

## **REPORT ON THE 2010 MEMBER MEETING OF ASSOCIATION OF THERAVADA BUDDHIST UNIVERSITIES**

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The 2010 Meeting of Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities (ATBU) was held at Mahamakut Buddhist University (MBU), in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand, from the 30<sup>th</sup> of September until the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2010 together with the MBU International Conference 2010. The conference was organized as a celebration of the 117<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Mahamakut Buddhist University and the 97<sup>th</sup> Birthday of His Holiness Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara, Supreme Patriarch of Thailand and President of Mahamakut Buddhist University Council.

The MBU International Conference 2010 was hosted by MBU and organized in cooperation with ATBU on the main theme of **Dissemination of Theravada Buddhism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**. The conference has been received widely by ATBU member universities and general public. Thai media was very interested and widely covered both in English and Thai language media. There were nearly six hundred people attended over the two-day conference. The conference was very capably prepared by a planning committee operated by Ven. Anil Sakya, Deputy-Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences, MBU and Honorary Treasurer of ATBU. The organizing of the conference benefitted from the support of senior administrative and staff of MBU as well as students from MBU Isan collage of Northeast of Thailand who helped with the considerable tasked involved. The organization was absolutely exemplary.

The academic program began with an inaugural speech by His Holiness Somdet Phra Wanarat, member of the Sangha Supreme Council of Thailand, Acting Head of the Dhammayuttika Order, Advisor of the Training Institute For Dhammaduta Bhikkhus Going Abroad and Vice-President of Mahamakut Buddhist University Council. It was followed by a welcome address of the Most Venerable Phra Theppariyattivimol, MBU Rector which was read out by Ven. Assistant Professor Phra Maha Panya Panyavuddho, Deputy-Rector for Administration Affairs because the Ven. Rector was sick and not able to attend the conference. Then it was followed by a video presentation on the 117<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of MBU.

The keynote lecture on '*Dissemination of Theravada Buddhism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*' was delivered by Professor Richard Gombrich of Oxford University, UK. The lecture was very thought provoking and challenging for people working in the field of dissemination of Theravada Buddhism. Over afternoon and the next day there were morning and afternoon sessions of paper presentations and panel discussion. There were six main papers and one brief presentation from a MBU doctoral student in total. These were complemented by cultural performance from the students of MBU Isan College as well as receptions, excursions, a general meeting and a memorable farewell ceremony.

### **Presentations**

The main theme of the conference was '*Dissemination of Theravada Buddhism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*,' and it was explored through six papers covering various aspects of the main theme by invited scholars as follows:

1. *The role of Mahasi Vipassana meditation tradition in dissemination of Buddhism in the world after the World War II* presented by Ven. Dr. Dhammapiya from International Theravada Missionary Buddhist University (ITMBU), Myanmar.
2. *Renaissance of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal: Prospect and Problem* presented by Dr. Keshab Shakya, Former Vice-Chair Lumbini Development Trust, Nepal.
3. *Role of Multimedia in Dissemination of Buddhism* presented by Dr. Titus Leber, an independent writer and director of films from Austria.
4. *Christian Reflection on Buddhist Mission* presented by Rev. Dr. Gregory Sharkey SJ., Boston University, USA.
5. *Possibilities for the Dissemination of Theravada Buddhism in Islamic Nations* presented by Dr. Dion Oliver Peoples, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand
6. *Thai Dhammaduta in the world* presented by Ven. Dr. Anil Sakya, Mahamakut Buddhist University, Thailand.

One of the highlights of the conference was the panel discussion towards the end of the conference. The panel discussion was eagerly participated by distinguished panelists and many questions and comments from the floor. There were six distinguished panelists in the panel discussion and it was moderated by Ven. Dr. Anil Sakya. The panelists included

1. *The Most Ven. Dr. Ashin Nyanissara*, ATBU Chairman and President of Sitagu Buddhist Academy, Myanmar.
2. *Professor Richard Gombrich*, Oxford University, UK.
3. *Ven. Dr. Dhammapiya*, ITMBU, Myanmar.
4. *Dr. Rabindra Panth*, Director of Nava Nalanda University, India.
5. *Dr. Tilak Kariyawasam*, International Buddhist College, Pak Chong, Thailand.
6. *Mr. Thanakorn Chusukserm*, MBU Isan College.

