

Master Jiru's Reflections on the Launch of the MABS Program

If the Buddha's teachings are appropriately and effectively propagated, the Buddhist community will be inspired to explore the Dhamma more deeply and to cultivate rightful conduct through proper practice. To realize this core objective, education must be firmly established. The transmission of Buddhism requires capable people; education must remain a priority for its continuation and development.

About seven years ago, with funding from the Youth Buddhist Education Foundation (YBEF), we began offering a two-year part-time Diploma in Buddhist Studies (DBS) in collaboration with the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, under the name Right Mindfulness Training Academy (RMTA). Three cohorts have already completed the program, and the fourth is currently in progress. More recently, we have taken a step further by initiating a Master's program. Although student recruitment is indeed challenging, I would like to take this opportunity to share some reflections from my years of involvement in this project.

As a transnational Buddhist worker residing in the United States, I broadly categorize Dharma education and educational work into three levels:

1. Outreach education through regular temple activities.
2. In-depth education for intellectuals who love learning.
3. Specialized education for training future successors.

The first two are often more casual in nature, sometimes limited to faith-based learning. It is only upon advancing to the third category that education becomes the foundation for preserving the quality and roots of Buddhism over centuries, forming the grand plan for cultivating highly skilled professionals. RMTA has chosen this path. Our aspiration is to introduce the complete tradition of Asian Buddhism into the English-speaking world. We are determined to strive forward relentlessly, aiming to serve as a solid stepping stone.

The DBS program was initially held at the facilities of MABA before moving online in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the US. On March 29, 2023, our team traveled to Sri Lanka and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Postgraduate Institute of Buddhist and Pali Studies (PGIPBS) to jointly establish a two-year, part-time Master's in Buddhist Studies (MABS) program. This year, our long-held wish has finally been realized: the program is set to launch in March 2026, and recruitment is now underway.

Several notable features of the program deserve mention:

1. **Strong faculty** – The MABS program has a robust and highly qualified team of instructors. I am grateful to the RMTA working group for their dedication in bringing together such esteemed mentors.
2. **Practical focus** – The curriculum remains rooted in tradition while addressing contemporary realities, striving to stay relevant to the present age.
3. **Commitment to quality** – With the Sangha's oversight, we aim to ensure that the quality takes precedence over quantity, both for teachers and students.

The ultimate goal of Buddhist education is to fulfill the wholeness and noble sanctity of Dhamma learning. Teacher-student friendships, grounded in moral cultivation and wisdom, should reflect the exemplary model of Buddhist Sangha's educational spirit. Only heartfelt sincerity can inspire deeper and broader awakening; only a lofty vision can shoulder great responsibilities. Outstanding teachers and students together embody the most profound dimensions of Buddhist education. I sincerely welcome friends with interest, ideals, and self-discipline to join us on this path of bringing the Dharma to the world in English.