lamp of wisdom
2009 NUS BUDDHIST SOCIETY
Buddhism in Asia Global Programme 2009 was first conceptualized in December 2008, when three students from the University Scholars Programme (USP) developed a sudden interest in religious studies after their field trip to Cambodia. While there have been previous study trips organized by the USP to study Christianity and Islam, there has been no such attempt to study Buddhism, one of the world’s largest religions. What resulted was their own study trip in order to conduct what they saw as a fascinating and niche academic examination of Buddhism.

Participants:
1. Anisha Anne Johnson
2. Chong Eng Ket William
3. Chong Li Yue
4. Elvis Chong
5. Kia Jie Hui
6. Lee Yean Chert
7. Ng Xin Zhao
8. Ouyang Huixian
9. Swati Gupta
10. Tan Min Qi Alicia
11. Tan Zhen Yue Michelle

Academic Mentors:
Dr Pattana Kitiarsa
Southeast Asian Studies Programme,
National University of Singapore

Chia Meng Tat Jack
Department of History,
National University of Singapore
Focus

> experience first-hand the variations of Buddhism in Asia, namely those in Singapore, Thailand and Taiwan

> foster an appreciation of multiculturalism and deepen understanding of how Buddhism has been integrated into the local context

> develop a personal understanding and a better appreciation of the rich fabric of cultural and religious diversity that is distinctive of Asia

Reflections

Studying Buddhism in English

To open the Singapore-leg of our summer programme, we invited Venerable Bodhi and venerable Chuan Cheng for a mini-roundtable discussion about Buddhist studies in Singapore. Venerable Bodhi is a NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Alumnus, and holds a PhD from the University of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka. Venerable Chuan Cheng is an Assistant Professor with the Buddhist College of Singapore (BCS), and obtained his MA and PhD in Buddhist Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

The importance of English is what made sense for a Buddhist college to be set up in Singapore in the first place. The role of BCS graduates would be to promote Mahayana Buddhism internationally through an English medium.

The advent of colonialism has meant Buddhist Studies till recent years was built upon the works of western scholars. It can almost be said that “outsiders” to Buddhist cultures and traditions have dominated the field. This highlights the need for Buddhist “insiders” to master English. Only through the mastery of the “outsider’s” language can Asian Buddhist scholars regain the voice of authority over their own religion.