





## Message

### **Venerable Seelananda**

Vice Principal, Buddhist & Pāli College of Singapore,  
and Honorary Adviser, BPC Alumni

Greetings everyone! It is my pleasure to announce to you, the formation of our new BPC Alumni (BPCA) management committee appointed by our beloved Principal, Venerable Dr Prategama Gnanarama Anunayaka Maha Thera. The new committee, led by Brother Kovida Jebsons Chia with 11 members in his team, has been in office with effect from 1 January 2019 for 2 years.

The BPCA's objectives are as follows:

- a) To promote the development and interest of the BPC for its students and alumni.
- b) To cultivate an active and cohesive environment where noble friendships are formed and spiritual developments are strengthened.
- c) To play a part in preserving and propagating the Buddha's sāsana.

It is managed by a committee of volunteers consisting of teachers, alumni and/or students of the BPC. The committee is appointed by our Principal or by a system of voting at the AGM for a term of 2 years. Both our Principal and I are the Honorary Advisers of the committee. While there is a division of roles among the committee members, the team will not be able to complete all the tasks by itself and will need the help and support of each and every one of you. Do come forward to participate in the activities organised by them. When we have big activities and help is much needed, please step forward and offer your kind assistance. Taking this opportunity, I would like you to join me in wishing the committee the best in their endeavours in the next 2 years.

To give a sneak preview of the challenging tasks that lie ahead for our current team, we have drawn up a list of ideas which the BPCA has not touched ground before. One of the main areas we are looking at is the possibility of setting up a website and through the means of social media like Facebook, etc. to reach out to a wider readership on the information of our college's courses and activities. I sincerely hope that the upcoming activities organised by our current team will be relevant and useful to the students' respective studies. Understanding of Buddhism is important, but putting the teachings into daily practice is vital.

At this juncture, I would also like to thank the invaluable contributions made by the preceding committee led by Brother Alex Goh @ Nimala with his team comprising Brother Tham Saik Hoong, Sister Elizabeth Kheh, Brother James Phoon, Brother Jeffrey Chieng, Brother Eric Wong and Brother Patrick Lim. They had performed their roles well by giving of their best in bringing to you the various activities and past issues of the e-bulletin. Thank you all for your selfless contribution.

Ādhu, Ādhu, Ādhu!

Having heard from our Vice Principal, we'll now hear from the new **BPCA Committee 2019-2020**.

**Chairman: Brother Kovida Jebsons Chia**

First, about myself. I started Buddhism through the Mahayana tradition in 1997. In 2014, I graduated from the BPC with a Bachelor of Arts in Buddhism; and in 2015, a Master of Arts in Buddhism. Currently, I teach in the Diploma class of the BPC held at Poh Ming Tze Temple and the Student Dhamma School of the Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery. I also conduct ad-hoc Dhamma talks in English and Mandarin.



I am grateful for the opportunity over the years to learn Dhamma through the BPC volunteer teachers and to obtain a formal tertiary education in Buddhism. Coming forward to serve in the BPCA Committee is my small way of paying back the kindness shown to me by the Principals and teachers of the BPC.

I am indeed honoured to be entrusted with the stewardship of the committee. Our most immediate plans are to engage the current cohorts of the BPC students and to reconnect with the alumni. We will organise as many activities as possible during our tenure. Through these, I hope to forge a strong camaraderie in the BPC community – a community of lifelong noble friendships and support for the Buddha's dispensation.

I would like to encourage more BPC alumni to come forward to volunteer as teachers, or to help organise or participate in the BPCA activities. Your contribution will go a long way in keeping the BPC community spirit alive and ensuring the posterity of the BPC as a renowned institute in Buddhism. Also, many a times, new students get to know of the BPC and its courses through words of mouth. I hope you can continue to be a BPC ambassador, to share generously with others about your learning experiences in the BPC.



**BPCA Management Committee 2019-2020**

- Back row (L-R): Sister Sandra Koh (Volunteers), Sister Lam Hoi Shan (Events and Bonding Assistant Lead), Sister Vera Yap (Honorary Secretary), Sister Tan Chew Ling (E-Bulletin Editor)
- Front row (L-R): Brother Kyaw Kyaw Naing, Brother Yap Yong Kim (Events and Bonding Assistant Lead), Brother Stevie Tham (Events and Bonding Lead), Bhante Seelananda (Honorary Adviser), Brother Kovida Jebsons Chia (Chairman), Brother Patrick Lim (IT and Media Lead)
- Not in the photo: Bhante Gnanarama (Honorary Adviser), Sister Lynn Choy (Honorary Treasurer), Sister Maureen Hui (Honorary Assistant Secretary), Sister Gillian Ang



## Our Activities!

The past months had been busy with the various enrichment activities for Dhamma learning organised or facilitated by the BPC and BPCA Committee. Here is a recap of these activities.

