahīśāsakas and to other schools, mainly the Mahāsāṅghikas, who were strong in southeastern India and were on the island, too. The Mahāsāṅghikas in Pāṭaliputra also went west to Mathurā, and on to the Gandharan cultural area. This area is known as Jibin in Chinese sources. *Ji* means *kambala*, blanket, and *bin* means foreigner. This term was used in China for the area south of the Karakorum Mountains, from where foreigners with their highly valued fabrics came. Its traditional eastern part is Uḍḍiyāna (Swat/Suvastu area) and Gandhāra proper. Its traditional western part is Bactria. Traditional Sarvāstivādins can be found in Bactria, in the vicinity of the Khyber Pass in Gandhāra (Puruṣapura), and in Uḍḍiyāna. The Mahāsāṅghikas prevailed in Gandhāra, but some groups were present in Bactria (e.g. in Termez) and in Uḍḍiyāna too.

During the reign of King Kaniṣka (AD 155 – *ca.* 179), a Sarvāstivāda synod was held in Kaśmīra. This synod may have ended at the beginning of the third century. From this time on Kaśmīra became part of *Jibin*, India's northwestern cultural area. The synod established a new Sarvāstivāda 'orthodoxy'. The traditional Gandharan *Aṣṭagrantha* was rewritten in Sanskrit, now called *Jñānaprasthāna* ('Development of Knowledge'), and a new, extensive commentary, the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, was composed for it. To the central text six more Sanskrit texts were added, establishing a Sanskrit *Abhidharmapiṭaka* of seven texts, said to be proclaimed by Buddha (*Buddhabhāṣita*) in heaven to his mother. The term *Vaibhāṣika* was used for Sarvāstivādins. The synod also established a new, Sanskrit Vinaya, called *Daśabhāṇavāra*. The synod simply removed most of the stories, *dṛṣṭāntas*, from the traditional, long Vinaya. The traditional Sarvāstivādins did not readily accept the new 'orthodoxy'. They only accepted that the *sūtras* of the *āgamas* (traditions) were *Buddhabhāṣita*. So, from the time of the synod, traditional Sarvāstivādins, made up of heterogeneous groups who all believed in *sarvāstitva* (the fact that everything exists), were

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also called Sautrāntikas (Dharma) or Dārṣṭāntikas (Vinaya). They gradually adapted their views to the new 'orthodoxy' from Kaśmīra. After Xuanzang had left India, and before Yijing was in India, i.e. at the end of the seventh century, the term Mūlasarvāstivāda appears. They most likely were traditional Sarvāstivādins with their long Vinaya. Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivādins now looked like one more group of traditional Sarvāstivādins.

Traditional, western Sarvāstivādins were famous for their practice of *yoga* and *yogācāra*. Using the Dharma (teaching) and its factors (Dharmas), they composed manuals (*śāstras*), teaching how to reach the stage of an *arhat*. Their manuals were about the Dharma *(abhidharma)*. So they could be placed in an *Abhidharmapiṭaka*. Besides the *Aṣṭagrantha*, another tradition of Sautrāntika *śāstras* begins with the *Abhidharmahṛdaya* of Dharmaśreṣṭhin (first century BC), a monk from the area of the River Vakṣu, which belongs to the Bactrian cultural area. The most prominent commentary on this text is the *Miśrakābhidharmahṛdaya* of the Gandharan Dharmatrāta, early fourth century. This text, in turn, is the basis of the *Abhidharmakośa* and its *bhāṣya*, the work of the Gandharan Vasubandhu (*ca*. AD 350–430).

In China many meditation manuals, *abhidharma*-like texts, are known as texts about the five gates of *dhyāna*. Five exercises lead to the first *dhyāna*, the first meditational stage in the realm of form, *rūpadhātu*. These meditation manuals reached China coming from Central Asia, and in particular from the Gandharan cultural area. An Shigao (Ashkani), Saṅgharakṣa, Buddhabhadra, and others all brought meditation manuals. The meditation techniques of these Sarvāstivādins all expounded a path, a *yogic* practice, *yogācāra*, to become an *arhat*. Mahāsāṅghikas, on the other hand, also had their *yogācāra*, developing wisdom, *prajñā*.

