

BIOGRAPHY

OF

THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW
(Chatṭha Saṅgīti Pucchaka Agga Mahā Paṇḍita)



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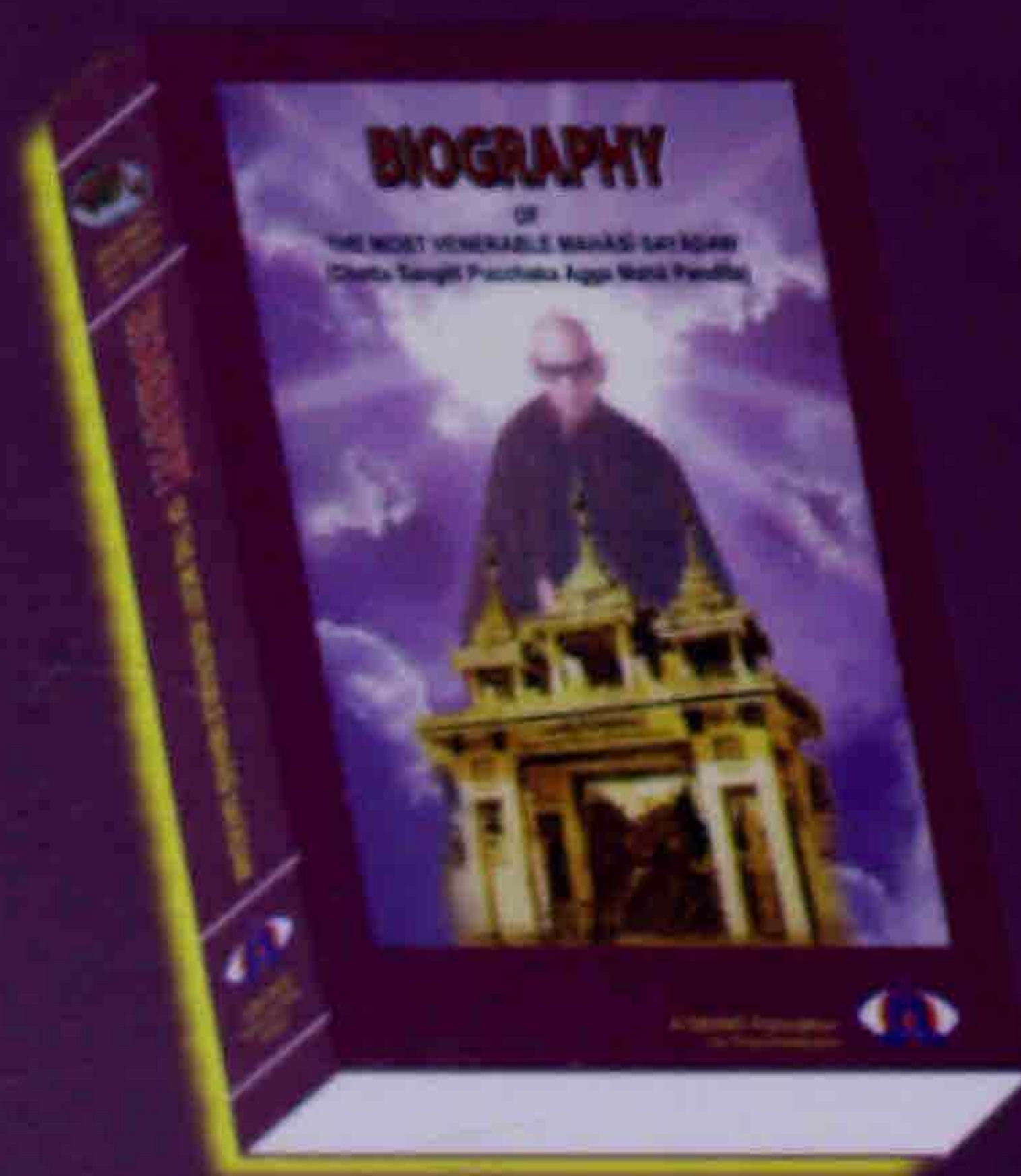
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FRONT COVER PHOTO

Gateway of Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha (Meditation Centre),
Hermitage Road, Kokine, Yangon, Myanmar
with background picture of Mahāsī Sayādaw.

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THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

**Buddhasāsana Nuggaha Organization
Mahāsi Thathāna Yeikthā
Rangoon**

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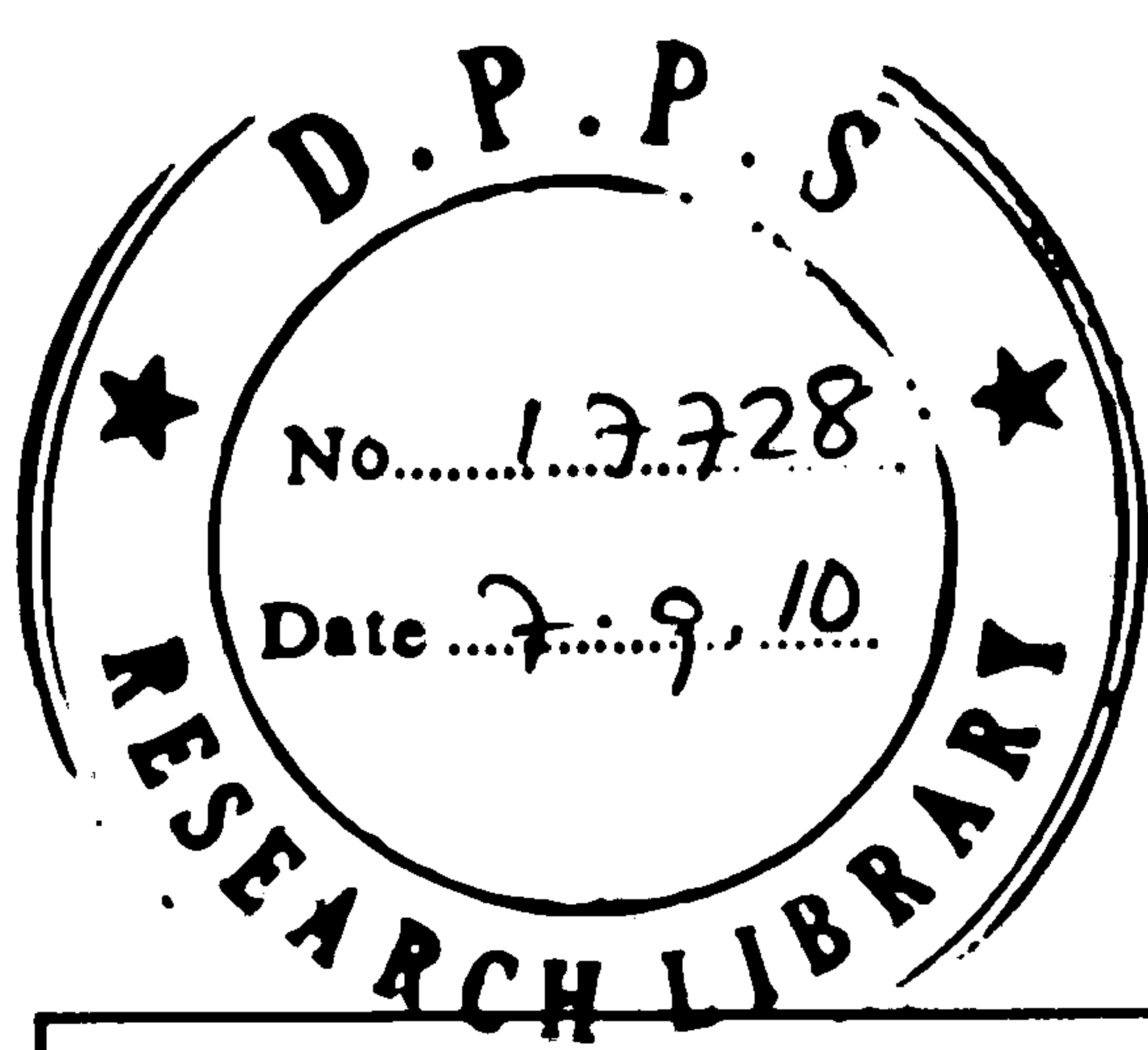
Written and Compiled by Ashin Sīlānandabhivamsa

Translated by U Min Swe (Min Kyaw Thu)

B.E. 2526

M.E. 1344

C.E. 1982



TO THE READER

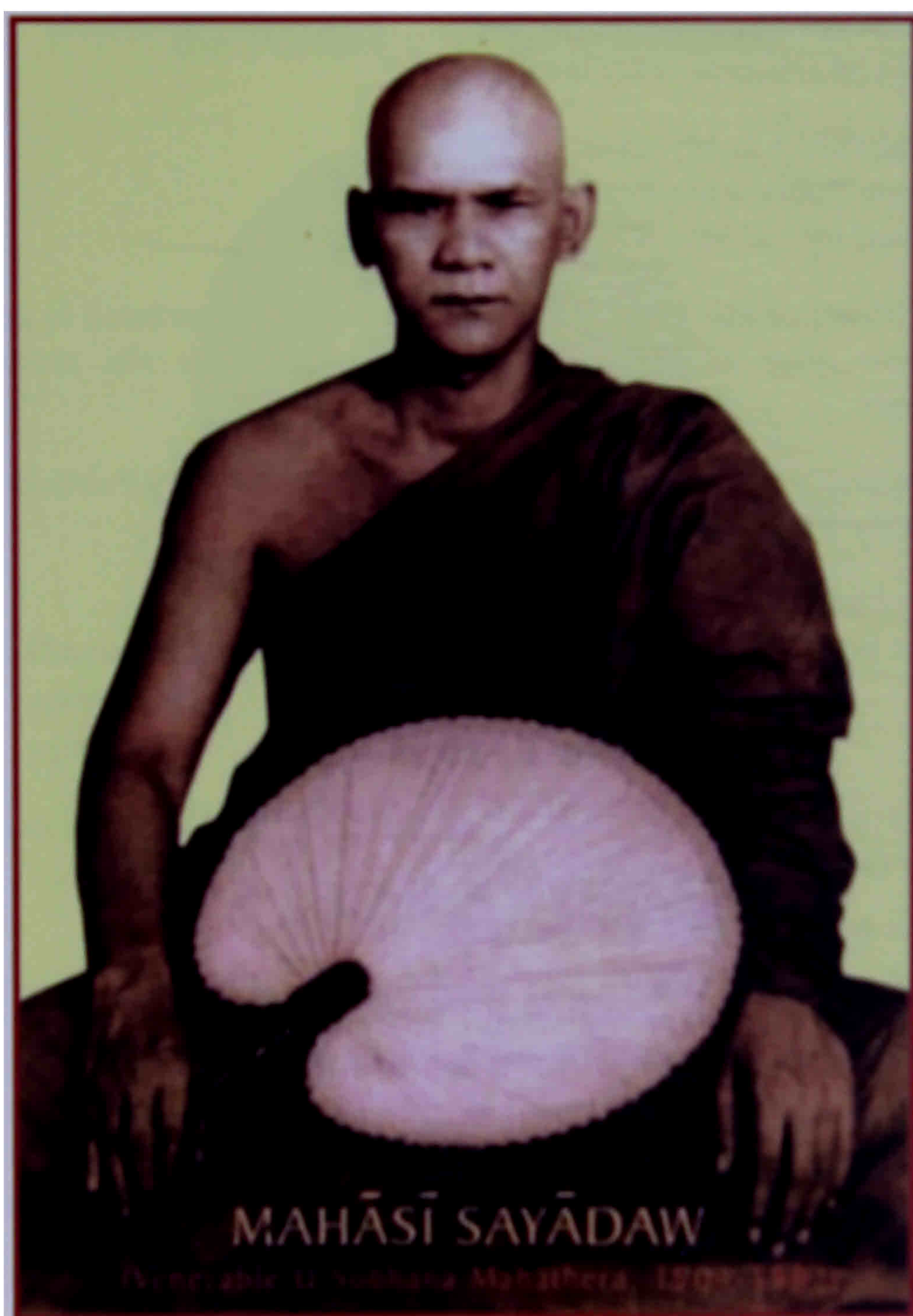
This 'Biography of the Most Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw' was written and compiled by the Venerable Ashin U Sīlānandabhivaṃsa. It is an accurate recording of the illustrious life of one of the most eminent Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā Meditation Teachers of the twentieth century.

This Gift of the Dhamma, greater than all gifts, which is now shared with you, comes from the hearts of many who have come into contact with the Teachings of the Buddha as expounded by the Most Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw.

You are advised to handle this book with great care; read it for the message it contains; share and make it known; so that others will continue to be inspired and strive for Nibbāna.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

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Sabbādanam dhammadānam jināti
The Gift of *Dhamma* excels all gifts

First Published in Myanmar 1982
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Permission for publication in Malaysia the Dhamma Discourses by Mahāsī Sayādaw (1904-1982) as Dhammadāna had been granted by Mahāsī Sayādaw (when Sayādaw was still alive) through Acara Suvanno Mahāthera of Malaysia (1920-2007).

*Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato
Sammāsambuddhassa*

Veneration to the Exalted One, the Homage-Worthy,
the Perfectly Self-Enlightened



The Buddha is an *Arahat* and he is worthy of the highest veneration. All beings including *devas* and *brahmas* venerate the Buddha because the Buddha is the Supreme One, who has extinguished all defilements, who has become perfectly self-enlightened through the realization of the Four *Ariya* Truths, and who is endowed with the six great qualities of glory, namely, *Issarya* (supremacy), *Dhamma* (knowledge of the path to *Nibbāna*), *Yasa* (fame and following), *Sirī* (noble appearance), *Kāma* (power of accomplishment) and *Payatta* (diligent mindfulness).

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw in many of his published discourses based on the *suttas* have brought the Buddha's Teachings to many who aspire for liberation from the vicious cycles of rebirth, i.e., *saṃsāra*. Numerous reprints of his discourses have been published by several Buddhist organizations; amongst them Selangor Buddhist Vipassana Meditation Society (SBVMS).



**Buddha Rūpa at Former
SBVMS Centre**

Secton 17, Petaling Jaya Centre

However, few indeed are so fortunate as to come across a book on the Biography of this Great Meditation Master who was competent in imparting to both monks and laity the essence of the Buddha's Discourses (*pariyatti*) and promoting the right method of practice (*paṭipatti*) for liberation from *saṃsāra*. Only 2,000 copies of this biography were first published in Myanmar in 1982 and since then no reprints were made.

To intimate readers to an in-depth knowledge of the life of one of the greatest contemporary *Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā* Meditation Teachers of our time, this 2009 edition of the Biography of the Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw compiled in 1974 by Venerable Ashin Sīlānandabhivamsa is now made available through the initiative and dedicated hard work of Tan Guan Chai (known to many as Uncle Tan) of SBVMS. This edition is updated to include (i) Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw's World Mission translated by U Kyin, which was first published in the Mahāsī Golden Jubilee Magazine, 1997, (ii) 'The Passing Away

of the Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw recorded by Bhikkhu U Aggacara, (iii) Mahāsī Sayādaw as Retold by Venerable Sayādaw U Sīlānandabhivamsa, and (iv) 2 Appendices on the Great Buddhist Councils for ease of reference of readers who wish to know a bit more about them.

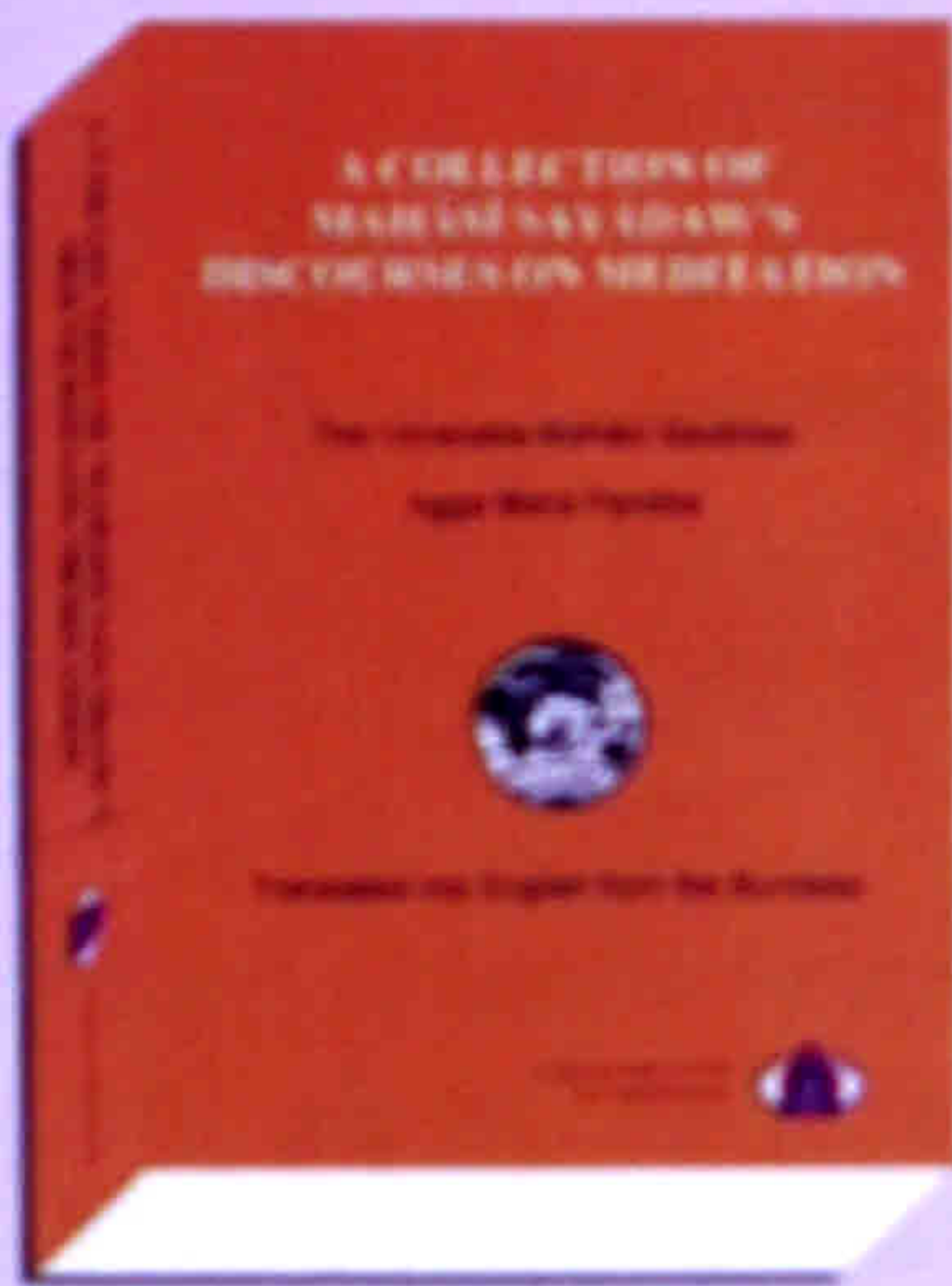
More information and photographs pertaining to the late Mahāsī Sayādaw's life were requested from the Abbot, Venerable Sayādaw U Ashin Jaṭila, of the Mahāsī Yeiktha in Myanmar who unhesitatingly requested the President, Mr. U Win Htein, of Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization (BSNO) at the Mahāsī Yeikthā to assist us. In August 2009, numerous photographs (saved on compact discs) and the text in Burmese script of an interview with Sayādaw U Sīlānanda (not long before he passed away in 2005) regarding *Sayādaw's* reflection on the Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw were received from the President of BSNO and these are most gratefully acknowledged. As such, the golden opportunity is seized to reproduce in this edition of the biography many of the rare photographs which are seldom or never published before. Such photographs serve to further illustrate activities in the life of the Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw. The assistance of Sayādaw U Sīlacara from Klang, Malaysia and Sayādaw U Thitzana from the U.S.A. in translating Burmese captions of the photographs and the interview text of Sayādaw U Sīlānanda are much appreciated. Photographs of Mahāsī Sayādaw's visit to Oakenholt (UK) are inserted with the courtesy of Venerable Bhikkhu Pesala of UK. Also, information compiled in this edition was sourced from the internet (e.g. Wikipedia – *World Free Encyclopedia*) and other references. Much effort and time have been invested in this current edition; and with illustrative photographs inserted throughout the biography makes this edition immensely interesting and colourful.

Sister Christine Lee keyed in the text of the book from the original copy of the Biography by Venerable U Sīlānanda (**see 'Introduction' on page 1**). Several draft manuscripts were generated as more materials became available. These were reviewed by Uncle Tan and relevant changes and modifications were made with the assistance of Sister Wooi Kheng Choo. This current edition was proof-read several times by Uncle Tan and both Sisters Wooi and

Christine. Even so, the readers' forgiveness and understanding are sought for any errors that may have been overlooked.

The assistance of many *Dhamma* friends in providing useful materials and financial donations are also gratefully acknowledged; for without their support this book would also not have seen the light of day. The inputs of Kenny Ngoi, Liew Elaine, and Yeap Boon Hean in helping out with the artwork are much appreciated.

Under the banner of SBVMS, Uncle Tan has published todate 32 discourses of Mahāsī Sayādaw and compiled into a single



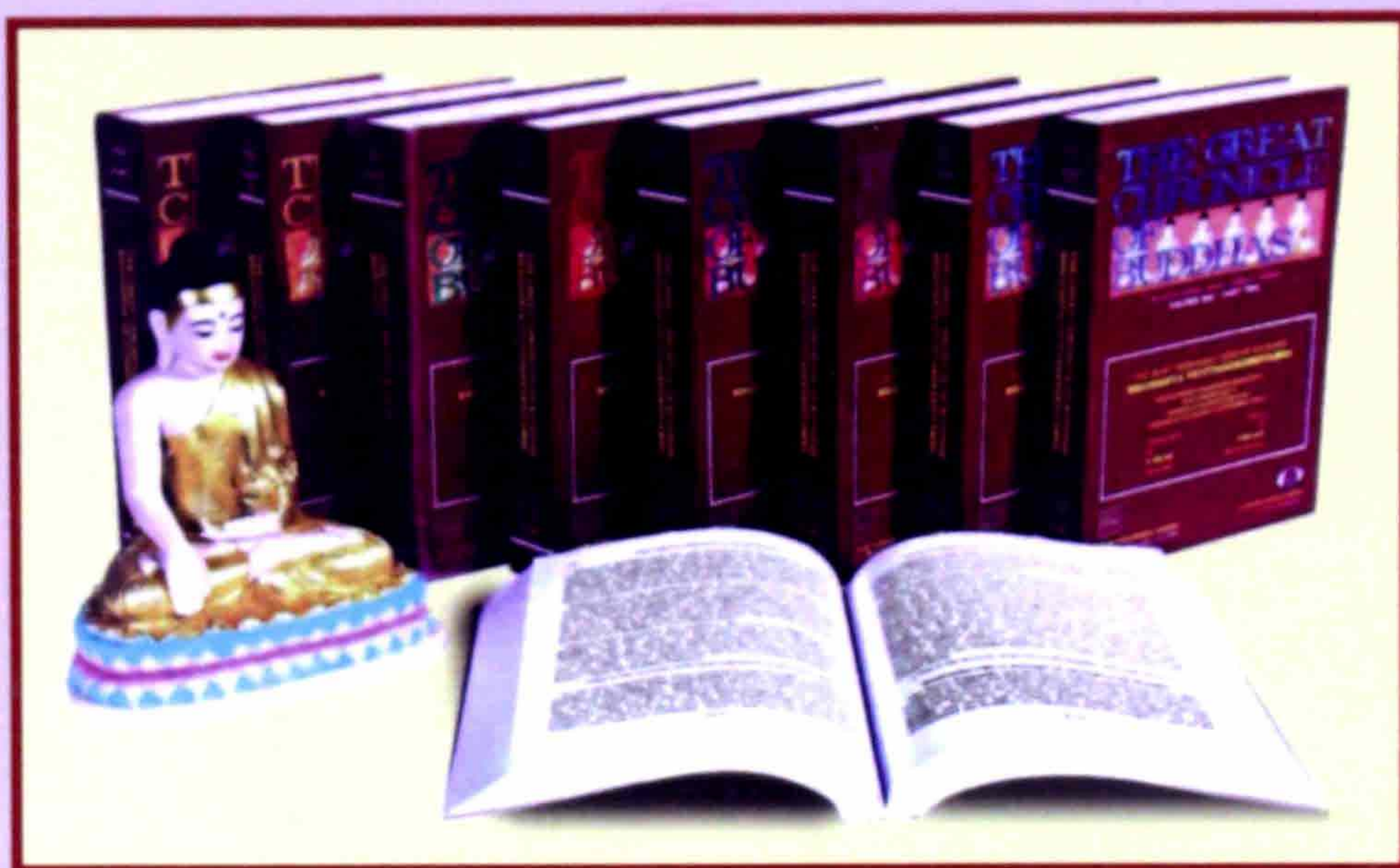
A Collection of Mahāsī Sayādaw's Discourses on Meditation

volume consisting of 7 books on *Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā* Meditation as expounded by Mahāsī Sayādaw based on the Buddha's Teachings. In a future reprint of this book, an addendum – 'Introduction to a Course of Vipassanā Meditation' by Dr. A. Kell, will be added on to the compilation of the 7 books to assist new meditators to find the right attitude towards meditation itself and towards the meditation teacher. With such devotion to propagate and prolong the teachings of the Buddha as expounded by the late Mahāsī Sayādaw, it is inevitable that his dedication culminates

in the compilation and publication of this present unique edition of the '**Biography of the Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw by Venerable Ashin Silānandabhivamsa**'.

A further significant contribution of Uncle Tan's effort in his *Dhammadāna* is the publication of 'The Great Chronicle of Buddhas' authored by the Most Venerable Mingun Sayādaw, Bhaddanta Vicittasārābhivamsa, which consists of 8 books with a total of 5,516 pages in 6 volumes. The preparation for such an enormous undertaking spanned over four years (1996-2000). Toiling arduously, Uncle Tan pieced together corrected words and sentences onto a second identical volume so as to come up with a much improved version of the Chronicle. In this daunting task, he was ably assisted by Sister Jackie, Sister Kim (Mrs. Tan Guan Chai) and other dedicated *Dhamma* volunteers. Another reason for this

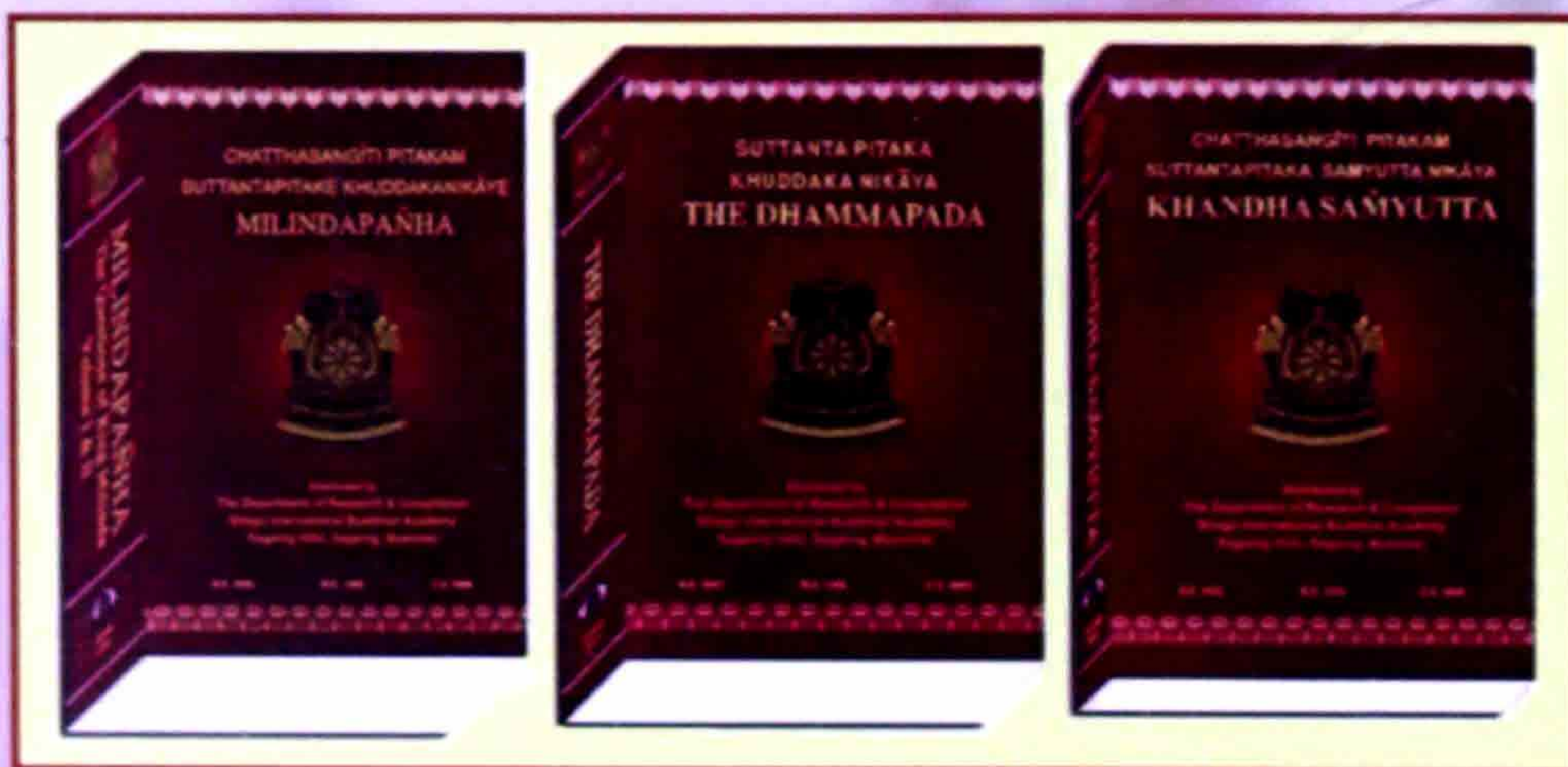
lengthy period of four years was due to the collecting of adequate funds for publishing the set of 8 books of the Chronicle!



THE GREAT CHRONICLE OF BUDDHAS

(See BOOK REF. 5 on page 130-131)

The crown of his *Dhammadāna* activities is in publishing to be sent back to Myanmar the set of Tipiṭaka authorized by the Sixth Council held in Yangon in 1954, upon the request of the Venerable Sayādaw Dr. Ashin Nyānissara (D.Litt., Ph.D.) of the Sītagū International Buddhist Academy.



THREE OF THE PUBLICATIONS FROM THE MYANMAR TIPIṬAKA

(L to R: The Questions of King Milinda, The Dhammapada
and Khanda Saṁyutta)

Finally, Uncle Tan wishes to express his heartfelt thanks to his family members:-

- Sister Lim Im Kim (wife) for a lifetime of sharing,
- Sister Pennee Tan (daughter) and family for providing his daily meals and other bodily needs and help when needed whilst staying with them,
- Mr. Sunny Tan (son) and family in Australia for their concern of his healthcare and encouragement in their own special ways, and finally to *Dhamma*-friends
- Sisters Wooi Kheng Choo and Christine Lee Chin Har for their dedicated assistance; for without them this book would not have materialized.

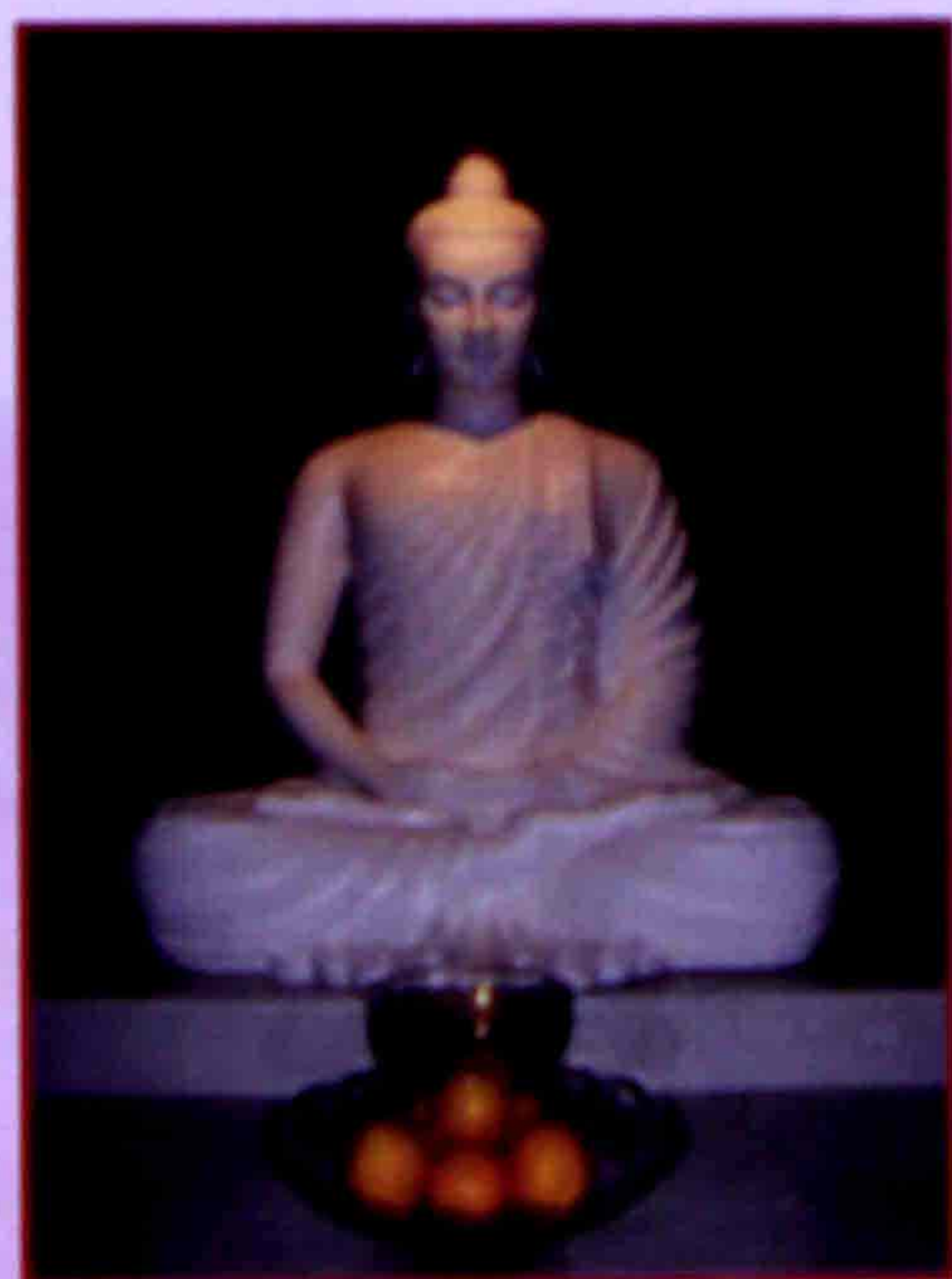
To those who have been inadvertently missed out, please rest assured that your merits are no less.

