



Uganda Buddhist Center

Newsletter

Volume 11. Issue 11. November 2015

In this Issue

Oliver gets Samanera
ordination—page 2

UBC at the World Buddhist
Forum, China—page 2

Global Buddhist
Conference on Resolving
Conflicts in Perth—page 3

African Buddhist Union—
page 3

Translating *Planting
Dhamma Seeds* into
Singhalese—page 3

Bulega Buddhist
Community Group—page 4

Health is Wealth—page 4

The Role of a Missionary: A
Buddhist Perspective—
page 5-6



*Bhante Buddharakkhita offering
a copy of his book to His Holiness
the 17th Karmapa.*

Bhante Buddharakkhita once again meets His Holiness the 17th Karmapa

On 5th November, Bhante Buddharakkhita flew from Sri Lanka to Varanasi, India for an International Seminar sponsored by the Women's Global Peace Initiative and Contemplative Alliance. The Seminar brought together Hindu, Buddhist, Sufi, Jewish, American Indian and Christian spiritual leaders for a dialogue on the theme "Awakening the Light of Dharma: How to Uphold Dharma in the World Today."

During the conference, Bhante Buddharakkhita was very fortunate to once again meet His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa, one of the most respected invited guests at the Seminar. They had met for the first time in 1996 in Tibet, when Bhante was still a layman. Bhante offered His Holiness a copy of his recent publication, *Caring for Our Planet: Buddhism and the Environment*.

His Excellence Prasittiporn Wetprasit visits UBC

BACKGROUND

Uganda Buddhist Centre is a non-profit organization engaged in propagating the teaching of Buddhism, creating a culture of peace, and organizing social, cultural and Humanitarian services.

This past July, the Uganda Buddhist Center was privileged to receive His Excellency Prasittiporn Wetprasit from the Royal Thai Embassy in Nairobi as a visitor. He was impressed and expressed humility and joy regarding the development of a Buddhist community in Uganda, as well as the rate at which the community is growing.



Oliver gets Samanera ordination as Ven. Sangharakkhita

Oliver Biraro, now known as Venerable Sangharakkhita, is a native of Rwanda. He started moving along his Buddhist path after meeting Bhante Buddharakkhita at the Uganda Buddhist Center in 2014. He had been searching for a way to give service and to begin a spiritual practice, and he knew he had found the right one after spending time with Bhante. He made many friends in Kampala as a teacher of yoga and tai chi. In May of this year he took the Eight Precepts and was temporarily ordained as a novice for one week.

Bhante Buddharakkhita, who acted as Sangharakkhita's preceptor, also sponsored his travel to the Na Uyana Forest Monastery in Sri Lanka, where he initially accepted the *Anagarika* precepts. He received his *Samanera* ordination on the first day of November—on *Kathina*, the day on which monks traditionally receive the gifts of two new robes for the year from local lay supporters. Sangharakkhita will stay at the Na Uyana Forest Monastery for at least two years, likely longer, to receive intensive monastic training and to practice vipassana meditation.

From everyone at the UBC, may Sangharakkhita move along the path smoothly while he trains for the benefit of all beings!



Sangharakkhita receiving robes from a Senior Monk during his *Samanera* ordination



Above: Bhante Buddharakkhita and Sangharakkhita at Na Uyana Forest Monastery



UBC at the 2015 World Buddhist Forum in China

On 23rd October, Bhante Buddharakkhita took a break from his academic studies to fly from Sri Lanka to Beijing for the Fourth World Buddhist Forum, held at several locations in China. He was accompanied by Uganda Buddhist Center Board Member Mr. Tom Kaboggoza.

The forum explored Buddhist values in modern times under the theme "Common Aspiration, Common Action—Embracing Exchanges and Mutual Learning." Bhante Buddharakkhita was an invited speaker. His talk was on the topic, "Cultivating the Buddha's Path to Peace: A Buddhist Perspective." We are very proud that Bhante had this opportunity to represent the entire Ugandan Buddhist community on this auspicious occasion.

Global Buddhist Conference on Resolving Conflicts in Perth, Australia

Conflict resolution is a recurring topic of discussion all over the world. Conflicts are both internal (for instance, personal internal confusion) and external (for example, religious intolerance). The scope of these discussions has expanded to include Buddha's teachings, thus offering a broad range of ideas on how to best approach egocentrism, hatred, and inner confusion, as well as many other aspects of the human condition that haunt all of us.