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Throughout history Sarvāstivāda, developing knowledge (*jñāna*), has borrowed practices of the Mahāsāṅghikas, developing wisdom (*prajñā*), and vice versa. Mahāsāṅghikas used the term Mahāyāna, Greater Vehicle, for their own kind of Buddhism. This happened for the first time in their *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, the earliest text about the perfection of wisdom, *prajñāpāramitā*, maybe in the first century BC. In the earliest Chinese texts, even in those translated from Sanskrit (e.g. Kumārajīva's *Lotus Sūtra*), the term *pāramī* is used. Because some Sthaviras borrowed some of the Mahāsāṅghika practices, e.g. the belief in a *Buddhakṣetra*, Buddha field, Sarvāstivādins also became Mahāyānists. They developed their Sukhāvatī paradise, the 'Pure Land', the land of Amitābha. Asaṅga (end of the fourth century), said by Xuanzang to be a Mahīśāsaka monk, continued Gandharan *yogācāra*, taking in Mahāsāṅghika Mādhyamika ideas about emptiness, *śūnyatā*. At the time, so-called later Mahīśāsakas in the Gandharan cultural area were seen as a subgroup of traditional Sarvāstivādins there. So, *yogācāra*, known to be Mahāyānist, is actually a Sarvāstivāda development. Because of the mutual borrowing of practices, in the end almost all, including traditional Sarvāstivādins, became Mahāyānists in the Gandharan area. Vaibhāṣikas remained Hīnayāna, Lesser Vehicle, for many centuries.

Extra-canonical narrative literature appears from the middle of the second century AD, with Kumāralāta's *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā*, also called *Dṛṣṭāntapaṅkti, Collection of Stories*. Kumāralāta is known as the first *ācārya* of the Sautrāntikas.

Some Buddha biographies, such as Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* (end of the first century AD, predating the Kāśmīra synod), also belong to traditional Sarvāstivāda literature. The *Udānavarga* – a collection of *udānas* verses expressing intellectual joy from the text called *Udāna* – is a *Dharmapada* of *Mūlasarvāstivādins*.

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In history, Sarvāstivāda Buddhism is tremendously influential. It forms the basis of Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism, too. But the most influential living school is another Sthaviravāda school, known as Theravāda.

Charles Willemen
Professor
Rector, International Buddhist College
Thailand

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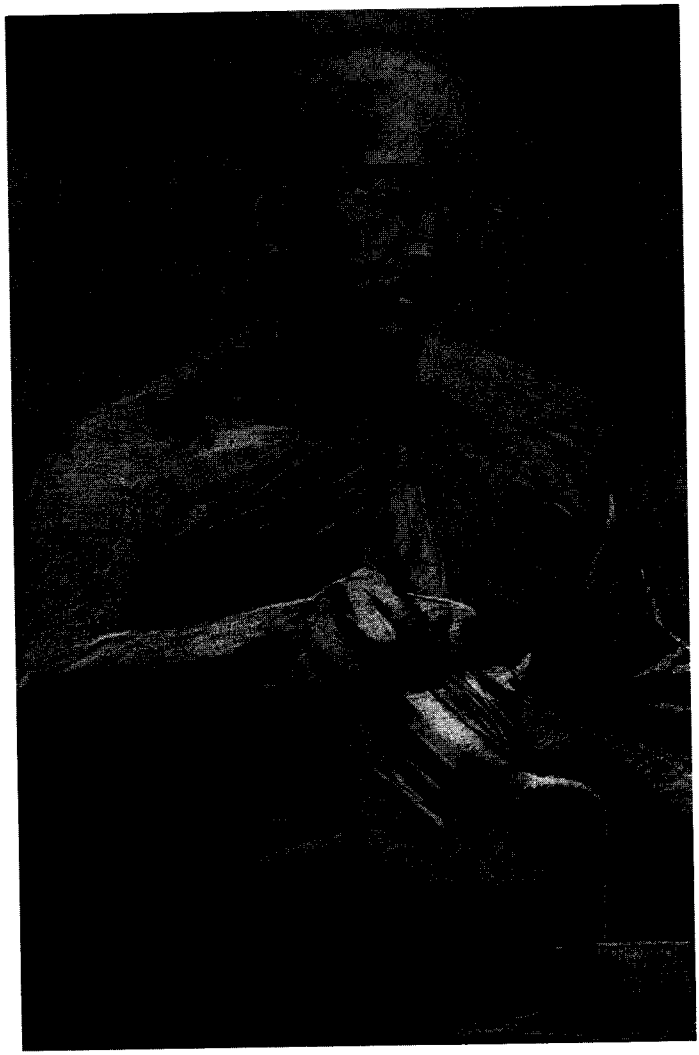