May this Biography of such an eminent *Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā* Meditation Master and Scholar be an inspiration to motivate you in your practice to strive for *Nibbāna*.

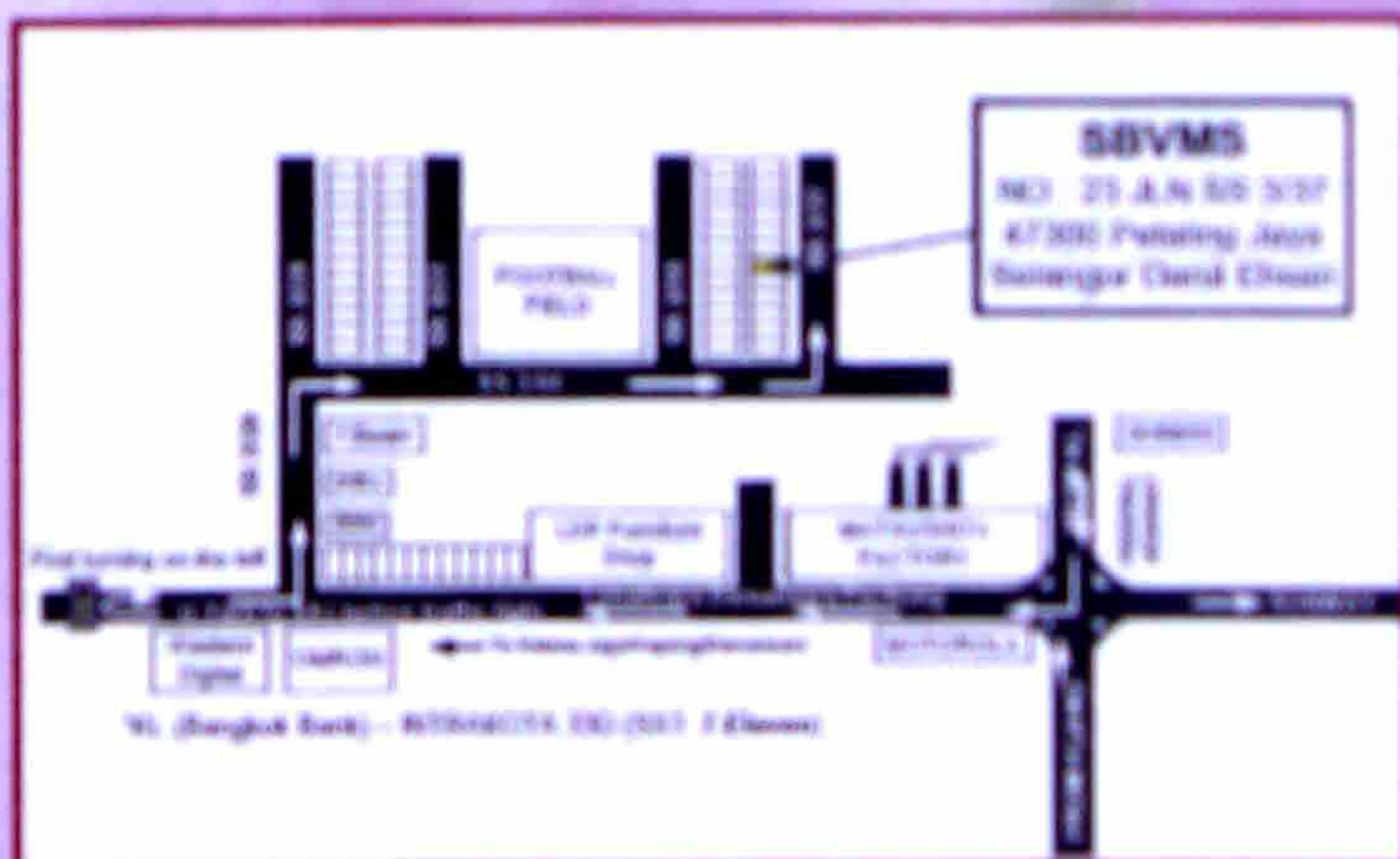
May all be guided by the Triple Gem and achieve calm, peace, wisdom and attain *Nibbāna* in the shortest possible time. May all sentient beings share in the merits acquired from this *Dhammadāna* and may the *Sāsana* last long.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

Wooi Kheng Choo
24 September 2009



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*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato
Sammāsambuddhasa*



Veneration to the Exalted One,
The Homage-Worthy,
The Perfectly Self-Enlightened

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*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato
Sammāsambuddhasa*



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The Perfectly Self-Enlightened

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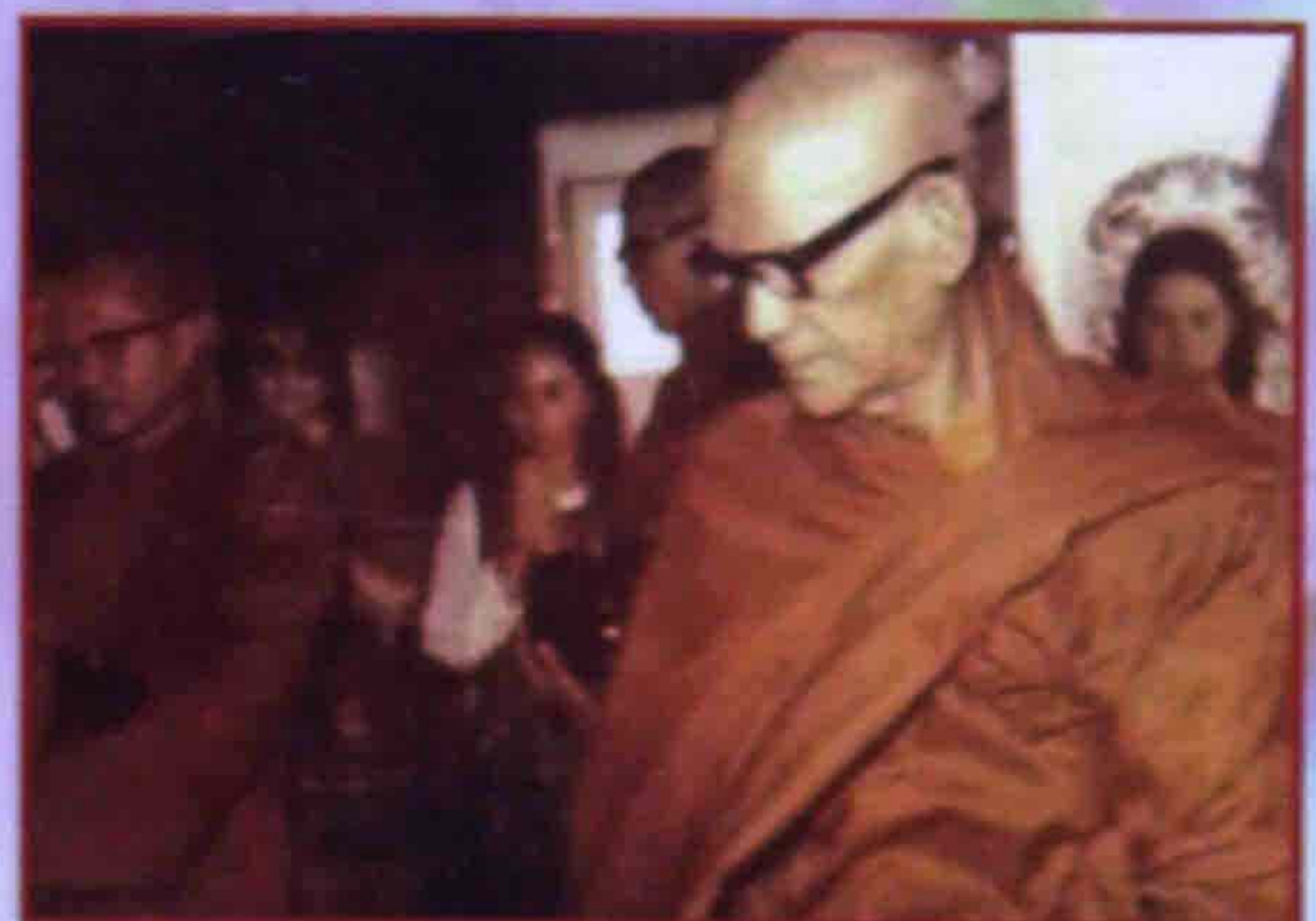
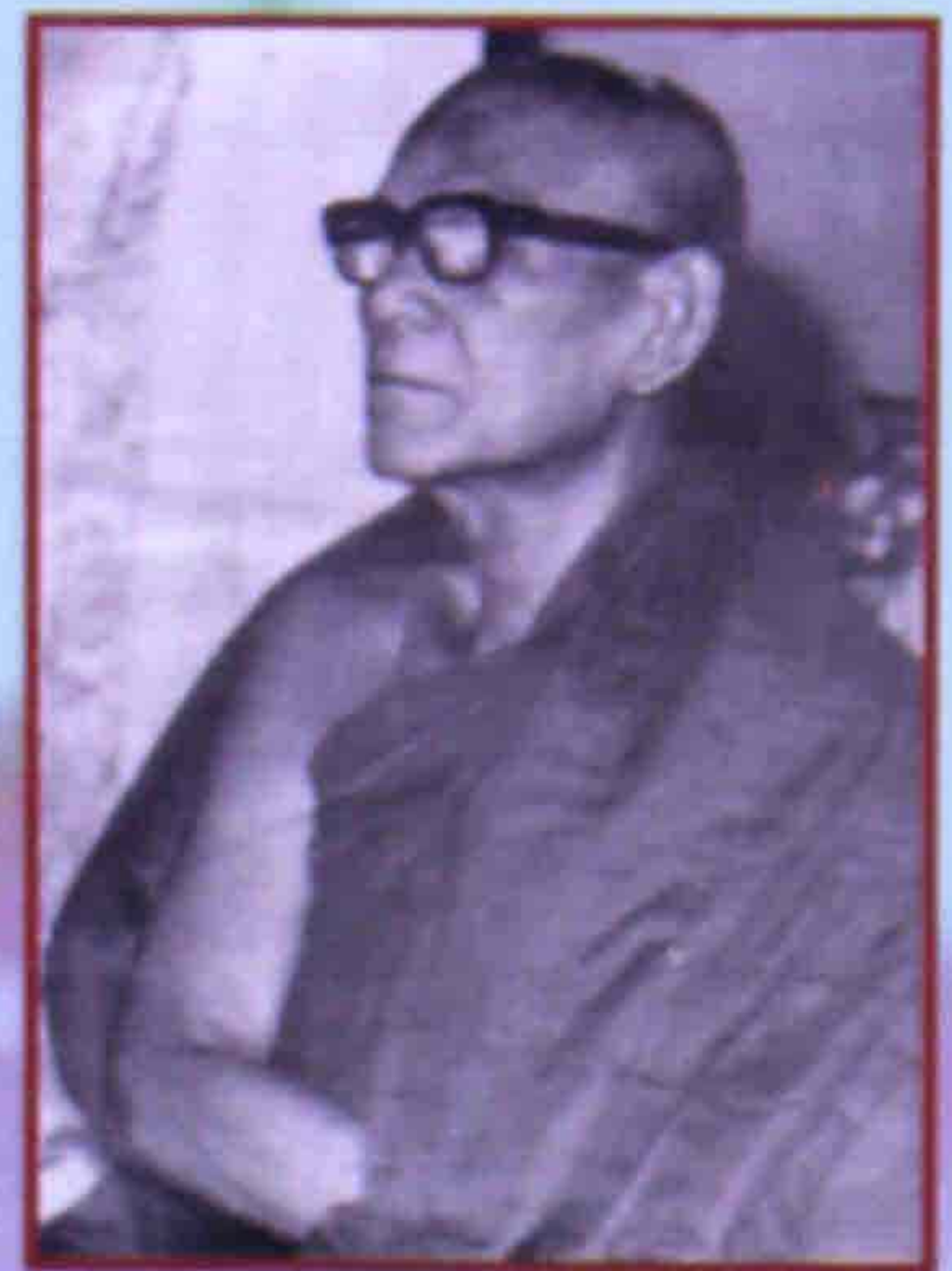
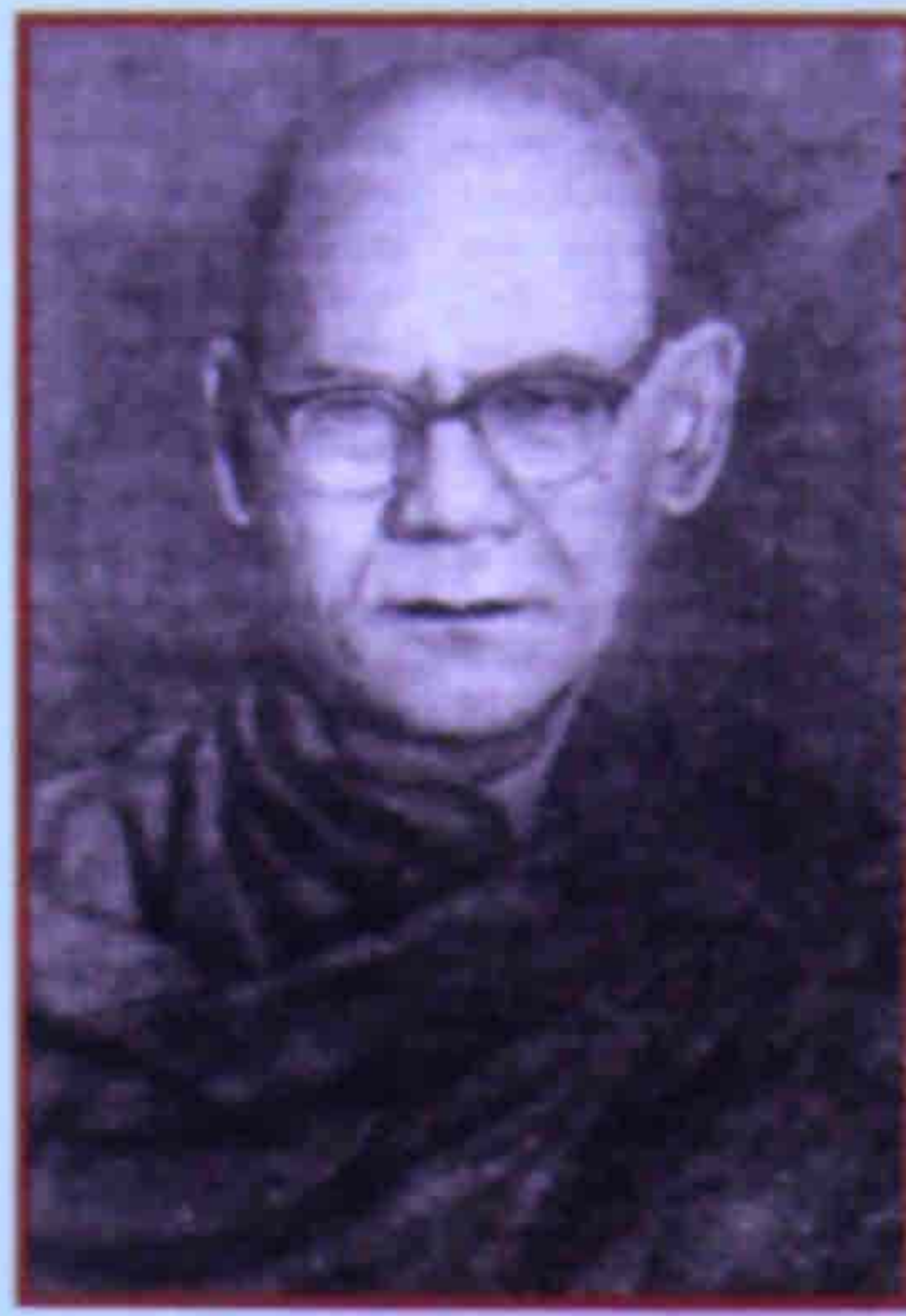
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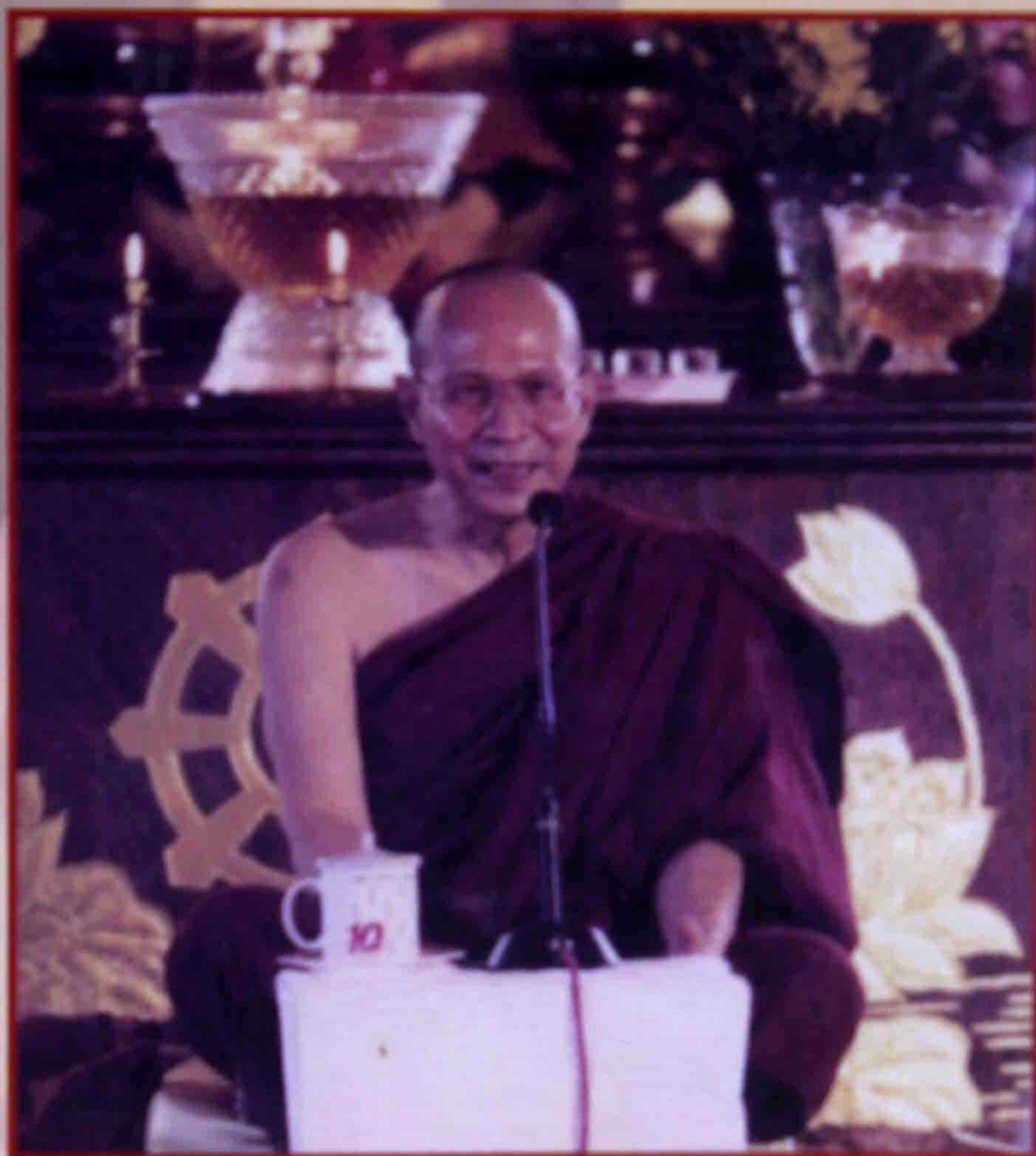
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THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW
(1904-1982)

**ABOUT THE COMPILER – THE VENERABLE
SAYĀDAW U SĪLĀNANDA**

(Extracted from 'The Fundamentals of Buddhism' by Sayādaw U Sīlānanda, published by INWARD PATH, 2008)



THE VENERABLE SAYĀDAW U SĪLĀNANDA

(1927 – 2005)

Delivering a Dhamma Talk at Dhammachakka Meditation Centre,
Berkeley, California, U.S.A.

The Venerable Sayādaw U Sīlānanda (1927 – 2005) was nominated by the most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw of Burma (Myanmar) to carry out the formidable mission of spreading the *Dhamma* in the West, more than 30 years ago.

The Venerable *Sayādaw* was the Abbot of Dhammānanda Vihāra in California and the spiritual director of the Theravāda Buddhist Society of America, Dhammachakka Meditation Centre and the Tathāgatha Meditation Centre of San Jose. In Burma, he

was also one of three Spiritual Directors of the Mahāsī Meditation Centre in Yangon.

Born to a devout Buddhist family in Mandalay on 16 December, 1927, the Venerable *Sayādaw* received his early education at an American Baptist Mission School for boys. He was ordained as a novice monk and began formal religious training at the age of 16, receiving full *bhikkhu* ordination four years later.

The Venerable *Sayādaw* held two Dhammācariya degrees and has taught at the Athithokdayone Pāli University. He was an External Examiner at the Department of Oriental Studies, University of Arts and Sciences in Mandalay, Myanmar. He was the Chief compiler of the Tipiṭaka Pāli-Burmese Dictionary and was one of the distinguished editors of the Pāli Canon and associated Commentaries at the Sixth Buddhist Council held in Rangoon (Yangon) from 1954 to 1956.

The Venerable *Sayādaw* was the author of seven Burmese Buddhist books and seven in English namely: THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS, VOLITION: *An Introduction to the Law of Kamma*, NO INNER CORE: *An Introduction to the Doctrine of Anattā*. THE MAN WHO CALLED HIMSELF TATHĀGATHA, ON CLEAR COMPREHENSION, THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS, and VIPASSANĀ MEDITATION INSTRUCTIONS

Well-regarded as a compassionate Teacher with deep insight knowledge, the Venerable *Sayādaw* taught *vipassanā* meditation, Abidhamma and other aspects of Theravāda Buddhism in English, Burmese, Pāli and Sanskrit. He has led meditation retreats throughout the U.S.A., Japan, Europe and Asia.

In 1993, the Venerable *Sayādaw* was awarded the title Agga Mahā Paṇḍita by the Burmese religious authorities and in 1999, the title of Agga Mahā Saddhamma Jotikadhaja. He was also appointed as Rector of International Theravāda Buddhist Missionary University of Yangon in Myanmar and was conferred Honorary Doctorate (D. Litt.) by the Yangon University in 2000.

Venerable *Sayādaw* U Sīlānanda passed away on 14 August 2005 at the age of 77.

THE MASTER OF 'RISING AND FALLING'
OF THE ABDOMEN

馬哈希尊者內觀修行傳統的師承



明貢尊者

Mingun Jetāvan Sayādaw (1869 – 1954)
(Sayādaw U Nārada Mahāthera)

This was the meditation master from whom the Mahāsi Sayādaw learnt his now famous technique of contemplating the rising and falling of the abdomen. This movement is the element of motion (*vīyodhātu*). By paying attention to the four elements within the body one can gain insight into their characteristics. It is the method of contemplation of the body described in the section of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta called 'Dhātumanasikārapabba' – the section on paying attention to the elements.

ABOUT THE MASTER OF 'RISING AND FALLING' OF THE ABDOMEN – MINGUN JETĀVAN SAYĀDAW

(Extracted from '*The Fundamentals of Buddhism*' by Sayādaw U Sīlānanda, page 236 - 239, published by INWARD PATH, 2008)

About 100 years ago there were *Sayādaws* in Burma who tried to revive the practice of *vipassanā* meditation. The systematic practice of *vipassanā*, as we do now here, I think, began with a *Sayādaw* who was known as Mungun Jetāvan Sayādaw. From his biography we learn that *Sayādaw* wanted to practise *vipassanā* meditation, but he did not know how to. So he was searching for a teacher who could teach him *vipassanā* meditation. Fortunately he met one *Sayādaw* in the place called Mingun. It is across the river from Mandalay. That *Sayādaw* who lived in Mingun was a student of another *Sayādaw* who was reputed or who was renowned as an *Arahat*. According to the verbal records, that first *Sayādaw* could be a Non-Returner because it is said there was a meeting of many *Sayādaws* at one time. The other *Sayādaws* asked that *Sayādaw* to give a *Dhamma* talk to them about the practice. And so he said: "I will give you a *Dhamma* talk as far as my practice goes, or something like this." Then he talked about the practice of meditation up until the third stage of enlightenment. If that record is to be relied upon then that *Sayādaw* was an *Anāgāmi* (a Non-Returner). That *Sayādaw* did not have many pupils because he lived in the forest and not many monks could live there. That *Sayādaw* who lived in Mingun was the student of the first *Sayādaw*. So he knew how to practice, and he practised, and maybe he was an enlightened person. So Mingun Jetāvan Sayādaw met that *Sayādaw* and requested that *Sayādaw* to teach him or to explain to him the practice of meditation. But that *Sayādaw* did not teach him in detail. He just said: "There is a discourse, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, and there are Commentaries and Sub-Commentaries. You just go and study this discourse in the Commentaries."

So Mingun Jetāvan Sayādaw studied the discourse along with the Commentaries and Sub-Commentaries. It is said that he came to know how to practise. So he practised. Maybe he got some instructions from that *Sayādaw*. We don't know. So he practised

and it is said that he was able to reach some kind of stage and that he was satisfied with his practice. That happened about 1908. So it was just at the turn of the 20th century.

After he got satisfaction with his practice, he wanted to teach other people how to practise meditation. So he began by giving *Dhamma* talks at Mingun, but nobody wanted to listen to him. His talks were so strange in those days that people just criticized him and made fun of him. For example, he talked of knowing 'when I am going', I know 'I am going' or 'when I am sitting', I know 'I am sitting'. They made fun of him (saying), 'we also know we are going when we are going'. We also know, 'when we are killing a fish, we are killing a fish' and so on. So nobody wanted to listen to him. He went back to his native village because he thought that people in his native village, his relatives and others would want to listen to him. So he went back to native village and again gave *Dhamma* talks and nobody wanted to listen to him. He received the same ridicule.

After about 2 years he went back to Mingun. And again he was persevering. He again gave talks. At the time a couple from Mandalay listened to him. They were interested and they wanted to practise meditation under his guidance. So they practised following his instructions and they also got satisfaction with their practice. So little by little the number of meditators increased. Later, he was able to establish a meditation centre in one town. That was in 1911. From that time on in many towns, meditation centres were established.

Ultimately in 1914 he went to lower Burma to the city of Thaton and established a monastery, giving it the same name, Mingun Jetāvan Monastery there. That was why he was known as Mingun Jetāvan Sayādaw. Many people came to him to practise meditation. So his fame spread far and wide. He had students or pupils who practised with him, and then who later on carried on his practice of *vipassanā* meditation. Many people, both monks and laymen, went to him to practise meditation. Many of his students became meditation teachers in his tradition.

One of his pupils, Sayādaw U Visuddha by name, established a centre in Rangoon and began teaching *vipassanā* in Mingun

tradition. That centre is still in existence in Rangoon not far from Shwedagon Pagoda.

In 1932, another student-monk went to Mingun Jetāvan Sayādaw and practised meditation under his guidance. That student monk practised about four months with him and then he had to go back to his monastery. The student was the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw. So Mahāsī Sayādaw after practising *vipassanā* under the guidance of Mingun Jetāvan Sayādaw began to teach *vipassanā* in 1938. He went back to his native village and gave *Dhamma* talks. There were people who wanted to practise meditation, including his cousins. So he first taught *vipassanā* in 1938. Then he went back and forth between the city of Thaton and his native place which is Upper Burma. In 1949, the then Prime Minister of Burma, U Nu, invited Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw to be resident teacher to teach *vipassanā* meditation at a newly established meditation centre in Rangoon, which came to be called the Mahāsī Sāsana Yeikthā (also internationally known as Mahāsī Meditation Centre). Ever since that time Mahāsī Sayādaw lived in the meditation centre in Rangoon until his death in 1982.

THIS IS THE ONLY WAY, O BHIKKHUS!



“Ekayano ayam bhikkhave, maggo satvamaṃ visuddhiya ...”

“This is the only way, O bhikkhus, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of Nibbāna.”

BIOGRAPHY

of

THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

FOREWORD

Among the world famous personalities in the field of Buddhist religion, only a few could be found at the present time who are able to disseminate more widely than ever the real essence of the Teachings (*Sāsana*) of Lord Buddha which would enable everyone to cultivate in his own self the virtues of Morality, Concentration and Wisdom (*Sīla, Samādhi* and *Paññā*) by which one can, through his own effort, reach on to the Right Path that leads from the world of appearances to ultimate reality.

THE TURNING OF THE DHAMMA WHEEL



Gautama Buddha delivered His First Discourse on Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta to the Five *Bhikkhus* who had attended to Him at the Deer Park in Isipatana (Sarnath). Many invisible beings such as devas and brahmas were also present.

To propagate the Teachings of the Exalted One and to expound its true concepts particularly on the practical aspect – *paṭipatti* – it is far more difficult. Buddhism itself is essentially a



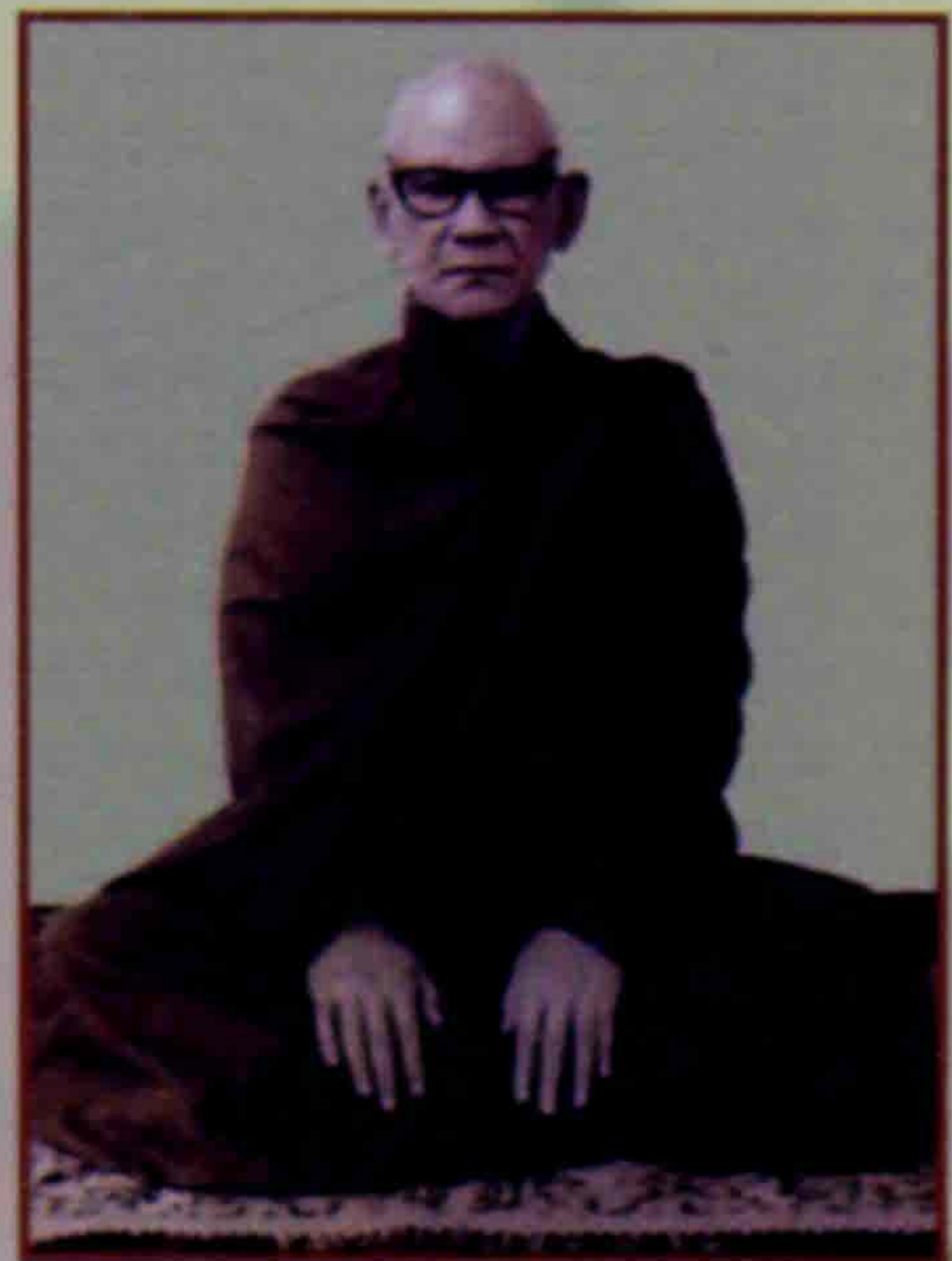
The Lord Buddha

In deep meditation under a dragon's protective hood.

practical path. To lead people on to the right track, the monk must also be a teacher as well, competent in both *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti*. Furthermore, a good knowledge of oriental languages particularly Pāḷi and Sanskrit as well as English, which being a universal language, is highly essential. If there is a handicap in imparting religious lessons in English this can be remedied by the assistance of disciples who know the language and who possess a fairly adequate knowledge of the profound *Dhamma*. The Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw is fortunate in this respect in that he has a handful of close

disciples, his own products, who are well acquainted with English while he himself reads and understands English. This is one of the factors which brings success in propagating *Paṭipatti Sāsana* in foreign countries.

The Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw with his intuition, talent and the power of spiritual awareness attained through his own individual effort and by the guidance of his eminent spiritual teachers in his early years is one of the brilliant stars among the galaxy of intellectuals in the hierarchy of Buddhist monks. Apart from being learned, it may perhaps be due to his *pāramītas* that he has been able to propound the most complex and intricate portions of the highly philosophical *Dhamma* for the benefit of mankind in the field of *pariyatti*. In



Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw

(1904 - 1982)

the field of *paṭipatti*, at the present day, he is pre-eminent. His persevering nature, enthusiasm, compassion and his outstanding

spiritual attainments are revealed in this biography.

The compiler of the memoirs of the *Sayādaw's* career, Ashin Sīlananda-bhivaṃsa (now promoting *Sāsana* in the United States) is an adept at the art of presenting in clear terms the contemporary allusions and known facts that would make all of us believe that the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw is a prominent figure who stands out above many others at the present day, and who will leave a history behind which time can never dim. The author's brilliance and depth of scriptural knowledge is obvious and his comprehension of the *Sayādaw's* life and his style of expression will surely make an interesting and wonderful reading. Just as Mahāsī Sayādaw has become a great and interesting figure in the history of Buddha *Sāsana*, the writer himself with his versatility, wit and penetrating mind will undoubtedly become, in due course of time, a remarkable figure in the world of Buddhist literature. The biography though concise; being factually written, is fairly comprehensive and includes an account and analysis of the work and achievements of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw.



