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UGANDA BUDDHIST CENTRE (UBC)

UBC Newsletter

February 2014

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Dhamma Greetings! We convey our heartfelt thanks to you all for the valuable effort and support extended to UBC in the past. Without your active support, it would not have been possible at all. Reciprocating your support is not possible. Thank you again.

The Dhamma school gets a tent

With support from our dear friend and well-wisher Ven. Rinpoche, UBC received a temporary tent for our Dhamma School. The facility is being used as a classroom for the school as one of the sustainability strategies for UBC to continue offering services and teaching the Buddha's principles to the children. More efforts in sustainability programming are underway and support is continually sought to achieve this goal.

Ven. Buddharakkhita visits King Oyo

In June, Ven. Buddharakkhita visited the Tooro Kingdom. He was warmly welcomed by H.M King Oyo, Queen Mother H.H Best Kemigisa and Hon. Jonathan Baguma at their palace in Munyonyo. His visit included Mr. Tom Kaboggoza, the Coordinator of the UBC, Mrs. Kaboggoza Sandra, Andrew Bakaki, and other members. This strengthened the ties between UBC and the Tooro Kingdom and was also an excellent opportunity to give a correct insight into Buddhism to the kingdom of Tooro.

As a result of this meeting, H.M King Oyo, Queen mother H.H Best Kemigisa and other ministers from Tooro, attended the Asian Buddhist culture festival together with the UBC delegates in Hong Kong. And he promised to work together with the Uganda Buddhist community.



Above: Ven. Buddharakkhita with H.M King Oyo and H.H Queen Mother Best Kemigisa

Photo courtesy of Eugénie Baccot photography;

Photographe // Journaliste free-lance

Site web - www.eugeniebaccot.com

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An experience in a new home for ten days

The whole experience of staying in such a big forest monastery was an experience itself, especially getting used to the sounds of crawling snakes and geckos, throughout the night, and then complete silence. The site of the monastery was very impressive, kept spotless by the team of us visitors who swept and spotted with the kutis (the small hut homes for Monks).

I and my teacher Ven. Buddharakkhita hailed down a bus from the outskirts of Kandy city. As the city was warming up, we said goodbye to the bustle. I knew where I was going would be totally different. That evening, we were warmly welcomed by one of the monks at the monastery. Our destination was Nauyana forest monastery which rests on about 5000 acres of land. My first time to stay in such a big monastery, where I stayed for ten days.

The following morning, dressed all in white like a ghost (the required attire for lay people in a monastery), I joined the other laypersons in a line which seemed like soldiers at a frontline going for breakfast. The next part of the morning schedule after breakfast involved cleaning of the place where the Buddha statue is rested (pagoda) which I did with much ease. This was a beautiful experience as us laypeople lined up at the pagoda to offer flowers accompanied by chanting in Pali language which I attempted to follow though I didn't understand the meaning of the words. The chanting was followed by lighting the incense which I did after another short crash course from an Iranian layman. As I had tried this before, it was great trying it in this incredible setting, even though I was not used to it. This was the same in the evening. As I was moving back to my kuti, a medium sized black snake was also leading in my way. Only to see it about 20cm on my feet. Hahah, what a big jump and horrible night I had!

The next morning while I was sweeping near the pagoda, here still emerges another snake of about 1.5metres, only to see it 50cm away from my feet. Surely, snakes are not my buddies. This raised so many worries and that night I didn't concentrate and have a good sleep too.

I was very lucky to be taken under the wings by one of the monks during my stay in the monastery. Ven. Ananda, a Sri Lankan monk who nicely spoke good English, offered me some lessons on Buddhism and especially on meditation most days. It was strange going from the noisy life to sitting down for hours, but it was exactly what I wanted from my stay, and was invaluable in learning about the backbones of monasticism and meditation.

During my time at the monastery I learnt and practiced two forms of meditation; Vipassana, meditation which examines in depth the true reality of nature through the process of our thoughts and actions. The second meditation is Samantha which involves focusing attention on a single-point especially on breath.

My experience with Ven. Ananda was truly inspirational as he had such a genuinely kind and approachable nature, as did all of the other Monks at the monastery. Another thing I learnt was that most of the Monks looked considerably younger than they were, which led me to lose many age-guessing games. I am not sure if it is down to their lack of hair and eyebrows, or stress-free lifestyle.

The process of learning and practicing meditation is a personal one, but I found out that it is a central part of a monk's life and a routine. A good understanding and patience are both crucial, and it is something I am keen to keep practicing.

It was also an unforgettable experience to ask monks about their lifestyle, and I felt truly lucky that I was able to ask open questions about meditation and Buddhism to 'my' monk as I called him, as he spoke the best English than most of the local Monks and laymen.

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I was also very lucky in that I met many people including laypersons whom I interacted with sometimes especially Martins from Sweden and one gentleman from Iran who was waiting for his ordination.