Water-pouring ceremony for the sharing of merits

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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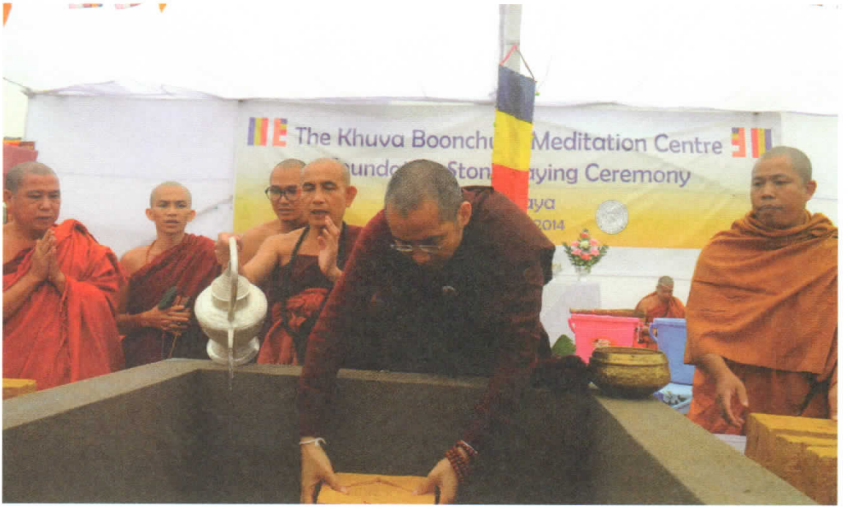

Bodh Gaya, 2013: With Phra Khuva Boonchum, at the Foundation Stone-laying ceremony for the Khuva Boonchum Meditation Centre

Sarnath, 2010: International Conference on Vinaya, at the Central University of Tibetan Studies

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Nalanda, 2006: Foundation Day of Nava Nalanda Mahavihara (NNM). L–R: Rector, NNM; Vice Chancellor, Patna University; Ven. Dhammasami; Governor, Bihar; Deputy Mayor, Wuxi

Bangkok, 2006: A meeting between the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies and Silpakorn University

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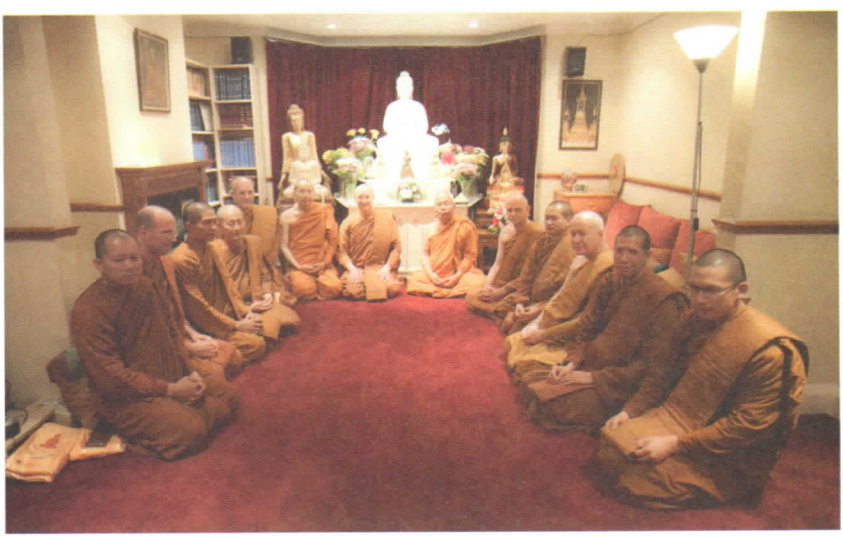
Spring Hill Prison, Buckinghamshire, 2013: Vesak celebration at the Buddha Grove



OBV, 2014: Visiting senior *sangha* from the Ajahn Chah Forest Temples

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Oxford Buddha Vihara, 2014: *Sima* Consecration ceremony

Wales, UK, 2012: Dhamma talk at Samatha Meditation Trust

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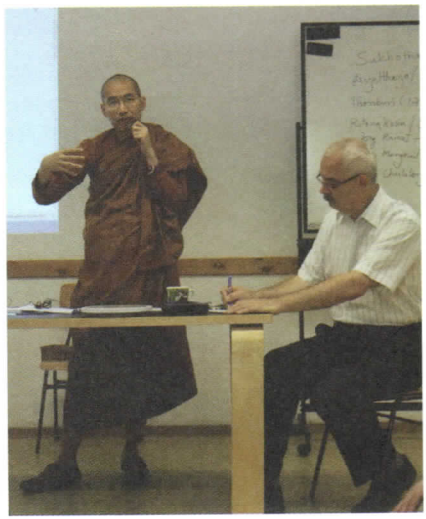
Poland, 2013: Meditation retreat