### **Visit by Top Graduates of the Buddhist & Pāli University of Sri Lanka, 24-28 October 2018**

From 24 to 30 October 2018, Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple) [MV] hosted 5 monks and 3 laities who had graduated with first class honours from the Buddhist & Pali University (BPU) of Sri Lanka. These distinguished graduates were from different faculties of Archaeology, Buddhist Culture, Buddhist Philosophy and Religious Studies & Comparative Philosophy. They stayed in MV during the visit.

The BPU delegation met Bhante Gnanarama (BPC Principal), Bhante Seelananda (BPC Vice Principal), Venerable K Rathanananda Thero (Chief Resident Monk of Sri Lankaramaya Buddhist Temple), Venerable Dr Rangama Chandawimala Thero (Associate Professor of Buddhist College of Singapore), Mr Melvin Phua Hang Meng (MV Management Committee Chairman), Mr Lim Ah Swan (MV Management Committee Vice Chairman) and Mr Raymond Yow (MV Dhamma Fellowship Chairman).



*With Bhante Gnanarama in Ti-Sarana Buddhist Association*

Singapore is one of the unique countries that offer rich multi-religious and multi-cultural experiences. The BPU delegation visited a host of Buddhist temples covering the 3 traditions – Buddha Tooth Relic Temple, Burmese Buddhist Temple, Karma Kagyud Buddhist Centre, Lian Shan Shuanglin Temple, MV, Sri Lankaramaya Buddhist Temple and Ti-Sarana Buddhist Association. They also visited the Buddhist College of Singapore in Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery. The places of worship of other religions were also not given a miss and the BPU delegation was delighted to visit Central Sikh Temple, Church of Divine Mercy, Masjid Darul Aman, Shree Lakshminarayan Temple, Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple and Thian Hock Keng Temple.



*With the volunteers of Central Sikh Temple*



*With Parish Priest, Fr Damian in Church of Divine Mercy*



*With the host of Masjid Darul Aman*



*With the priests at Shree Lakshminarayan Temple*



## *Our Activities!*

A visit to Singapore without seeing our places of attraction would not be complete. The BPU delegation explored Gardens by the Bay, Marina Bay, ArtScience Museum, Helix Bridge, Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, Merlion and Universal Studios Singapore. They also sampled our places for live, work and play, such as the Central Business District, Chinatown, Little India, HDB Toa Payoh Town, Eunos Hawker Centre, East Coast Park and Vivo City.

Even though they had a packed schedule, the BPU delegation participated in Bojjhanga service, MV Kathina Celebrations and Puja. They also gave Dhamma talks to the BPC Diploma and YMBA classes.



*At Universal Studios Singapore*

Before heading home, the BPU delegation expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to visit Singapore. They felt welcomed and had enjoyed their stay. They left with a tinge of sadness as they would miss the hospitality that MV had so generously displayed.

*Contributor: Sister Sandra Koh*

### **BPC Diploma Students' Temple Tour, 25 November 2018**

Many people's idea of a great Sunday morning was to sleep in late and then enjoy a good lazy cozy brunch. However, 46 students from the BPC Diploma classes had thought otherwise.

On 25 November 2018, these students arrived at the Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple) [MV] well before 9.00 am for a temple tour led by Teachers Jasmine Tan, Jebsons Chia and Bhagya Jean Lau. In the past decade, BPC has been organizing such a tour annually to expose new students of its Diploma classes to the 3 traditions of Buddhism.

The first stop of the tour was Lian Shan Shuanglin Temple of the Mahayana tradition. The temple's Volunteer Head, Brother Michael Tan conducted an informative tour of the sprawling temple grounds with beautiful architecture and historical artifacts. He also explained some key Mahayana concepts.



*At Lian Shan Shuanglin Temple*

The students next visited the Amitabha Buddhist Centre. They were met by the guest teacher, Venerable Sangye Khadro who so graciously gave an introduction on the Lam Rim practice of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.