Sayādaw U Sīlananda
(1927 - 2005)

Buddhism was from the very outset a missionary religion. To be able to inherit the Wisdom which the Blessed One had offered to mankind, one should endeavour to know and follow the method of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation which is being stressed by Mahāsī Sayādaw at home and in the course of his religious missions abroad. Following the footsteps of the Buddha to make available to all men the universal principles of Truth and to offer to all the knowledge of the Path, Mahāsī Sayādaw has diligently performed his noble task according to the famous exhortation of the Exalted One which says:

“Go forth, O *Bhikkhus* for the good of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, benefit and happiness of gods¹ and men. Let not two go by one way. Preach, O *Bhikkhus*, the Dhamma, excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent in the end, both in the spirit and in the letter. Proclaim the Holy Life², altogether perfect and pure.”

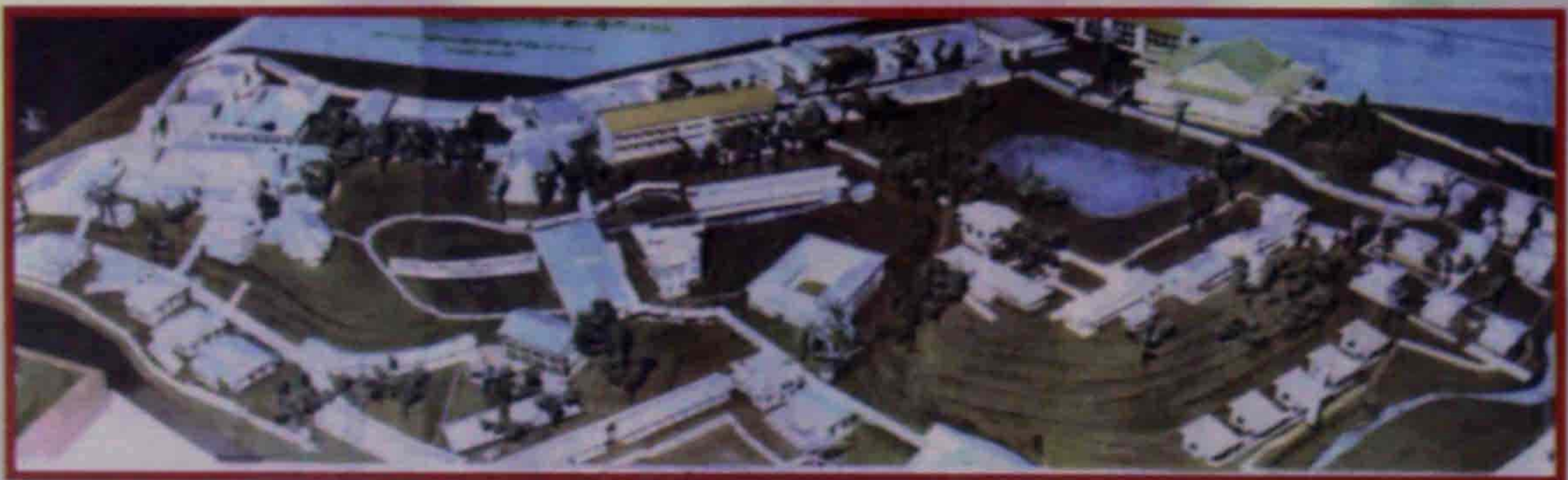
Extracted from ‘The Buddha and His Teachings’ on page 108.
(See BOOK REF. 1 on page xxxix)

I have dedicated myself to the work of translating this interesting biography with my unshaken faith in Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*, and particularly with my utmost reverence to the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw and also in harmony with the following remarkable maxim contained in Dhammapada (v. 354).

“The Gift of the *Dhamma* is greater than all other gifts.”

May all beings be able to seek for the light of *Dhamma* and find peace and happiness.

Min Swe (Min Kyaw Thu)
Secretary, Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization
Mahāsī Sāsana Yeikthā, Rangoon
November 28, 1981

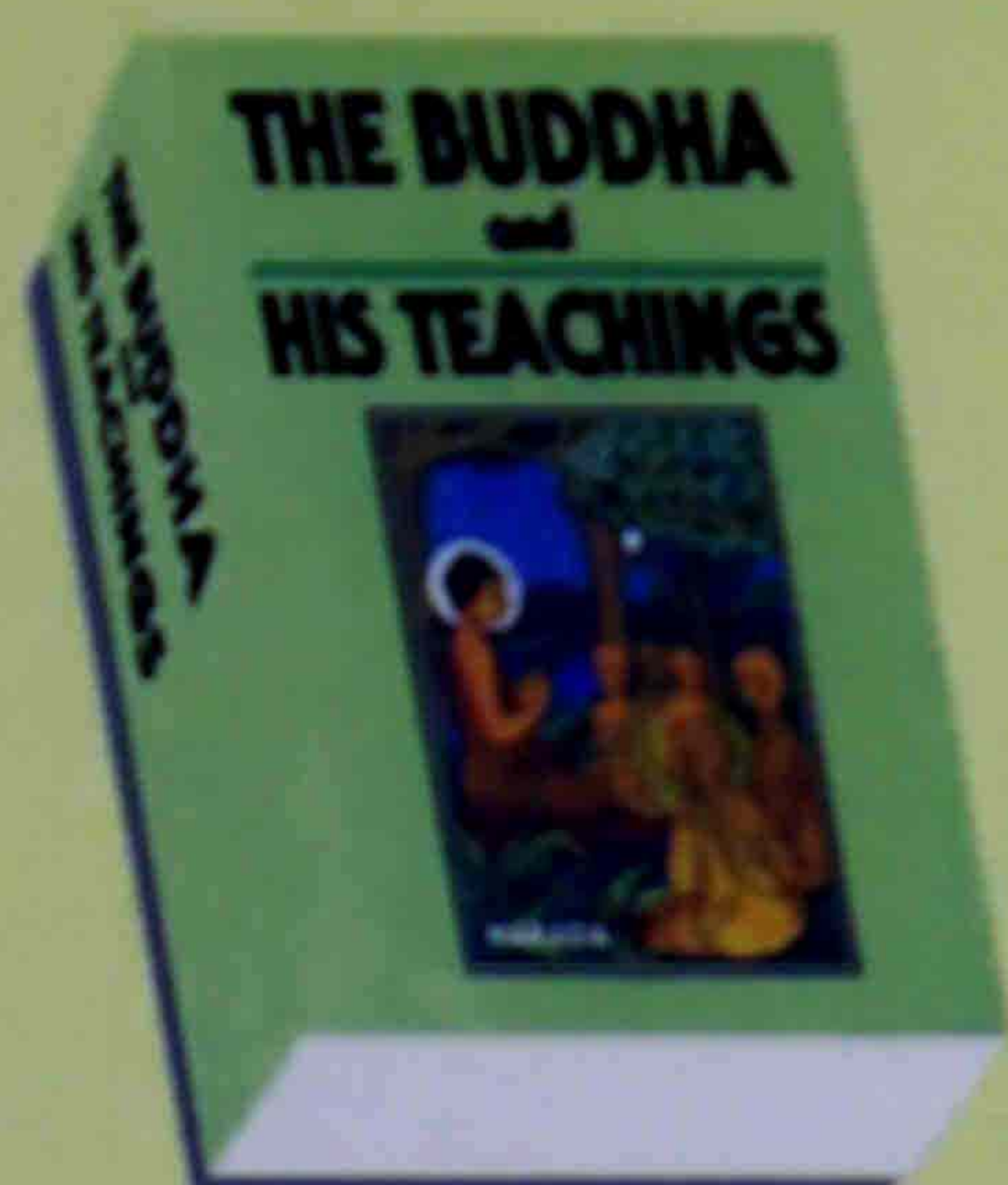


MAHĀSĪ MEDITATION CENTRE

Layout Plan of Mahāsī Meditation Centre, Yangon, which covers an area of 19.6 acres property.

-
1. Note the reference to gods which refers to *devas*.
 2. The Pāli term *Brahmacariya* has no connection whatsoever with a God or a *brahma*. It is used in the sense of noble or holy.

BOOK REF. 1 : THE BUDDHA AND HIS TEACHINGS
by VENERABLE NĀRADA MAHĀ THERA



THE BUDDHA AND HIS TEACHINGS provides a good source of information for those who wish to understand the life of the Buddha and his fundamental teachings.

The book, first published in 1942, has been reviewed and expanded. Though primarily intended for the students and beginners rather than for scholars, the reader will find it an extremely valuable hand-book, offering sound foundation to the basic tenets of Buddhism as found in its original Pāli tradition.

Besides providing a comprehensive account on the Life of the Buddha and His chief disciples, the moral code of conduct, culminating in the Ten Perfections, a considerable portion of the book deals with the current issues in Buddhist studies regarding KARMA, REBIRTH and NIBBĀNA. It also includes an introduction to Buddhist Meditation with particular reference to the Four Sublime States (or Brahma Vihāra) namely, METTĀ (Loving Kindness), KĀRUNA (Compassion), MUDITĀ (Sympathetic Joy), and UPEKKHĀ (Equanimity).

The author, the Venerable Nārada Mahā Thera, is a well-known Buddhist Missionary from Sri Lanka. He is also author of many other Buddhist publications – well used among students of Buddhism.

*From Publisher's Note
(Buddhist Missionary Society, Malaysia)*

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato
Sammāsambuddhasa*



Veneration to the Exalted One,
The Homage-Worthy,
The Perfectly Self-Enlightened

BIOGRAPHY

of

THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

INTRODUCTION

AIM AND OBJECT

The Great Buddhist history of 'Mahāsi Paṭipatti Sāsana' which occupies a place in the field of Buddha Sāsana has been successfully implemented after overcoming various difficulties. In the realm of Buddha Sāsana such a kind of history is absolutely necessary to be written and published. This kind of history cannot possibly come out if no such outstanding figure like the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw has emerged on the scene. It is indeed really fortunate for all Buddhists to have a person of extraordinary ability to be able to produce a magnificent History of Sāsana. We have clearly seen with our own eyes that because of the most admirable qualities of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* and of the talented genius of the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw, the radiant light of *Paṭipatti Sāsana* has emitted all its brilliance to the great delight of all Buddhists though it has once lost its glorious luster in the realm of Buddha Sāsana.



Mahāsi Sayādaw

(1904-1982)

It is not that there were no great and holy personages who had assiduously practised the noble *paṭipatti* in the history of Sāsana which had preceded us. To mention the most recent outstanding historical figures, Kintawya Sayādaw, Theelon Sayādaw, U Sīla Sayādaw and Mingun Jetāvan Sayādawpayāgyi, etc., may be cited. The names of these Sayādawgyis had been put on record in the History of Sāsana for having wonderfully devoted themselves to the noble practice of *paṭipatti* and attained the higher awakening consciousness - insight knowledge. However,

although these *Sayādawgyīs* had seriously practised *vipassanā* meditation in the manner of the *Pacceka*-Buddha sufficient enough for their own individual salvation without preaching the knowledge which they had achieved, they had not been able to contribute to the work of disseminating the *Dhamma* world-wide for the benefit of other Buddhists in general, just as Mahāsi Sayādaw has done. On the part of the community of Buddhists, there is no doubt that they will not be able to ignore or keep their eyes shut, or rather, cannot help recognizing the talented ability and wisdom of the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw who is capable of making *Paṭipatti Sāsana* to emit its rays of brilliant light to reach to countries beyond the frontiers of Burma, such as the Continent of Asia, America and Europe, etc., thereby making the History of Mahāsi Pariyatti Sāsana widely known in the interests of the future generations to enable them to enhance their faith and generosity and also to perpetuate the *Pariyatti Sāsana*.

As it should include the biography of the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw and of the life histories of other *Kammaṭṭhāna-cariyas* residing at various meditation centers in many other countries abroad, such as Thailand, etc., it would require to find a competent person who could write the biography of the Venerable *Sayādawgyī* though the life histories of *Kammaṭṭhāna-cariyas* could be procured easily from the meditation centres concerned. Hence, in repeatedly considering as to who should be selected to be entrusted with the compilation of the biography, Ashin Sīlānandabhivaṃsa was found to be a suitable person for the purpose.

It was the day following the completion of twenty-first anniversary of the ceremony for 'puja' in honour of Mahāsi Sayādawpayāgyī, which was held on the Full Moon Day of Natdaw (December), 1332 M.E. (1970). On that day, all meditation teachers and devotees on the eve of their return to the respective places of their own, paid homage to the *Sayādawpayāgyī*. At that time, on being asked by the *Sayādawpayāgyī*, "U Teiktha! Have you received the Moggallāna Nissaya? The newly reprinted book of Moggallāna Nissaya has already been published." I replied, "Your Reverend Sir, I've not received it yet."

Sayādawgyī then immediately picked up the Moggallāna Nissaya book which was at hand readily, and then handed it over to me. While handing over that book to me, *Sayādawgyī* said, "This book contains a very good presentation of introductory remarks written and edited by U Sīlānanda."

After reaching back to my own centre, I started reading carefully between the lines the preface to Moggallāna Nissaya written by the editor, which had earned the approbation of the *Sayādawgyāgyī*. In this preface, I found very effective and thorough comments rendered by the editor on matters relating to how the writings and preaching of 'Uda-grammar' were expounded by the Moggallāna Nissaya *Sayādaw*, and how unusual meanings and explanations in Burmese had been given by that *Sayādaw*, in respect of which, the old Grammarian teacher, *Sayādaw U Bodh*, and U Po Hiaing, the famous 'Yaw' Secretary to the Government, were unable to explain. Even in reading through it casually, when Ashin Sīlānandabhivamsa's brilliant talent was noticed as being able to expose the attributes of the text which had submerged, it would not be surprising why *Sayādawgyī* had justifiably extolled U Sīlānandabhivamsa's qualities which were deserving of praise.

After perusing the attributes of Ashin Sīlānandabhivamsa's introductory remarks, I happened to make a critical survey of his mode of expression, the usage of words and the style of presentation. It has the qualities of:

1. Consistency in the syntheses and in sentence-construction of syntax.
2. Thoroughness and proper sequence.
3. Ability to notice and assess correctly with fairness and equity the points or facts lying submerged which can hardly be discernible to other persons.
4. Being skilful in linguistic studies (himself a *Kovidā*) and proficient in the knowledge of grammar, i.e., use of tenses, subject and object, his writings are precise with clarity and simplicity that could be easily understood.

Such being the case, there was ample reason and justification in selecting Ashin Sīlānandabhivamsa to be entrusted with the work.

of writing the biography of Mahāsī Sayādawpayāgyī.

AND NEXT

Moreover, there was another reason. This is Ashin Sīlānandabhivaṃsa's outstanding ability in being able to write the 'Introduction to Tipiṭaka Pāḷi-Burmese Abhidam'. This 'Introduction', as a matter of fact, reveals his talent more vividly than his editorial comment made in the preface to Moggallāna Nissaya. It was compiled with grandeur, about the size of the 'Saṅgāyana book', covering 117 pages. In that 'Introduction', it can be found that detailed and close scrutiny had been made by Ashin Sīlānandabhivaṃsa on inscriptions like Asoka pillar and rock inscriptions, Pāḷi scriptures, Commentaries, Dīgha texts, Sanskrit and 'Pyakyaik' texts in sifting the fundamentals of Pāḷi language, Māgadha language, etc., that would satisfy the curiosity of the intellectuals. Over and above that, since comparisons had been made explaining the distinguishing features and similarity of points in Pāḷi, Sanskrit and Pyakyaik languages, this great 'Introduction' is a clear manifestation of Ashin Sīlānandabhivaṃsa's proficiency in these and other languages.

FURTHERMORE

At the time of the Convention of the Sixth Buddhist Council, although the very young Ashin Sīlānandabhivaṃsa had not been listed among members of the Central Organizing Executive Committee of the *Saṅgāyana*, he had been asked to participate in the work of the *Saṅgāyana* together with eminent *Mahātheras* of the Organizing Committee. Ashin Sīlānandabhivaṃsa, an indispensable person in compiling the profound Text of *Dhamma* like Tipiṭaka Pāḷi-Burmese Abhidam, was entrusted with a very important key position of responsibility.

It would not be proper in the eyes of the world to compose and write perfunctorily such an important Abhidam (Dictionary) said to have been compiled by the Sixth Buddhist Council. It was essential to compile it so as to match completely the required standard of the quality of the world's Abhidhams that had been in use throughout the world. The *Sayādawgyīs* of the Central

Organizing Committee knowing this essential requirement, had entrusted this work of compilation to Ashin Sīlānandabhivaraṃsa, who was capable of taking on the responsibility to make this Abhidham reach the level of world standard in quality for world-wide use.

Ashin Sīlānandabhivaraṃsa was found to be a person well-competent to discharge the onerous duties assigned to him by the Central Organizing Committee. He had the responsibility to collect, choose and write out the words, phrases and diction in this Abhidham prepared by him after comparing them with other Abhidham words, or phrases and diction written by other committee members with reference to Pāḷi-vyākaraṃ texts, Sanskrit-vyākaraṃ texts, and also the *saddhattha* meanings and terminology, Commentaries, Dīghas and Ganthis, and then to adorn his own writings after comparing and consulting with all diverse and varying points of view derived from his investigation and examination of those various texts so that this Abhidham should have the same degree of quality standard as that of the World Abhidham.

The original draft of that Abhidham written by Ashin Sīlānandabhivaraṃsa were then type-written into four copies and these were given over to *Pativisodhaka* Committee. The draft copies that were re-vetted by that Committee had to be put up to the monthly meeting of *Sanghas* comprising (1) Sayādaw U Nyanuttara, (2) Mahāsī Sayādaw, (3) Sayādaw U Visuddha and (4) Ashin Sīlānandabhivaraṃsa, for the purpose of verification and consultation relating to the problems arising out of this matter and to bring into harmony the differences found in the respective drafts and to consider fresh suggestions that might be received in respect of such words or phrases, and diction.

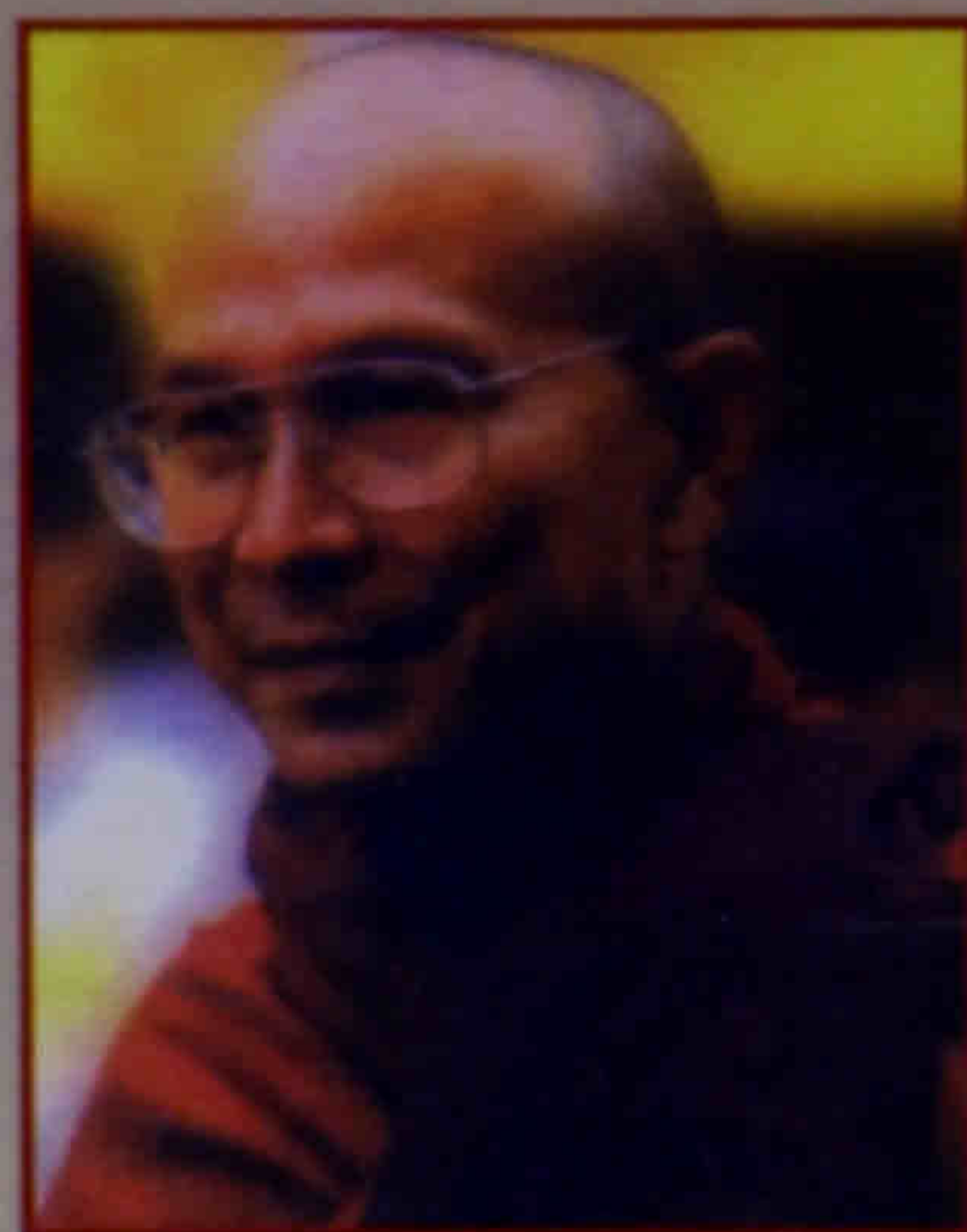
Similarly, Ashin Sīlānandabhivaraṃsa had performed the duties in many important branches of the Sixth Buddhist Council at the time of the Convention jointly with the *Sayādawgyīs* of the Central Organizing Committee. In particular, as he had worked together very closely with the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw who was holding a highly responsible top-post on the occasion of the Sixth Buddhist Council, it was imagined that there could not be any

other person except Ashin Sīlānandabhivaṃsa who know more about 'the facts of life' of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw.

Taking into consideration of these facts and viewpoints, Ashin Sīlānandabhivaṃsa had been selected to compile the biography of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw which would need to be contributed to the great History of Mahāsī Paṭipatti Sāsana.

HE FIRST REFUSED

After selecting Ashin Sīlānandabhivaṃsa as the most suitable person to compile the biography of the Venerable Mahāsī *Sayādawpayāgyī*, I personally proceeded from Wetlet to Abāyārama Shwegu Taik Sāsanawadaya Ok Kyaung at Seinban Ward, West Mandalay where he was then residing. Finding Ashin Sīlānandabhivaṃsa readily at hand on my arrival there, I explained to him the purpose of my visit.



Sayādaw U Sīlananda

(1927 - 2005)

I had to tell him of my responsibility for the successful implementation of Mahāsī Paṭipatti Sāsana and the dire need for inclusion of the biography of the Venerable Mahāsī *Sayādawpayāgyī* in that great History of *Sāsana* and also of the fact that I had to come over to Mandalay to urge him to write that biography.

At first, he refused to accept my offer on grounds of his preoccupation. I honestly believed his statement that he was extremely busy and preoccupied. Even at the time of my arrival to entreat him, I found a number of student-monks ready to take lessons since they had already taken their seats. Having reached his place immediately before the teaching time started, and not being able to wait till the teaching of lessons was over, I could not help entering the premises of the monastery where the class for the teaching was to be conducted.

Although I had no chance of urging him at length to accept

my proposal, he had reached a stage in which he could not possibly turn down my forceful and earnest request as he was on the eve of giving lectures to his pupils. In spite of the fact that he had not accepted my offer of proposal which, of course, amounted to his tacit agreement, I had to visit him several times and remind Ashin Silānandabhivamsa, for my not being able to remain with peace of mind, rest-assured.

AFTER COMPILATION

At the time of giving him pressure to write this biography, Ashin Silānandabhivamsa had asked me, "What should be the length of his biography?" I replied, "You may write as much as you think proper since it is to be contributed to the History of Patipatti Sāsana." feeling of course, to avoid dictating him and intending to give him a free-hand in the writing up of this biography. After his completion of the compilation work, the Biography of the *Sayadawpayāgyi* was found neither excessively long nor too short, that is, just of the right size.

Although it is impossible to measure the size of the biography using *Sayadawpayāgyi's* honourable status and glorious attributes as a yardstick, in what has been written by Ashin Silānandabhivamsa, almost nothing is found lacking anywhere. And whatever has been described by him, is found not only thorough and accurate, but also astute in being able to display his craftsmanship in revealing the glory of the *Sayadawpayāgyi* in places where it should be revealed.

Though I do not feel inclined to illustrate the rare qualities invested in the biography lest it should become lengthy, I consider it appropriate to mention the manner in which the biography has been commended by intellectuals, as far as my knowledge goes.

"The chapter on 'Promotion of Sasana in Ceylon' is extremely interesting to read."

(*Ganavsaka Dhammacariya U. Sabana*, of Mya Thiri Dham Monastery, Anawrahta Road, Rangoon.)

“Only after reading the biography, a keen desire has arisen in me to read very minutely and carefully the Texts of *Dhamma* written by Mahāsī Sayādaw.”

(*U Nandavumsa, paccimayon Kyaingtaik, Ayethaya Street, Rangoon.*)

“After reading the portion under the heading ‘The Problem of Life Existence’ contained in the Biography, I happened to read once again the Book ‘The Problem of Life Existence’ (see **BOOK REF. 2 on page li**).

(*U Tilokasaya, Aungmaythukha Monastery, Campbell Road, Rangoon.*)

“It is just like reading a novel – a vivid narrative. I could not help reading through this biography from the beginning to the end at a stretch without being able to stop even for a while.”

(*U Pannobasa, Zabudipa Hall, Kabā-Aye, Rangoon.*)

“If this biography was written by me personally, it may not be as comprehensive and particular as it is.”

(*Mahāsī Sayādaw.*)

These are critical comments and commendations which appeared after reading through the ‘Biography of the Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw’, written and compiled by Ashin Sīlanandabhivamsa.

It was found in the ‘Uminga’ Jātaka wherein mention had been made that after the *Bodhisatta* Mahāwsada Paṇḍita had given away the Chief Queen Nāndadevi and Princess Pancalacandhi (daughter) of King Cūlani Brahmādatta, to Videharit King, he started extolling the womanly qualities of Queen Nāndadevi, describing her beauty, her graceful royal figure, her majestic appearance and her delightful and charming looks. Mahāwsada Paṇḍita’s expression of approbation being so fine, realistic and effective, it had again aroused the passionate feeling of love and attachment in Cūlani Brahmādatta King, and this aesthetic desire had impulsed him to see his old beloved favourite Queen Nāndadevi, once again.

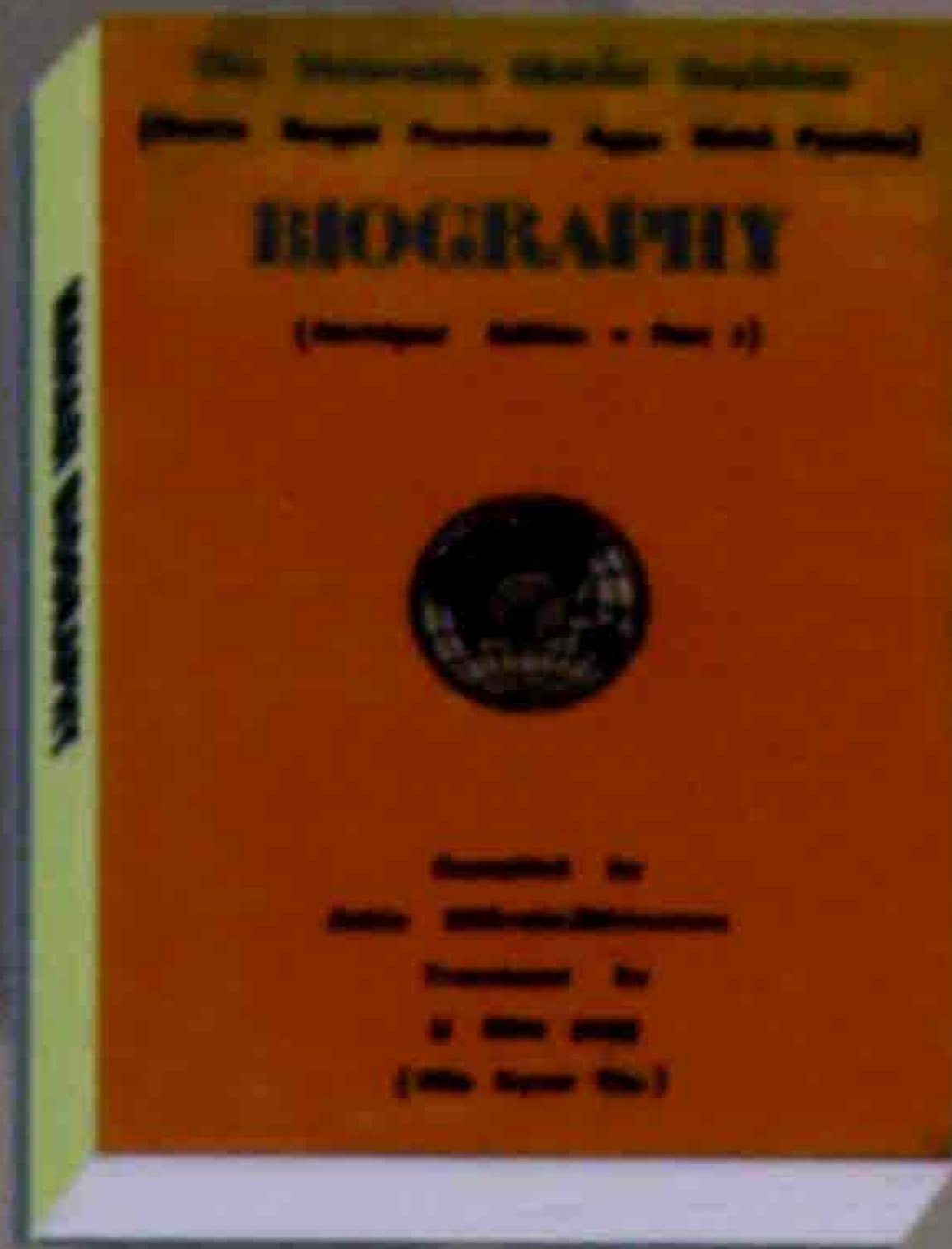
Much in the same way, at the present moment too, it was because of the fine achievement of Ashin Silānandabhivamsa in being able to extol the attributes of the *Sayādawpayāgyi*, many people were found to have been kindled with the burning desire to re-read the *Dhamma* Texts written by the Venerable Mahāsi Devānāga. If superficially observed without attentiveness, many attributes which a person spiritually endowed, might probably remain conspicuous as if they were submerged. To those who are observant and thorough, such intrinsic qualities will be clearly obvious, though they may not be clearly manifested to ordinary people without depth of knowledge. It will then naturally prompt them even to search for the points connected with the qualities that are submerged and have escaped the notice of those who have failed to pay due attention.

In particular, knowing full well that the biography has received the approval and appreciation of the *Sayādawpayāgyi*, my efforts in impelling Ashin Silānandabhivamsa to do the work of compilation, may be said to be successful.

STILL NARROW IN SCOPE

The biography of *Sayādawpayāgyi* in the big book of the 'History of Sāsana' which is difficult to handle and read, being intermingled with the life stories of other personalities, is limited in scope. Only two thousand copies of this bulky book of *Sāsana* History which includes the biography of *Sayādawpayāgyi* could be printed and published. Compared with a considerable number of Mahāsi devotees, the number of books so published and put into circulation was quantitatively small. I felt exceedingly happy when I came to know that the Buddha Sasana Suggaha Organization of Rangoon Sāsana Yeiktha had already made arrangements to print and publish that biography of the *Sayādawpayāgyi* contained in the big book of the history of 'Mahāsi Paṭipatti Sāsana', separately in a book form as the First Part of the Biography.

1 *Biography of the Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw*



Copy of First Part of Biography (printed 1982)

2,000 copies published by
U Min Swe (BSNO)

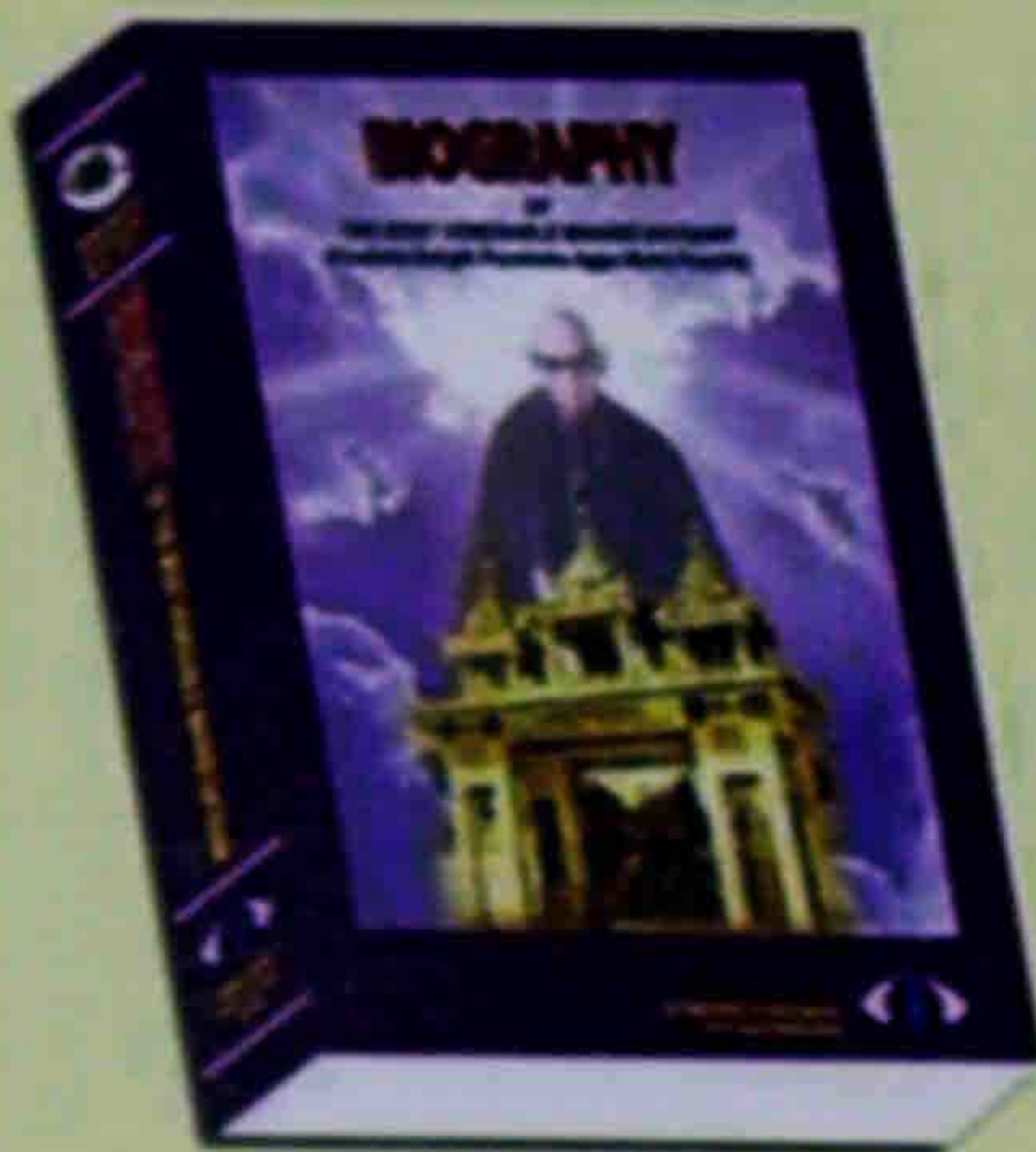
famous personality.

