

## REPORT SENT FROM LONDON BUDDHIST VIHARA (WESAK CELEBRATIONS AT LONDON BUDDHIST VIHARA)

When at the presidential request of Ven Saddhatissa Thera, the incumbent of the London Buddhist Vihara, H. E. the Burmese Ambassador in London, U Aung Soe, stepped out on the balcony of the Vihara shortly after 9.30 a. m. on 2nd May, B. E. 2502, to hoist the Buddhist flag, the Wesak Celebrations in London were officially opened and a ceremony was repeated which marked a new epoch in the history of Buddhism in the West. As the Buddhist colours unfurled, the soft brilliance of summer morning gave gentle greeting to the message of Peace and Loving-kindness to all beings, while within the building beautiful flowers and decorations served to endorse the homage. In the Hall, where the Precepts had already been given, and where the President had already welcomed the distinguished gathering of Ven. Bhikkhus, Ambassadors of many countries and a general assembly representing many nations, the addresses of speakers were invited as H. E. U Aung Soe returned from his sacred mission.

Ven. Sayadaw U Thithila Aggamahāpaṇḍita opened the deliberations by giving his discourse. He stressed upon the significance of Wesak Festival and all that the term "Buddha" and "Buddhism" imply. He also said that the celebration of Wesak lies in practising the Precepts, and this is the only way to express gratitude to the Buddha who, with infinite compassion, showed the way to the Goal.

H. E. Mr. Gunasena de Soysa, the High Commissioner for Ceylon expressed his gratitude to Their Excellencies the Ambassadors of Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos for their presence. He emphasised that peace can be obtained only when people practise self-control and loving-kindness. His excellency also explained the purpose of the mission of the London Buddhist Vihara and urged for a common support. He welcomed Ven. Paññadīpa Mahathera who had, only recently, arrived in England to take part in the propagation of the Dhamma. Ven. Paññadīpa also spoke and explained the significance of Four Noble Truths.

Ven. Saddhatissa Thera concluded the proceedings with his Presidential address. He spoke of the manner of the Wesak Festival and stressed the importance of the individual effort. Ven. Thera elucidating the importance of Loving-kindness recalled that Asoka renounced the sword in favour of love, virtue. Surely the message which brought about this entire change of heart will bring peace again to the World.

The Wesak Celebrations at the Vihara continued for three days with a record attendance for observance of Aṭṭha-sīla, many sermons and informal talks in Sinhalese, English and Burmese; and showing of Buddhist films. The final event consisted, fittingly, in the showing of films of Lumbini, Bodha-Gaya, Isipatana and Kusinara and other neighbouring Sacred places in India, Ceylon, etc.