

Dr. Pyi Phyo KYAW
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Short biography

Dr Pyi Phyo Kyaw is Senior Lecturer in Theravada Studies at Shan State Buddhist University, Taunggyi, Myanmar. She is also a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at King's College, London, United Kingdom. She studied BA in Economics and Management at Oxford University, before completing her MA in Buddhist Studies at SOAS, University of London, in 2010, and her PhD in Buddhist Philosophy at King's College, London in 2014.

She has undertaken meditation practice within different meditation traditions in Myanmar since 2005. She also teaches Vipassana meditation in Budapest, Hungary.

Research Interests

- Burmese Buddhism
- *Abhidhamma* (Theravada Analytical Philosophy)
- Buddhist Economics, especially Buddhist microeconomics
- Buddhist Meditation, especially *Abhidhamma* meditation
- Traditional Buddhist Pedagogy
- Applied Buddhism, especially Buddhist mathematics
- Meditation in Theravada Buddhism

Her research interests bridge the fields of Theravada Buddhist Studies and Burma Studies, and primarily concern living traditions of Burmese Theravada Buddhism. She has extensive fieldwork experience in Myanmar. She has translated Burmese writings on meditation and biographies into English, and given talks on a variety of subject including Buddhist analytical philosophy, Buddhist education and meditation.

She has also undertaken intensive meditation practice within different Buddhist traditions since 2005, and monastic training in Myanmar as a precept-nun in nunneries based at Pyay (formerly Prome) and Sagaing. In addition, she has received traditional *Abhidhamma* training from experts in *Abhidhamma* studies from Yangon, Sagaing and Mingun. In September 2012, she passed oral examinations held by the *Abhidhamma* Propagation Association in Yangon on the *Mātikā* (Abstract) of the *Abhidhamma* and the *Pañhāvāra* (Investigation Chapter) of the *Paṭṭhāna* (Conditional Relations) with distinctions.

Her PhD research combined a textual and Buddhological approach with exploration of present-day Burmese practices using fieldwork, demonstrating the use of *Abhidhamma*, Theravada analytical philosophy in a variety of contemporary and recent historical settings associated with ritual, meditation, recitation, memorisation, and with pedagogic and mathematical practices. In doing so, she elucidated how the *Abhidhamma* has become – and is maintained as – an actively practised tradition unique to Burmese Buddhism. The main focus of this research is on the *Abhidhamma* text, the *Paṭṭhāna*, a late canonical Pali text, which deals with the functioning of causality and uses the mathematics of

enumeration and combinatorics to do so. The research looks at how the *Paṭṭhana* has developed and is utilised in Burma in recent centuries, revealing its ongoing significant role in modern Burmese Buddhism. This extends beyond textual studies into ritual, magical and meditative practices.

Her current research focuses on the relationship between *Abhidhamma* and *Vipassanā* (insight) meditation, exploring how and to what extent the teachings in the *Abhidhamma* are applied in meditation practices, and assessing the roles of theoretical knowledge of ultimate realities, i.e., the most basic constituents of reality, in meditation.