This 'Introduction' will now be brought to a conclusion with my best wishes praying that the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization (BSNO) will be able to widely publish this 'Biography of the Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw' not only by making it available to the reading public who are Burmese Buddhists, but also by endeavoring to make it within the reach of all mankind, irrespective of race, sex and creed throughout the whole world so as to enable them to read and appreciate this inspiring life-history of a great and

Wetlet Masoyein U Teiktha

Month of Tawthalin, 1340 M.E. (24.9.1978)

The above INTRODUCTION is translated by: U Min Swe (Min Kyaw Thu), Secretary of Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization, Mahāsī Sāsana Yeiktha.



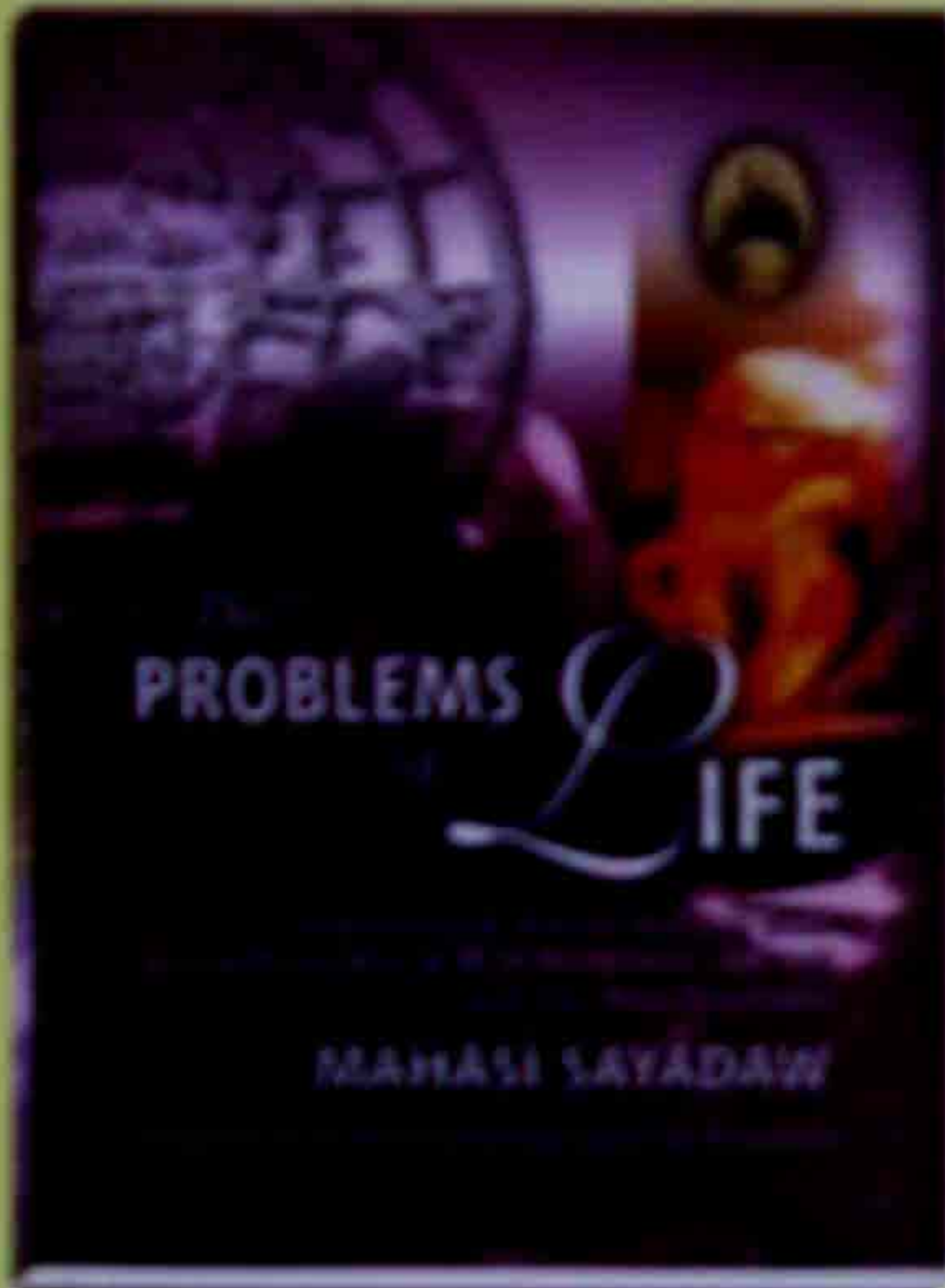
I am filled with much happiness to have the opportunity to produce this current edition of the "Biography of the Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw". I sincerely hope that you too will find great joy reading about Mahāsī Sayādaw's life and his Teachings of the Buddha-Dhamma.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!
Tan Guan Chai
24.9.2009

Current Edition of Biography (printed September 2009)

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Tan Guan Chai (SBVMS)

BOOK REF. 2 : THE PROBLEMS OF LIFE EXISTENCE by MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW



One day, while I was waiting for my turn in the clinic, I over-heard Dr. U Myint Swe asking about the problem of 'After-life' to one *Sayādawgyī* (Elder *Thera*), who was enthusiastically explaining to him by way of higher Buddhist philosophy, metaphysics (*Abidhamma*) and modes of conditionality (*Paṭṭhāna Paccaya*). But Dr. U Myint Swe seemed not too satisfied with the *Sayādawgyī's* answer couched with Pāli terms. So when I went for treatment, he again asked me the same question.

Anticipating the faculty of answering to the person who could not be satisfied with the explanation of a *Sayādawgyī*, I had to console him by saying, "Let me consult the *Theras*." But the business has not yet ended. After two or three days he started to bring up the subject again.

I suggested, "Doctor, this is not an easy problem to solve. It'll be better to put forward to Mahāsī Sayādawgyī." Then he told me to do so; and I had to oblige.

When I conveyed *Sayādawgyī's* reply to Dr. U Myint Swe as, "It is for the devotees to ask what they do not know and it is our responsibility to make them known." Dr. U Myint Swe gladly put forward the three problems in writing and submitted to *Sayādawgyī*.

Sayādawgyī's reply in accordance with the Lord Buddha's teaching was so vivid and clear that, it was like directing the correct path to the one who was lost on the way, exposing by reversal of the inverted pot or providing the lamplight to the one fumbling in the dark room . . .

Thus, from these circumstances, this book titled **THE PROBLEMS OF LIFE EXISTENCE** came into circulation . . .

by Mangala Aung Myint

MAP OF MYANMAR



Major cities of importance in Mahāsī Sayādaw's life:

Upper Burma: within the red rectangle are Shwebo,
Sagaing & Mandalay.

Central Burma: within red circle are Thaton,
Moulmein & Yangon.

**MONKS RETURNING FROM ALMS-ROUND AT THE
MAHĀSĪ MEDITATION CENTRE, YANGON**



The meditation center was opened two years after the establishment of the Buddha Sasana Nuggaha Organization which was founded in 1947, with the most Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw as its Principal Preceptor. It is located on about 20 acres of quiet pleasant garden land in Sasana-yeiktha Road, Bahan Township of Yangon off Kaba-Aye Pagoda Road. There are over 100 buildings on the grounds for housing the meditation teachers and yogis, bhikkhus and laity, men as well as women and providing complete retreat facilities (see Layout Plan on page xxxviii).

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato
Sammāsambuddhasa*



Veneration to the Exalted One,
The Homage-Worthy,
The Perfectly Self-Enlightened

THE MOST VENERABLE MAHASI SAYADAW

*Mahāsī thera gunogha - bhavitantara pubbhago.
Kassam therapadanam ham, subham butattasucakam.*

'KOYINGYI' – A BRIGHT STUDENT

The time being the last part of the session for religious instruction at the monastery of Seikkhun village, the melodious sound of chanting and recitation flowing out from that institution and floated in the air could be heard distinctly.



Mahāsi Sayādaw
A Bright Student
(Photo taken in 1949)

'Recitation' means the repeated utterances of the expression in words or phrases as explained by the teacher. It is a spell of teaching learnt by the pupil as pronounced by the teacher in turn between the teacher and the pupil. At this Thugyi Kyaung, i.e., monastery, which is obviously named after the designation of the headman of the village, the pupil's voice rang forth more audibly than the voice of the teacher U Parama, the presiding monk (chief monk), who could only be heard occasionally and feebly. As the person chanted the *Dhamma* with a clear sweet tone, the people nearby listening to the chanting could hear it and found

it extremely pleasant and mellifluous. It is something like the speed of a '*theindaw*' horse – a stallion of the first class pedigree, full of grace, smooth going without the slightest hitch. Hearing the voice of fluent chanting, one could easily know that the chanterer was endowed with gift of rare eloquence. Judging from the nature and quality of the lesson that was imparted, the pupil who recited flawlessly was probably regarded as really wonderful. Simply because, Sayādaw U Parama's lesson that was given related to

‘Sammoha-Vinodani’ Commentary and its prelude. ‘Sammoha-Vinodani’ is relevant to Abhidhamma concerning *Khandha*, *Āyatana*, *Dhātu*, *Sacca*, Paṭiccasamuppada, etc., which is a highly profound doctrine and which implies abstract metaphysics. That is why the Commentary itself is difficult. The lengthy explanation given in what is known as original Dīgha, is even more difficult to be grasped than the Commentary itself. Among Pāli scriptures, it is considered to be the most fundamental and highly difficult. The explanation is pregnant with meaning and precise. The whole text and its explanation being deeply philosophical, it is doubly difficult. A person who could ably recite well is obviously not an ordinary person of intelligence, if he could do so without the assistance of the teacher in the course of his recitation.

It was all the more surprising because the pupil who made the recitation was neither a senior monk-pupil nor a junior monk, but happened to be an ordinary *sāmaṇera* – a novice. A novice who had not yet been ordained as a senior monk and who was still a *sāmaṇera* at an early age of nineteen years, but was capable of reciting philosophical text on *Dhamma* without a flaw and support was indeed a prodigy. Such a person with an outstanding ability can hardly be found, say, one in a thousand, (or rather), one in a ten-thousand. As this elderly novice (*koyingyi*) was so fluent and faultless in his recitation, that one of the seven or eight monks by the name of U Nandiya, who also attended the course when coming down the stairs of the monastery was perforced to ask, “O, brother ‘*Koyingyi*’, have you studied the derivatives and intricacies relating to *Dhamma* Scriptures?” The reply being, “No, Sir”, one could very well imagine the depth of knowledge, and know how wonderful was the wisdom possessed by that elderly novice. This *sāmaṇera*, a probationer in the religious Order was not only proficient in Piṭaka Scriptures called ‘Lessons for the Monks’, but also in the worldly (*lokiya*) knowledge of Mathematics. Since the early age of sixteen, he had perseveringly practised the subject of Arithmetic called ‘*Ganagambhira*’ without the aid of a teacher, and within a short period of one month, he had completely understood and mastered all the methods of working out the sums and solving the problems as contained in that book. Knowledge of Mathematics,

which is the science of space and numbers, (comprising Arithmetic, Algebra, Trigonometry, Geometry, etc.) is not at all easy. It has got to be taught, trained and practised with difficulty. To become skillful or proficient in that kind of subject by merely practising it without anyone's assistance and instructions, relying on the guidance of the book only, is a rare ability that must be attributed to his strange perfections (*pāramitas*). There is hardly any room to doubt that this *Koyingyi* will also be able to acquire the knowledge of other subjects as well by merely devoting himself earnestly to those studies. When meritorious deeds are performed, people generally used to pray for a phrase – "May we be endowed with a gift of knowledge of the subjects appertaining to *lokita* and *lokuttara*, temporal and spiritual, by merely hearing or perusing it." *Koyingyi* appears to be a personage whose wishes have now been fulfilled for having prayed, as already mentioned, in his past existences.

This *Koyingyi*, the elderly novice who has proved himself since his youth to have possessed an extraordinarily shrewd intellect far surpassing the usual ordinary mental capacity of his young age, is no other person than the embryo Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw whose fame has spread all over the world reaching beyond the frontier of the Union of Burma, and on whom depends the present day *Sāsana* in Burma as a reliable guide and an eminent teacher like a beacon signaling the light of *Dhamma*.

The birth place of the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw is Seikkhun village which lies off the main road seven miles west of the town proper of Shwebo. The name 'SHWEBO' in itself is well known to all of us as the 'Site of Victory' signifying the successful restoration of the Konboun Dynasty, the last of the line of hereditary rulers. It is indeed true and correct. As composed in a verse:

*"Foremost among the glorious past,
Konboun Dynasty in history ranks first,
With illustrious Alaungpaya and his comrades
numbering over sixty;
Forming a chosen team of warriors free;
Ushering in a New Era of fame and glory."*

U Aungzeya who later became famous as King Alaungpaya the Great started rallying a small detachment of infantry forming a nucleus consisting of sixty men of the highest calibre and outstanding courage from among the village population living in the suburbs of the city of Shwebo. He made possible the existence of the Konboun Dynasty after reorganizing the dismantled state of the country which had fallen into chaos, disorder and turmoil. Had it not been for the revival and resuscitation of the hereditary line of the Konboun Dynasty, no one could say for certain whether the Burmese culture and fine arts which flourish today would have been dwindled into oblivion or have found a different expression simply because it was the Konboun Era that had left to us the remnants of the heritage of the Burmese refined culture and arts.

Just as Seikkhun village is an environ of the city of Shwebo at present, it happened to be one of the fringe villages within the limits of U Aungzeya's Shwebo township when it was established. At the time when forty-six ward elders of the Capital City were designated with coveted titles, the head of Seikkhun village had been conferred upon with the title of 'Dhamma Thura'. Judging from the fact that Seikkhun village was one the outlying villages at the time of the establishment of Shwebo town, it would appear that Seikkhun village was in existence well before Shwebo was founded. In the matter of rural development as the springing up of villages in the past were not as fast as at the present, it seems that Seikkhun then was a big village. Be it as it may, it is clear enough that Seikkhun was a prosperous 'big' village at the time when the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw was born. This is evidenced from the fact mentioned in the epilogue in the book of *Dhamma* known as 'Vipassanā Meditation' wherein it was described as: 'A big village bearing the name of Seikkhun renown; reputed near and afar as almost a town'. The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw had once remarked that in those days, the number of dwelling houses in the village was probably in the neighbourhood of seven or eight hundred. At the present moment, Seikkhun village has grown into a large village comprising about twelve hundred buildings, and because of the famous 'Ingyindaw' pagoda in its close proximity and

of its close link with the well know personality of the Venerable Mahāsī *Thera*, its name has risen to country-wide prominence.

SAYĀDAW'S PARENTS

Seikkhun being one of the villages lying in the outskirts of Shwebo happens to be a source of economic support to the City of Shwebo from the business point of view. Its environment being in the abundance with resources of water supply such as dams and exquisite lakes, where 'kabo' (canal) has found its way through paddy, maize, beans and other kinds of cereals are prolific. As nature has benevolently provided it with a wide expanse of greenish-brown arable land coupled with a number of pleasant gardens, orchards and lofty trees, it has become a prosperous village with a rich hinterland. Moreover, producing the well famed cotton piece goods and fabrics popularly known as 'chiba', clothes, the big village is renowned as a small town within Shwebo district with its thriving handloom textile industry.

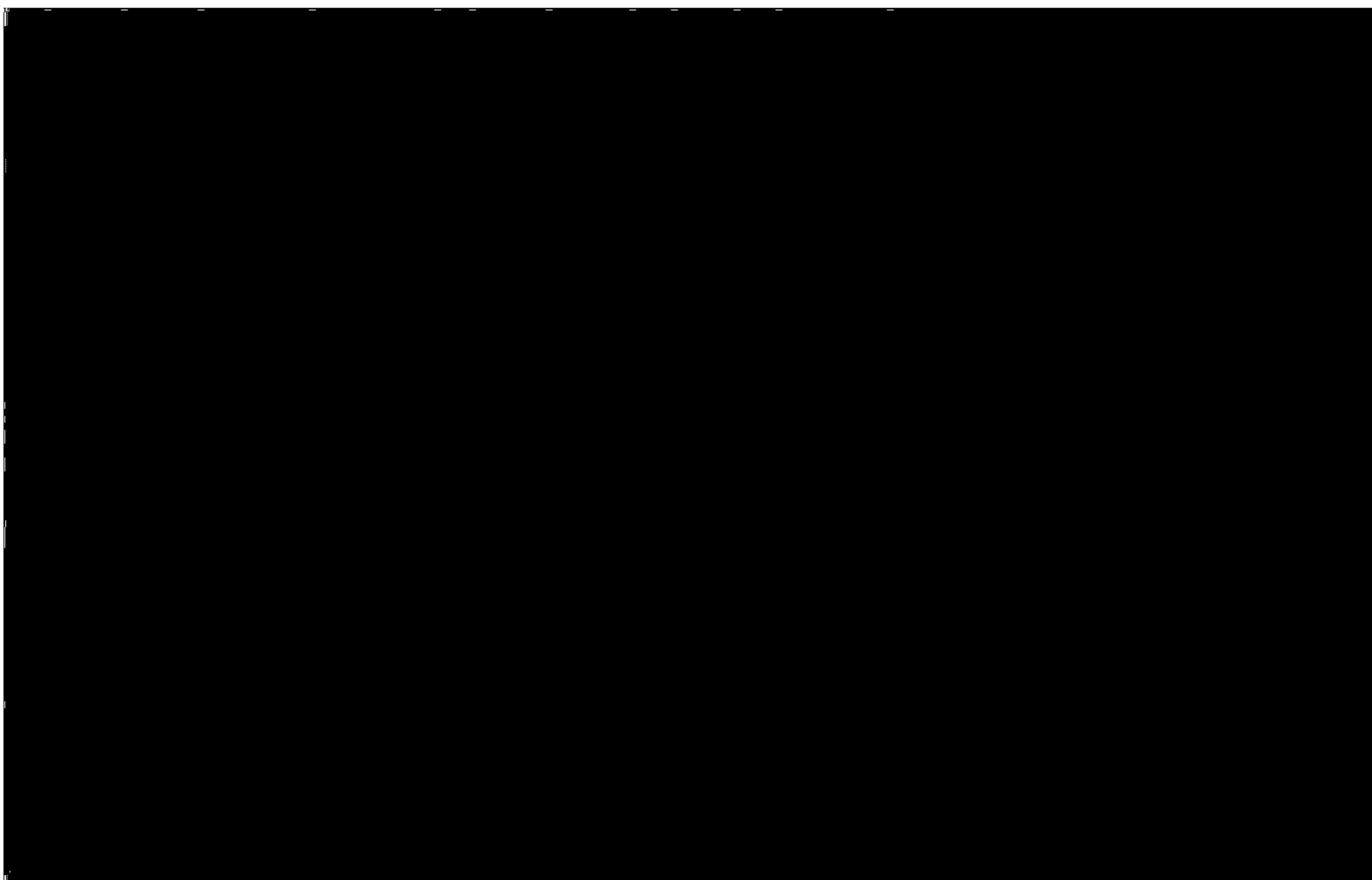
Both the parents of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw were the natives of that Sheikkhun village. U Kan Baw is his father's name and that Daw Ok is his mother. Upon his parents' side they were all honest cultivators by occupation in the way of their livelihood as was customarily the case with the majority of inhabitants living in the rural area. In those old days, one bread-earner's income was sufficient enough to feed the whole family. Hence, although U Kan Baw and Daw Ok could not be regarded as being rich belonging to an affluent society, they were fairly well-off and self-sufficient without having anything to worry about their own subsistence.

The young people of that village generally addressed *Sayādaw's* mother as 'Aphwa Ok', which literally means 'Grandma Ok'. Some of course, with due respect called her Daw Shwe Ok. This fact was mentioned by the *Sayādaw* himself in his written scriptural text by the name of Visudhi Magga Mahādīgha Nissaya (Nigon – last portion). It seems that mention was made probably not to let the people run away with a wrong idea that the correct name of his mother was not either Daw Phwa Ok or Daw Shwe Ok.

The Venerable *Sayādaw* loves the truth, and that is the

reason why he once stated as mentioned hereinafter about his parents' occupation just as he had done in the case of his mother's true name. What he said with unassuming honesty was that the occupation of '*dagagyis*' (his parents) was simple farming. As yeomen, they owned a plot of cultivable land that could be ploughed with just a pair of bullocks, i.e., about 12 acres or so in area. With this piece of land which seemed fairly adequate within one's own capability to manage, they lived on and sweated for their own living.

THE BIRTH



THE HOUSE WHERE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW WAS BORN

The Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw, the second son of U Kan Baw and Daw Ok, was born at about 3 a.m. on the 29th July, 1904 (the third waxing day of the Second Waso, 1266 of the Myanmar Era). U Kan Baw and Daw Ok had three other sons and three daughters besides the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw, thus making a total of seven children in all. The eldest son was U Tin who died at the age of twenty-eight. Next to U Tin was the *Sayādaw*, and younger than him was Daw Khin. Daw Khin died at an early age of sixteen. After Daw Khin came U Hmin, U Ba Yin and Daw Thin. All three died after they had reached the age of twenty. The youngest of the lot was Daw Sat, who passed away at the age of about fifty in the year 1333 M.E. (1971). Among all these children,

U Tin, Daw Thin and Daw Sat got married, while Daw Sat had three sons and three daughters. The off-springs of Daw Sat are still living.

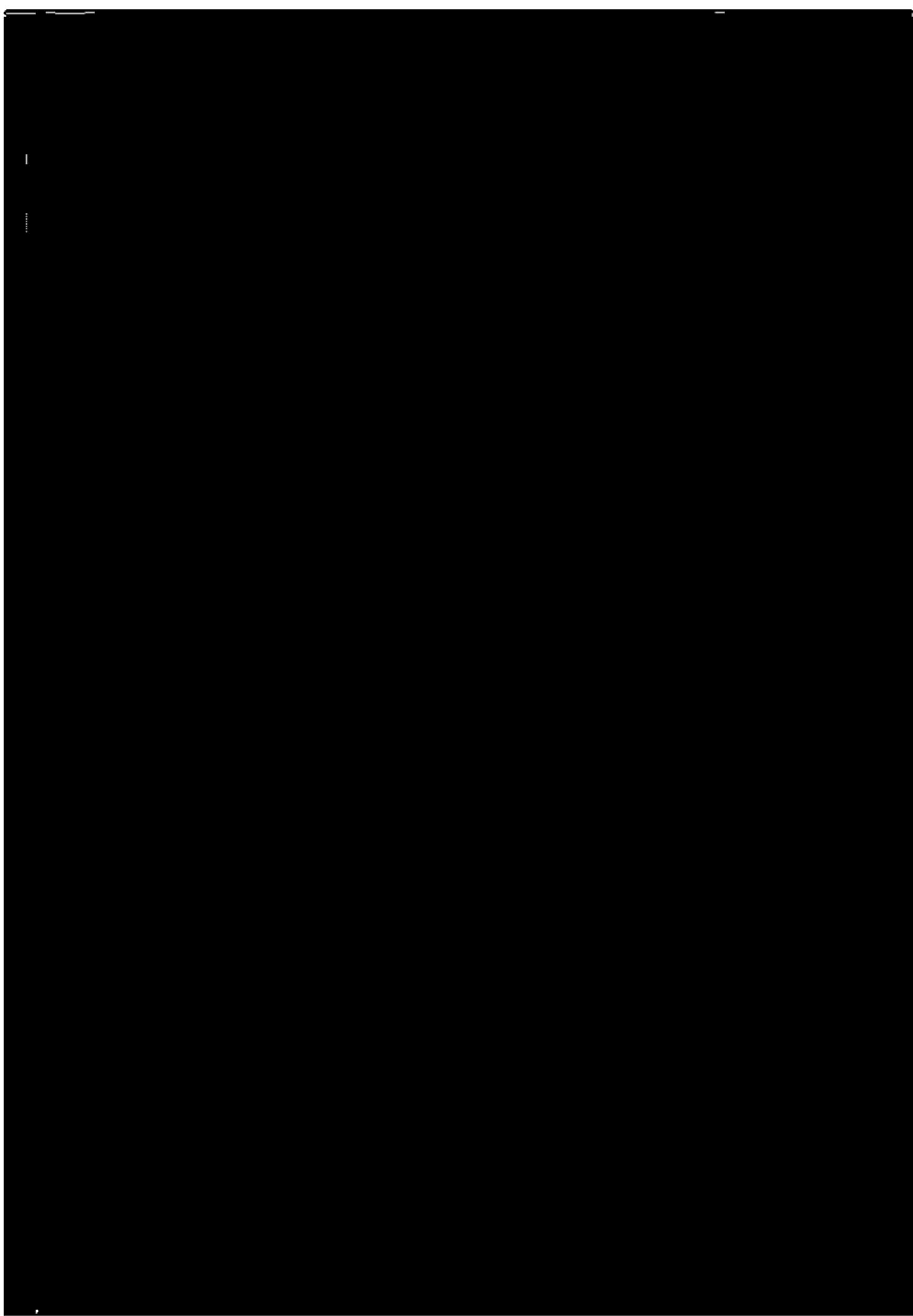
A passing reference to his brothers and sisters reveals that none of them lived long. *Sayādaw's* mother having died at the age of 44 (forty-four) in the year 1286 M.E. (1924) may be said to have had a short life. Only *Sayādaw's* father alone had lived up to 78 (seventy-eight) years. The Venerable *Sayādaw* is now nearly seventy-six years old. Therefore, considering his age, it may be stated that his health is pretty good. By his careful way of living and by strictly adhering to the medical advice and directions of his first-rate physicians, he will not only reach the age of his father, but will also have a longevity even much more than his father. We wish the *Sayādaw* a happy life exceeding the ordinary lifespan of a century.

ASSUMING THE ROLE OF SĀMAṆERA OR ENTERING INTO MONKHOOD

Looking into the names of *Sayādaw's* elder brother and sisters, it will be found that their names were all given in rhymes, such as U Tin, U Khin, U Hmin, U Ba Yin and Daw Thin. Such being the case, it seems probable that the young boy who was the embryo *Sayādaw* must have been given a name in the like manner with a rhyme. What is really surprising is that the name of the *Sayādaw* when he was a boy happened to be identical with the name of the wealthy gentleman who would later entrust the *Sayādaw* with the ecclesiastical administration of the Sāsana Yeikthā (the present Mahāsī Meditation Centre where the *Sayādaw* now resides), through great devotion and reverence. It could be just a coincidence. However, if it is stated that the very name given is nothing but a *nimitta*-precursor of what the future will be, no one will probably deny.

As is usually the custom in rural areas, the would-be *Sayādaw*, the boy, was sent to the monastery for his early education when he was 6 years old. It is really the case. In those old days when the knowledge of Science had not yet gained popularity, the monasteries afforded a training centre for education, which imparted vocational as well as spiritual studies. Equipped with the

knowledge acquired from such institutions wherein reside the community of monks, or a monk or two, it is not only possible for a person to stand on one's own feet for a livelihood but also to climb the ladder for the attainment of eminent positions such as, the high ranking posts of civil commissioners and Ministers and army Generals. That is the reason why men of intellect and people holding high ranks in those days were all the products of the monasteries. At the time of the embryo *Sayādaw*'s first admission to school, though the knowledge of Science was fairly advanced and well-known in Burma, there were no schools in villages where such technical subjects were taught as at present; the monasteries or monastic schools had to take the responsibility as the Seat of Learning to impart knowledge in both temporal and spiritual affairs relating to education, culture and discipline. As such, the future *Sayādaw* had received his early education relevant to what a boy of his age should know in the art of reading and writing, from U Ardeicca, the presiding monk of the Pyinmana Kyaung (monastery) at Seikkhun village.



Shin Sobana
Mahāsi Sayādaw-to-be

In his boyhood at the age of twelve, he was novitiated as a young monk (a novice) and became a *sāmaṇera* – under the guidance of his old teacher U Ardeicca, the abbot. As a *sāmaṇera* the name given to him was 'Shin Sobana' which fitted in with his personal appearance and personality. Certainly it is; *Sayādaw* bears the characteristic of a true native of Shwebo District possessing a good height and prominent features. His hands, arms, legs and other limbs of the body, etc., are also long and slim, stout and full, matching his dignified status. He is highly intelligent too. (In his portrait contained in a journal published in April-May, 1954, his big broad ears are more conspicuous). His looks calm, dignified and serene

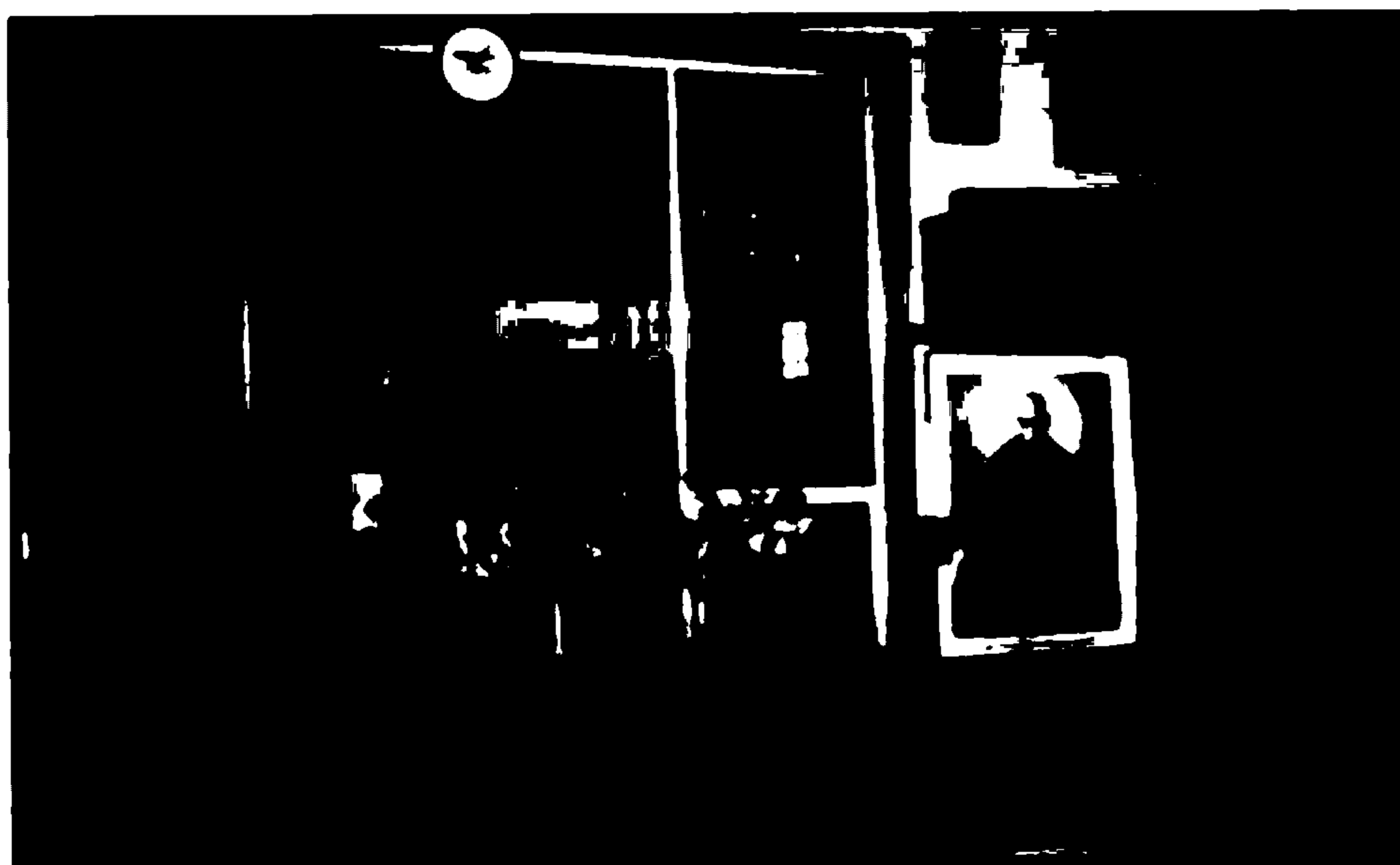
truly reflect his tranquil state of mind and inner peace, *samādhi*, which is far from artificial. There is elegance and gentleness when he talks and walks. As it is hardly impossible for a human to erase or discard the inborn traits of character, by judging from the *Sayādaw*'s graceful looks and highly respectable demeanour as is found today, it can be assumed that almost the same condition relating to the manners and behaviour might have prevailed in the early part of his age.

For this reason, the name 'Shin Sobana' (which means a person full of grace and dignity) that has been given to the young monk is so much in harmony with his handsome physical appearance and dignified personality, that the name itself exactly fits in with the man's personality. Furthermore, it seems that his preceptor must have given him the name of 'Shin Sobana' with wonderful foresight that this young monk, the would-be Mahāsi Sayādaw, would rise to the rare qualities of a famous prelate in the hierarchy of Buddhist Monks adroit in the field of practical *vipassanā* (*paṣipatti*) and of Buddhist scriptures (*pariyatti*). From whatever angle it is viewed, the title or name of 'Shin Sobana' is pre-eminent.

Koyin Sobana, the novice, after entering into monkhood, took his lessons on ten Jātakas (the Birth Stories of the life of the Blessed One in the last ten existences prior to His becoming the Gotama Buddha). The presiding monk being well aware of the young monk's keen intellect taught him the Vinaya Pāḷi and Arthakathā (Commentaries) without the foundation of the basic knowledge of the grammar. Thereafter only, the presiding monk let him study the grammar and 'sanjo' – a doctrinal portion of the Tipiṭaka *Dhamma*.

