

Our Activities!

The busiest, last quarter of 2019 has come and gone. BPC held its biannual graduation ceremony to celebrate the achievement of its graduates, as well as a temple tour for its Diploma students. Also, the existing students took their examinations with trepidation. Here is a recap of these events.

Graduation Ceremony, 27 October 2019

BPC held its first graduation ceremony without our beloved Founding Principal, the late Dr Pategama Gnanarama Anu-Nayaka Maha Thera, at Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple) [MV] on 27 October 2019 (Sunday).

The Guest-of-Honour was the High Commission of Sri Lanka to Singapore, Her Excellency Sashikala Premawardhane. The ceremony was also graced by two senior officials from the Buddhist and Pali University (BPU) of Sri Lanka – Vice Chancellor Venerable Senior Professor Gallelle Sumanasiri Thero, and Registrar Mr R.A. Piyarathana. The university conferred the respective academic qualifications to five classes of a total of 112 graduates from BPC:

- Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies: Class 2017
- Bachelor of Arts in Buddhist Studies: Class 2017
- Bachelor of Arts in Buddhist Studies: Class 2018
- Diploma in Buddhism: Class 2016/17
- Diploma in Buddhism: Class 2017/18

Notably, four graduates from Class 2018 of the Bachelor of Arts, namely Sister Lee Kim Neo Susie, Sister Phyu Phyu Htant, Sister Sing (Sim) Hui Huang Agnes and Brother Soe Ko Ko Htet were conferred the distinctive First Class Honours!

The graduates, accompanied by their families and friends, registered their attendance from 1.00 pm. Those receiving the BA and MA degrees donned the BPU gowns. At 2.00 pm, the ceremony began with the procession of our distinguished guests from Sri Lanka, MV Chief Resident Monk Venerable U. Cittara, BPC Acting Principal Venerable Pupule Seelananda Thero, MV Chairman Dr Lim Ah Swan, MV Honorary Secretary Sister Rosalie Boon, BPCA Chairman Brother Kovida Jebsons Chia and others.

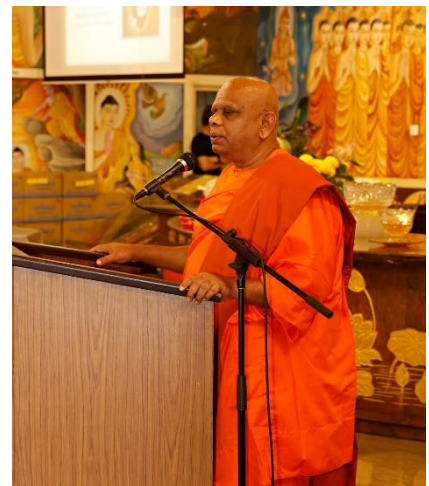


Leading the procession was Venerable Senior Professor Gallelle Sumanasiri Thero, Vice Chancellor, Buddhist and Pali University

After all were seated, Venerable U. Cittara led the opening chanting and recitation of the five precepts, followed by a welcome address by Venerable Pupule Seelananda Thero. There were also speeches by Venerable Senior Professor Gallelle Sumanasiri Thero and Her Excellency Sashikala Premawardhane. Brother Ng Hock Chye (MA 2017), on behalf of the graduates, expressed gratitude to BPU and BPC for the utmost gifts of Buddhist education and Dhamma.



Welcome address by Venerable Pupule Seelananda Thero, Acting Principal, Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore



Speech by Venerable Senior Professor Gallelle Sumanasiri Thero, Vice Chancellor, Buddhist and Pali University



Speech by High Commission of Sri Lanka to Singapore, Her Excellency Sashikala Premawardhane

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Brother Ng Hock Chye (MA 2017), Graduate Representative

On this joyous occasion, Venerable Senior Professor Gallele Sumanasiri Thero launched the [BPC official website](#) designed and managed by Brother Patrick Lim. He also presented certificates on behalf of BPU to the BPC lecturers to thank them for tirelessly dedicating themselves to the noble cause of BPC.