To create an environment in which solutions could be discussed, the Buddhist Society of Western Australia hosted the Ninth Global Buddhist Conference on Resolving Conflicts in Perth on August 5-12, 2015. Bhante Buddharakkhita was an honored guest who was invited to share his personal story on Self-Discovery: Following the Buddha's Path.

He talked in detail about his experiences, how he came to Buddhism, and how the Buddha's teachings have helped him cultivate inner peace and happiness.



Bhante Buddharakkhita at the Ninth Global Buddhist Conference.



Above: Venerable Buddharakkhita with other Delegates at the Conference in Perth, Australia.

Introducing the African Buddhist Union

On 2nd November, Bhante Buddharakkhita established the Africa Buddhist Union to serve as an umbrella organization for all Buddhist groups and individual practitioners living in 54 African countries. The major purposes of the Union are to promote and cultivate the spirit of brotherhood and fellowship among members, and to organize activities such as study sessions focused on the Buddha's teachings. To enhance the energies of love and peace, the Union will organize monthly meditation sessions on full moon days.

In November 2016, approximately twenty members of the African Buddhist Union will meet in Morocco for a program to discuss climate change. The meeting will also be aimed at encouraging, developing, and fostering the Buddhist sila values of truth, loving-kindness, compassion and generosity.

Those interested in joining the Union should be willing to make the effort to meet with other members at least once a month for meditation and other Dhamma activities. For more info, please write to us at africanbunion@gmail.com

Translating Planting Dhamma Seeds into Sinhalese

Bhante Buddharakkhita's book *Planting Dhamma Seeds: The Emergence of Buddhism in Africa*, stands as an important marker of the appearance of Buddhism in Africa. The book's powerful and inspiring narratives have touched readers all over the world. So far the book has been translated into Spanish and French, and the recent Thai translation has been described as having a significant influence.

The book is now being translated from its original English version into Sinhalese, the main language spoken in Sri Lanka. It is being translated by Mr. Jayatissa, and will hopefully be in print by the time you read this report.

Bulega Buddhist Community Group

Under the leadership of founder Bhante Buddharakkhita, the Uganda Buddhist Centre continues to introduce the idea of Buddhism to members of the community of Entebbe, Uganda, especially the village of Bulega.

Most recently Bhante has overseen the formation of a Bulega Buddhist Community Group, whose goals are to support and ensure the continuing development of the village where the Centre is located. These goals are to be achieved hand-in-hand with encouragement of the community to grow its own food and to achieve economic independence. Toward the second goal, Bhante has donated a sewing machine for purposes of income generation.

The group has also come up with several ideas, projects and activities meant to establish a foundation for inner spiritual growth and improved general welfare through the Dhamma. These include organizing Dhamma programs, performing tasks aimed at improving village sanitation, and the clearing and maintenance of small side roads, members' houses, and the main temple. The growing program is already underway with the planting of flowers and small trees around the temple. The group will eventually expand its activities to more tree-growing and vegetable production.

In September, Bulega Buddhist Community Group organized a Walk for the Hungry activity that was aimed at raising awareness about people in the surrounding community who are in need of the most basic sustenance.



Above: The Bulega Buddhist Community Group during the 'Walk for the Hungry' Campaign.

Health is wealth

Under the theme HEALTH IS WEALTH, the Uganda Buddhist Centre is involved in an ongoing program to address the problem of lack of safe water for drinking and cooking in the village of Bulega. The UBC has offered resources to install a third borehole for the surrounding community, and has accepted full responsibility for making necessary repairs to ensure that all three boreholes function properly at all times to meet the safe water needs of Bulega.

At the same time, the Centre has just completed the addition of six new rooms on the grounds: a library, dining room, kitchen and three dormitory rooms to accommodate visitors and volunteers who offer service to the UBC.



The Role of a Missionary: A Buddhist Perspective

Before sending forth sixty fully enlightened beings to various locations to propagate the Dhamma, the Buddha told them, “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. 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 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.”

To effectively spread the Buddha’s message of peace, harmony and freedom to the rest of the world, it is important for true missionaries to uphold “the four Ps”: *purification* of one’s mind, *purpose* of spreading the Dhamma, *propagation* of the most excellent Dhamma, and *patience* with people’s receptivity of the Dhamma.

Purification: The first step for a Buddhist missionary is to purify the mind by removing all greed, hatred and ignorance. Such a high degree of freedom, even for a temporary period, is necessary for spreading Buddhism. In order to get rid of these bonds, it is necessary to undergo mental purification and training in the form of meditation practice. Of course, the act of going forth helps to accelerate this purification process. I feel joyous in the knowledge that the World Buddhist Summit is building a new Nalanda University, which will serve as a centre for training Buddhist missionaries for much-needed Dhamma dissemination.