In the past, a student pupil taking the course of lessons was not ordinarily allowed to tackle with the Nissaya. Nor were the teachers willing to permit the pupils to deal with Nissaya. This was to prevent the pupil from taking things easy or becoming slack. However, as regards Shin Sobana even at the time he was learning the advanced grammar, both the two volumes of Nankyaung Nissaya and Dakkhinavam Nissaya were allowed to be studied in

**AT THE MEDITATION CENTRE OF MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S
NATIVE VILLAGE IN SEIKKHUN, SHWEBO**



a) The statue of Mahāsi Sayādaw and other memorabilia of the outstanding meditation teacher



b) Members of Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization examining the photographs of Mahāsi Sayādaw



c) Big drum



d) Stone slabs engraved with Mahāsi Sayādaw's 'GUIDE TO VIPASSANĀ'



e) The hair-relic of Mahāsi Sayādaw



f) Mahāsi Sayādaw's requisites at the Meditation centre



g) The Mahāsi Sayādaw's Private Residential Hall



h) Female yogis at the meditation centre

combination. Through unremitting application of his endeavour, he had succeeded in digesting it. Likewise, by also pursuing other branches of knowledge relating to grammar, he reached the stage of competency capable of teaching others. Shin Sobana's intelligence was more obvious when he was learning the Dīgha. Even while perusing the Dīgha, he was able to memorize it and do the recitation by heart. Not only was his memory good, but also his intellectual faculty of reasoning power or intuition was remarkably penetrating. It has been mentioned earlier in this biography that at an early age of

sixteen, he could grasp fully through practice the big book of Arithmetic called '*Ganagambhira*' inside a month without the aid of anyone. Shin Sobana being endowed with the attributes of his inborn talent and wisdom coupled with his untiring effort was able to acquire higher knowledge of the Pāli Commentaries and the Dīgha even in the capacity of a novice.

TRANSFER OF RESIDENCE

When Shin Sobana was seventeen years old, circumstances had shaped themselves in such a way as to require him to change his residence-monastery. In that year his earliest teacher Sayādaw U Ardeicca abandoned the yellow robes, i.e., the role of a monk, and became a layman. Therefore, being left stranded without a teacher upon whom reliance could be made to enhance his knowledge of the *Dhamma*, Koyin Sobana was compelled to shift his residence to Shwe-Theindaw monastery in north-Chiba village. There, he continued his studies and took lessons on the short volume of grammar called '*Saddattabedaceinda*' from Myaunggyi Sayādaw U Arcara who was then the Patron or the Chief of that Shwe-Theindaw monastery. Later, when another teacher by the name of U. Parama became the presiding monk at Thugyi Kyaung in Ingyindaw-taik, Koyin Sobana again changed his residence to that monastery.

On a site north-west of Seikkhun village about 400 '*tas*' (approximately 5,600 yards) away, stands the historically famous 'Ingyindaw' pagoda (shrine). According to its history, this pagoda was built and renovated and was reverently treated as a place of worship successively by a number of previous kings, such as Thiridhammāsoka, Narapatisithu, Mindon Min, etc., during their regimes. It is a place which has earned its reputation through the ages as an attractive centre of pilgrimage and festivities. Annually, the religious festivals are celebrated commencing from the 8th Waxing day of the month of Tagu (April) to the Full-moon day of that month. During the festival days, the place become vivacious and is thronged with various ethnic groups of pilgrims, and traders (sellers and buyers) from all over Burma. All kinds of commodities and household goods which will meet the needs of both village-folks and town-folks are said to be available as desired.

In the neighbourhood of this majestic and beautiful Ingyintaw shrine, a number of monasteries can be found at present as of in the old days. All these monasteries in a group as a whole are called Ingyintaw-Tike ('tike', sometimes spelt 'taik' means a group or cluster of *kyaungs*). The present well-reputed Mahāsi Kyaung is one of them. In the past, however, this monastery did not bear the name of Mahāsi Kyaung. By tradition, the name of the *kyaung* was usually given after the name or title of its Presiding Monk. The Thugyi Kyaung lay (and still lies) adjacent to Mahāsi Kyaung on the north-west. It was formerly an old rickety monastery but as the Headman of the village had reconstructed it, it carried the name of Thugyi Kyaung - meaning the *kyaung* built by the Headman. This was the monastery where Shin Sobana had resided till the end of the fourth *vassa* after his ordination as a monk (*rahan*). Koyin Sobana continued to devote himself seriously to the religious studies comprising various branches of Piṭaka with the aid and direction of the Presiding monk of that Thugyi Kyaung. Particularly, at the age of nineteen when Shin Sobana was still an ordinary young monk, *sāmaṇera*, he had learned a lot and accomplished himself with Sammawhavinodani Commentary and the voluminous Muladigha of the Piṭaka, which ordinary monks would not even dare approach or tackle.

GAINING ADMISSION TO THE ORDER OF SANGHA



Ashin U Sobana

After attaining the age of nineteen, the time had come for Koyingyi Shin Sobana to make a firm and supremely important decision in connection with his life's career.

Appraising himself of his position in life as a *samaṇera*, he had to ponder deeply thus. "Having entered the realm of *Sāvana*, I have studied the Buddhist scriptural texts and literature to some extent. I have been able to acquire the knowledge of *Dhamma* within a few years, which

to others would have taken many years to achieve. Therefore, there is no doubt that I have the necessary ability, foresight and aptitude.”

“If such fine qualifications were made use of in the pursuit of contemporary worldly business affairs, I’m sure I will really make a good headway in this worldly life, amass a good fortune and become prominent and prosperous. Similarly, after having acquired the knowledge of Buddha’s *Dhamma* to quite a considerable extent, I could become a person rich in experience of the spiritual knowledge in the world of human existence. Apart from that, in this life existence, there is ample scope for me to devote my genius and gain more complete knowledge of the religion. I have also studied the lessons in English in part from my relative U Sandimar, a monk, while I was residing at Shwe-Theindaw monastery in Chiba village. If I were an ordinary layman in this mundane world, I would be in a position to continue to learn English to my entire satisfaction. For these reasons, should I revert myself to the level of this temporal life?”

“Since I have learnt and gained considerable knowledge of the Buddhist Literature, I have come to visualize, superficially of course, the shallowness or depth of the Buddha’s *Sāsana*. In addition, since I have tasted the sweets of the noble monkish life, feeling of insatiable thirst and desire for tasting more of Buddha’s *Sāsana* has arisen in me. In fact I have a craving desire for practical application of the Buddha’s Teachings. In particular, I am keen to practise wholeheartedly the *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation in accordance with the Buddha’s direction and teachings. If possible, I wish to follow the footsteps of the Thee-Lon Sayādawgyī whose fame has spread throughout this part of the country and make myself distinguished like this eminent *Sayādawgyī*. If I am really bent upon implementing these objectives successfully, I should continue to remain in the realm of *Sāsana*. Hence, should I seek peace and happiness in this *Sāsana* by going a step further to enter the role of a *rahan* (an ordained monk)?”

Reaching the junction of the road – a dilemma – with these rambling and ramified thoughts, it would appear superfluous to say that the decision which Shin Sobana had to make, was of paramount

importance for him. However, looking at the present day affairs of the *Sāsana* in Burma, it seems quite clear that the decision will be crucially significant for the future *Sāsana* and posterity. If at that time, Shin Sobana's decision arrived at were to return to the life of an ordinary worldling, the present state of affairs of the *Sāsana* (particularly *Paṭipatti Sāsana*) might not have been the same as it is now. We can fairly surmise that it would have been quite different. In all the lives of the world famous personalities which go down in history, their deeds and doctrines will undoubtedly have the beneficial effect or leave an indelible impression in one way or the other on the country, race and religion.

It hardly needs special mention as to what kind of decision Shin Sobana had reached at that time. For the decision so made, Shin Sobana who had then reached the age of 19 years and 4 months on Monday, the fourth Waning day of Tazaungmon (November) 1285 M.E. (1923) received the higher ordination and rose to the rank of a senior monk in the name of 'U Sobana'

At that time, Sayādaw Sumeda, an eminent personage was residing at Sumeda monastery in Htansin village near Seikkhun. This distinguished *Sayādaw* was the Arch-Prelate of the so-called 'Mahabo' Sect. Therefore, U Sobana was ordained and admitted to the monkish Order by the Reverend Sumeda, the Arch-Prelate, and Ashin Neimmala *Thera* as his Preceptors assisted by Sayādaw U Parama and other *Kammavaca Sayādaws* together with thirty-five other *kammakaraka sanghas* who tendered their ecclesiastical vote by a resolution at the ordination service. To enable U Sobana to be ordained a senior monk (*upazin*), his uncle and aunt U Aung Baw and Daw Thit accepted the role of his benefactors for the ceremonial function.

Ashin Sobana was not only bent upon acquiring the scriptural knowledge (*pariyatti*) but also inclined to take up the practice of meditation (*paṭipatti*). By putting himself into practice, he wanted to know through personal experience that the noble teachings of the Blessed One are true and correct. However, at that stage since he had not yet fully accomplished in his scriptural learning, and being comparatively young also, he was constrained to

suppress his eager desire for pursuing *paṭipatti*, but then he proceeded to gain the acquisition of the basic scriptural knowledge only, with relentless effort. Meanwhile, he taught others too as much as he could. While he was thus earnestly persevering to acquire *pariyatti*, he had never neglected to strictly observe the rules of conduct laid down for the monks (morality or *sīla*) which is the basic requisite for the practical exercise of meditation (*paṭipatti*). Even within the period of the first four months after he was ordained as a monk, he had seriously observed the meritorious practices according to the precepts called '*dhutaṅgas*' viz.: *rukhamu dhutaṅga*, *pindapatika dhutaṅga*, *ekasanika dhutaṅga*, *pattapindika dhutaṅga*, etc.

For the purpose of acquiring the scriptural knowledge, he continued to take lessons from U Parama, the presiding monk of the Thugyi Kyaung.

PĀḶI 'PATHAMABYAN' ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

Examinations had become a fashion of the day among the world of monks in the Union of Burma at the time when Ashin Sobana was admitted to the Order of *Sangha*. The majority of the people would give recognition as a person of erudition only to a monk who had been successful in the examination. Also in matters connected with the affairs of the *Sāsana*, there were works which could be beneficially performed if there had been success in the examination. To be quite candid, performances and teachings of a person who had passed the examination were used to be readily accepted and complied with faith and confidence by the public in general. The majority had a notion that only those who passed the examination had reached the required level of status deserving of recognition. As such, in order to be more effective in all his performances and activities concerning the future *Sāsana*, Ashin Sobana sat for the first Pathamabyan initial examination conducted by the Government in the year 1286 M.E. (1924) even before his completion of the first *vassa* as a senior monk. He got through the examination easily despite the fact that he had not the slightest idea as to what type of questions would be set at the examination simply because he had been equipped with the knowledge of the scriptures

far in advance of the standard required of such an examination, and also because he had been teaching others.

In the year 1287 M.E. (1925) after a year (one *vassa*) from the time of his higher ordination, Ashin Sobana went to Syriam, opposite Rangoon, on the other side of the river. He reached Syriam at the beginning of the rainy season. From there, he proceeded to Bassein where a monk, a native of Seikkhun, was residing. Later, he returned to Syriam and took up his abode as a retreat for a *vassa* (rainy season). In that year, as he had been very busy with his itinerancy he could not find time to sit for the examination. In the year 1288 M.E. (1926), however, he appeared for the 'Pathamalat' examination as a candidate from Syriam, while temporarily residing at Mya-Thein-Dan Kyaung of Kyaungdawya Taik in Rangoon. Without much weariness and effort, he found success in the examination.

After passing this Pathamalat examination, Ashin Sobana gave away in charity to the Presiding monk the monetary award that was donated to him by the Government, and then returned to Seikkhun taking along with him only the Pass Certificate. In the year 1289 M.E. (1927) while at Seikkhun village, he had to go to Shwebo and then sat for the examination. It is to be noted and remembered as stated by the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw that Ashin Lasana, younger brother of the present Gandayon Sayādaw of Amarapura Town, also appeared for the Pathamagyī examination at the same time with him, in the role of a *vāmaṅgera*

TO MANDALAY FOR FURTHER PURSUIT OF STUDIES

In the days of Ashin Sobana, after his success in Pathamagyī examination, the road to examinations came to a dead end. There were no further steps to climb. Nor were there any classes for tuition or examinations as at the present day. Since considerable progress had been made in the study of scriptures and since examinations had reached the terminus, it was only necessary to receive doctrinal instructions from the teachers as might probably be found by chance. In some cases of course, it is only through the wise counsel of the teachers that the right way to correct thinking could be reached. To receive many a wise counsel and fruitful instructions of

the teachers, it was imperative to stay where there were a number of teachers (of intellectual fame). Therefore, in the year 1290 M.E. (1928) after accumulating four *vassas* as a monk, Ashin Sobana left Seikkhun for the Capital City of Mandalay known as ‘Yatanabon’ which had the reputation as a centre of spiritual learning with a large number of competent teachers adroit in the field of Buddhist literature. Generally speaking, if a trip had been made to Mandalay, the most learned city in Burma, a person was said to be really learned. As regards Ashin Sobana, however, he had an aptitude and skill in seeking knowledgeable experience. Rather, it would be more accurate to say that he was capable of learning.

During those days, at the well-established big monasteries in Mandalay, the student-*sanghas* were numerous; and also in almost every group of monasteries (*taik-kyaung*), a good number of eminent teachers (*Sayādaws*) were found to be present. It was the time when both the students and teachers alike were making tireless efforts in learning and imparting *pariyatti* – scriptural knowledge, respectively. Since teachers were many and plenty, mediocre *Sayādaws* had hardly any chance to gain popularity or rise to fame. At that time in Mandalay, only if a monk was really very intellectual and exceedingly scholastic and smart in the art of teaching, he could hope to become a reputed spiritual teacher. Therefore, if anyone was desirous of acquiring the knowledge of *pariyatti*, Mandalay city being the seat of spiritual learning, must invariably be visited without fail. That was the reason why Ashin Sobana had made his journey to Mandalay leaving behind his native place, his teachers, parents, relatives and others. On his arrival there, he went straight to Bwadaw Kyaung at Khinmakan Taik in Anaukpyin (western part of Mandalay) where there were people who had had communication with him.

Ashin Sobana again proceeded with his studies in Pāli, Commentaries and Dīghas under the guidance and supervision of the most eminent *Sayādaws* while residing at the Bwadaw Kyaung of the Khinmakan Taik. At that time, in Anaukpyin, Sayādaw U Lakkhaṇa of Chanthagyi Kyaung was well-renowned and a very popular teacher. Ashin Sobana never missed the lessons in classes of that *Sayādaw*. Neither did he remain absent from

attending the classes conducted by the *Sayādaws* of Taungthaman and Khinmakan Taik Kyaungs, and of the *Sayādaw U Eindavamsābivamsa*, etc., residing at Taik Thit (meaning new *taik*) which lies to the west of Aletaikgyi.

In this manner for a period of over one year, Ashin Sobana had learned all the methods imparted by the teachers who had earned very good reputation in the field of *pariyatti*. It may be said that the duration of his one year's stay in Mandalay was brief. Nevertheless, since Ashin Sobana was a person of great ability with a sufficient background experience in scriptures, over a year's stay in Mandalay may be regarded as more than adequate. On the other hand, it appears that Ashin Sobana had an intention to stay in Mandalay longer than that period. However, in the year 1291 M.E. (1929), owing to an unforeseen circumstance which had caused him to leave Mandalay, he was obliged to depart from that city contrary to his original objective.

The year 1290 M.E. (1928) in which Ashin Sobana reached Mandalay, was the year when Ye-Myet-Gyi In (the Great Lake) was hit by unprecedented floods. The Venerable *Sayādaw* had once stated that he (Ashin Sobana) had to travel by steamer from Mandalay to Kyaukmyung (a riverine port near Shwebo) on his way back to Seikkhun owing to the death of one of his cousin brothers in that year.

ARRIVAL AT MOULMEIN TAUNGWAINGALE

One day, a letter was received by Ashin Sobana who was then residing at Khinmakan Taik. This letter was from the *Sayādaw* of Taungwaingale Taik Kyaung of Moulmein. The letter conveyed a request with an invitation wishing Ashin Sobana to come over to Taungwaingale to give instructions relating to *Dhamma* to the pupils there. The *Sayādawgyi* of that *taik kyaung* was a native of Seikkhun though he was residing at Moulmein as a Presiding Monk. News had already reached him about Ashin Sobana's outstanding success in the examinations and performances relating to *pariyatti*. That was the reason why he had requested Ashin Sobana to assist him in promoting the *Pariyatti Sāsana* and also because Ashin Sobana was a native of Seikkhun, just as he was. As the *Sayādawgyi*

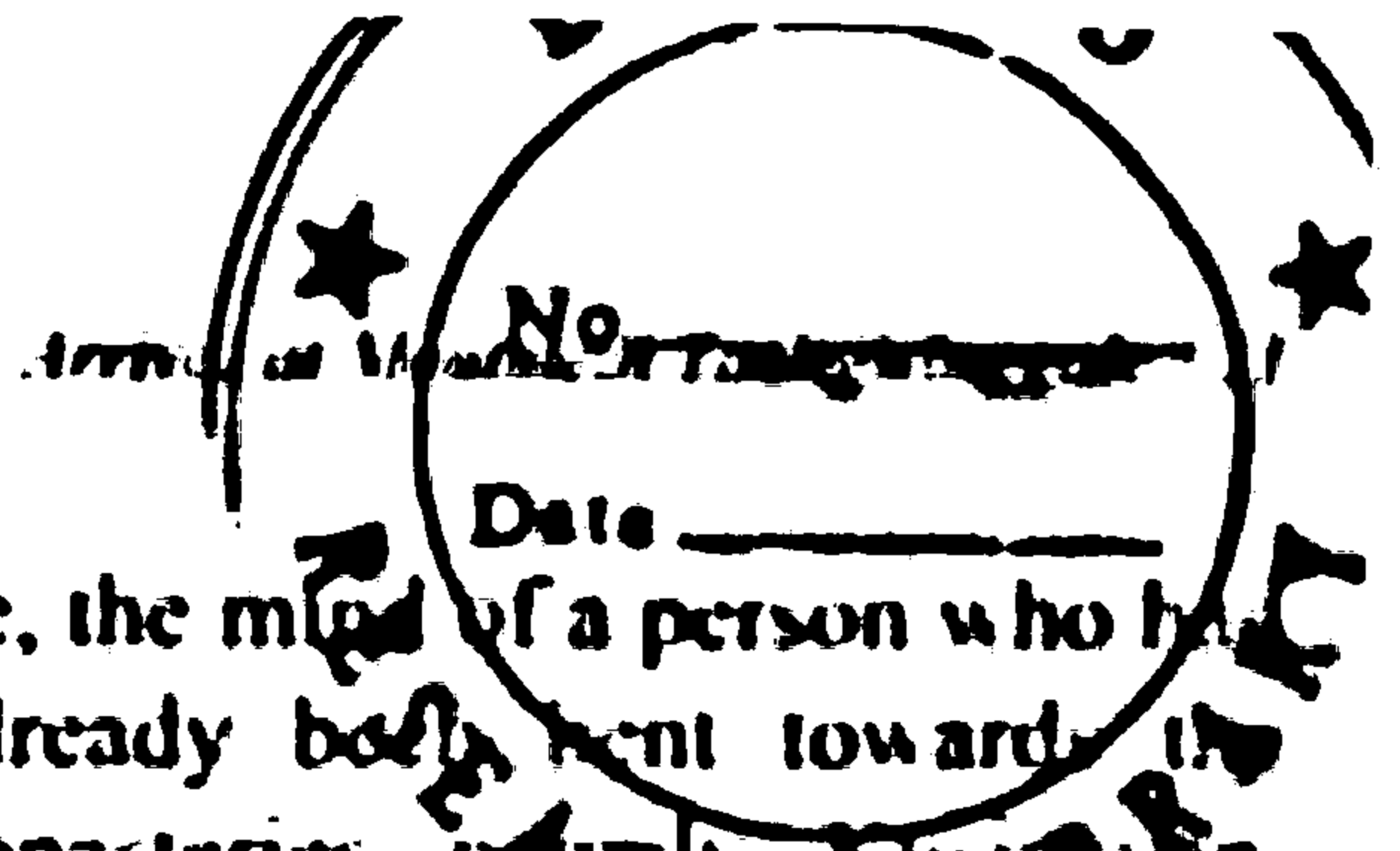
was a personage really worthy of great respect, and as he himself had also gained accomplishment in the Buddhist studies to a certain extent at Mandalay, Ashin Sobana left for Moulmein in that year 1291 M.E. (1929).

It seemed as if Moulmein Taungwaingale was according a warm and enthusiastic welcome to Ashin Sobana who had left his native village heading for a new place to start opening a new chapter in his life's career. It is exactly so. Though it assumes the name of Moulmein Taungwaingale, it is, in fact, not within the city precincts of Moulmein. It is a centre situated at a place about a couple of miles away to the east of the city. At this place there is a hill that tapers off into a projection forming a round shape nearly spherical or so, and in accord with the appearance and outline, it has been given a fitting name of Taungwaingale. Being in the lower region of the country where rains are abundant, this Taungwaingale (which literally means a small round hillock) is adorned with a variety of verdant trees – always fresh and evergreen. Having stood at a good distance fairly far away from the city, there is peace and tranquility. To say that there is 'peace and tranquility' means all worldly pleasurable sensations are totally extinguished in consonance with the maxim – "In the abode of virtuous men, *kāmarāga*, the sensations of sensual desires, shall become extinct." Just as the thriving big cities with full amenities of city life such as gaiety, amusements and festivals are extending their invitation to those who are used to indulge in worldly pleasures of life, it would appear as if Taungwaingale also clothed with big shady trees and thick green foliage thus affording an extremely pleasant centre for the pursuit of noble *Dhamma* without any tinge or trace of *kāmaguṇa*, sensual pleasure, is beckoning the men of virtue. Therefore, the moment



**Young Mahāsi
Sayādaw**

at age 32 when
he first arrived at
Taungwaingale
Monastery, Moulmein



there is a glimpse of Taungwainggale, the mind of a person who has taken a glance at it will have already been bent towards the *Dhamma*. Hence, a number of monasteries, namely, Kusayon, Sitayon, Padanikayon, Thayettaw Taik Kyaung, etc., have sprung up one after another in a row along with the inflow of numerous devout persons wishing to learn *pariyatti* and practise *paṭipatti* peacefully at the Taungwainggale.

Taungwainggale which was welcoming the arrival of Ashin Sobana, being dressed up with its nature's accompaniments, such as lofty trees, forests and mountain ranges that could bring delight and calmness of mind to persons having a glimpse at it, and with monasteries for the community of monks built and donated with noble mindedness by people who have faith and generosity, it has become a paradise or rather a haven fully crowded with the noble *sanghas* keen on pursuing and practising *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti* *Dhamma* to gain peace and tranquility. The hill site where Ashin Sobana had arrived to reside was the *taik kyaung* at that Taungwainggale.

Depending upon the Venerable *Sayādaw* of the *taik kyaung* whose birth place was the same as his, Ashin Sobana while residing at the *taik kyaung*, monastery, bore the brunt of work of the *Sāvana* and the ecclesiastical duties of the monastery by giving lessons and delivering lectures on scriptures to the student-pupils. Ashin Sobana while happily fulfilling the wish of the Venerable *Sayādaw* till the year 1293 M.E. (1931) at the Taungwainggale Taik Kyaung, which fitted in well with his mental background bent upon seeking 'peace and calmness', not only shouldered the work of teaching the pupils but also personally devoted himself to the study of Pāli texts, Commentaries and Dīghas. While so doing, Ashin Sobana had learned and studied wholeheartedly the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta contained in Dīgha Nikāya (Collection of Long Discourses), and Majjhima Nikāya (Collection of Middle-Length Discourses), together with Arthakathā (Commentaries) and Dīghas. Why was special emphasis made on the particular *sutta* into which he put his whole energy with care and with heart and soul? Of course, there was reason for doing so. This reason itself had changed or diverted the course of Ashin Sobana's work relating to the affairs of the *Sāvana*.

ASHIN SOBANA AND PAṬIPATTI

The region of Seikkhun village, where the birth place of Ashin Sobana situates, is an outstanding place. It is because this was the region where eminent Venerable *Mahātheras* – *Sayādawgyīs*, had taken residence giving preference to the acquisition of the knowledge of *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti*. Looking from a distance directly towards the North-East from Seikkhun village, a large ‘*zedi*’ (pagoda) can be seen standing at a site fairly far off. This pagoda is one in which the bones put in a receptacle (relics) of that highly distinguished Venerable Thee-Lon Sayādawgyī, were enshrined. This Venerable *Sayādawgyī*’s reputation in the field of *paṭipatti*, had spread throughout the country and he was looked upon as an *Arahat* possessing the attributes of *jhāna* and *abhiññā*, the super-natural knowledge or faculty. The prime donor of this famous pagoda was King Mindon (of Burma). The site where this pagoda stood was the place where the said Venerable *Sayādawgyī* had had his solitary retreat. (In connection with the marvelous and extraordinary achievements of this *Sayādawgyī* relating to *paṭipatti*, the practical exercise of meditation, it can be found in the introductory portion of the book called ‘Mahāsi Method of Vipassanā Meditation Exercise’. If desired, reference may please be made to that book of *Dhamma*, where the basic factors were already mentioned in the prologue.)

Again, directly to the South-East of that Seikkhun village, about five miles away, also stands the Mahabo village, Mahabo Sayādawgyī was a Prelate who gave *paṭipatti* an unqualified priority and who found happiness living in seclusion in the jungle. He was a well-renowned *Sayādawgyī* during the time of the Great King Mindon.

In particular, the two Venerable *Sayādawgyīs*’ pre-eminence in the field of *paṭipatti* being widely spread in the areas to which they belonged, Seikkhun village which is situated between the two tracts of Thee-Lon and Mahabo is filled with fragrance of the noble qualities of those two celebrated personalities. A few details of these two personages are more or less known by the people living in that area as handed down to them from one generation to another.

A study of the line of descent of Ashin Sobana’s teachers

will reveal that they were the descendants of Thee-Lon Sayādaw and Mahabo Sayādaw. This is true. The teacher of Ashin Sobana's preceptor Sumeda Sayādaw (U Neimmala) was Pinle Sayādaw U Vicāra. This *Sayādaw's* teacher was Sayādaw U Khemeinda of Mekkhathā Rāma Taik (monastery) of Mandalay. The said U Khemeinda was the pupil of Mahabo Sayādaw (U Paduma). Mahabo Sayādaw's teachers were Makyeechan Sayādaw, U Nārada and Thee-Lon Sayādaw (U Sandimar). Therefore, Ashin Sobana who had been brought up in the said area, and in that environment and also among this famous lineage of spiritual teachers, could not help being mentally inclined towards *paṭipatti*. Having possessed the innate quality of profound stability of mind, it is extremely natural that he had become interested in the methods and techniques relating to the religious practices connected with the meditational exercise – (*paṭipatti*).

Moreover, since Ashin Sobana had reached the status of a teacher giving scriptural lessons, he had also acquired ample knowledge of the literature concerning Buddha's teachings (*Dhamma*). Numerous teachings and discourses relating to the methods and practices leading to the attainment of *magga-phala* are contained in the Pāḷi scriptural texts. The practical methods of meditation exercise in accordance with the Pāḷi scriptures have been described in the Visuddhi Magga. The Buddha Himself had taught in his famous Kāyasamutti Sutta called Kālāma Sutta that 'any sort of teachings should not be accepted without first letting it be subjected to critical examination, and by putting it into practice personally for one's own apparent realization, if it is found really beneficial, one should comply with it and indulge in it in a practical way; and then, if it is of no beneficial value, it should be rejected or discarded'. Therefore, he had yearned for the achievement of the discriminate knowledge through practical application of the theoretical aspects of the facts which he had studied and acquired. Even while performing the duties of the *Sāsana* in the role of a teacher and a lecturer, he had propelled his mind towards the domain of *paṭipatti* building himself up as 'I shall personally pursue the knowledge through experience and put myself into practice', with a firm resolve – an irresistible urge indeed!

It is indeed true. Buddha's teaching is not that kind of *Dhamma* which one should remain content with by merely having a hearsay knowledge of the lessons or scriptural texts. It is a *Dhamma* that should be properly understood and personally practised. To get liberated from this dreadful *samsāra* (rounds of existences) which is bound with all kinds of miseries, such as, frightful condition of birth existences, etc., or to completely eradicate the evils of *loba* (greed), *dosa* (anger), *moha* (delusion), etc., the Buddha had taught and explained in many different ways, adopting various methods. The objective will not be reached without endeavoring to learn these methods through the medium of books and scriptures and without earnestly undertaking to take up the practice. One may know the right prescription (of drug) for treatment (of ailment); well, one may have the medicine, but if it is not compounded and properly administered, no benefit can be derived from the drug or the medicine. The nature of any drug or medicine is such that knowing its potency alone will bring no benefit or advantage. It will be beneficial only if it can be dispensed or taken as prescribed. Likewise, as Buddha's *Dhamma* is the kind of medicine that can cure or counteract the disease of 'greed', 'anger', etc., and of birth and old age, how can it bring about beneficial results without personally putting it into practice? If no practical application of the Buddha's *Dhamma* is made, it will be like a person who is unable to cure or give treatment for the dreadful diseases although the healing medicine is available in hand.

Nowadays, a number of Tourist Information booklets or brochures for pilgrims and travelers' diaries will be found and are obtainable. If the guiding instructions contained therein are familiarized, one will be able to impart a lot of information to others with reference to many places, although he might not have been to such places in person. His knowledge, however, is being derived from information of the second-hand type; this knowledge will undoubtedly be miles apart from that of the person who has himself actually been to such places. Though the information contained in Visitors' Guide may have indicated as to what rest-house or halting places are there in such and such a place and what kinds of goods, what sort of scenery or scenic spots can be found, changes might

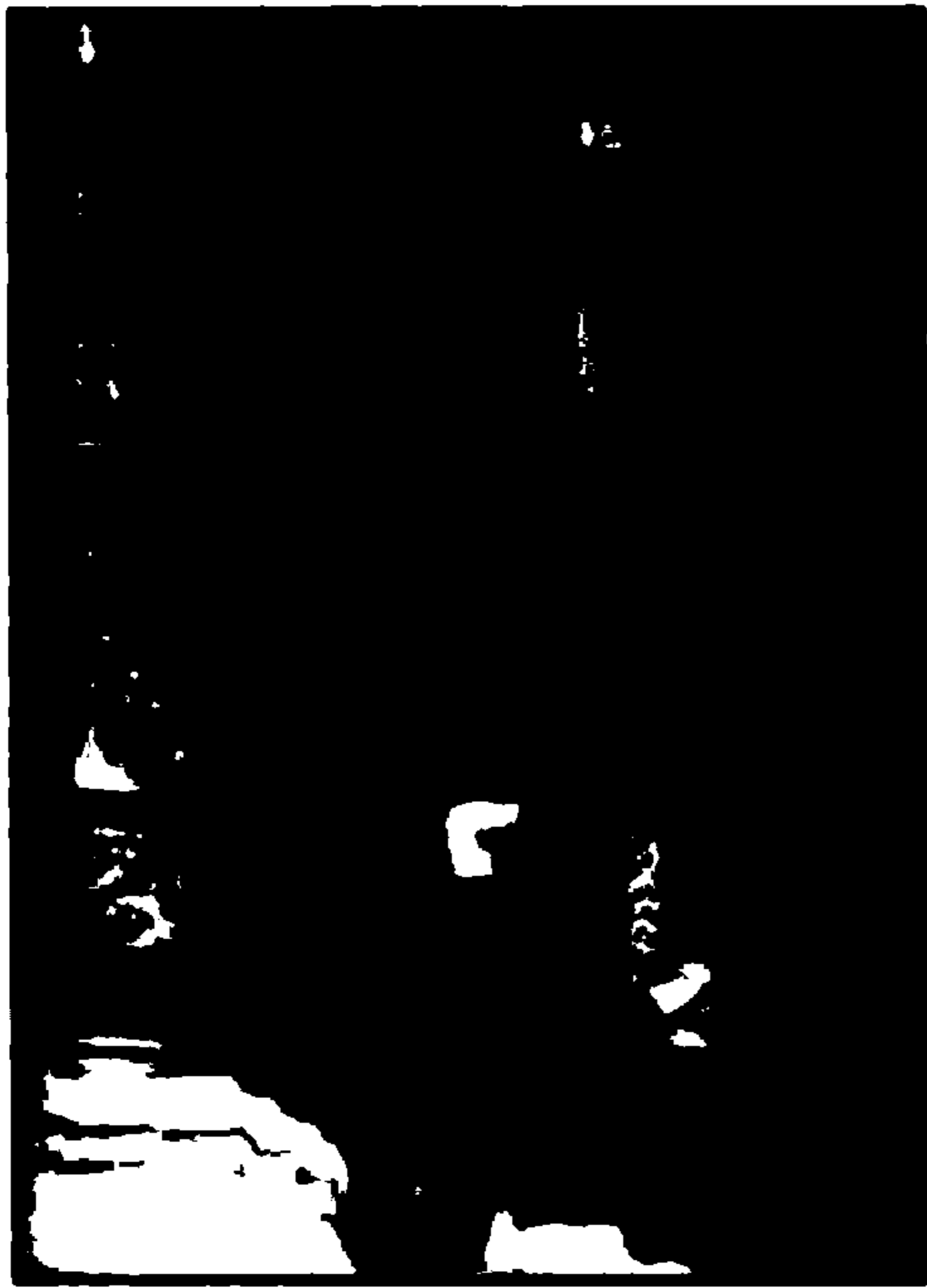
have already taken place at the time when one actually visits and sees the place personally. One may, in fact, find a road better than the road described in the booklet of information, or a bad road, short road, long road or a short-cut road or a road which is safer, i.e., a less risky road, etc. A lot of new things may be experienced too, which are not mentioned in the booklet. Such being the case, his knowledge regarding the place concerned will only be secondary in nature, unless and until he has personally been to that place. Neither can he say that he has himself personally been to that place. Therefore, relating to that place he cannot fully grasp all the information given in the booklet, and he will be able to tell only that 'the booklet has stated so', or might probably say that 'what has been mentioned in the booklet is so and so'. If one has already visited the place, he will be able to speak comprehensively and firmly with full confidence of what he has personally seen, come across or experienced. Will the reader, therefore, be satisfied with what has been recounted to him as second-hand information obtained from the Visitors' Guide, or rather, with just the information furnished in the booklet, if he was in a position to travel and visit that place?