*With Venerable Sangye Khadro at Amitabha Buddhist Centre*

From there, the students proceeded to Ti-Sarana Buddhist Association for a special mission. They went to pay their respect to our beloved BPC Principal, Bhante Gnanarama and made it to be the first students to celebrate in advance his 87<sup>th</sup> birthday which would fall on 6 December 2018.

After enjoying a healthy light lunch and birthday cake, the students journeyed to the Burmese Buddhist Temple of the Theravada tradition. They were warmly received by Brother U Khin Sein, Honourable Vice President of the temple's management committee, who gave an interesting account of how the colossal Buddha statues of the temple had voyaged from Myanmar to Singapore. Venerable U Dhammissara, a resident monk of the temple, conducted a short puja and blessed the students to do well in their studies, work and lives. A befitting finale for a temple tour indeed!

On the tour bus heading back to MV, the students felt that their time had been well spent in forging friendships among them and gaining knowledge about the 3 traditions of Buddhism.

*Contributor: Sister Bhagya Jean Lau*

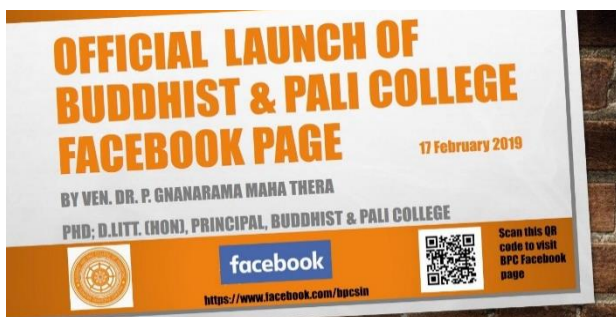


## Our Activities!

### **BCPA Chinese New Year Lo Hei, 17 February 2019**

The BPC students at the Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple) [MV] campus had double happiness on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the Chinese New Year – not only did they end their classes earlier than usual, but they also had a fun-filled afternoon of bonding, Lo Hei and snacks at the MV dining hall.

This Chinese New Year celebration, organised by the BPCA Committee, was graced by BPC Principal, Bhante Gnanarama. It was attended by Vice Principal, Bhante Seelananda, Teachers and about 50 students. Brother Stevie Tham was the emcee of the day. In conjunction with this happy occasion, Bhante Gnanarama officiated the launch of our uniquely BPC's Facebook page. (*Hurry, go like it [here!](https://www.facebook.com/bpcsin)*)



<https://www.facebook.com/bpcsin>



*The Teachers dressed up for the occasion*






*A pan shot before the activities*

To kick-start the activities, the students were grouped into tables of 6 to 8 persons each, and had an ice-breaking activity of solving a jigsaw puzzle at their table. All the tables completed the task swiftly in under 10 minutes!



*Completing the jigsaw puzzle*

Next up was the exciting Scavenger Hunt. The students in groups were given 40 minutes to check out the various spots in and around the MV main shrine hall to answer 9 questions and take a wifie. Even though some questions might be a bit tricky – like those below – the students displayed great teamwork and resourcefulness in scouting for the right answers (ahem... they also googled?!).

-  State two major events about the Buddha at the Sanchi Gate.
-  Count the number of swan motif, like this one →  at the MV shrine hall.

The students' high spirit was not dampened by the drizzle that had limited outdoor movement. They took wifie as required by the hunt and figured out the answers as a team. However, when came to counting the whopping number of 70 swan motifs in the shine hall, the task might be better accomplished by 1 or 2 persons as otherwise, too many cooks might spoil the soup. It was an intense race to find the answers and yet, there were sights of the teams discreetly giving directions to one another.



*Display of might despite the rain - wifie at the nagapuspa tree!*



*Wifie at the Sanchi Gate*



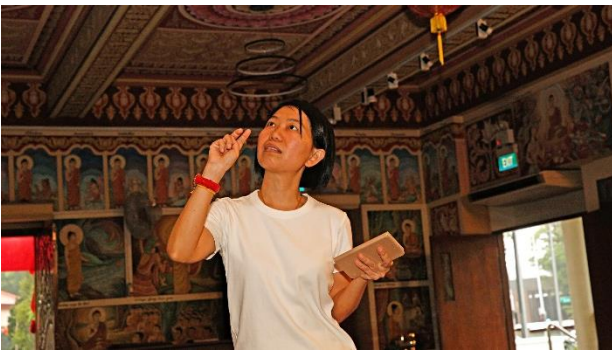
*Q Our Activities!*



*Wefie with Buddha and his bhumisparsha mudra*



*Mm-hmm... the answer should be...*



*Let me count the swan motif in the hall – 1, 2, 3 .....68, 69, 70!*

The first team that completed the hunt turned in their answers and wefie shots in about 30 minutes. They scored 29 out of the 30 points and walked away as the winner with a prize given out by Bhante Gnanarama to each member. Congratulations to the team from the General Arts Qualifying class!