Purpose: The second step is to fully understand the purpose of spreading the Dhamma. A true missionary is not concerned with either financial gain or the conversion of others to Buddhism, but with the welfare and benefit of all beings who may be willing and capable of hearing and contemplating the Dhamma. Missionaries should be motivated by compassion, defined as the mental quality of opening one’s heart to the suffering of beings all over the world. Suffering is particularly acute in Uganda, thus I would like to extend an invitation to all Buddhists to come to Uganda to carry out such missionary work. It would be wonderful if the Sixth World Buddhist Sum-

mit, out of deep compassion and wise consideration, could focus on facilitating such work in traditionally non-Buddhist areas such as Africa and Latin America.

Propagation: The Buddha advised his enlightened monks to propagate the Dhamma that he described as excellent in the beginning (ethical conduct), excellent in the middle (mental training), and excellent in the end (penetrative wisdom). How can we disseminate this teaching? We have to demonstrate the perfection and purity of a Dhamma lifestyle, and we have to teach by example—especially in terms of following certain precepts. Only then can we win supporters and followers. In Uganda I have taught local residents based on setting an example and following the precepts that I have accepted as a monk. For instance, I have tried to follow the parami of generosity by donating three boreholes so that people living around the UBC can have access to clean water. The local people have understood this lesson and now view us in very friendly terms. Whenever I walk through the village, the kids always say, “Bye Buddha!” More and more they are saying “I greet you in the name of the Buddha” while holding their palms together in the traditional sign of respect.

Patience: When spreading the Dhamma, one needs to be patient with how people respond. Receptivity varies a lot, and we have to be patient and show a willingness to accommodate others’ views. During my travels overseas I am constantly asked whether African people understand the Dhamma. My reply is always, “Why not?” During my missionary work in Africa I have found that many Africans are thirsty for Dhamma. Please do not hesitate to come to the UBC based on an uncertainty of whether people here are capable of understanding the Dhamma. Of course, there are those who are inclined to listen and contemplate the Dhamma, and others who will resist or be fearful of something new that they have never heard before. Such encounters can generate humorous misunderstandings—for example, when some fellow Africans asked me why I am “taking medication,” I patiently repeated the word “meditation” two times, but they did not get it. But more and more I meet other Africans who are capable of understanding that meditation is a “scientific approach” to achieving happiness and peace.

continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

Not just in Africa, but all over the world, we know that some people are ready to receive and contemplate the Dhamma, others are not. But we are all blessed with the special gift of human rebirth so that we have the opportunity to listen to the Dhamma and perhaps open our hearts to its message of compassion and wisdom. There is a high chance that people who are suffering a great deal are ready to listen to the Dhamma.

Let us join hands and spread the Dhamma in Africa and other parts of the world, so that all beings may understand how it is excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, and excellent in the end.

May all beings be well, happy and peaceful.

Extracted from Bhante Buddhakkhita's article available online at:

<https://docs.google.com/document/edit?id=1tuBnd8rqTLpqQMsLSyPR6ay65cLpM1GMQ7-8xBG0IAs&hl=en>

Peace

Only with peace shall nations rise so high as to concur a sane continuity for centuries.

Only with peace shall communities be built from ideology, expand enormously beyond imagination, and coexist side-by-side, complementing each other.

Only with peace shall families thrive amidst hurdles, shall lineages spring eternally, and shall destruction become but an unwelcomed myth.

Only with peace at heart shall stability in families be realized, community differences be contemplated, and paradise mature, maximizing peace and happiness.

By: Mukomazi Andrew—Volunteer, Uganda Buddhist Center

Would you like to submit an article for publication in the UBC Newsletter? Anything that would be of interest to the general Buddhist community is welcome, including personal experiences, questions that you would like to ask the UBC team, poetry, short stories, and letters to the editor. Send your articles by email, as Word or WordPerfect documents, or as text documents to: ugandabuddhistcentre@gmail.com or buddhistcenteruganda898@gmail.com.

May All Beings Attain Perfect Peace and Liberation!

Our Address and Contact Info

Uganda Buddhist Centre

Off-Entebbe Road, Bulega, Garuga, Entebbe

P.O. Box 898, Entebbe, Uganda

Phone: +256(0)7750-19180,

+256(0)776-159985

E-mail: ugandabuddhistcentre@gmail.com

buddhistcenteruganda898@gmail.com

Website: www.ugandabuddhistcenter.org