Ashin Sobana does not wish to be like a person who has only read the booklet of information or like a person who has recounted the information after reading the booklet. He would prefer to be like a person who has been personally to that place and who has had personal experience. Being desirous of becoming a practical person as stated in the foregoing he has become inclined towards *paṭipatti*.

Apart from that, though the teachings of the Buddha in Pāḷi are likened to the information booklets, such booklets may not be free from mistakes, whereas the Pāḷi texts are not so. It is therefore to be believed without an iota of doubt that the teachings being the utterances of the Lord Buddha, the Omniscience, who had gained Supreme Enlightenment and who had trodden the Path and found the *Dhamma* personally, should be accepted as absolutely true and correct.

It is entirely impossible for a person to put into practice the

teachings of the Lord Buddha with benefit if he is doing meditation exercise with skeptical doubts. It is definite that if one practises with faith, it will surely reveal that what has been realized in practice is in entire agreement with the teachings of the Buddha. When it is so clearly known, it is certain that the feeling of immense



**Refurbishing a Shan
Umbrella,
Shwedagon Pagoda**

faith, belief and fervour in the Buddha and the *Dhamma* will occur. Prior to his realization of the Truth, his faith and belief were based upon the personality, but after the realization, the faith that has arisen in him becomes manifold – more than a hundred or a thousand fold – the Faith that is extremely firm, unshakable, resolute, indestructible and immuned from anyone's interference or inducement. To cite an example: In the previous year, a scaffold was constructed at the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon for the renovation of its 'Umbrella' – the top portion of the

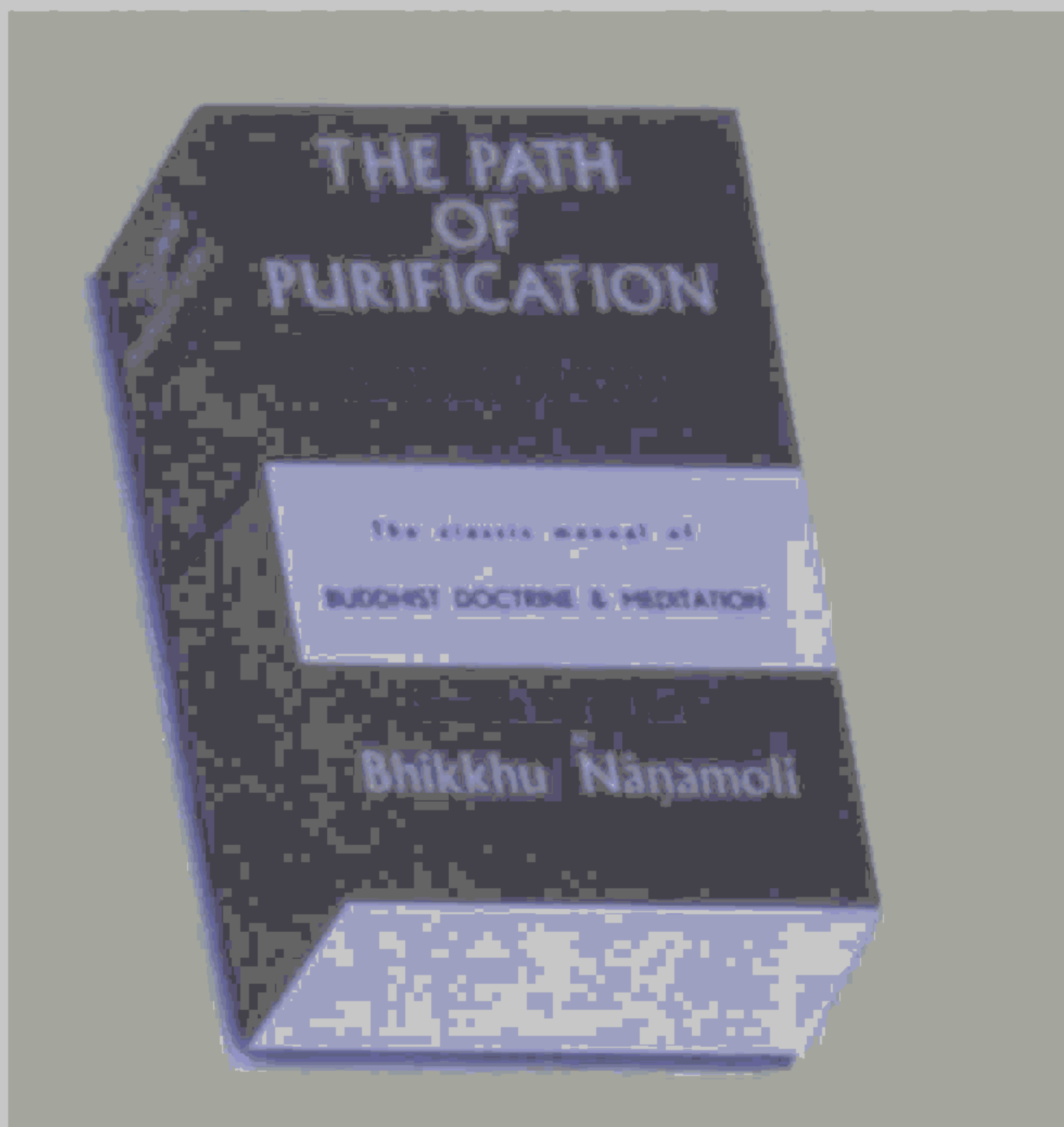
spire. Those who wished to worship with great earnest up to the 'Umbrella' of the pagoda were permitted to do so. Those who were fortunate to climb up to the top and worship, had seen with their own eyes a variety of jingle bells hanging on to the 'Umbrella', the '*Nget-ma-nar*' (an ornament banner-like piece of flat metal sharp-pointed at one end) and the '*Seinbu*' (a round piece of shimmering gold of bulbous shape almost spherical) which are adorned with priceless gems and precious stones. Their knowledge in connection with this 'Umbrella' is really a firm knowledge. What has been written and recorded in the ancient architectural memoranda or records relating to this monument is found to be evidently true and correct. If anyone had told them that 'what they said about the glittering crown – the 'Umbrella' as being embedded with inestimable treasure of diamonds, gems and other precious stones is a mere exaggerated statement or a brag, and the photographs of these 'Umbrella', '*Nget-ma-nar*' and '*Seinbu*' as being camera-

tricks or fake, such a person who said so would probably be regarded by them as 'one who was mentally deficient or rather a mental delinquent'. Their confidence and faith will not be shaken a bit by the prattling talk of such a person. It is because they have vividly seen it with their own naked eyes. In the same way, Ashin Sobana also wished to entertain that kind of unshakably firm faith in the three jewels of Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*. He was desirous of giving support to the Buddha's teachings by his own achievement of the realization of its Truth with heart and soul. For this reason also, Ashin Sobana was bent upon practising *paṭipatti* with his own personal effort.

A person who wants to practise *paṭipatti* should choose any one of the methods to his liking from among the many. It will be found that in the Visuddhi Magga (Path of Purity) (See BOOK REF. 3 on page 28) the methods relating to *samatha* and *vipassanā* have been written and explained at length comprehensively. However, all methods and techniques so mentioned need not be adopted and practised. Only one of the methods should be chosen and exercised. From the time of his becoming a *sāmaṇera*, novice, Ashin Sobana had become interested in what had been stated in the last portion of the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta after having gone through it and found the guaranty offered therein. This guaranty is: 'If mindfulness exercise (*satipaṭṭhāna*) is diligently practised, one can become an *Arahat* or an *Anāgāmi* within a time period of seven years at the most or seven-days at the least (shortest)'. This guaranty or undertaking given by the Buddha is really good to be accepted and practised. Therefore, if a person, who intends to practise the *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation exercise, is one who has found and known this 'guaranty', it is absolutely certain that he will select the method of *satipaṭṭhāna*.

After arriving at a decision to pursue and practise the *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* meditation, Ashin Sobana had carefully and thoroughly studied the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Thereafter, he checked it up with the Commentaries and Dīghas, and seriously studied it until he was able to grasp fully the essence of the Buddha's words (teachings). He had earnestly learned the Commentaries with all his might till he could memorize them. As such, when he was about

**BOOK REF. 3: THE PATH OF PURIFICATION (VISUDDHI
MAGGA) by BHADANTĀCARIYA BUDDHAGHOSA
Translated from the Pāḷi by Bhikkhu Nāṇamoli**



**THE AUTHOR AND HIS
WORK**

‘In the post-canonical literature of the Theravādins, three works stand out as special treatises on meditation. The chief textbook is Buddhaghosa’s ‘PATH OF PURITY’, a superb work written in the 5th century. Like all human authors, Buddhaghosa has his faults. But these are just minor

irritants, and he has composed one of the greatest spiritual classics of mankind.’

EDWARD CONZE

THE TRANSLATOR

‘During the 11 years the English Bhikkhu Nāṇamoli spent in Ceylon as a member of the Buddhist Monastic Order, he made a notable contribution to Pāḷi studies by his important critical translations of difficult texts, and by his own writings. No one can fail to recognize the deep understanding of his subject, the considered and balanced judgments, and clear sighted and well-founded interpretations the Ven. Nāṇamoli has consistently brought to bear throughout his translations of Theravāda Buddhist works.’

**I.B. HORNER, D. Litt.,
President, Pāḷi Text Society**

to leave Taungwaingale, he was already fully equipped with knowledgeable experience academically. It might even be possible for him to practise with a fair amount of success by relying on the scriptural texts. Nevertheless, the work of practising *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation exercise is a practical one. In any kind of work which requires practical application of knowledge and effort, it would be far-reaching only if reliance is made upon a teacher or a guide who has the necessary practical experience. Only then, he will be able to avoid loss of time and labour. If the instructions of an experienced teacher are complied with, it will bring him a lot of benefit. He can also make sure of himself that he is on the right path.

When a mechanical device or a machine is bought, a booklet of instruction is usually attached. It is really tiresome to acquaint oneself with the instructions contained in such a booklet. Sometimes, one may come across that the machine cannot be operated because of wrong interpretation of the instructions or of lack of knowledge. If however, instructions are received from a person who has had personal experience in handling such a machine, one can very easily understand the mechanism. It is certainly so. To some, even though they cannot read the instructions in English for not being able to understand that language, if they have the practical knowledge in the use of the machine, they know very well about its mechanism. Even those who have gone through the instructions will be able to make good use of the machine without waste of time if assistance were obtained from such experienced persons. In all kinds of practical work, a teacher or an instructor is so much essential. In the absence of any teacher or instructor, it will be something like a blind elephant rushing through the jungle hitting recklessly here and there, and in the like manner as one will be groping in the dark, as it were, experimenting and guessing the work, it is extremely difficult for him to step on the right track. For this reason, the Lord Buddha had said, “*Yathābhūtaṃ nānaya sattā parivesitabba,*” which means “To achieve the true and correct knowledge, one should seek for and rely upon a teacher.”

Ashin Sobana having already realized the essential need for a practical teacher who could instruct according to the Buddha’s

teachings, and also by his own awareness, had to endeavour in search of a teacher. In the matter of procuring a teacher, Ashin Sobana may be said to be fortunate with regard to have had the opportune time and place.

In amplification: it can be said that the right methods and techniques of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation exercise had become increasingly widespread and popular up to a period of one thousand years after the demise (*Mahāparinibbāna*) of the Buddha, and as it must be stated to have dwindled into oblivion, spiritual teachers qualified to instruct methodically had become scarce thus reaching a state when it was almost impossible to practise fully in accordance with the right techniques. As a matter of fact, it had almost come to a point of dejection causing one to raise his hands up (to give up) in the pursuit of *paṭipatti*. Those *Sayādaws* who had lived through the years and had seen the past stated that Thee-Lon Sayādawgyī after making his initial address to the congregation saying he would recount all his experiences in practising meditation to his heart's content, had taught in a systematic way how he had reached up to the stage *Anāgāmi-phala* and as to how he had indulged in *vipassanā* meditation, how *vipassanā-ñāṇa* (insight knowledge) was gained by him in stages and how he was absorbed in a trance known as *phala-samāpatti*.

Thee-Lon Sayādawgyī had not put anything into writing in the form of a text on *Dhamma* about his experiences. Are there people who have learned and inherited the techniques from the Venerable Thee-Lon Sayādawgyī? If there is still any who is linked with the *paṭipatti* of the Thee-Lon Sayādawgyī, it cannot be said that the rays of hope have not as yet completely vanished. Are there any such people who could be traced or found in one place or the other?

In this connection, Ashin Sobana may be said to be fortunate. At that time, in Thaton, a town not too far away from Moulmein, a Venerable *Sayādawgyī* popularly known as Mingun Jetāvan Sayādaw was teaching practical methods of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation exercise. As it was stated that this method had been taught since about thirty years, the presumption is that the method

and technique shown by the *Sayādawgyī* relating to *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation practice is true and on the right lines. When making further enquiries, Ashin Sobana surprisingly found out with delight that the *Sayādawgyī* was of the lineage of the famous Thee-Lon Sayādaw.

Tradition has ascribed to Jetāvan Sayādawgyī's life history (see page xxxii) as one who had learned and accepted the methods and techniques of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation from Aletawya Sayādawgyī of the Mingun Hills. The Venerable Aletawya Sayādawgyī happened to be one of the many disciples of Thee-Lon Sayādawgyī. Such being the case, there is reason to believe that the methods of meditation practice of Jetāvan Sayādawgyī had descended from Thee-Lon Sayādawgyī's practical methods in an unbroken continuity. When Ashin Sobana was about to leave Taungwainggale in search of practical *Dhamma*, it coincided with the time the Jetāvan Sayādawgyī was personally giving practical instructions and directions on the methods of exercising mindfulness with vigilance, i.e., '*Appamāda Satipaṭṭhāna Dhamma*'. Therefore,



Mingun Jetāvan
Sayādawgyī,
U Nārada Mahāthera
(1869 – 1954)

it must be regarded as an opportune moment for Ashin Sobana. Instructions on *satipaṭṭhāna* being given at Thaton which is not far too remote from Moulmein and is within easy reach, it must be considered as fortunate from the point of view of the place. In the light of these favourable circumstances, Ashin Sobana had come to a decision to approach the Venerable Jetāvan Sayādawgyī as a Teacher to be able to dedicate himself to the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*. The budding lotus flower awaiting to blossom forth was indeed in readiness to be caressed and

embraced by the soft dawning light of the early rising sun!

HIS STAY WITH JETĀVAN SAYĀDAWGYĪ

Ashin Sobana considered that the time was ripe to visit the Venerable Jetāvan Sayādawgyī at Thaton, and accordingly made his decision. He then had to seek permission from Taungwainggale Sayādawgyī. The *Sayādawgyī* was in fact reluctant to allow Ashin Sobana to leave Taungwainggale. However, as it would be improper to deter Ashin Sobana in the matter concerning the pursuit of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* meditation, the *Sayādawgyī* was constrained to acquiesce. After receiving permission, Ashin Sobana left the Taungwainggale Monastery on the seventh Waxing day of Pyatho (January) in the year 1293M.E. (1931), and this was the beginning of his long journey in search of the practical *Dhamma*.

First of all, when Ashin Sobana left Taungwainggale, he was accompanied by U Tayzawunta, a monk who had put in six *vassa* (years) as an ordained monk and whose temperament was compatible with his own. Being on a journey intended to pursue meditation practice, it was imperative to strictly adhere to the *Vinaya* Rules of Discipline and avoid impediments or obstacles to religious life as far as possible. They, therefore, started on the journey only taking along with them the eight requisites of a Buddhist monk (*parikkharā*), viz.: (the bowl, the three robes, the girdle, a razor, a needle and a water-strainer).



Robes & alms bowl

The Rules of Discipline being essentially required to be followed rigidly, they left without even putting on slippers, that is, with bare feet and also brought along with them a lay disciple (*kappiya*) for the purpose of handling cash for payment of train fares on their behalf. After reaching Martaban on the opposite side of Moulmein across the river, the *kappiya* was asked to purchase

railway tickets for two persons up to Zinkyaik station and only after they had obtained the passenger tickets, the *kappiya* was sent back home. Although Ashin Sobana had left Moulmein for the purpose of practising meditation under the guidance of the Jetāvan Sayādawgyī.



**First batch of yogi-monks under tutelage of
Mingun Jetāvan Sayādaw**

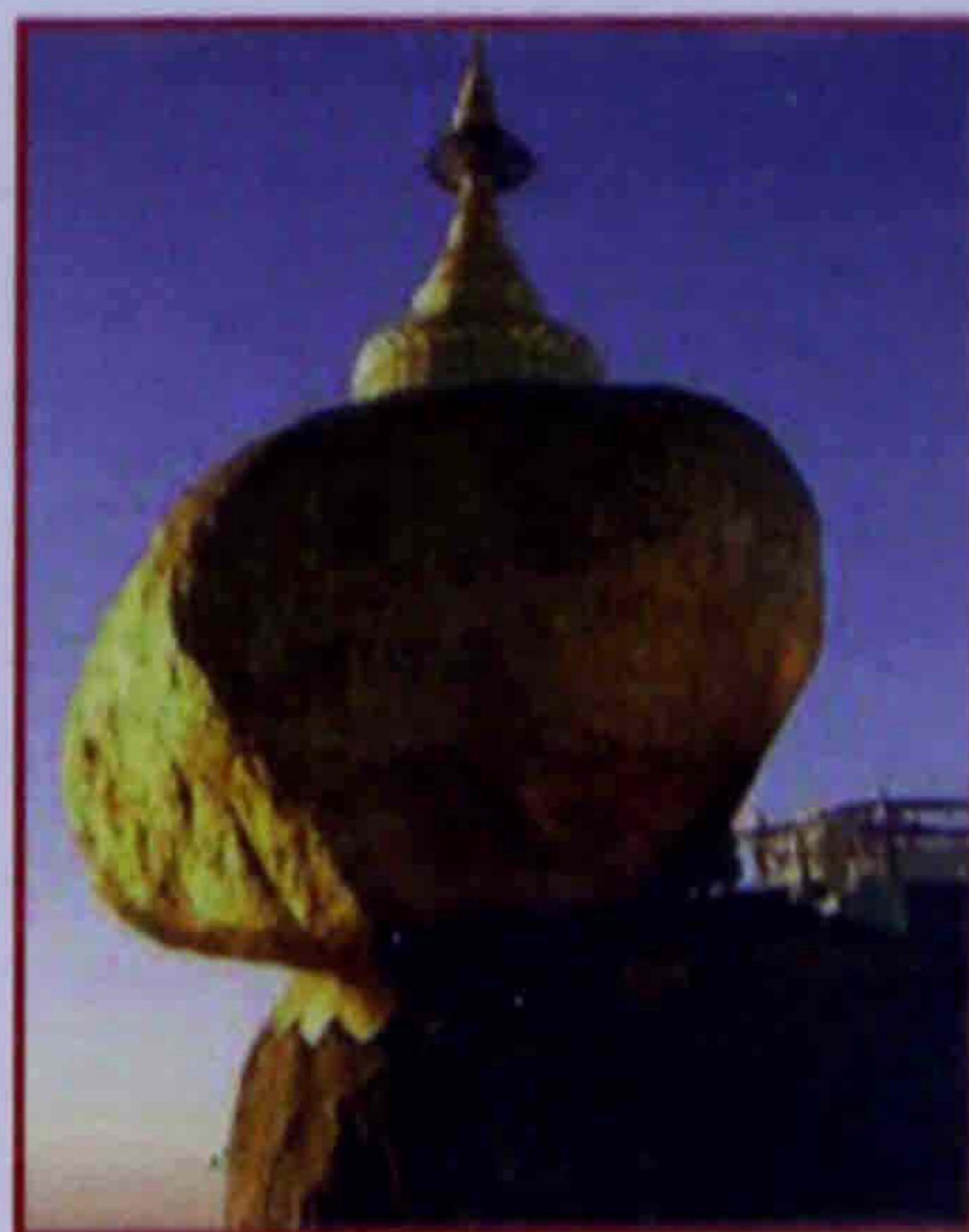
Mahāsī Sayādaw-to-be is 2nd from left, last row of yogi-monks

he had arranged to get down at Zinkyaik instead of going straight to Thaton, to visit, observe and worship the holy spots in that area as inspired by his urge. These are the renowned places of religious sanctity such as, Kaylatha, Myathabeik, Vepolla Hills, etc., and Kyaiktiyo Pagoda (standing on the summit of the hill bearing the name of that famous pagoda itself wherein enshrined that hair-relics of the Buddha) where virtuous men seeking for the noble *Dhamma* do find mental peace, comfort and happiness. In the



Kyaiktiyo Pagoda

View from afar. The pagoda stands on a summit of a hill bearing the same name - Kyaiktiyo as the famous pagoda.



**Kyaiktiyo or Hanging
Rock Pagoda**

course of their extended journey, Ashin Sobana and his companion monk took the train if by chance donors appeared to provide them with travel tickets, and if no such donors were found, they tramped on foot relying on their own energy and fervour.

The two monks led by Ashin Sobana set out from Zinkyaik and made their way to places, such as Tatun, Yinnyeik, Kawkadok, Thaton, Kaylatha Hill, Myathabeik Hill, Vepolla Hill, Kyaiktiyo Hill, etc., undergoing great physical hardships and discomforts, fatigue and many difficulties on the way. After reaching back to Kawkadok village, Ashin Sobana and U Tayzawunta departed from one another and went on their own respective journey. U Tayzawunta dropped his mission and without visiting other places for further investigation, proceeded directly to Thaton Jetāvan to take up *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation practice. Ashin Sobana, however, wishing to visit and enquire about a well-known place, alighted from the train at Donwun station and proceeded on his own solitary journey eventually arriving at a forest retreat, a monastery where a monk, 'Shweyaung-pyataung', by the name of U Ohn Gaing was presiding. As all the monks residing at that monastery headed by the monk U Ohn Gaing were observing the ascetic practice known as *susanam* (cemetery) *dhutaṅga*, Ashin Sobana being a guest or a stranger monk (*agantuka*) sojourning in that monastery, had to observe that *dhutaṅga* practice together with other monks for four nights in succession throughout the length of his stay. After leaving this place, he continued his journey finally reaching Thaton where Jetāvan Sayādawgyī was residing, on the fifth Waxing day of the month of Tabaung (March) in the same year.

It may be recalled that Ashin Sobana, who had left Moulmein to practise meditation, first visited Kaylatha Hill, etc., without proceeding directly to Jetāvan Sayādawgyī. By his innate nature also Ashin Sobana's mind was bent upon practising *kammaṭṭhāna*. Now, he had also consulted with the persons who were pursuing meditation practice with great endeavour and zeal at their respective places where he had visited. He had also personally taken part in the practices they themselves had indulged in. The mind that had already had its natural tendency to *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation practice was again animated and glazed with *kammaṭṭhāna* and made more keen with added zeal. The influence

of the work of meditation practice had pervaded the whole of Ashin Sobana's mind. For this reason, without the slightest delay on the very day of his arrival at the feet of the Jetāvan Sayādawgyī, Ashin Sobana had sought for the *Dhamma* on *kammaṭṭhāna*. As requested, the *Sayādawgyī* also started giving instructions on the methods of *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation and let Ashin Sobana carry on with the practice immediately.

Ashin Sobana then went on persevering with the work of practising meditation as instructed. Having come over to this place with his solemn determination to practise seriously, Ashin Sobana put his inexhaustible energy into the practice with unremitting effort like a man trying hard to procure a spark of fire through friction by constantly rubbing the two hard stones (flints) without any relaxation. It involved no less than many days refraining himself from uttering a single word for about four months in the course of his meditation exercise, avoiding total sleep by continuous exertion to gain concentration and mindfulness and by noting every movement of the limbs without a miss while walking to and fro throughout the whole day during the time he indulged himself in such meditation practice. It was amazingly noticed that in spite of his vigorous practices with utmost diligence without the slightest regard for the health of his bodily Self, his physical body and strength remained normal - extremely strong and alert, robust and free from any kind of ailment. On one day when chance came in his way, Ashin Sobana respectfully related to the *Sayādawgyī* an account of the state of physical condition experienced by him. The Venerable *Sayādawgyī* then remarked with an exhortation: "In the personality of an individual who is practising *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation, the qualities of the *bojjhanga Dhamma* are taking place; and because of the faculty of these *bojjhargas*, diseases and ills have been got rid of. Hence, the present condition of good health is the attribute of the power and faculty of the *bojjhargas*, and this fact should be properly noted and remembered."

This is exactly so. The requisites of the *bojjhargas* are *sati* (mindfulness or recollection), *paññā* (knowledge or wisdom), *virīya* (energy or exertion), *pīti* (extreme joy or rapture), *passati* (contemplation, observation or understanding), *samādhi*

(concentration or calmness), and *upekkhā* (equanimity). In the personality of those who are constantly practising the *Dhamma*, these seven requisites for attaining *vipassanā* or supreme knowledge are always occurring. While practising meditation, turbid demerits – evil actions and viciousness will not take place, the mind becomes extremely purified. That is why the *Dhamma* possesses very potent qualities. The mind or the consciousness that arises along with such *Dhamma* has become extraordinarily clear, pure and very acutely powerful under the influential impact of the latter. If the mind so happens, the matter or substance connected with the mind or upon which the mind dwells, is also free of impurities and becomes very clear. As the '*Hadayavatthu*' – the bodily substance caused by the mind, is purified, the blood on which it depends also becomes pure and gets cleansed. Again because the blood is pure and clean, *upādānakkhandha*, i.e., the aggregates of the body or *khandha* becomes clean and consequently, there will be no opportunity for the occurrence of the diseased-body. With the non-occurrence of the diseased material form, the body will be free from disease, and as such, it is definitely certain that *bojjhanga* could dispel or wipe off the diseases and ills. For this particular reason, severe illness and diseases which had once oppressed or attacked the personalities of the Blessed One, Shin Mahākassapa and Shin Moggallāna had been completely eradicated or cleansed from the body or the *khandha* after listening attentively to the chanting of the *bojjhanga Dhamma*, just as the water cannot possibly stay on or remain still even for a second on the leaf of a lotus plant.

UNAVOIDABLE RETURN TO TAUNGWAINGGALE

The original intention of Ashin Sobana in coming over to Jetāvan Sayādawgyī was to practise meditation for a period of about one year. It might have occurred to him then that his objective would be achieved only by practising for approximately a year. However, this must be deemed to be Ashin Sobana's underestimation because of the fact that Ashin Sobana, in spite of his less than one year's stay with Jetāvan Sayādawgyī, has now reached the pre-eminent status in the personality of the Venerable Mahāsi Sayā daw, which, of course, evidently lends support to his



Taungwainggale Temple



**Sima hall and stairway,
Taungwainggale Temple**

calculated underestimation. For Ashin Sobana, the days had rolled on unconsciously while practising earnestly with inspiration under the instructions of the Jetāvan Sayādawgyī. However, an unexpected turn of events had taken place rendering it inevitable for him to return to Taungwainggale. On the 7th, Waxing day of Waso (July) in the year 1294 M.E. (1932), while still practising *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation, a telegram conveying the news of serious illness of Taungwainggale Sayādawgyī had reached the hands of Ashin Sobana with a request that he should come back immediately. On the following day, i.e., the 8th, Waxing day of Waso, (July) he had to hurry back to Moulmein Taik Kyaung.

On arrival there, Ashin Sobana found the condition of the patient *Sayādawgyī* almost critical with hardly a ray of hope for recovery, the *Sayādawgyī* being cruelly oppressed by the severity of the disease with the old age telling upon him. However, Ashin Sobana without surrendering his hope did his utmost giving *Sayādawgyī* the best treatment with the help of the most reliable physicians apart from



Ashin Sobana

(holding walking stick)

Return from Mingun Jetavan
Sayadaw's Centre,

Seen with the Taungwainggale
Sayadaw (seated, 2nd left).

personally nursing the *Sayādawgyī* with all tenderness. However, on the seventh day after the arrival of Ashin Sobana, the *Sayādawgyī* breathed his last and finally retired from the scene of this 'one life existence'.

After the death of the *Sayādawgyī*, of all the remaining disciples, Ashin Sobana was the most senior, and he had the prospects of succeeding the chair of the *Sayādawgyī* as a presiding monk. Nevertheless, as Ashin Sobana had only put in 8 years (*vassa*), and with this handicap, not being feasible to accept the role of a presiding monk, he remained in the capacity of a chief caretaker of the monastery under the patronage of the Taungwainggale Jetāvan *Sayādawgyī*. After assumption of his duties as a chief caretaker for a period of about two years when he had completed ten years' training as an ordained monk in the year 1295 M.E. (1933), Ashin Sobana accepted the offer of appointment as a presiding monk and permanently took his residence at the *taik kyaung* (monastery) managing the duties of the ecclesiastical administration as its *Nāyaka* (Chief). From the time of his arrival back to Taungwainggale from Thaton, Ashin Sobana could not find opportunity to devote his sole attention to *paṭipatti* only and in view of the prevailing circumstances also, he had to perform the task of teaching lessons on scriptural texts (*pariyatti*).

PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE ON KAMMAṬṬHĀNA DELIVERED

While residing at Taungwainggale Taik Kyaung as Chief, *Nāyaka*, Ashin Sobana continued to exert himself in the work of his *paṭipatti*. He had also to teach lessons on scriptures to his disciple *sanghas*. (It may be stated that in his continuous pursuit of knowledge in the practice of meditation as had been done under the guidance of the Jetāvan *Sayādawgyī*, he had reached a satisfactory stage). On the other hand, as his *taik kyaung* happened to be a monastery offering courses of study on *pariyatti*, and as he had not yet come across people who were desirous of practising meditation, he had had no chance of giving instructions on *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation practices while residing in Moulmein.

In the year 1300 M.E. (1938), however, Ashin Sobana, the



Ashin Sobana
Teaching the Dhamma

presiding *Sayādaw* of Taungwainggale Taik Kyaung, returned to his native village Seikkhun with a view to giving his blessings to his relatives there, and then, took his residence at Ingyintaw Taik Mahāsī Monastery of that village. The main object of his return to Seikkhun was to preach and give practical lessons to all and sundry living in that village on the methods of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* meditation. Ashin Sobana therefore, started teaching a lengthy discourse covering a wide range on the system of *appamāda vipassanā* (meditation through

mindfulness with vigilance) at the Mahāsī Kyaung. After having listened to the *Dhamma* as taught by the *Sayādaw*, the number of people wishing to take up a practical course in meditation increased gradually with the result that it had come to a stage requiring to give practical instructions on the methods and techniques of *vipassanā* meditation exercise. Those who went through a course of *vipassanā* meditation practice in accordance with the instructions given by the *Sayādaw*, by and large, tasted the flavour of the noble *Dhamma* attaining practical realization with a fair amount of success.

In Seikkhun village, those who earnestly took the course of practical *vipassanā* exercise as pioneers were U Tun Aye, U Po Chon (*Sayādaw's* first elder cousin-brother), and Sayā Kyan (*Sayādaw's* first younger cousin-brother). The manner in which these three persons had practised was not superficial in the nature of past-time relaxation, but was really serious putting their heart and soul into the practice with utmost vigor. A good example of their earnest endeavour in carrying out meditation practice was divulged by the Mahāsī *Sayādaw* in the course of his discourse on 'Basic Vipassanā Dhamma' expounded during the Thingyan festival days on the occasion of Burmese New Year, in the year 1320 M.E. (1958) at the Assembly Hall known as 'Hpanyin Dhammayon' in Sāsana Yeikthā Meditation Centre, Rangoon, as described below:

“All three of them after consulting among themselves, began

to meditate in the first week for seven days. They put in all their energy into the practice relentlessly. Everyone of them brought a small packet of betel leaf and nuts duly prepared for chewing and a cigar (cheroot) along with them for their consumption – one each for seven days. These remained untouched, and eventually a total of 7 packets of betel leaf and nuts and 7 cigars all intact belonging to each of them had to be taken back home on their return after expiry of seven days. Judging from this note-worthy incident, one can perhaps understand as to what extent they had devotedly striven with vehemence and rigour in practising meditation.”

*(Ref. Basic Vipassanā Dhamma:- 2nd printing page 123-124;
3rd printing page 132-133).*



Ashin Sobana
(1904 - 1982)

These three persons were the first, or rather the earliest disciples connected with the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw’s method of *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation exercise. On the third day of their devoted contemplation with respect, faith, seriousness and diligence, they reached the state of *udayabbaya ñāṇa* thereby gaining awareness of the incessant arising and passing away of *rūpa* and *nāma*, i.e., the knowledge of the psycho-physical phenomena. Having also found by personal experience the appearance of radiant light with rapturous feeling and serenity of mind, they were said to be overwhelmed with extreme happiness to have tasted the noble *Dhamma* when they were not yet advanced in age. The continuation of the discourse on this *Dhamma* was most gratifying for those who have not yet exercised in the practice of meditation and was worthy of emulation.

It is indeed really inspiring and interesting to note or hear the teaching on the achievement of the *bhaṅga ñāṇa* stage (insight into the dissolution of things) by U Po Chon, the first elder cousin-brother of the *Sayādaw*, from among the said three persons. This teaching evidently makes it clear that *vipassanā ñāṇa*, means the knowledge which can deliberately bring about the actual faculty of

perception and realization of the true state of things. This would tend to indicate that *vipassanā ñāṇa* cannot as yet be realized either by mere acquisition of the book-knowledge of the scriptures, or by hearsay knowledge. U Po Chon, on reaching the stage of *bhāṅga ñāṇa*, had found out the continual process of dissolution of all objects of awareness at every moment of seeing and encountering them. When looking at the trees they were found to be disintegrating followed by utter dissolution. As it was stated that he found the same process taking place when looking at the earth, it is convincing enough that he was becoming aware of the continuous arising and passing away of things without making special effort to contemplate and reflect. What is meant by it is – awareness had come to him automatically that everything is rapidly ceasing and vanishing. It is something like knowing definitely by practical application of the method in mixing the yellow and blue colored solutions that the resultant effect of the mixture of the two colours (yellow and blue), would produce a green coloured solution. Thus, the nature of *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anattā* (not-self) are not to be invited or summoned by one. These are the natural phenomena which will clearly be realized automatically when contemplation and awareness have become accelerated and strengthened. What is meant by it according to the teachings is that only if it is so realized and when real *vipassanā ñāṇa* occurs, the incessant arising and dissolution of things can be truly known and appreciated by merely contemplating and noting without the help of imagination. Emulating the example of the first three yogis who had completed the course of practising meditation, the number of yogis in Seikkhun who followed suit had come up to fifty. Among those yogis, there were a good many who had reached the stage of *vipassanā ñāṇa* as had been accomplished by U Po Chon. Ashin Sobana's performance of the work concerning *vipassanā* by teaching according to his primary object had borne him up to the month of Tazaungmon (November) of that year. Indeed, Ashin Sobana's preliminary effort in promoting *vipassanā Dhamma* had a far-reaching effect and had been crowned with success.