Budapest, 2013: Lecturing at the Dharma Gate Buddhist College, Seated is H.E. Janos Jelen, Rector

Hungary, 2013: Meditation retreat

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Institute of Education, London, 2012: Dhamma talk with Venerable Wuttichai Vajiramedhi (Tan Vor)

Imperial College London, 2014: Opening a Dhamma talk for Tan Vor

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Wolfson College, Oxford, 2012:
A farewell for Arjia Rinpoche

OBV, 2014: Summer School and Ordination

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OBV, 2014: Addressing students from Magdalen College School

SOAS, London, 2013: Academic & Cultural Presentation, Shan New Year organised by SCA-UK

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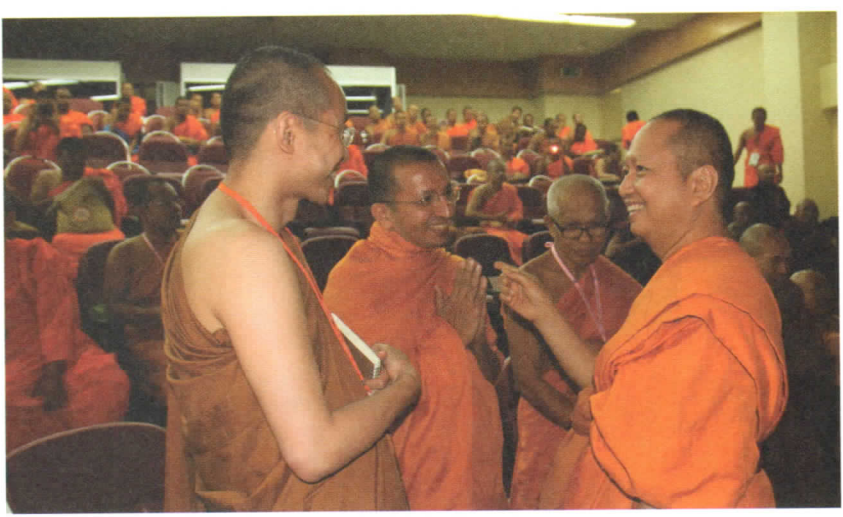
Mahachulalongkorn University, 2012: Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn making an offering at the UN Day of Vesak celebrations



Mahachulalongkorn University, 2012:
With MCU Rector Most Ven. Prof. Phra Brahmapandit and other members at the UNDV

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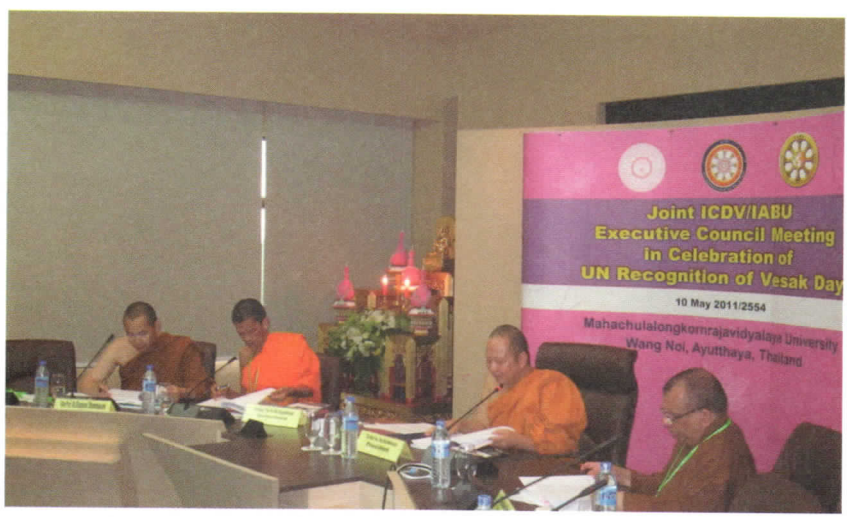
Mahachulalongkorn University, 2011: With fellow recipients of Honorary Ph.D.s. From L–R: Korea, Shan State (Union of Myanmar), Mongolia, Indonesia, Taiwan, Shan State (Union of Myanmar), and Lao



Mahachulalongkorn University, 2011: Joint ICDV/IABU EC Meeting for the UN Day of Vesak

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Madrid, 2014: Launching Meditación Mindfulness, Fácil at the College of Doctors & Graduates of Philosophy & Sciences.
With H. Cosano and R. Guerrero