The transition from the backpacker lifestyle to living at such a big monastery was a very powerful one; eating one meal a day, rising and sleeping at unusual hours and doing cleaning mainly at the Pagoda. These didn't seem difficult while at the monastery. Fortunately while at the monastery, I didn't find

the eating of only one meal a day too difficult, as I think my mind accepted that it would only get breakfast and I would have to meditate any hunger away. But surprisingly, I failed to totally adjust to that style of eating out here because of some health problems.

I achieved exactly what I wanted from my stay, to learn more about the monastic order, meditation and Buddhism as well as have a completely different change in routine and lifestyle, all surrounded by beautiful and stunning settings. I also took away some practical changes, especially concerning living more simply, which the Monks do in their tiny kuti's with only essential items.

Author: Bakaki Andrew

Vesak Celebrations at UBC, May 2014

The celebrations were graced by the Abbot and Monk of UBC, The Most Venerable Budharakhitha.

The theme of the day was love and wisdom. A theme that delivered a number of shared messages among the participants.

Guests arrived at 9:30 am and without wasting any time the monk introduced our dear guests to one another and later treated us with a very memorable a mindful meditation session that ushered us into a relaxing and peaceful celebration mood.

The meditation session was followed by speeches from some of the distinguished guests including Tony an Australian Buddhist, Eng. Ntwasi a longtime friend of Ven. Buddharakkhita and a practicing Buddhist resident in Entebbe and Dr. Juuko a traditional healer practitioner from Kigo.

Tony's speech was centered around attachment which he says according to the Noble truth is and has been the biggest cause of suffering to us, The other guests were from

Sri Lanka and Nepal (Sherpa and Sumathirathne) working with the UN in Uganda added their voice on the topic in an interactive manner. He illustrated the cause of suffering with several examples that left members appreciating the message in such a simplistic manner. In conclusion with an

illustration of a book in the palm of the monk, Ven. Buddharakkhita illustrated the kind of resistance that causes human beings suffering when they lose or when someone takes away an article in their life. He also added that craving levels ought to be controlled as craving compounds the problem of material attachment.

The speeches were followed by a Q&A session where a number of questions were asked by members in the congregation and the Venerable answered all of them skillfully to the satisfaction of everybody.

The question that took a most of time to explain was the question of re-birth asked by Eng. Ntwasi which after a long explanation Venerable Buddharakkhita promised to provide more literature from American book store with scientific evidence later in the year when he goes to America.



He further said a shared fire from the candle does not make the candle deem or faint.

In his address to our guests of the day, Robert Ziribasanga the Operations Manager and personal Secretary to Ven. Buddharakkhita thanked everybody for the time they spared to come and celebrate Vesak day at UBC. He further encouraged all members present to continue visiting the center even when the Monk is away.

He also reported to the members the various donations that have been recorded at the center this year. He reported generous donation of a tent by Venerable P. Rinpoche of Chokygru Foundation, full sponsorship of 2 monks training; tuition fees volumes of books donated by the President of the Australian Buddhist Council through his friends of Singapore. He appealed to the older Buddhist communities to continue supporting UBC. He also thanked Venerable Buddharakkhita for giving him the opportunity to attend the last IBC conference at New Delhi in India last August where he met very many great friends to UBC including Venerable P. Rinpoche.

The Coordinator Mr. Tom Kaboggoza Mukomazi welcomed everybody and thanked members for turning up on such a short notice in quality numbers. He wished everybody peace and love.

In a concluding session Venerable Buddharakkhita met some of the attendees of the day in the temple where he unveiled a proposal by a one Mss. Moemoe Zaw

She proposed a sustainability strategy of enabling material and financial support by members who turn up for retreats and visits in order to sustain the center activities.

She said in her proposal that all monasteries across the world thrive on donations and good-will of the people who patronize the establishment.

Unanimously members present adopted the idea and spontaneously Ugshs. 250,000 an equivalent of (\$100) was raised in a circle

form!

Bravo sister MoeMoe!!!! It instantly worked!

It was also emphasized that people can willingly contribute whatever they have to support the Center activities in future as this will reduce the dependency burden/pressure on the Monk's personal sources and probably increase his presence at the temple.

Eng. Ntwasi was appointed by the Monk as the acting treasurer for such funds raised, and was instructed to keep the money on the center account in Africa

The Monk concluded the impromptu meeting by tanking all the participants for being mindful and prescribing sustainability strategies which has been bothering him since inception. This in my opinion is what I take to be the power of being together in all situations of real life; the Liverpool team says "you can never walk alone" Big up to all our dear guests.

Would you like to give in an article for the UBC Newsletter? Anything that would be of interest to the general Buddhist community is welcome. Personal experiences, questions that you would like to ask the UBC team, poetry, short stories, letters to the editor. Send your article by email as a Word or WordPerfect document, or as a text document to ugandabuddhistcentre@gmail.com/ buddhistcenteruganda898@gmail.com