### **ATBU Meeting**

On this same occasion, a meeting of the Executive Committee of ATBU was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, 2010 at Somdet Phra Nyanavarodom Meeting Room, MBU. Here is a summary of the various resolutions passed at the ATBU Exco Meeting and the General Meeting of the members:

1. The Most Ven. Aggamahapandita Dr. Ashin Nyanissara assumed the Chair. After paying homage to the Buddha, Ven. Dr. Nyanissara delivered the opening speech. He thanked the MBU for hosting the 2010 MBU International Conference on *Dissemination of Theravada Buddhism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. He also appreciated Dr. Keshab Shakya's presentation on *Renaissance of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal: Prospect and Problem* and suggested strengthening Buddhism in the Buddha's birth place. There is also a need to protect Buddhism in countries like Indonesia, where the Borobudur is lilac an open museum. Ven. Nyanissara concluded his speech chancing all speakers and advised that we must not be afraid to propagate and protect Buddhism; and the practice of Pariyatti and Paripatti are necessary for the promotion of Buddhism.
2. Ven. Dr. Anil Sakya gave a verbal report on the development of ATBU and a written report will be submitted later. Ven. Dr. Anil Sakya reported that academic exchanges create atmosphere of co- operation and unity among members. For example:

- a) The Pali conference held in 2009, organized by MBU and ATBU was very successful and a great achievement of ATBU.
  - b) Members have been meeting each other at various conference held by different organizations.
  - c) Dr. Ravindra Panth informed the meeting that the outcome of exchanges with Nalanda University is that Pali is spoken at Nalanda University.
  - d) Ven. Dr. Anil Sakya also reported that the financial status of ATBU is on the website. Membership fees collected is used to open an account with Bank in ATBU's name.
3. The meeting unanimously accepted Nalanda Buddhist College (Indonesia) and Lumbini Buddhist University (Nepal) as new member of ATBU.
  4. The meeting also accepted Dr. Ravindra's proposal for Ven. Dr. Satyapala as member of Executive Committee?
  5. Ven. Dr. Anil Sakya read Ven. Dhammasami's absence's report. The meeting unanimously accepted Ven. Dhammasami's proposal of Ven. Dr. Pategama Gnanarama, Ven. Miriswaththe Wimalagnana, Ven. Dr. Ashin Katu and Dr. Ravindra's proposal of Ven. Dr. Chatchai Suchattajayo to form a committee to replace the position of chief Editor of the Pali Section of the ATBU Journal vacated by Ven. Dr. Kumanarabhivamsa.
  6. Issue on the main topic for 2011 ATBU General Conference was widely discussed at the meeting by members. The main focus was around 'Buddhist Education.'
  7. Date of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ATBU General Conference could not be finalized as the MBU rector of MBU was absent.
  8. Ven. Anil Sakya informed that MBU has successfully registered the ATBU under the Thai law. For the registration sake and to avoid complication of international membership, MBU has registered ATBU under new Executive Committee from MBU staff alone until it is now legally registered under Thai Law. The ATBU now has legal status in Thailand and it is entitled for all activities without legal barrier under the Thai laws. However, it has to be understood that the new ATBU Executive Committee set by MBU staff alone are just as proxies for the founding International ATBU Executive Committee.

It remains for me, in the name of the ATBU, to thank again to organizers of the MBU International conference 2010 for their excellent preparation and sponsorship. The conference represented the 'the light of Theravada Buddhism' and bodies well for the future of this flourishing field.

**Remarks:** Submitted at the Preparatory Meeting of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Theravada Buddhist Universities Conference at the ATBU conference room, Mahamakut Buddhist University, Thailand on 14<sup>th</sup> September BE 2554/CE 2011.