Dr Ng Yuen Yen receiving the certificate



Teacher Lily Chan receiving the certificate

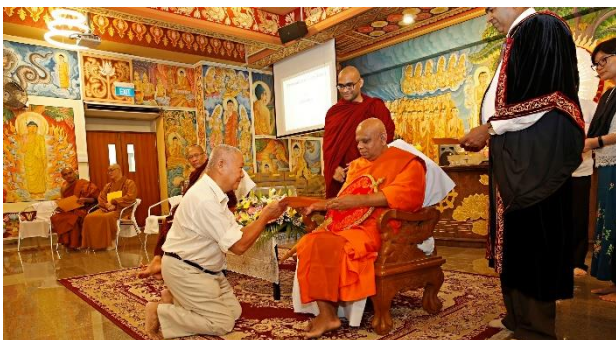


Venerable U. Cittara receiving the certificate. Looking on was Mr R.A. Piyarathana, Registrar, Buddhist and Pali University



Teacher Leong Huey Miin receiving the certificate

After the heart-warming session of acknowledging the BPC lecturers, Her Excellency Sashikala Premawardhane presented the Diploma certificates to the graduates from Classes 2017/18 and 2018/19.



Dr Atula Foo receiving the certificate



Brother Kim Jong Hyun (Class of 2016/17) receiving Diploma



Teacher Ong Keng Boon receiving the certificate



Sister Zhang Wen Xi (Class of 2017/18) receiving Diploma

Our Activities!

Thereafter, Venerable Senior Professor Gallele Sumanasiri Thero conferred the respective degrees and scrolls to the graduates of the BA Classes 2017 and 2018, and MA Class 2017.



Brother Kyaw Kyaw Naing (Class of 2017) receiving BA degree



Venerable Thalahagama Ananda (Class 2018) receiving BA degree



Brother Lee Ding Yi Tag (Class of 2017) receiving MA degree



Sister Sandra Koh (Class of 2017) receiving MA degree

After the graduates were conferred their academic qualifications, Dr Lim Ah Swan presented souvenirs to our distinguished guests from Sri Lanka.



Dr Lim Ah Swan presenting a souvenir to Mr R.A. Piyaathana, Registrar, Buddhist and Pali University

To mark this special occasion, the graduates took group photos with our distinguished guests from Sri Lanka and BPC Acting Principal and lecturers. They were each given a copy of the graduation magazine specially printed for the occasion and treated to a sumptuous refreshment. Many graduates also visited the photo booth managed by Brother Patrick Lim to take "studio" photos individually or as a group.



Ag Principal Venerable Pupule Seelananda Thero and lecturers, Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore



Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies, Class of 2017



Bachelor of Arts in Buddhist Studies, Classes of 2017 and 2018



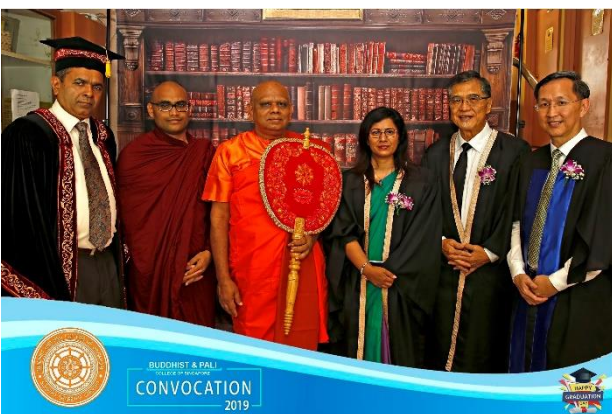
Diploma in Buddhism, Class of 2016/17



Diploma in Buddhism, Class of 2017/18



The Big Family of the Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore



*"Studio" photo taken by Brother Patrick Lim.
(L-R) Mr R.A. Piyarathana, Venerable Pupule Seelananda Thero, Venerable Senior Professor Gallele Sumanasiri Thero, Her Excellency Sashikala Premawardhane, Dr Lim Ah Swan, Brother Kovida Jebsons Chia*

Sadhu to all the graduates for the successful completion of their courses in BPC! BPCA wishes them the very best in their endeavours ahead!