*The winning team with BPC Principal, Bhante Gnanarama and Vice Principal, Bhante Seelananda*

After the Scavenger Hunt was the delicious Lo Hei and snacks. The well-wishing script was read aloud when the vegetarian yusheng was put together. Thereafter, there were rowdy cheers and utterance of auspicious words at different tables as we tossed the yusheng and immersed ourselves in the Chinese festivity and BPC friendship. Sister Lynn Choy also treated us with her specially prepared snacks, such as chwee kueh, nonya kueh and mini cake. These tasty snacks were hard to resist and by the time the Chinese New Year celebration ended at 5.30 pm and we parted way, many of us did not have sufficient space in our stomach for dinner.



*Bhantes joining in for the yusheng tossing*



*With yusheng and BPC friends*

Before we left, we had a group photograph with Bhante Gnanarama, Bhante Seelananda and the Teachers. Till we meet again, please take care!



*A BPC Family Portrait on 17 February 2019*

*Photo Credit: Brother Patrick Lim*

## High Passing Rate of Diploma Examinations 2018!

BPC offers a 1-year course in Diploma in Buddhism. It conducts evening classes twice a week from October to September of the following year. The classes are held at Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple) [MV] and Poh Ming Tze Temple [PMT]. Students may opt for either campus to attend the classes. There are 5 subjects, as follows:

1. Early Buddhism - Basic Doctrines
2. Buddhist Social Dimensions
3. Early History of Buddhism up to 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BCE
4. Geographical Expansion of Theravada Buddhism
5. Pāli Qualify Paper

Subject #1 provides a glimpse of the core teachings of Buddha during his lifetime while Subject #2 explains how his teachings can be applied in our daily life. Subject #3 chronicles the history of Buddhism up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Buddhist Council and Subject #4 details the Dhamma missionary post-3<sup>rd</sup> Buddhist Council to the countries of Sri Lanka and Mainland Southeast Asia. Subject #5 imparts a general knowledge of Pāli and its grammar, for a better appreciation of Buddha's teachings in his own language.

At the end of the 1-year course, students need to achieve an attendance rate of at least 75% in order to take the examinations. The examination of each subject is 3 hours. For Subjects #1 to 4, students choose 5 out of 10 questions in the examination paper to answer, and for Subject #5, students choose 5 out of 8 questions to answer. The examinations are held over 2.5 days in October.

To be conferred the Diploma, students must take the examinations for Subjects #1 to #4. The result of each subject is in 5 bands, viz. A (>70 marks), B (>55 to 70 marks), C (>45 to 55 marks), D (>40 to 45 marks) and E (≤ 40 marks). A student is certified to have passed the examinations if he/she does not have a E or two Ds in the 4 subjects.

While taking the examination for Subject #5 is optional, students are encouraged to take it, and almost all of them do, so as to be better prepared for the Pāli subjects in the Bachelor and Master of Arts classes. More importantly, a good grasp of the Pāli language would allow one to access the indigeneity of Buddha's words and the Pāli Canon.

Sādhu to the 43 students from the MV and PMT campuses who took the Diploma examinations in October 2018. The results were released in January 2019, and together they achieved a high passing rate

of **93%**! Congratulations to each and all for their vīriya (energy) displayed!

As it turns out, Pāli Qualify Paper had the highest number of students acing the examination – 2 in 3 students got an A! This was followed by Buddhist Social Dimensions (35%) and Early History of Buddhism up to 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BCE (28%). For each of the 5 subjects, about 9 in 10 students or more had scored a C and above.

Among these 43 students, 3 students had attained the best results of 4 As and 1 B. The baton is now passed to the current batch of Diploma students in the MV and PMT campuses to achieve a perfect score of 5 As for the 5 subjects in 2019!