Sitagu,Yangon, 2014: International Conference on the Preservation of Buddhist Cultural Heritage

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Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon, 2012:
Consecration of the Buddha-rupa offered by the Government of India

ITBMU, Yangon, 2013: Conference to promote
Lik Loung – the Shan Buddhist 'Great Texts'

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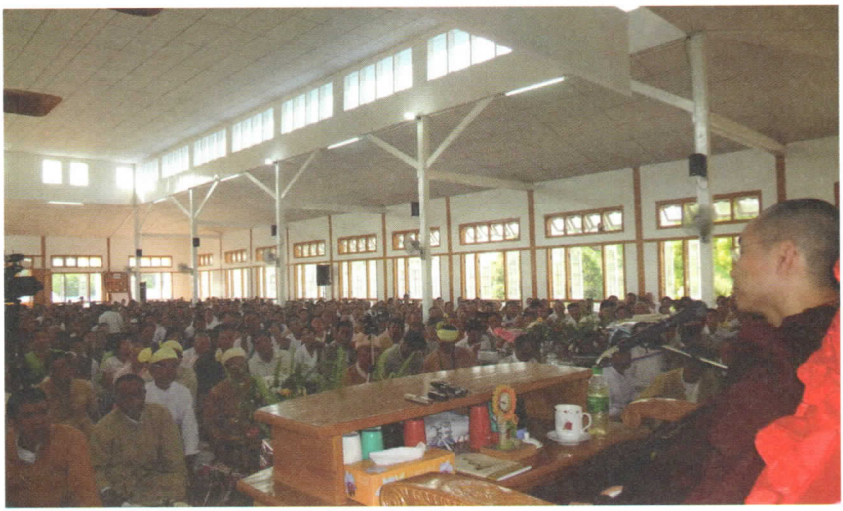

Kyaukme, Shan State, 2012: Dhamma talk

Taunggyi, Shan State, 2014: Foundation Ceremony of the Shan State Buddhist University. Led by Vice President, Union of Myanmar, Dr. Sai Mauk Kham, and the Chief Minister

www.dhammadownload.com

Veluwan Monastery, Taunggyi, Shan State, 2014: International Pali Conference

Laikha, Shan State: Ven. Dr. K. Dhammasami greeting well-wishers on his 50th birthday, at the Wat Ho Loi Monastery in Nong Pang Village

www.dhammadownload.com

OBV Singapore, 2011: Dhamma talk

OBV Malaysia, 2011: Meditation and Dhamma talk

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Kertarajasa Buddhist College, Indonesia, 2006: Inaugural 'Conference of Indonesia Buddhist Colleges'

Buddhist & Pali University of Sri Lanka, 2013: With the Vice Chancellor and teaching staff

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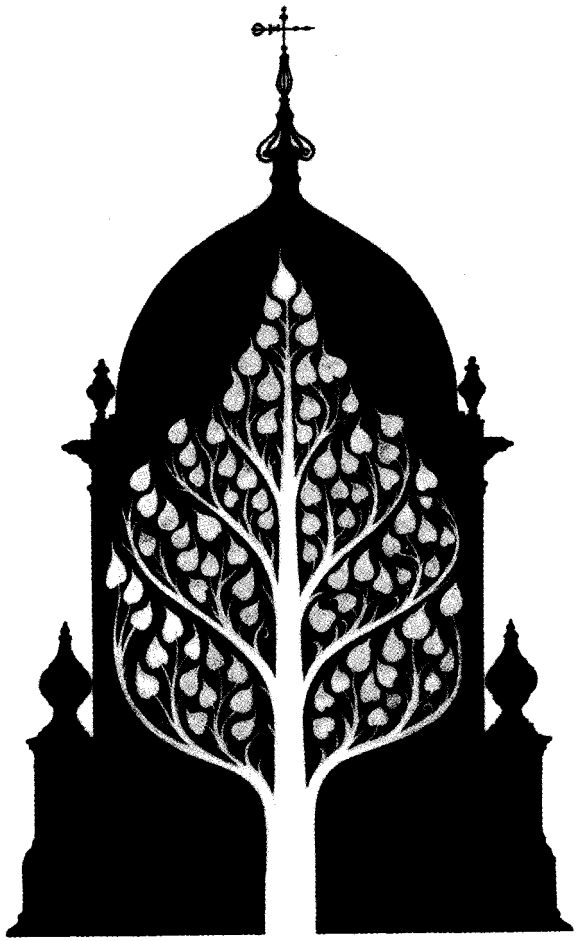

The Bodhi Tree and the Sheldonian Theatre, University of Oxford