

Reflect

THE OXFORD CENTRE FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES
ANNUAL REVIEW 2017

The Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies promotes the study of Buddhist texts, societies, theories and practices. It is a Recognised Independent Centre (RIC) of the University of Oxford and was established in 2004.



Director's message



Over the last two years, the emphasis in the activities of the OCBS has shifted considerably. Until 2015, I had been giving an intensive beginners' course in Pali every year: I gave one in Oxford in August, and I also gave a few similar courses abroad. One of the students who enrolled for the course in August 2015 was Ilona Budapesti, who had studied both (modern) Chinese and Japanese to an impressively high level. Ilona is an activist by nature and very persuasive. She persuaded me and my colleagues that I should try to reach more pupils by giving the same course live online. She also demonstrated for us how to do it, and rapidly set up the Pali Online School (POS). Within the next four months, three courses were held successfully. Since then, I have held two more.

At the beginning of this year, Alex Wynne and I gave a version of the introductory course in India to 15 students from the Dept. of Pali, University of Mumbai. They had been selected by their teacher, Dr Yojana Bhagat, who was present throughout the course and made admirable arrangements. The enthusiasm of the students was deeply moving.

I used the August slot to give a less formal course in Oxford, an Advanced Pali Reading Course. I admitted only ten students and the course lasted ten days. I intend to repeat it, with quite different materials, this coming August.

This new focus on our Pali teaching activities has opened up some very exciting opportunities for the continuance, and indeed resurgence, of Pali teaching. This includes training new teachers of our course, and translating the course into Marathi and Chinese!

You will find details of all these projects within the Annual Review, and we hope that you will join us, in whatever way you are able, on our odyssey into the future of Pali teaching.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Gombrich".

PROFESSOR RICHARD GOMBRICH
DIRECTOR, OXFORD CENTRE FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES
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DID YOU KNOW?

The Centre provides one to one support in reading texts with students from all over the world.

Highlights of the past year



Lectures/visitors

Scholars from around the world came to Oxford via the OCBS for research work and to deliver lectures.



IOP Symposium

The centre hosted a joint symposium with the Institute of Oriental Philosophy entitled “*The Possibility of Buddhism for the future of Humankind*”. This was hosted at Wolfson College on 6 – 7 April 2016.



Journal

Our Journal is now in its 6th year. Contributions continue apace, and many prominent universities around the world subscribe.



Archive

The Centre has been intensively involved in digitizing the entire archive of Professor Gombrich's articles and book reviews. As this goes to print, the uploading to our website is about to start!



So-wide visitorship

The So-wide visitorship continues, bringing a scholar monk/nun from a Buddhist country for a term to Oxford every year for fruitful interactions with students.



Adult Outreach

Last year we inaugurated what will be an annual 'Introduction to Buddhism' course, delivered in Oxford.



Podcasts

The Centre continues to upload audio documents of lectures which it has arranged.

“The OCBS provides me with invaluable support and is an important part of developing the field of Buddhist Studies at the University of Oxford.”

PROFESSOR ZACCHETTI
NUMATA CHAIR OF
BUDDHIST STUDIES

Teaching Pali...

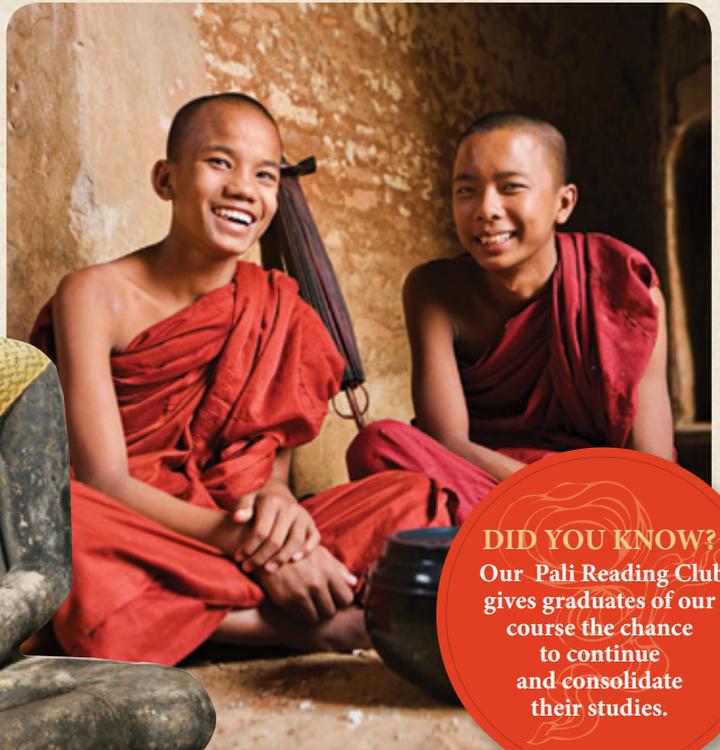
Although there are many primers for learning Pali in English, and some in other European languages, most of those in use follow ancient Indian tradition by showing how Pali grammar is related to that of Sanskrit. The OCBS course book says: “Learning Pali by way of Sanskrit is a terribly long way round. For a research scholar, who wants to bring fresh insights to bear on the Pali texts, knowing Sanskrit is in the end essential; but not for anyone else.” (sec.3).