The good results of the Diploma examinations in October 2018 are made possible by the hard work of the volunteer teachers in both campuses. They are:

1. Early Buddhism - Basic Doctrines  
MV: Bhante U. Cittara  
PMT: Teacher Angela Ko Guat Hua
2. Buddhist Social Dimensions  
MV: Teacher Lee Mee Yin  
PMT: Teacher Leong Huey Miin
3. Early History of Buddhism up to 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BCE  
MV: Dr Ng Yuen Yen  
PMT: Teacher Jasmine Tan  
Teacher Wong Lai Peng
4. Geographical Expansion of Theravada Buddhism  
MV: Teacher Bhagya Jean Lau  
PMT: Teacher Kovida Jebsons Chia
5. Pāli Qualify Paper  
MV: Bhante K Gnanarathana  
PMT: Teacher Wahyu Perdana Yudistiawan

BPC is also grateful to MV and PMT for providing a conducive environment and quality facilities, such as air-conditioned classrooms, projectors, beverages and car parks, to facilitate the students' educational pursuit in Buddhism.

Many of the students who have passed the Diploma examinations are now in the General Arts Qualifying class in the MV campus. We wish them the best as they further their studies in BPC. For those who did not continue for various reasons, we hope that they would continue to track the Dhamma path and enjoy the noble bliss as they put into practice Buddha's teachings.



## Activities Line-Up

To foster a closer bonding among BPC alumni and students, BPCA committee has organised a 5 day 4 night trip to Borobudur, Jogja and Dieng in Indonesia, led by our Vice Principal, Bhante Seelananda, from 20 to 24 May 2019. Due to overwhelming response, registration has closed. But do watch out for the next issue of the e-bulletin to learn about what the participants have experienced in the trip.

BPC will conduct a course review of its Diploma in Buddhism for the public on 20 and 28 July 2019 at Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple) [MV] and Poh Ming Tze Temple [PMT] respectively, to encourage enrolment. The details, as well as our other activities for the year, are set out below.

Schedule	Activity	How to Apply
13 March to 22 May 2019 (every Wednesday), 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm	Introduction to Buddhism Course at MV, 30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495	Registration closed. Class has commenced.
19 May 2019 (Sunday), 9.00 am to 3.00 pm	Promotion of BPC courses at Vesak Day Celebration at MV, 30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495	Open to all. No pre-registration required.
20-24 May 2019 (Monday to Friday)	Trip to Borobudur, Jogja and Dieng in Indonesia	Registration closed. Tour fully booked.
15 July to 31 August 2019	Enrolment of Diploma in Buddhism	Download application form at <a href="http://mv.org.sg">http://mv.org.sg</a> or collect it from MV at 30 Jalan Eunos Singapore 419495
20 July 2019 (Saturday), 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm	Course preview of Diploma in Buddhism at MV, 30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495	Open to all. No pre-registration required.
28 July 2019 (Sunday) 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm	Course preview of Diploma in Buddhism at PMT, 438 Dunearn Road, Singapore 289613	Open to all. No pre-registration required.
17-25 August 2019 (Saturday to Sunday) [tentative]	Sri Lanka trip and convocation ceremony at Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, Baudhdhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 00700, Sri Lanka	Exclusively for the graduates of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BA in Buddhism 2017 and 2018; and</li> <li>• MA in Buddhism 2017.</li> </ul>
6 Oct 2019 (Sunday)	Classes commence for Diploma in Buddhism at MV campus	Register between 15 July and 31 August 2019 by downloading the application form at <a href="http://mv.org.sg">http://mv.org.sg</a> or collect it from MV at 30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495.
8 Oct 2019 (Tuesday)	Classes commence for Diploma in Buddhism at PMT campus	
19-21 October 2019 (Saturday to Monday)	Examinations for Diploma in Buddhism at MV campus, 30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495	Students of the Diploma classes 2018-2019.
27 October 2019 (Sunday)	BPC Graduation Ceremony at MV, 30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495	Exclusively for the graduates of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diploma in Buddhism 2018</li> <li>• BA in Buddhism 2017 and 2018; and</li> <li>• MA in Buddhism 2017</li> </ul>

 *Closing!*

## **Closing Remarks**

If you like what you have read in this issue of e-bulletin, have any suggestions or feedback for the BPCA committee to do better, or would like to come forward to make a difference to our BPC community, please feel free to drop us an email at [bpca2017sg@gmail.com](mailto:bpca2017sg@gmail.com).

We look forward to hearing from you soon!

Om̐ādhu, Om̐ādhu, Om̐ādhu!