Photo Credit: Brother Patrick Lim

BPC Diploma Students' Temple Tour, 1 December 2019

For the past 11 years, BPC has been organizing a temple tour annually to expose the students of its Diploma classes to the three traditions of Buddhism.

The Diploma students of Class 2019/20, who started the academic year on 6 or 8 October 2019, gathered at 8.30 am on 1 December 2019 (Sunday) at Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple) for a temple tour led by Teachers Jasmine Tan and Leong Huey Miin. The tour also provided a rare opportunity for the students from the two campuses at MV and Poh Ming Tse Temple to come together and interact. Those from the same campus could also take the time to find out more about their classmates outside the classroom setting.



Briefing by Teacher Leong Huey Miin in the coach

The first stop of the temple tour was Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery of the Mahayana tradition, at 184 Jalan Toa Payoh. The monastery was built progressively on vast land generously donated by the late Mr Low Kim Pong, a wealthy Hokkien trader in Chinese medicine and a money-lender, in 1898. It was announced as the 19th national monument in 1980 by the Singapore Preservation of Monuments Board, making it the only Buddhist monastery to be given the status of a national monument.

The temple's volunteers briefed the BPC visitors on the temple's origin, Mahayana's emphasis on compassion and the concept of Bodhisattva who were enlightened beings deferring nibbāna to help others to reduce sufferings. They showed the BPC visitors around the sprawling temple compound and the magnificent Buddhist statues. The Mahāvira Hall, first completed in 1907, was the most important and decorated hall in the temple. Inside the hall was Buddhas of the three worlds – Shakyamuni Buddha, Medicine Buddha and Amitabha Buddha. Shakyamuni Buddha statue was flanked by his two chief disciples, namely Venerable Mahākassapa and Venerable Ānanda. Behind the statues was a white jade Guan Yin Bodhisattva from Myanmar since 1903. There was also a Reclining Buddha in another hall.

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Reclining Buddha statue, Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery

The BPC visitors proceeded to Guan Yin Dian sited at the far eastern side of the monastery. In the hall was the 11.2 metre tall statue of Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva – the personification of great compassion and mercy – with a thousand hands and a thousand eyes. The walls above the doors on two sides were also filled with 3,000 copper figures of Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva.



Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery

In the open courtyard in front of the Guan Yin Dian was the Dragon Light Pagoda of about 29 metre tall. The wind chimes hang at the roof eaves were constantly tinkling in response to the air flow.



Seven-storey Dragon Light Pagoda with carvings around its base to depict the Buddha's life, Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery

The next stop of the temple tour was Sasanaransi Burmese Buddhist Temple at 14 Tai Gin Road. The temple was the first Burmese Buddhist temple built outside of Myanmar in the traditional style, appropriately adapted to the local conditions. Its magnificent marble Buddha statue was also the biggest enshrined outside of Myanmar.

When the BPC visitors arrived at the temple, the temple representatives were already waiting in the main hall. The host briefed the visitors on the Burmese Theravada tradition, the temple's history and how the eleven feet tall marble Buddha statue was transported from then Burma to the temple in Singapore. The BPC visitors also learned about the Burmese tradition of short term child monk ordination, which aimed at allowing Burmese to start young in learning the precepts and vinaya rules. They saw several child monks, probably aged seven to ten, playing joyfully in the temple. After the briefing, the temple monks conducted a puja and blessed the BPC visitors.



Biggest marble Buddha statue outside of Myanmar, Sasanaransi Burmese Buddhist Temple

The BPC visitors proceeded to the third storey of the temple where they were showed a standing Buddha statue set in a spacious and tranquil meditation hall.



Standing Buddha statue in meditation hall, Sasanaransi Burmese Buddhist Temple



On behalf of BPC, Sisters Jasmine Tan and Leong Huey Miin presented a token of appreciation to Sasanaransi Burmese Buddhist Temple representative

The last stop of the temple tour was Amitabha Buddhist Centre at 44 Lorong 25A Geylang – a temple of Vajrayana tradition. It was established in 1989 as a centre for the study and practice of Mahayana Buddhism based on the Gelug tradition of the Tibetan master, Lama Tsong Khapa and following the lineage of Lama Thubten Yeshe and the Spiritual Director, Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche. It was associated with the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, an international Buddhist organisation founded by Lama Thubten Yeshe and headquartered in the United States. Its current seven storey building since May 2007, was decorated with 120,000 LED lights on the rooftop as part of the extensive offerings to the Triple Gem of Buddhism. The building had distinctive architecture which skillfully combined the iconic style of traditional Tibetan monasteries and contemporary urban design.