ASHIN SOBANA AND ABĀYĀRAMA SAYĀDAW

Ashin Sobana after seven months of devotion to teaching

vipassanā at Seikkhun, returned to Moulmein Taungwainggale in response to the call of his duty. After his arrival at Taungwainggale, however, he had to resume his efforts in imparting lessons on scriptures also while delving into the practical field of insight meditation exercise - thus combining the theoretical and practical knowledge of the *Dhamma* - *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti* together.

At that time, a new *kyaung* (monastery) had sprung up at a place between Taungwainggale and Taungwainggyi. This monastery was constructed by a rich timber merchant U Po Dan and his wife Daw Kyin Myaing and their son Maung Maung Saw of Daingwunkwin Quarter, Moulmein. As this monastery was built for Abayārāma Sayādaw of Mandalay to reside, it was given the name of Abāyārama Taik. After its completion in the year 1302 M.E. (1940), Abāyārama Sayādaw took his residence there throughout the Buddhist Lent.

Abāyārama Sayādaw was a well-known personage who had written and published a considerable number of religious books on Nissaya which served as a resourceful guide for the Buddhist monks, in both Māgadha and Sakkāta, such as New Nissaya Dictionary (Abhidham), Moggallāna New Nissaya, Muddha Boda New Nissaya, Hitopadesa Nissaya, Amarakosa Nissaya, Katanta Nissaya, etc. Being a scholarly Senior Monk of much learning well-versed in the field of both Māgadha and Sanskrit languages, he was highly esteemed and respected by the *sanghas* irrespective of whatever their learnings might be to any sect or school of thought. He was the literary genius capable of rejecting and tackling or explaining all difficult problems relating to the Buddhist literature. Therefore, Ashin Sobana, the Taungwainggale Sayādaw, had often visited the Abāyārama Sayādaw residing at Abāyārama monastery and sought for elucidation on many difficult and ambiguous points found in the Buddhist literature with particular reference to certain words-formation, sense development and derivatives from the etymological and grammatical points of view appearing in 'Kammavaca' and some Pāli Commentaries, i.e., Dīghas (unquoted). To all such queries, Abāyārama Sayādaw had given clear explanation and interpretation as to what alphabets were deficient in what sort of vowels, what

verbal roots were unrepresentative in Pāli and what verbal forms had disappeared and so on.

In like manner as Taungwainggale Sayādaw Ashin Sobana had had opportunity to seek for clarification and for jotting down notes of the *Sayādaw's* words of advice, and also since opportunity had afforded him to read and study the Nissayas written by that Venerable Abāyārama Sayādawgyī, he had regarded this Venerable Sage as one of his own teachers. Later, in 1330 M.E. (1968) when efforts were made to print 'Moggallāna Nissaya Book' for the second time, Ashin Sobana who had then already assumed the name of Mahāsī Sayādaw, sent a letter to the author of this biography with a request to instruct his disciples, both monks and laymen, to take part in offering a donation of one thousand *kyats* as a contribution towards the expenses for the reprinting of that book of *Dhamma*, making mention of the fact at the same time that he owed a deep debt of gratitude to Abāyārama Sayādawgyī (ref. from extract of letter).

QUALIFIED STANDARD IN TEACHING



Young Mahāsī Sayādaw
(1904 -1982)

In 1302 B.E. (1940), after the arrival of Ashin Sobana at Taungwainggale, the then Government under the British Administration further raised the standard of Pathamabyan Examination by introducing a new system of qualifying examination for diploma in teaching *Dhamma*. The standard required of this Diploma examination was comparable to that of the examination held by the Mandalay Pariyatti Sāsanahita Association and Rangoon Zediyingana Pariyatti Association. In the year 1302 M.E. (1940), the first of

this kind of examination was held in Mandalay at Sudhamma-daw, and only those who had passed the Pathamagyī Examination conducted by the Government were permitted to sit for the examination.

Ashin Sobana had heard of such a qualifying examination for Diploma in Teaching. Having himself passed the Pathamagyi Examination; he decided to appear for that Diploma Examination. Of course, the basic foundation of *paṭipatti* lies in *pariyatti*. It would be adequate enough for a person who has no knowledge of *pariyatti* to carry on the practice of meditation for his own good provided he has a teacher to be relied upon. However, for those wishing to teach others, it is absolutely necessary to become well proficient in the knowledge of *pariyatti*. Only if they are adept in the theoretical knowledge of the scriptures, they will be able to appreciate the true value and essence of the Buddha's teachings, and then, only if they possess such knowledge, they will be able to take up the practice personally in accordance with the Teachings and also to impart his knowledge of the *Dhamma* to others as well. There is hardly any doubt that Ashin Sobana had grasped these significant points. For this reason also, he had made himself thoroughly proficient in *pariyatti*. It is quite obvious that mere personal acquisition of proficiency alone in the theoretical aspect of the *Dhamma* is not sufficient enough. It would require the recognition of the people in general that one is really proficient. Then only they will have confidence in what one teaches and accept what he teaches. However, it would be improper to blow one's own trumpet of his own academic achievement just for the sake of publicity or letting others know his ability. It would therefore be essential for a person to attain a degree of education or a diploma or to reach the required standard of proficiency which is generally recognized by the public. To enable those desirous of attaining the requisite qualification, the government had extended this privilege. Hence his decision to appear for the said examination.

As this *Dhammacāriya* examination or the examination for the title of diploma in the teaching of *Dhamma* is to be held every year alternately in Rangoon and Mandalay, the year 1303 M.E. (1941) found Rangoon as an examination centre. Taungwainggale Sayādaw Ashin Sobana therefore had to come down to Rangoon, and sat for this examination in the month of Nayon (June) in that year. Since he had been originally accomplished with the knowledge of the scriptures prior to the examination, he got through

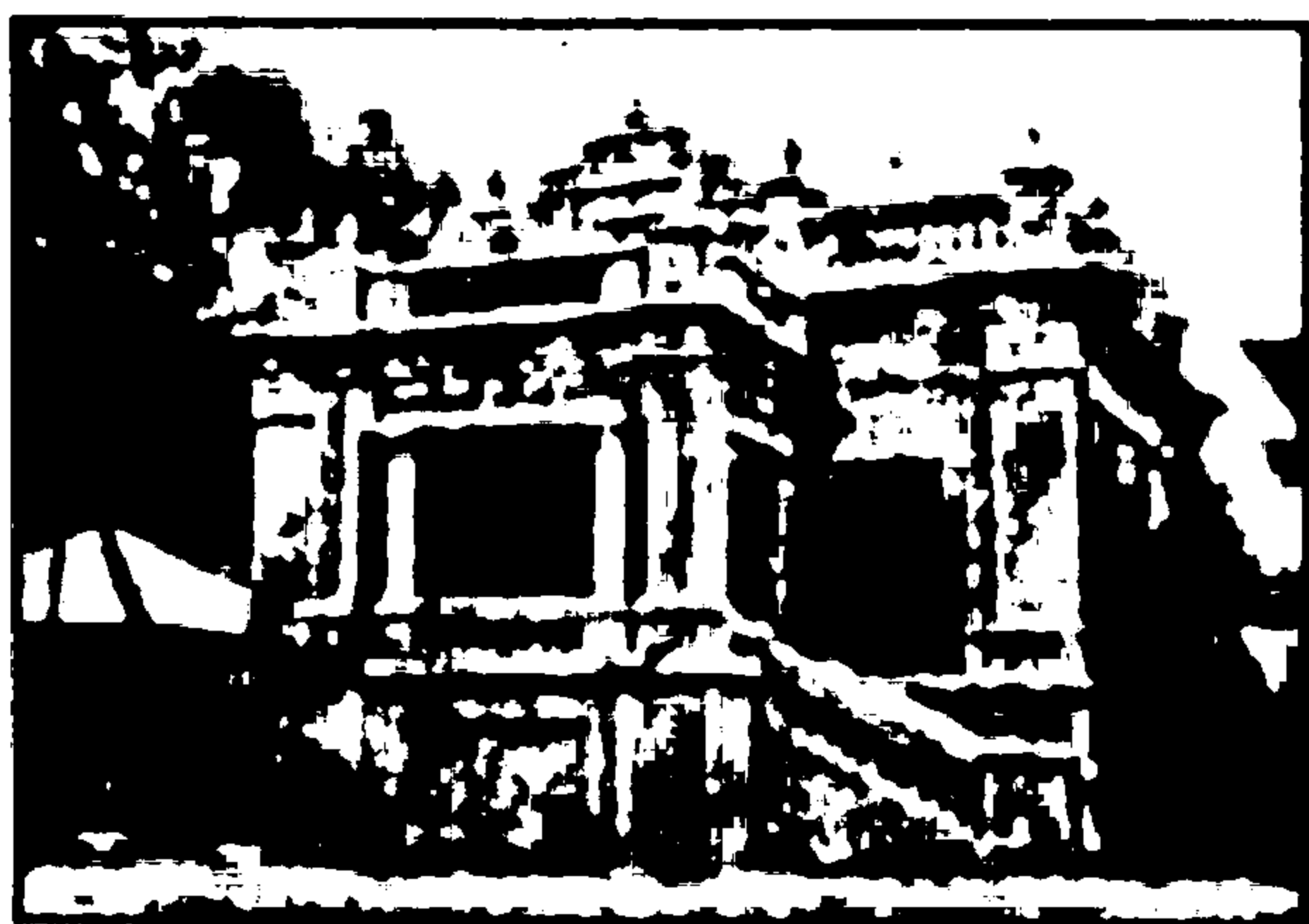
it quite easily. Out of the nine subjects, viz.: three main compulsory texts and six subsidiary or optional texts, he passed the three main and five optional texts with the exception of Aṅguttara Commentary, and was awarded the title of 'Thiri Pavara Dhammacāriya' along with a certificate to that effect.

In those days, the type of questions set at the examination was such that if a person had digested the main texts with an adequate background of knowledge and experience in grammar, he could have easily passed in the optional texts without even devoting himself to the study of such texts. People used to say then that a person might have passed in the optional subjects like the six texts, but he must have only perfunctorily studied them just by having cursory glance at the names of the texts among the books of *Dhamma* kept in array in an *almirah* or a bookcase. It means to say that even the contents of the book were never run through or the book itself was left untouched without turning a single page. Such persons who had not entirely read the book or who had read the book only superficially generally came out with success in the optional texts. This had so happened because the type of the questions gave priority to the knowledge of teaching rather than to one's assiduity or ability in the knowledge of the scripture texts. The examination being fundamentally a test of skill and ability of a person in the subject of teaching *Dhamma*, it will hardly be justified to find fault with it. However, after coming into existence of the Pāli universities, this system was modified, and thereafter only questions that were set happened to be the type that could be tackled successfully only by persons who were well versed in the relevant scriptural texts. Therefore, at present there is no one who has found success in the examination getting pass marks at one attempt (within a year) in all nine texts, or eight, or seven or six.

There is room to think whether Ashin Sobana had under the then prevailing general circumstances passed in the eight texts within a year only by reading through them with little more than what was considered to be an ordinary superficial effort. It would, however, be wrong to think so. According to what had been heard from the mouth of one of his contemporaries who had sat for the same examination at the same time, Ashin Sobana had since then

studied exhaustively all the Nissayas and gained accomplishment in them. In the course of a casual conversation with this *Sayādaw* on general topics, it was learnt as will be mentioned hereafter, that Mahāsi Sayādaw is really an adept in such texts as Mājjhima Nikāya (collection of middle-length discourses called 'a bag of texts'). He is well-versed in those scriptures not only now but since the time he had sat for the *Dhammacāriya* examination. After leaving the examination hall, he went on explaining with all sincerity of purpose that such and such a question was from this and that Saṃyutta and was extracted from which *sutta* and so on. That is the reason why he came out of the examination with flying colours within a year on his first attempt, passing in all the eight texts. (This *Sayādaw* who had recounted as stated in the foregoing is still living.) In the light of these remarks, it is evidently clear that Ashin Sobana had met with success in the examination having been already equipped himself with the knowledge of all the Nikāyas even before he appeared for the examination. For this reason, the title 'U Sobana, Sāsanadaja - Thiri Pavara Dhammacāriya 1303 M.E. (1941)' appearing with an emblem of a peacock on the reverse of the cover-page of the book - 'Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta Pāli Nissaya' - his own masterpiece, written and published in the year 1313 M.E. (1951), embraces the full meaning of the distinctive Title of *Dhammacāriya*.

THE RETURN TO SEIKKHUN VILLAGE



SEIKKHUN TEMPLE, MAHĀSĪ
CENTRE

up its arsenal and mobilizing its military strength, had been seriously battling with the British and the French. It was a critical

At the time when Ashin Sobana passed the *Dhammacāriya* examination although Burma was peaceful and calm, it was nearly two years that the World War II had erupted in Western Europe. It was the time when Germany, which had suffered defeat during the First World War and had since then been building

period when the Allies were subjected to frequent enemy air raids and to the attacks of U-boats, having been caught unawares. The British and the French were, in fact, unprepared for the war and a situation had arisen whereby they were in great fear of the imminent danger of a German invasion and conquest of the British Isles. As regards Burma, the conflagration of the war had not yet spread to its premises and therefore it was a moment of quiet happiness for the Burmese people, while, on the other hand, the British Imperialists, who had once annexed the country, subdued its people and put them under their thumb as mere underlings, were gasping. As is usually the case when a country is on the verge of war and disaster, prophecies, predictions and omens became the fashion of the day and were indeed rampant. 'Lightning strikes the umbrella stick' was the kind of presage that was then in vogue and that means Germany or Japan, the 'Lightning', was about to strike the British, the umbrella stick. The 'Lightning' which symbolized Germany or Japan was expected to come, and the people were awaiting in eagerness and looking forward to the arrival of the benefactor particularly from the East. It was a moment of suspense mingled with fear to accept and welcome the saviour along with the risks and dangers of the war. On the other hand, the British government was making full preparations in Burma to prevent the danger of the approaching war. Home Guards' training and security measures were adopted to protect the people and the country from disastrous consequences of the possible enemy air raids and bombing. Deep and heavily sand-bagged air-raid shelters were built throughout Burma. Despite these urgent and feverish preparations for the war in the county, the Burmese people were behaving without much disquietude and were carrying on their routine work as if the situation was far from being tense, of course regarding the situation as being a little beyond normal.

However, after the fifth Waning day of the month of Natdaw (December) in the year 1303 M.E. (1941), the course of events took a different turn and became accelerated. On that very day, Japan declared war on the British and the Americans and opened a new war front simultaneously followed by heavy and ruthless bombing raids on the Pearl Harbour, Hawaii, with its air force planes.

The British by then had calculated that Japan would soon

expand its theatre of war and reach Burma. The British were also under the impression that the Japanese forces would enter Burma and annex it by switching its forces through the Shan States via Canton. Expecting this manoeuvre, massive concentrations of armed forces were made in the Southern Shan States. At the outset, the British planned to leave aside Tenasserim. Only afterwards, it had occurred to them that Tenasserim was strategically important for them because of the presence of a good number of air-fields within its confines. Realizing that they would meet with disaster if Burma fell into the hands of the enemy, they began to draw up schemes for the defense of Tenasserim. Not long before the declaration of war by the Japanese, the British government in taking the defensive measures issued orders to the effect that the people should shift from the strategically important places to other places of safety. The war clouds began to gather on the horizon.

Aerial warfare being essential for the successful conduct of the war in the present day, air-bases and air-fields became the main targets of the enemy for destruction. As Moulmein Taungwainggale was in close proximity of an air-field, and not being out of danger zone all those residing in the monasteries and rest-houses (*zayats*) in the neighbourhood of Taungwainggale and the air-field were ordered by the army to shift to other danger-free places within seven days from the date of the order. Although the promulgation of the order of the British government caused a frightful shudder, panic and unhappiness to others, it was a god-gifted opportunity given to Ashin Sobana of Taungwainggale. As a matter of fact, though Ashin Sobana, by force of circumstances, had to reside in Taungwainggale, it was against his will, as his mind was bent towards Seikkhun, the site of his own victory in his work of imparting *vipassanā*. Having first experimented his work in disseminating the seeds of *vipassanā* at Seikkhun, he became very enthusiastic to continue boosting up his partially victorious task more effectively. But as he had had his duty to fulfill at Taungwainggale, it had not been possible for him to leave that place. Now that the British Government's Orders had afforded him the best opportunity to quit Taungwainggale; therefore, immediately after the Government's orders were made known to him, he decided to return to Seikkhun.

After Ashin Sobana's departure, one who took a look at the Taungwainggale Taik Kyaung would find a wonderful spectacle. Although Ashin Sobana was said to have gone back to Seikkhun, the condition of his sleeping couch and bed remained the same as before. His mosquito-net lay at the corner of the couch as usual. The bedding and pillows also remained where they were, as originally left over. It would perhaps appear unbelievable if it was really true that he had in fact left the place and returned to his native village. Ashin Sobana had now gone away taking along with him only the *parikkharā* - the bare requisites of a monk for his use according to the Rules of Discipline, just as he had done in the past when he went away for some time in search of the noble *Dhamma*. This fact itself proved to be a standing witness to his magnanimous mind and remarkable lofty character.

Taungwainggale Taik Kyaung being a long-established monastery and revered by a large number of devotees was rich in various household goods for the use of the *kyaung*, such as, cups, plates, utensils, receptacles, cane mats, floor mats, carpets, etc. It was therefore extremely difficult to remove them from one place to another or to keep them properly in a safe place within a very short time. In the case of an ordinary person he might feel miserable and helpless with such a load of property to be cared for so much so that he could even get frustrated and dejected in respect of these properties. War is devoid of discipline. During the war, the entire monastery and all other buildings might be totally destroyed or devastated. Hence, to be worrying about these properties would bring one to no where as the situation was fluid and everything was uncertain. Therefore, it would be wise and proper to take an indifferent attitude and let the properties remain where they were at the monastery. It seems that Ashin Sobana had imagined so. Nevertheless, he had left his instructions with his disciple monks (*upazins*) to remove all scriptural texts from the *taik kyaung* and send them to Mahamyaing Monastery which was considered to be a safer place. Leaving aside the property belonging to the monastery which were difficult to be removed and carried and which he had also discarded, the total abandonment of all his personal belongings actually in constant use by him, was indicative of his feeling of detachment from worldly desires, an exemplary act which ordinary

persons would find it hard to imitate and follow suit.

World War II had caused to upset the living conditions of many a people in one way or the other. Just as the people who were originally seemingly delicate, mild and soft-hearted in nature had joined the tough army as impelled by their intense patriotism; there were some who had entered into monkhood being fed up with their own life's condition. It may be said that Taungwainggale Sayādaw was one among those whose condition in life's career had changed. Up to the time of his departure from Taungwainggale, Ashin Sobana had striven to put *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti* on equal footing and kept them evenly balanced. While teaching *pariyatti* he had practised *paṭipatti*. From now on, Ashin Sobana will be found relentlessly making effort in the interest of all Buddhists while performing the duties of the *Sāsana* in the role of a *Kammaṭṭhāna Sayādaw* putting his heart and soul in the pursuit of *paṭipatti* as his supreme objective. Indeed, the radiance of *Paṭipatti Sāsana* is going to emit its beam of light to reach the four corners of the World!

PROMOTING VIPASSANĀ SĀSANA AT SEIKKHUN

About a fortnight after Japan had declared war on the British and the Americans, Burma practically had also suffered intolerably from the disastrous effects of the war. The Japanese started launching air raids on the City of Rangoon on the sixth Waning day of the month of Pyatho (January) in the year 1303 M.E. (1941). There were many casualties as a result of bombing, strafing and machine-gunning from the air. The city people getting bewildered not knowing how to dodge the assailant or take cover for lack of experience in the dangers of the war, suffered considerable loss of lives. The horrors of war had spread far and wide and enveloped the whole country. At the initial stage after the Japanese had overrun Burma, the people in the country were under the vague impression that the war had come to an end. However, soon afterwards when the British and the Americans retaliated in full force with frequent air strikes, there was always an imminent danger that might befall at any moment.

Although Burma, as a whole, was said to be terribly

suffering from the onslaughts of the war, some of the fortunate villages in the outlying areas had escaped from such inflictions. Fortunately, these villages were free from the dangers of the war in contrast to other places which had to undergo a lot of hardship and trouble. Seikkhun village being included in the list of such lucky villages, Ashin Sobana, who had arrived back to that village, was able to disseminate widely the seeds of the knowledge of *vipassanā* meditation exercise by way of preaching and teaching while residing at the Ingyintaw Taik Mahāsī Kyaung in the village of Seikkhun. Because of the *Sayādaw's* fine ability in teaching others to become highly interested, and of his very effective and practical way of teaching, the number of yogis who came to meditate had increased from day to day and year to year.

Those who had personally found the taste of *Dhamma* after practising meditation strictly in accordance with the instruction of the *Sayādaw*, became desirous of letting others also taste the sweets of *Dhamma* like themselves. It is something like wishing others to equally share the experience of very good and tasty food after one had enjoyed tasting an extremely delicious food. It was however impossible to invite all others to come over to Seikkhun. They came to realize that the most feasible line of action to be taken in the interest of all others would be to write a text book on *Dhamma* and to publish it. For this very reason these yogi devotees earnestly solicited Ashin Sobana to write a book on practical *vipassanā* meditation and the methods to be exercised as might be considered suitable for people with varying degrees of intellectual ability or knowledge, namely, of immature intellect, mediocre and mature intellect. In consideration of the request made by these lay devotees (*upāsako*), the *Sayādaw* had written the Text bearing the title of 'The Method of Vipassanā Meditation'.

'THE METHOD OF VIPASSANĀ MEDITATION' TEXT WRITTEN

The *Sayādaw* after obliging the request of his lay devotees wrote the text on *Dhamma* entitled 'The Method of Vipassanā Meditation'. It was the time when the British and the Americans were embarking on the stage of their air attack in various parts of Burma. Shwebo town was under foray of air-attacks and was bombed almost every day. Yet amidst the continuous roar of

bombs, the *Sayādaw* had completed writing the two volumes of 'The Method of Vipassanā Meditation' within a period of only seven months. These two volumes of the text having had the royal-sized pages of about 950, it was really marvelous to be able to completely finish writing such a voluminous text book within a brief period of seven months. Some of course, might have been probably carried away with the idea that it could have been written only perfunctorily just for the sake of producing a book since it was said to have

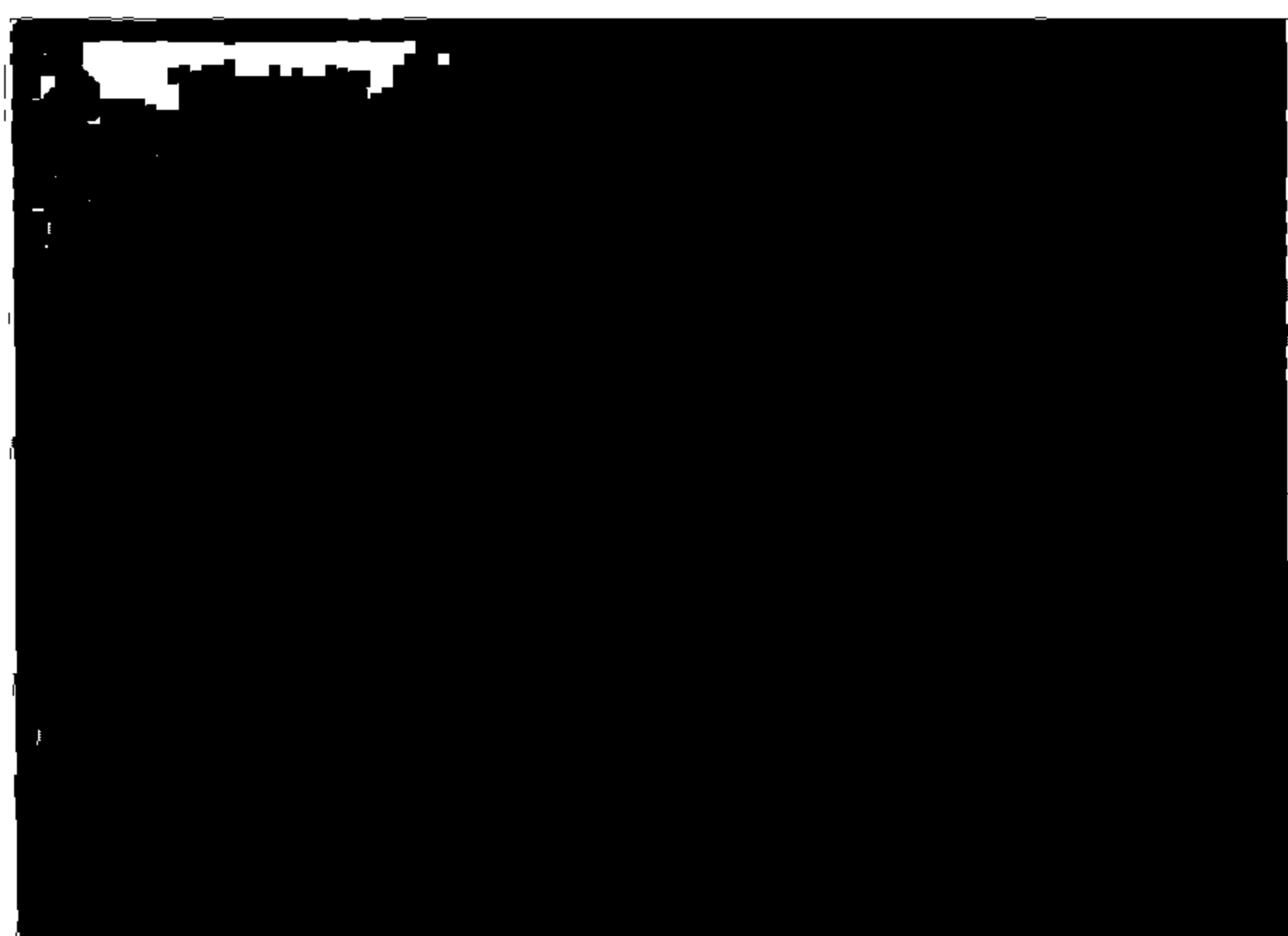
been completed within a very short time. On the contrary, by going through a few pages of this text, it can be realized that this huge



Mahāsi Sayādaw

Preparing his treatise.

and comprehensive text book was a real outstanding work of Ashin Sobana's immense undertaking and stupendous achievement as it contained the promise of his genius with references to Pāḷi, Commentaries and Dīghas combined with the practical aspects of the *Dhamma*.



Mahāsi Sayādaw

Going through his treatise.

After writing this magnificent text, the responsibility for printing had cropped up. Being a war time period, it was not at all easy to print because of the scarcity of various printing materials. There was difficulty in printing this book in Shwebo too. However, the task of printing luckily found a solution with the assistance of a yogi who gave a piece of information which was far-reaching. Having heard about the difficulties in the matter of finding a printer, a yogi from Ywathitgyi village of Sagaing District, who had come over to Seikkhun and was practising meditation fervently put up to the *Sayādaw* that there was a printing press at Ywathitgyi. When the *Sayādaw* expressed his opinion that it would be essential to have a person capable of reading through the printed proof and correcting

the printing errors, this particular yogi again followed up with another information of the availability of one *Sayādaw* (a monk) at Ywathitgyi. Acting on that information, Sayādaw Ashin Sobana sent a written note along with the original manuscript copy of the text with necessary instructions entrusting the text to that Twathitgyi Sayādaw and added a request to go ahead with the work of printing the text. The said *Sayādaw* was immensely satisfied with the talented learning of the author immediately after reading through the text, which in fact ably illustrates Ashin Sobana's depth of wisdom and genius. These two *Sayādaws* became friends through the introduction of this text without knowing each other. Only after the printing of the text had started when Ashin Sobana sometimes visited Ywathitgyi, the two *Sayādaws* had the chance of meeting one another closely and thereafter only, ordinary acquaintance had developed into a firm friendship with a close intimacy. This *Sayādaw* later became *Kammaṭṭhāna-cāriya*, i.e., a teacher in meditational practice, after diligently practising *vipassanā* according to the methods prescribed by Ashin Sobana. This Ywathitgyi Sayādaw is no other than the chief Nāyaka of the Shwezedi Yeikthā of the Sagaing Hills. He was the founder of that *yeikthā* and was well-known as Shwezedi Sayādaw, holder of the title of Agga Mahā Paṇḍita, Basandraceka, Pariyatti Kovida, Paṭipatti Nāmaka, Citrakatthika, i.e., one who is skilled in *pariyatti* and is also eloquent in teaching, and one who is devotedly attached to *paṭipatti*.

After having gone through the press, the first volume of 'The Method of Vipassanā Meditation' text was brought back without a hitch from Ywathitgyi to Seikkhun. However, the second volume of the text while remaining in the press-forms after being printed but before it went into the process of book-binding was destroyed by fire when Twathitgyi village was badly hit by the incendiary bombs dropped from the aircraft belonging to the British and the Americans. As the fair manuscript draft of the second volume of the text had been consumed by the fire, another fair manuscript copy had to be re-written. Though the first volume was said to have been put to printing, only 200 (two hundred) books could be printed and published because of acute shortage and scarcity of printing paper during the war period. Therefore, only

after the war was over, the first volume was again printed in Mandalay at Thukhawadi Press and the second volume at Hla Khin & Son Press.

GLORIOUS QUALITY OF THE TEXT

Some of the buildings if presented to the eye from the frontal view look beautiful, though they are not when viewed from other angles. For the purpose of exhibiting the picture of such a building, it is important for a cameraman to possess an artistic eye. Only if the photograph is taken from a position which would produce a picture of a fine view of the building, then the building will be appreciated when the picture is exhibited. The photograph also will be listed as a fine piece of art. On the other hand, some types of buildings are not as such. From whatever angle they are viewed and observed, they will be found beautiful and delightfully pleasing to the eye. In respect of such a type of building, there is less responsibility for the camera-man or the photographer to choose the proper angle from which the shot is to be taken with the camera. No matter from whatever position the picture is taken and then exhibited, the building will be found as a thing of beauty and the picture will be classified as a good specimen of fine art. 'The Method of Vipassanā Meditation' Text on *Dhamma* written by Ashin Sobana resembles the building belonging to the second category. From whatever viewpoint it is read and whatever may be the chapter or portion of the book that is read, all are to be found amazingly good and perfect. To put it in another way, this book 'The Method of Vipassanā Meditation' is very much like a grand dinner table prepared and richly laid with sumptuous and delicious dishes. Just as every dish of food and curry is good, palatable and wholesome, every part of section of this book is full of flavour, highly remarkable and excellent. Therefore, if anybody says that he is keen on reading a few good portions of it or passages in the book 'The Method of Vipassanā Meditation', it is only left to advise or instruct him to go through the whole of the lengthy text book from the beginning to the end.

However, just as a person who was present at such a grand dinner would particularly mention about dishes which were nearest to his seat on the dining table and which he had greatly relished, it

is desirable to make mention of a few facts in this section relating to what has been written in the book 'The Method of Vipassanā Meditation'. A considerable number of books on *vipassanā* have been written and published in Burma. However, none has yet been found like this text book on 'The Method of Vipassanā Meditation' which is remarkably comprehensive in the field of practical *vipassanā*. The statements presented therein making comparisons between the practical aspects and the authentic references as are contained in Pāḷi Commentaries and Dīghas, are as really outstanding as they are exquisitely delightful. It could provide a new outlook or a view just like looking at a familiar building from an entirely new and different angle. Particularly what is demonstrated at the beginning of the 2nd Volume of chapter V, gives one an agreeable taste with regard to the practical side of the *Dhamma*. The whole chapter is filled to the brim with narratives and explanations similar to the kind of instructions given by a person who is escorting many people to reach a place where he himself has visited before. Minute instructions and details are found to have been given so as to enable others to clearly understand and carry out correctly on the right lines the work of *vipassanā* without ambiguity. Such an aptitude to be able to instruct so minutely is because of one's own personal assimilated experience and the ripe experience that has been reaped by teaching others in a practical way in the field of *vipassanā* meditation. Otherwise, how extremely difficult would it be to give such kind of instructions. Minor or less important instructions in the way of a reminder, such as, 'while mindfulness and the mental process of noting become strong and accelerated, the meditator will feel a subtle and slight thrill with a little tremor. A depressing periodic wave of sensation with a mild touch of chill might occur in the back or hinder surface of the body, or in the whole body. Don't fear. It is the occurrence of a pervading joy according to nature. There may be a sudden fright or a thrilling sensation on hearing soft voices or feeble sounds. Don't get frightened. It simply indicates consciousness or awareness of the state of severity of the feeling of touch as concentration gains momentum, etc.', are really very lucid and impressive. It is exactly like one recounting his own personal experiences. It is quite certain that a yogi who has received such minute instructions cannot

possibly deviate from the right path. Therefore, if this chapter V is read through from the beginning to the end, it can be realized by mere guess alone that the author of this text book is by no means a person of ordinary calibre but a personage who has reached a very high stage concerning *vipassanā*.

IS THIS THE KIND OF ANNĀ-VYĀKARANAM? (OR) IS IT THE KIND OF DIVINE REVELATION OR UTTERANCE OF KNOWLEDGE?

During the lifetime of Lord Buddha, many a *Thera* and *Therī* (senior Buddhist monks and senior Buddhist nuns) who obtained the pure and spotless *Dhamma*-eye had eulogized whole-heartedly with intense feeling of delight their own saintly personal experiences, achievements and view-points concerning *Dhamma* with retrospection. The enthusiastic joyous utterances or hymns (*udanam*) so eulogized by these *Theras* and *Therīs* are well-known in Pāli Piṭaka as Theragāthā, Therīgāthā, Theraapadam and Therīapadam. [The “Psalms of the Brethren and of the Sisters or *Bhikkhunis* eminent saints, respectively, uttered occasionally in the form of songs of triumph or hymns expressing the peace or the calm delight within them beyond words to which they have attained or who have left the world and are free from worldly desires, etc.] In the *apadam* verses or stanzas, they had described their past reminiscences and history. Could it be that what is contained in chapter V of that book - ‘The Method of Vipassanā Meditation’ is something that resembles the expression of the said *udana*?