The OCBS course differs from all others known to us both in content and in method. In content, details of Pali which are alien to Sanskrit (e.g., its use of the “dative” case) are pointed out. In method, the gap is far wider. We assume that what students will want from the course is the ability to read Pali texts for themselves, not to write or to converse in Pali. We discourage spending effort on learning by heart, and substitute instruction in how to use works of reference. Looking things up is a virtue, not a failing. We likewise discourage attempts to learn fast, and urge students to concentrate

on accuracy, not speed. We also draw attention to how one can learn from fellow students, and ask them to work together in small groups.

This format has proved transferable to online teaching. Although labour-intensive, it remains a very effective method for learning Pali. This format has enabled us to reach people worldwide who aren't able to travel to Oxford. We are putting in place support structures to enable course graduates to continue their studies. (See below).

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DID YOU KNOW?
Our Pali Reading Club gives graduates of our course the chance to continue and consolidate their studies.

... in the future

Creating a Chinese version

In October 2015 a fortuitous encounter led to a very dynamic individual becoming a Trustee of the OCBS. One of the tasks that she has greatly assisted in is helping us get the course translated into Chinese.

Once that is done, we have a plan to recruit and train a few bright students who would be prepared themselves to become teachers of the course. The hope is thus to create a pyramid of Pali teachers, to charge a royalty for use of our course and thus to gain an income for the OCBS, while making the Buddha's teaching much more accessible to the people of China.

Creating a Marathi version

This should in principle be an enterprise similar to the Chinese one, but may turn out to be slightly more difficult. The initial problem is turning out to be finding the right grammatical terminology. The grammatical system worked out by Panini and his school in India round the 4th century BC in order to analyse Sanskrit can be, and to some extent has been, used also for the teaching and analysis of the languages descended from Sanskrit, of which Marathi is one. To use it to explain Pali would, like using the Sanskrit language itself, enormously complicate the whole enterprise.

English grammar is simpler, and thus easier to learn. Marathi speakers who have been taught English have little trouble in learning or revising the grammar they were taught when they studied English. But to produce a Pali grammar based on English would produce a strange hybrid, accessible only to the middle classes. This would not democratise knowledge of Pali; and in turn means that the very followers of Dr Ambedkar who most want and need to learn Pali in order fully to understand their religion would rarely if ever be benefitted. We are working with Dr. Yojana Bhagat, Head of Pali at the University of Mumbai, to enlist the help of native Marathi speakers to create a Marathi version of the course.



DID YOU KNOW?

A recent interview with Prof. Gombrich on a Chinese language website received 500,000 hits in just 24 hours.

Financial statement

year ending 31 March 2016

The OCBS completed the financial year ending March 2016 with £38,228 in reserves, an increase of £8,255 on 2014/5. With annual expenditures of £69,985, the reserves represent approximately six months of operating costs. Whilst the Board regards this as satisfactory in the current funding climate, the objective remains to increase reserves to the equivalent of one year's operating expenditure in order to provide greater security for continued operations of the OCBS.

Income Statement	Restricted funds	Unrestricted funds	2016	2015
Incoming Resources				
Voluntary Income		30,747	30,747	40,521
Activities for generating funds	9,017	37,326	46,343	28,358
Investment Income		150	150	4
Total Incoming Resources	9,017	68,223	77,240	68,883
Resources Expended				
Cost of generating voluntary income		(927)	(927)	(4,331)
<i>Charitable activities</i>				
Education	(9,931)	(56,700)	(66,631)	(73,263)
<i>Governance costs</i>		(1,427)	(1,427)	(1,363)
<i>Other Resources Expended</i>				
Total Resources Expended	(9,931)	(59,054)	(68,985)	(78,957)
Net Income/Expenditure	(914)	9,169	8,255	(10,074)
Total Funds Brought Forward	3,150	26,823	29,973	40,047
Total Funds Carried Forward	2,236	35,992	38,228	29,973

Balance Sheet	2016	2015
Fixed Assets	590	850
Current Assets		
Debtors	6,650	2,895
Cash at bank & in hand	38,485	32,398
Total	45,135	35,293
Creditors (within 1 year)	(7,497)	(6,170)
Net assets	38,228	29,973
Funds		
Unrestricted funds	35,992	26,823
Restricted funds	2,236	3,150
Total Funds	38,228	29,973

This financial summary is taken from the annual report and financial statements of the OCBS for the year ending 31st March 2016, approved by the Board of Trustees.

Financial realities of the OCBS

Core Funding

£2 million endows the Centre's core running costs for perpetuity.

£80,000 covers core costs for one year.

Target Funding

£4,000 allows us to run continuing educational support for Pali course graduates for one year.

£40,000 pays for the Academic Director for one year.

£3,500 allows us to train a Chinese aspirant in Oxford so that they can teach and promulgate our course in China.

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The Centre wishes to thank Dr. Thet Thet Nwe, The Institute of Oriental Philosophy, Dharmachai International Research Institute and the 60th Dharmachai Education Foundation, Christine Tong, Sanjukta Gombrich, The Oxford Buddha Vihara, The Doris Field Charitable Trust and The Pye Charitable Settlement for their generous support.

DID YOU KNOW?

We are opening our borrowing library to anyone who lives in the Oxford area, with the catalogue listed online.

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