The BPC visitors met up with Venerable Thubten Chodron, an American Tibetan Buddhist nun. She was an author or editor of more than 25 books on Buddhism. She gave a dhamma talk to the BPC visitors on the similarities and differences among the various Buddhist traditions, and emphasized that all had the same core teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha which encompassed the three marks of existence (impermanence, sufferings and non-self), the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.



Dhamma Talk by Venerable Thubten Chodron, Amitabha Buddhist Centre

Next, the BPC visitors proceeded to the second storey of the building where the prayer hall was, and were briefed about the temple's origin and history.

At the end of the temple tour, the BPC students had a better appreciation of the three traditions of Buddhism and how Buddhism, having been propagated to different countries, was assimilated into the respective local cultures and yet, did not lose the shine of its core teachings. They also deepened the comradery among them and made friends who would support them in their Buddhist pursuits and spiritual development in the years to come.



Examination Seasons, October and December 2019

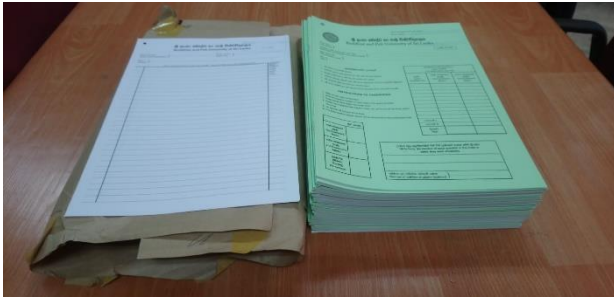
In March 2019, the students of the Diploma, General Arts Qualifying (GAQ), BA1, BA2 and MA classes started to register for the examinations. After the close of the registration, BPC Acting Principal Venerable Pupule Seelananda Thero made a trip personally to the Buddhist and Pali University (BPU) of Sri Lanka to register the students' candidature for BPU's external examinations.

October and December were the seasons of the year for the examinations, which most BPC students would dread. Even though the teachers had conducted revision classes and BPC had granted study leave of more than a month, the students in general still got butterflies in their stomach. They lamented for not reading up their class notes earlier as they dragged their feet into the examination hall – Chew Quee Neo Hall at Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple) [MV].

The Diploma examinations took place from 19 to 21 October 2019 (Saturday to Monday), ahead of the degree examinations held later in December 2019. This was because the academic year for the Diploma classes started in October in the preceding year while that for the degree classes started in January 2019. With five subjects to be covered in 2.5 days, the Diploma examinations were efficient in having:

- Two subjects each on the first two days and one subject on the third and last day.
- The candidates to spend both the morning and afternoon on the first two days in MV, with each half-day devoted to taking the examination of one subject for three hours.
- Lunch break of one hour between the morning and afternoon sessions on the first two days. Lunch was cooked by the MV kitchen helpers out of compassion for the candidates. Sadhu to them for the kindness and support!

Invigilator assigned by BPU was specially flown in to conduct the examinations supported by the two BPC administrative staff. For the degree examinations held from 2 to 13 December 2019 (Monday to Friday), Venerable Rideegama Wanarathana Thero, a lecturer from the Department of Buddhist Culture of BPU, was the invigilator. He brought from Sri Lanka 23 sealed envelopes of examination papers for all the subjects of the GAQ, BA1, BA2 and MA classes. Also in his luggage were some 100 answer booklets and several rims of loose sheets for the candidates to fill up with their answers, as well as a rubber stamp bearing BPU's name, pieces of white string, etc.



The examination answer booklets and loose sheets

A couple of days before the start of the examinations, BPC firmed up the seating arrangements based on the candidates' index numbers given by BPU. The administrative staff set up the tables and chairs in Chew Quee Neo Hall and carefully pasted each and every index number on the table of the assigned seat.

GAQ and BA1 students took their examinations on the same alternate days – GAQ in the morning and BA1 in the afternoon. The following day would be the examinations for MA and BA2 students – MA in the morning and BA2 in the afternoon. This schedule facilitated some candidates in taking the examinations for subjects of different levels.

Before the start of each examination paper, the invigilator invited two candidates randomly to sign on the sealed envelope which contained copies of the examination paper, to confirm that the envelope had not been tampered with. Thereafter, he opened the envelope and took out the examination papers for distribution to the candidates.



This envelope, sealed on 22 November 2019 by Mr E.A. Gunasena, Deputy Registrar (Post Graduate Degrees and External Examination) of BPU, contained 30 copies of the examination paper for the GAQ subject, "Emergence of Buddhism and Basic Buddhist Teachings"



GAQ class taking the examination



Venerable Rideegama Wanarathana Thero was invigilating the MA class

Other than the examination paper, each candidate was also given an answer booklet and one loose sheet for use as rough paper. Those who filled up their answer booklet were given more loose sheets to continue writing. To prevent cheating, each loose sheet was dated, stamped with BPU's name and signed by the invigilator. By the end of the three hours, the candidates stopped writing and used the white string to fasten any loose sheets which they had written on to their answer booklets. They also wrote on the booklet cover the examination name, the subject, their index number and the numbering of the questions attempted. Thereafter, they handed in their answer booklets to the invigilator or the BPC administrative staff, and left the hall.



The beaming MA Class 2019 with Venerable Rideegama Wanarathana Thero after the last examination paper on 13 December 2019

After all the examinations were done, Venerable Rideegama Wanarathana Thero flew back to Sri Lanka on 14 December 2019 (Saturday) morning. In his luggage were the answer booklets for marking and scoring by the BPU lecturers. The results of the Diploma and degree examinations would be released in January and April 2020 respectively.

BPCA would like to congratulate the graduating classes, namely the MA and BA2 classes, for having accomplished a significant milestone in Buddhist education. We hope that the BA graduates would join the MA programme under the new syllabus in 2021. As for the students from the Diploma, GAQ and BA1 classes, BPCA wishes them a fruitful learning as they progress into the next level of their Buddhist studies.

Photo Credit: Sister Sandra Koh

Activities Line-Up

To foster a closer bonding among BPC alumni and students, BPCA committee has organised a 6 day 5 night trip to Sukhothai in Thailand, from 1 to 6 February 2020. Due to overwhelming response, registration has closed. But do watch out for the next issue of the e-bulletin to find out what the participants have experienced in the trip. Our other activities are set out below.

Schedule	Activity	How to Apply
5 January 2020 (Sunday)	Classes commence for GAQ, BA1 and BA2 at Mangala Vihara (Buddhist Temple) [MV], 30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495	Students who have completed the preceding level of study.
1-6 February 2020 (Saturday to Thursday)	Trip to Sukhothai in Thailand	Registration closed. Tour fully booked.
19 February to 22 April 2020 (every Wednesday), 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm	20 th run of Introduction to Buddhism Course at MV, 30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495	Register at http://mv.org.sg
30 April 2020 (Thursday), 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm; 1 and 2 May 2020 (Friday and Saturday), 9.00 am to 4.00 pm; and 3 May 2020 (Sunday), 1.00 pm to 5.30 pm	Certificate Course in Buddhist Counselling (Anusasana) at MV, 30 Jalan Eunos, Singapore 419495	Register via: - SMS to Sister Lynn Choy at 82889888; or - Email to Sister Vera Yap at bpca2017sg@gmail.com
7 May 2020 (Thursday), 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.
22-25 May 2020 (Friday to Monday)	Workshop in Sri Lanka for MA teachers to be involved in teaching the new syllabus for the MA programme from 2021 onwards	Not applicable

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.

We look forward to hearing from you soon!

Om̐dhū, Om̐dhū, Om̐dhū!