BUDDHA-RŪPA

Mahāsi Centre, Seikkhun Village

Thera Ashin Bākula said to his close friend Acela Kassapa whom he had known since his childhood: “O, my friend Kassapa! I had taken the meals provided by the state for only seven days in the capacity of a person wrapped up in *kilesa* (i.e., a person who is not yet free from moral defilements or human

passions). On the eighth day, however, I had attained *Arahatta-phala* (Fruition attained through the faculty of *Arahatship*).” It is inappropriate to tell a layman not being a monk about one’s own attainment of *Arahatta-phala*. As mentioned hereinafter, the Commentator had given the answer to the question raised by himself as to why such a statement had to be made. “The *Thera* had only stated about his achievement of *Arahatta-phala* and not of his own self as being an *Arahat*. Apart from that, the *Thera* was well-known as an *Arahat*. That was why he had stated so.” After having read the answer given in the Commentary, mention was made about the method of contemplation concerning all the four foundations of mindfulness in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and in the statement of exposition of the Commentary and Dīgha. However, only the portion relating to the contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) was written quite circumspectively while the methods of contemplation regarding the foregoing portions on mindfulness were only dealt with in brief. Hence, in respect of those yogis who had to practise meditation relying only on the strength of the book, it was a great handicap for not knowing how to contemplate and note on the sensations or feelings – ‘*vedanā*’. Nevertheless, such contemplation must have been actually practised in the past and that was why there had undoubtedly been a considerable number of people who had actually gained special knowledge of the *Dhamma* that is ‘the awakening of the higher consciousness which leads to Enlightenment’, by devoting themselves to meditation in conformity with the said prescribed method. At that time, in as much as *vipassanā* had nearly lost its contact with the people, such methods of contemplation and meditation practice had almost fallen into obscurity to the extent that those desirous of meditating in a practical way were on the verge of giving up hope. *Sayādaw*’s text book on ‘The Method of Vipassanā Meditation’ came to the rescue giving encouragement to such down-hearted people and helping them to clearly understand the other portions of the methods of contemplating mindfulness, as well. This text had distinguishingly provided a missing link in the broken chain of *vipassanā* that had nearly sunk into oblivion. In regard to this point of fact, Masoyein Sayādaw U Teiktha of Wetlet rendered the following graphic account in extolling the qualities of

the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw.

“However, for the purpose of practising, it was barely known how to indulge in *kāyānupassanā* only, and as regards the methods of contemplating on *vedanānupassanā* (the contemplation of pain, and unpleasant sensations), *cittānupassanā* (the contemplation of mental activities and noticing them as they occur), and *dhammānupassanā* (the contemplation of the mind-objects), it had become almost incomprehensible. It could not be understood as to how contemplation should be made on the simultaneous arising and ceasing of the extremely accelerated process of the mind, mental thoughts and formations. Every time opportunity came in the way, consultations had to be made with those who were equally knowledgeable and with those teachers who had better knowledge than us. Insofar as such consultations and queries were concerned, nobody who had been so consulted or queried was found to have already grasped the methods of contemplation on other aspects of mindfulness except the method of contemplation of the body. One could therefore very well imagine as to what extent we had fallen far behind in the matter of contemplating with awareness relating to the higher aspects of the foundations of mindfulness stated in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna. As such, it had been a long time that we had become almost unbearable or choking, as it were, for not knowing the real concept or meaning of it. Our happiness knew no bounds when we came to discover the right method relating to the latent ambiguity in the higher aspects of Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna meditation practice which, in fact, had been found to be really good and satisfactory by men of virtue and wisdom as to become highly elated with joy, and for which we had to be grasping for breath in the past as if pricked in the heart by a sharp-pointed pin.”

As a matter of fact, in connection with ‘The Method of Vipassanā Meditation’ book, Sayādaw U Teiktha had spurted out what had been lying dormant in his mind for not being able to hide his feelings which he had suffered. It is quite natural to those who, having come across difficulties in his lessons for which he cannot find a solution, could not help becoming uneasy and dispirited to the point of near choking, and then, could not help becoming highly elated by revealing his feeling of gratitude either to a person or a

text book that has helped in finding a solution to the problems and difficulties.

ESSENCE OF CHARACTERISTICS, ETC.

Those who had sat for the *Dhammācariya* or diploma examination in teaching know the taste of its quality, etc. Among the questions relating to Abhidhamma and Commentaries, one question on essence of their characteristics and their origin or cause had been prescribed. Therefore, every person appearing for the qualifying examination for Teachership, will have to learn by heart the extracts from the Commentaries which had been prescribed. The author of this writing had also passed the *Dhammācariya* examination only after learning the subjects (extracts) by heart. As efforts had to be made to study in order to get through the examination, no thought had been entertained to consider deeply the significance of the meaning of the essence of the characteristics, etc. Besides, it would be really difficult to personally realize its nature. It was, in fact, regarded as being almost absurd.

However, after reading through the paragraphs in chapter IV of 'The Method of Vipassanā Meditation' relating to the essence of characteristics, etc., it has not only been clearly realized that what was originally imagined had been wrong but had also been fully understood that the meaning attached to its origination and cause, had reflected in the knowledge or consciousness of the yogi. When *vipassanā* meditation is put into practice, all such essence of the quality or characteristics, etc., even without studying them beforehand, have been realized as if a person failing to understand how to operate a machine in his possession, has been made to understand and work properly. A yogi who is lacking in knowledge may not know the essence of the characteristics by just naming them. However, as it has been stated that the essence of the characteristics can be obviously known only when perceived by the senses, these are the words or phrases which will definitely stir up the feeling to become interestingly bent upon practising meditation.

THE MEANING OF PARAMAT̥ṬHA

Paramat̥ṭha or *paramat̥* is the word known even by those

who have some slight knowledge of 'Sango', a part of the branch of the knowledge of Abhidhamma. If it is stated that this word is familiar to all those who have pursued or are pursuing religious studies, it will not be wide off the mark. However, those who understand the real meaning of the word *paramaṭṭha* correctly and rightly will not be as many as may be imagined. Everybody knows the name of *paramaṭṭha* as it conveys the sublime meaning of the characteristic of immutability. Nevertheless, if the question arises as to what are those that have become unchangeable, it will not be easy to give the precise and correct answer. Some give the name of *paramaṭṭha* because of its intrinsic attribute of unchangeability or immutability. On the other hand *paññatta*, being changeable and mutable, it is generally said that it has not received the name of *paramaṭṭha*. Difficulty arises when it comes face to face with the phrase or expression, viz.: "As these persons are subject to the natural law of change — ceaselessly becoming and a never-ending change, it is called *rūpa* (form, shape or body)." For this reason, with a view to getting a way out of this difficulty, as it were, and because of its characteristic in causing to bring about unchangeability, the unchangeability or immutability is to be regarded as the nature of *paramaṭṭha*. As *phassa* — mental factors, have the characteristic of the sense of touch, this *phassa* (contact), the connecting link between the organs of sense and the objects they cognize, will not alter or move away from its tactile nature in the personality of any individual, it is to be stated as *paramaṭṭha*. Similarly, as *lobha* (greed) is capable of causing evil or bad consequences, it will never change its natural tendency to cause to bring bad effects. It is likely to cause and is capable of causing bad resultant effects in the personality of anyone. That is why many persons are saying that it is named '*paramaṭṭha*', and so on. Their conviction relating to *paramaṭṭha* is merely an appreciation of the sense of immutability or unchangeability. 'The Method of Vipassanā Meditation' text, however, by disclosing the correct original meaning as '*paramaṭṭha*' merely to indicate that the conviction so entertained by such people is basically correct though it just narrowly missed the correct meaning and by showing comparison between the meaning of the Burmese connotation of the word 'immutability' and the relevant Pāḷi phraseology, has

revealed the true meaning. In revealing this interpretation, to make it more convincingly clear that his own assumption is absolutely sound, Kathāvatthu (subject of discourse), Commentaries, Mūladīgha, Anudīgha and other Dīghas of fame are cited as authentic references.

A text on *Dhamma* which is written with supporting references to Kathāvatthu, Dīghas and Anudīghas in explaining the meaning of the expression *paramatṭha* is very rare indeed. Without being able to refer to or probe into these scriptural texts, certain teachers had written some books or made speeches quite desultorily according to their own whims and fancies, thus going off at a tangent not in consonance with the expressions and sense contained in the well-famed Dīghas. As these facts have been explained broadly, if the chapter relating to *paramatṭha* and *paramatta* in the book 'The Method of Vipassanā Meditation' were read through, the meaning of the word *paramat* in its true and natural sense cannot possibly be misunderstood. Therefore, one *Sayādaw*, a teacher who has a deep sense of thought and imagination had once stated, "Only after I have read the Mahāsī text book, I have become fully convinced of the nature and meaning of *paramat*. In the same way, a remarkable exposition of the essence and meaning have been found in various places of the *Sayādaw*'s text book on 'The Method of Vipassanā Meditation' which could bring surprise and cause to bring a mental illumination of the new learning even to intellectuals. If this text has been carefully read through, one cannot help having high regards for and a very high estimation of its author.

Now that it has filled a good number of pages in writing something about this Text. This chapter will therefore be brought to a conclusion with a descriptive account as to how the doors of the five sense-organs are shut out.

THE MANNER OF CLOSING THE DOORS OF THE FIVE SENSE-ORGANS

The name of Ashin Pothila is so well-known that there is hardly anyone who has not heard of him. He was an eminent *Thera* with a very brilliant scholarship, an intellectual giant. However, as he was only teaching others the Tipiṭaka (Buddhist Scriptures) and

had failed to practise practical *vipassanā* meditation, the Blessed One used to address him as ‘Worthless Pothila’ (meaning a rot) – every time the Buddha came across him in order to instill into his mind the feeling of repentance. As he was so dubbed frequently, repentance came to him. He then went round in search of a meditation teacher and after having seen many *Theras* who one after another had directed him to look for a *Kammaṭṭhāna Sayādaw* (teacher in meditation), eventually came upon a seven year old young *sāmaṇera*, who was an *Arahat*. This *Arahat*, the young *sāmaṇera*, after satisfying himself by putting Ashin Pothila to test to find out if he still had his ‘ego’ – pride (*māna*), or not, gave him the *kammaṭṭhāna*. In the method given by the young *sāmaṇera*, the instructions were that if sensations appeared at the six sense-doors, five doors of the sense-organs should be closed and only the mind-door (*manodvāra*) should be kept open and worked through it. Then, what is meant by saying that the five doors of *dvāras* should be closed or blocked up? As no fuller explanation was given in the Commentary, it is difficult to understand. Should the eyes and ears be closed to prevent seeing or hearing? Even if the eyes and ears could be shut out to some extent, could the nose be closed? Again, even if the nose can be blocked up to a certain degree, could it be possible to prevent all other parts or limbs of the body from coming into contact with any other material objects or things? If it is not possible to do so, what is meant by closing the five sense-doors? If it is to be stated from the point of view of practical application, it has created a difficult situation. The key to this difficult situation is clarified in the book ‘The Method of Vipassanā Meditation’. In going through this statement of clarification in the Text, it is found easy. (In this regard, finding it easy means that it is easy to know the method. After the method is known, it is not at all easy to carry out in practice as desired by the young *sāmaṇera*; it can be achieved only by continuous and relentless effort).

To close the doors of the five organs of sense means to cause extinction of the mental urge or the sensation arising at the doors of the five sense-organs as has been explained by the *Sayādaw*. To say “Let the impelling force of mind – the mental urge – cease to function,” is easier said than done. Nevertheless, how

should it be done to bring about the extinction of this mental urge. Here, it becomes very obvious that the method of controlling and dispelling the mental urge to the extent of making it extinct is invaluable. Since the extinction of this mental urge is indispensable, it has become supremely important to achieve it. Then, how had Ashin Pothila striven to make this urge – the impelling force of mind – become extinct? This question and answer has been precisely and explicitly given in the Text ‘The Method of Vipassanā Meditation’. This very well-known method at the present day, the kind of training in contemplation based on the foundations of mindfulness is, “To contemplate and note continuously as ‘seeing’, ‘seeing’ at every moment of seeing, etc.”.

MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW



Mahāsī Sayādaw
Delivering a Dhamma talk

Thus, Sayādaw Ashin Sobana while residing at Mahāsī Kyaung of Seikkhun village, had directed his energies in endeavouring to promote the *Paṭipatti Sāsana* by immersing himself in teaching *Vipassanā Dhamma*, teaching practical method of meditation exercise and writing of books on *Dhamma*. His fame and popularity had grown more and more just as there had been an increase, day by day, in the number of people who came to know him. Since about that time, both laymen and monks in the neighbourhood called him the

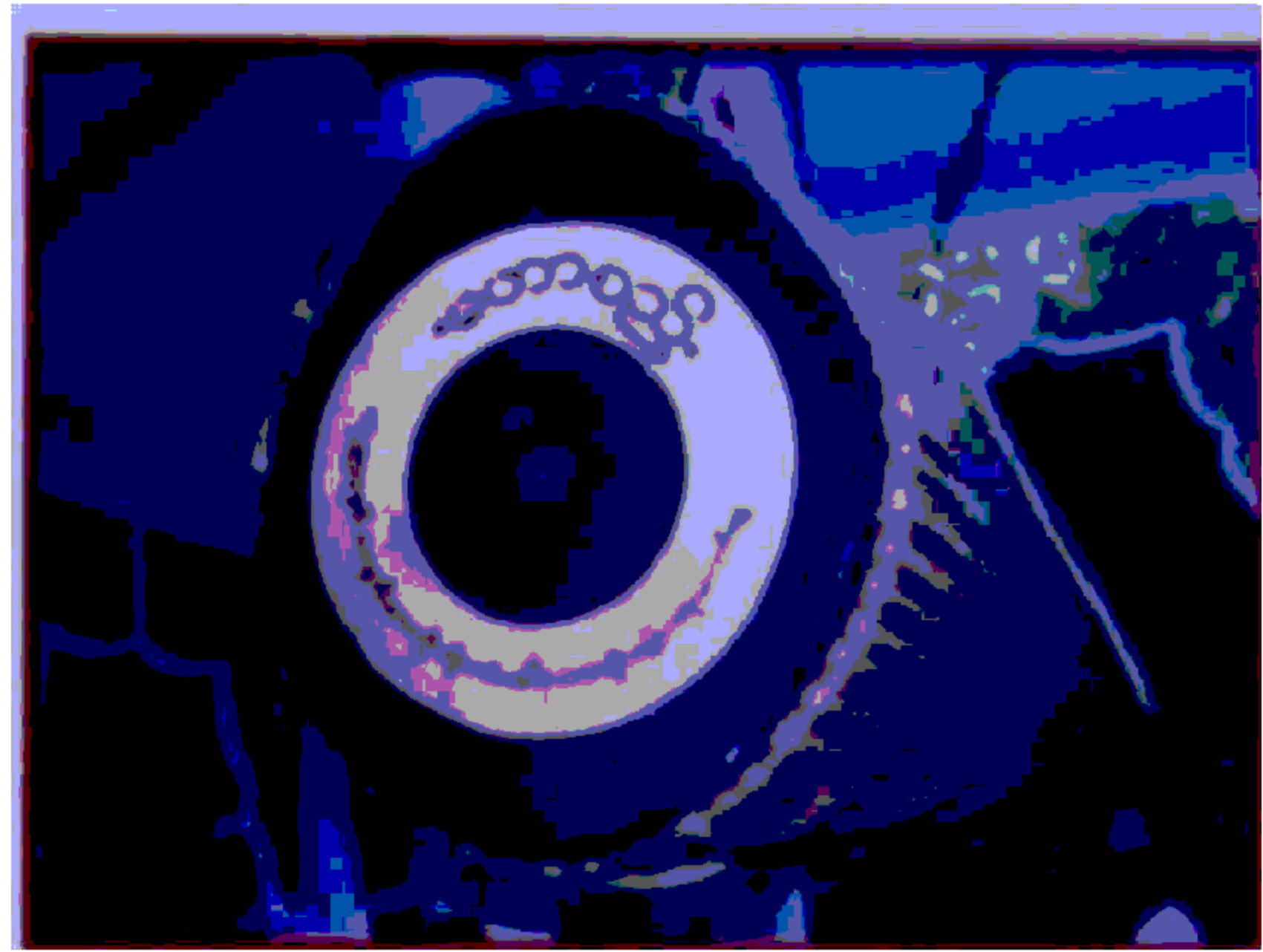
Venerable Mahāsī, and then later used to address him as Mahāsī Sayādaw. From then on, up till present, he has become famous as Mahāsī Sayādaw.

Although he was widely well-known as Mahāsī Sayādaw for taking up his residence at the Mahāsī Kyaung-Taik, the Mahāsī Sayādaw was not in fact the Chief Nāyaka (Presiding Monk) of that Mahāsī Kyaung-Taik (monastery). He was only a *Kamaṭṭhāna* Meditation Teacher. The Chief Nāyaka of the Mahāsī Kyaung is still living. How he has derived the name of Mahāsī Sayādaw from

the name of the place he had resided, was mentioned by him in the first part of the 'Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta Nissaya' Text wherein it says, "I, the Venerable *Thera* bears the name of Mahāsī by *pannatta* depending truly on the name of residence though when young the name is Ashin Sobana." Why the monastery had received the name of Mahāsī Kyaung-Taik was also described in the epilogue to the book 'Visuddhi Magga Mahādīgha-Nissaya' as follows:

At the entrance of that monastery there was a huge *Kokko* tree. When this lofty *Kokko* tree was uprooted by the force of a violent storm, its huge trunk was found to be hollow inside. The hollowed trunk having a barrel shape was ready to be transformed into a big drum. Therefore, the big trunk was then cut off and after being hewn with a few finishing touches in the interior to put into shape, it was covered with dried animal skin that was strained over the ends of cylindrical frame and turned into a Big Drum. The broader face of this drum has a diameter of 40 inches and on opposite sideways it measures 34 inches. The narrower face at the other end of the drum has a diameter of 36 inches and on sideways – 31 inches. The girth measured 125 inches while the length from top to bottom is 105 inches. The sound of beating the drum is a signal to the people to assemble for the purpose of listening to the discourse to be delivered by Mahāsī Sayādaw. This signaling practice has since been adopted till now whenever the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw is present to give his teachings to the populace at Seikkhun. For this reason, the monastery assuming the Burmese Vernacular name of the 'Big Drum' bears the name of 'Mahāsī Kyaung-Taik'. ('*Mahā*' means 'Big' or 'Huge'; '*Si*' means 'Drum'; '*Kyaung-Taik*' means 'Monastery'.)

The exact measurements of the said big drum have been described above. Casually judging from the looks of this big drum, its circumference is roughly about twice the size of a man's folding in the arms when embraced, and when it is kept standing in a vertical position, the height is about 3 inches more than that of the door of the 'Hpanyin' Dhammayon (the Assembly Hall) inside the Mahāsī meditation centre in Rangoon. This big drum was made in the year 1295 M.E. (1933). The donors of this drum were U Po Htin and his wife Daw Kha, the *dayakās* of Seikkhun village. The



THE BIG DRUM

The Big Drum is 8 feet 9 inches long and has a circumference of 10 feet 6 inches on the broader face of the drum. Left: the big drum hung in its original location.

Right: the big drum hung in its present location.

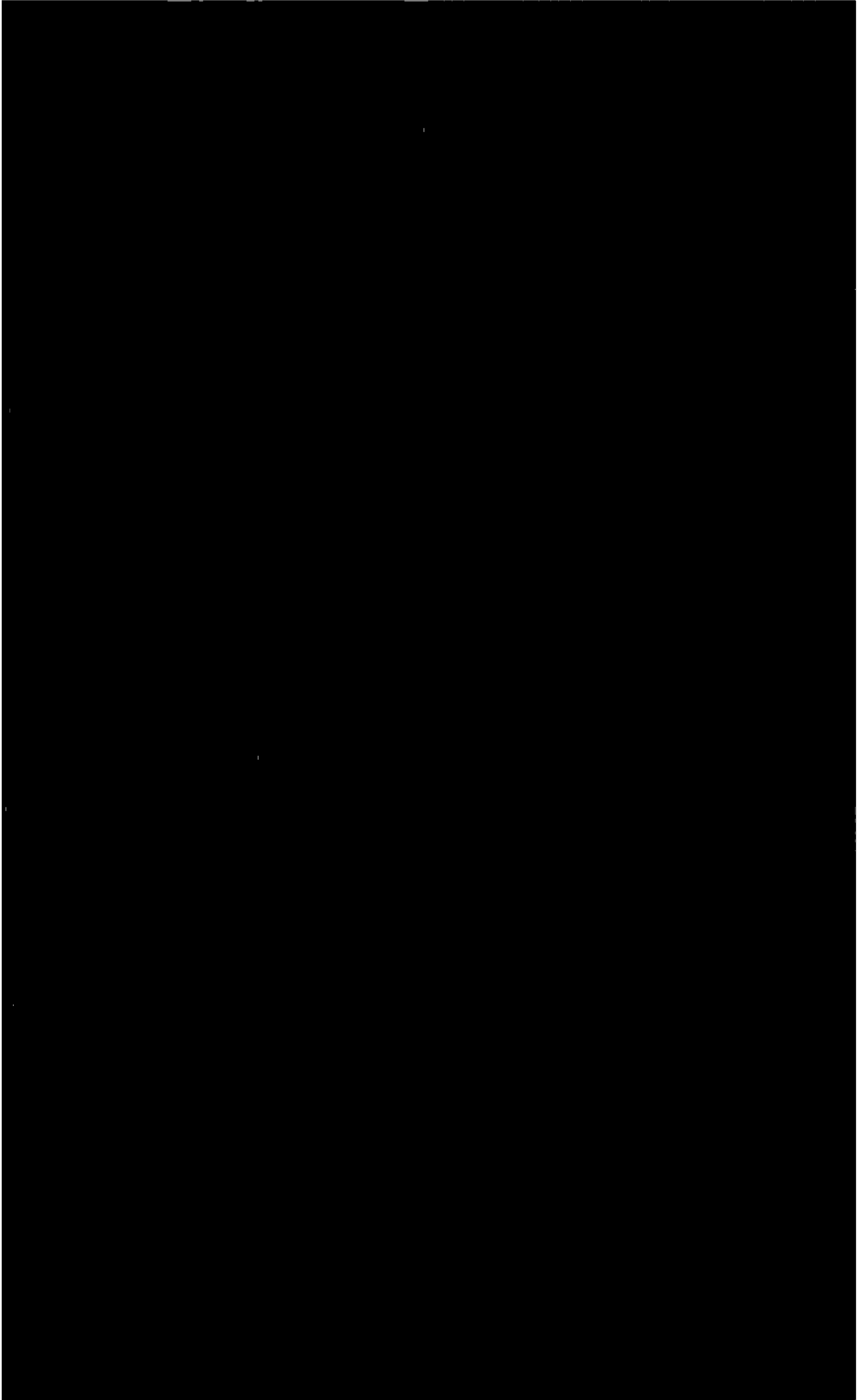
dimension of the show-room type place itself where this big drum is kept or exhibited is approximately about the size of a small *kyauing* or a dwelling place for a monk to reside. The drum is sounded by beating it at noon mid-day, the time for holding a congregation for religious worship in order to let the people living in the neighbourhood of the monastery to hear. In those days when radios were not widely in use by many, this big drum of the Mahāsi monastery had proved to be as reliable a timepiece as the Big Ben (Westminster Chiming Clock) of London, for all village folks residing in the neighbourhood of that monastery.



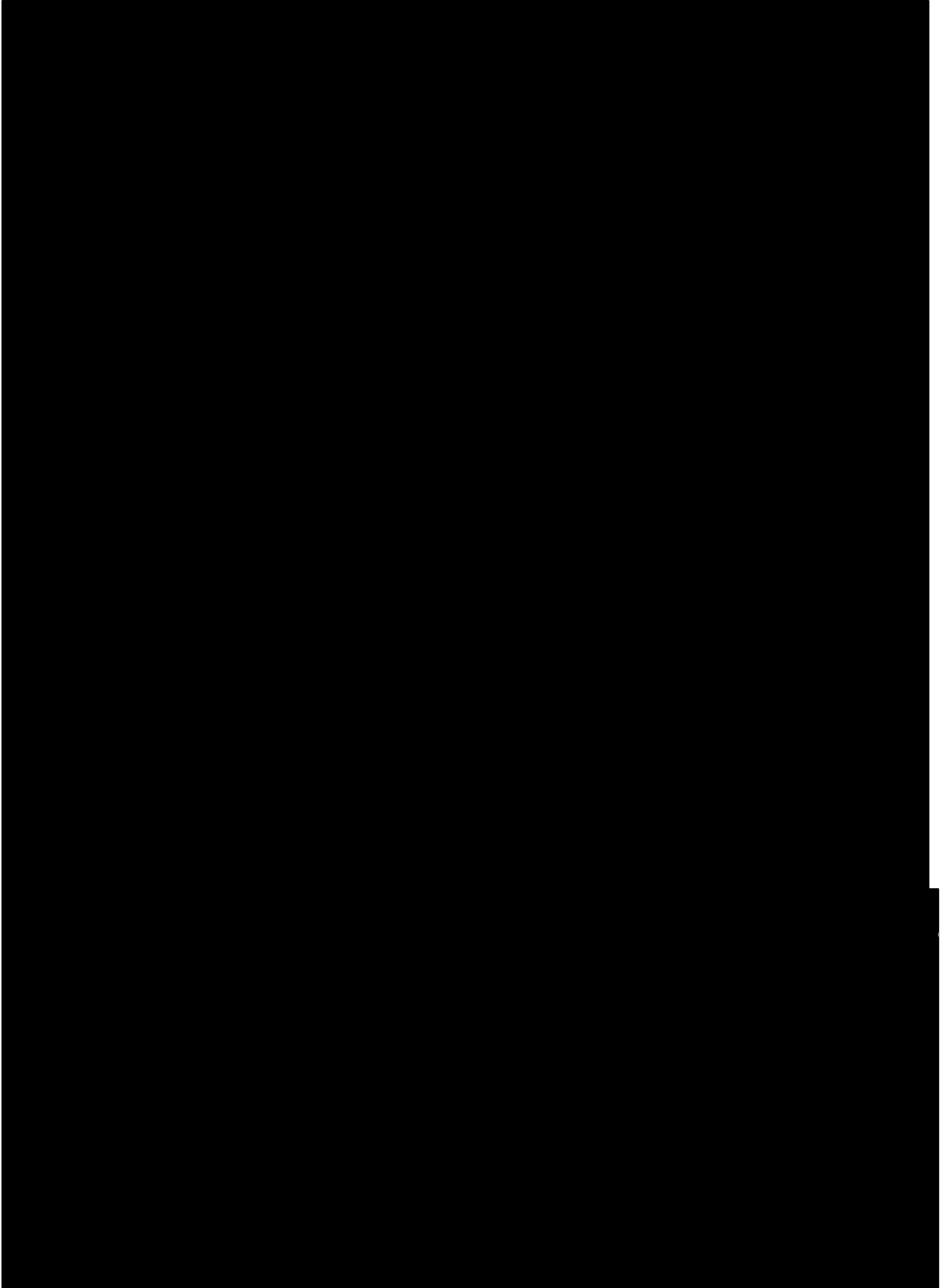
BIG DRUM IN MAHĀSĪ CENTRE, SEIKKHUN VILLAGE

Present location of the Big Drum is in the Ordination Sima - a consecrated building for Ordinations and Uposatha ceremonies.

**THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW
AT VARIOUS STAGES OF HIS LIFE (1904 -1982) – 1**



**THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW
AT VARIOUS STAGES OF HIS LIFE (1904 -1982) – 2**



After Mahāsī Sayādaw's arrival at the Mahāsī Kyaung-Taik, the time signal emitting from the Big Drum was more frequent. The signal was given to get the people (devotees) assembled at noon time not only for religious worship but also to serve as an announcement heralding the discourse to be delivered. It is for this close link between the teachings of the *Sayādaw* and the Big Drum, the name of Mahāsī Sayādaw has spread more rapidly. This Big Drum, up to this day, remains in splendour and dignity at the Mahāsī Kyaung in Seikkhun village as a treasured piece of symbol in memory of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw.

RETURN TO TAUNGWAINGGALE AFTER THE WAR

Even after the end of the war, Mahāsī Sayādaw continued to reside at Seikkhun village devoting his attention to the work of promoting *Vipassanā Sāsana*. During the Second World War up to that stage, the Taungwainggale Taik Kyaung was looked after by *upazin* U Wimala, one of the disciple monks of the *Sayādaw*. However, throughout the war as occasional visits could only be made Taungwainggale Kyaung, though not directly hit by bombs, had lost a good deal of its properties such as plates, and utensils having been looted and ransacked by miscreants. They made havoc to the extent of removing the roofings of the main buildings of the monastery and of the corridors. One-foot timber floor pieces and six by three inches wooded beams were not even spared. The original donors of the monastery reveringly requested the *Sayādaw* to return to Taungwainggale saying that they would renovate the *taik kyaung* if the *Sayādaw* had his desire to return to the *kyaung* to reside. To this request, Mahāsī Sayādaw had given his word that he would come back and stay as long as he might consider appropriate. In compliance with the *Sayādaw's* wish, they repaired the *kyaung* and restored it to good condition. When renovation had been completely done, Mahāsī Sayādaw returned to Taungwainggale monastery.

Just on the eve of Burma gaining its independence, General Aung San fell a victim as a martyr at the hands of the murderous traitors. Thakin Nu had to take the place of General Aung San according to the rule of discipline in war – a maxim 'One hero

stepping in the shoes of another fallen hero'. The fortunes of Burma's politics had swung in another way while Mahāsī Sayādaw was residing at Taungwainggale Taik-Kyaung and that was soon after Bogyoke Aung San and his team of comrades had met their ill-fate. It was a turning point in the history of Burma heralding a new era. After having been in subjugation under the British for over a century (counting from the time of annexation of Lower Burma), on the fourth of January at 4.20 a.m., in the year 1948 (the ninth Waning day of the month of Pyatho (January) in 1309 M.E. {1947}), Burma was able to proclaim its Independence with full sovereignty and absolute freedom. At the time of Burma's proclamation of its Independence, Mahāsī Sayādaw who was still at Taungwainggale Taik-Kyaung had been spontaneously reciting Mahā Samaya Sutta, Mahā Dhammāsamādāna Sutta, etc., after taking his seat with reverence before the image of the Lord Buddha and at the same time paying homage and praying with a fervent wish for the health and prosperity of the whole of the Union of Burma. In that year, on the 10th Waxing day of the month of Tabaung (March) as the annual general meeting (of the organization for the promotion of *saddhammapala vipassanā* – founded over more than one year ago, under the patronage of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw) was to be held, Mahāsī Sayādaw had to return to Seikkhun, Shwebo, during the early part of the month of Tabaung (March).

After a few months' stay at Seikkhun following the close of the general meeting or assembly at the beginning of the Lent in 1311 M.E. (1949), the *Sayādaw* had to go back to Moulmein Taungwainggale Taik-Kyaung. After the Lent had ended, during the latter part of the month of Natdaw (December), in response to the invitation he had to proceed again back to Seikkhun where he was obliged to conduct the libation of the *taik kyaung* which was to be donated to the *Sayādaw* at Seikkhun Mahāsī monastery. In the course of his return journey while temporarily stopping at Rangoon *en route*, he had personally seen a place on the site of the Thathāna Yeikthā (meditation centre) where forty-nine *sanghas* had read the *paritta* (hymns which were read for protection to be immuned from danger), as shown to him by the late Sir U Thwin. On that occasion, he had no inkling whatsoever that this particular site would happen

to be a place where he would have to reside permanently for the promotion of *Sāsana*. It seems as if the *nats* (celestial beings) had brought him there reminding him as: “Your Eminence, behold now the place where thou shall have to reside in future!”

MAHĀ SATIPAṬṬHĀNA SUTTA NISSAYA



Mahāsī Sayādaw
At a Dhamma talk session

After his return to Seikkhun village, Mahāsī Sayādaw continued to devote his time and energy to the work of promoting *vipassanā*. Not being able to cope with the increasing volume of work single-handedly, he had to enlist the support of his disciples as his assistants who were qualified in teaching meditation

practice and these disciples had adequate practical experience in meditation. Among them the two, namely, Sayā Kyan and Sayā Kywet were the first to be entrusted with the instructors' duties. The two teachers as *kammaṭṭhāna* instructors bore their responsibilities well. They had goodwill wishing others to derive benefit like themselves by practising insight meditation through mindfulness. The two instructors later requested Mahāsī Sayādaw to write a book on Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna on which people could rely for the achievement of the true *Dhamma* and in which refuge could be taken by all. The *Sayādaw* conceded to the request made by his two disciples and wrote a new Nissaya book entitled ‘Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta’.

Though it may be said to be a Nissaya, it is not merely a guide in name but really resourceful and dependable adorned with a variety of meanings and effective explanations of the definitions relating to literary usages and terms. It is all the more surprising in that it contains the elucidation of the work program of *vipassanā* meditation exercise along with the comparative statements of the processes.



MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW AND MEDITATION TEACHERS

(Mahāsi Sayādaw is seated in the center)

At the beginning of the Nissaya itself, the meaning has been given as '*Kurusu* – in the country of Kuru'. At first sight it might appear grammatically wrong in the usage of the term between the singular and plural number. However, only when the explanatory foot-note relating to the phrase is seen, it is clearly known as to why the singular number is used. There is only Kuru country. But, according to Pāḷi grammar, the plural number is used in Pāḷi language. It is important when Pāḷi is translated into Burmese to fall in with the Burmese terminology. In Burmese terminology, it is unusual to use a plural number in respect of a country. Therefore, to agree with the Burmese terminology, the words 'in the country of Kuru' has been translated in the form of a singular tense. Indeed, the *Sayādaw* had conformed strictly to the instructions given by the Lord Buddha as '*Samaññam Natidāveyva*'. Apart from this, it has been pointed out that the said country of Kuru is no other than the State of Delhi in India. In the far-off days, *Sayādaws* had no chance of acquiring the general knowledge of places, such as towns, cities, or countries. The people also had not much experience in the knowledge of geography. Therefore in regard to towns, cities, and countries mentioned in Pāḷi language, they were unable to explain or instruct to make them clear and convincing. At the present day, however, books and other information reading materials are

numerous. Besides, one could travel widely to reach such places. In this regard, the present-day *Sayādaws* are in a better advantageous position than those of the past. As this vantage position has been expressed in terms of the words 'The State of Delhi', it has become obvious that the New Nissaya *ab initio* is really an outstanding piece of literary work. This is but one of the extraordinary features relating to the grammatical comments.

In particular, concerning the work of *vipassanā*, the explanation given regarding how mindfulness can be realized while meditating, is of great value and significance. Since it would appear as if the work (of *vipassanā*) is accomplished by those who have reached the stage of the attainment of *magga-phala* without practising the method of meditation through mindfulness while listening to the discourse only by mere satisfaction derived from what has been heard, the Commentary has explained that this false notion should not have been entertained, and that worry, grief and lamentation could only be got rid of only through the method of Mindfulness. But in the explanation given in the Commentary being extremely pithy and brief, it can hardly be understood. In order therefore, to make it clear and understandable, ample clarification has been made in the New Nissaya.

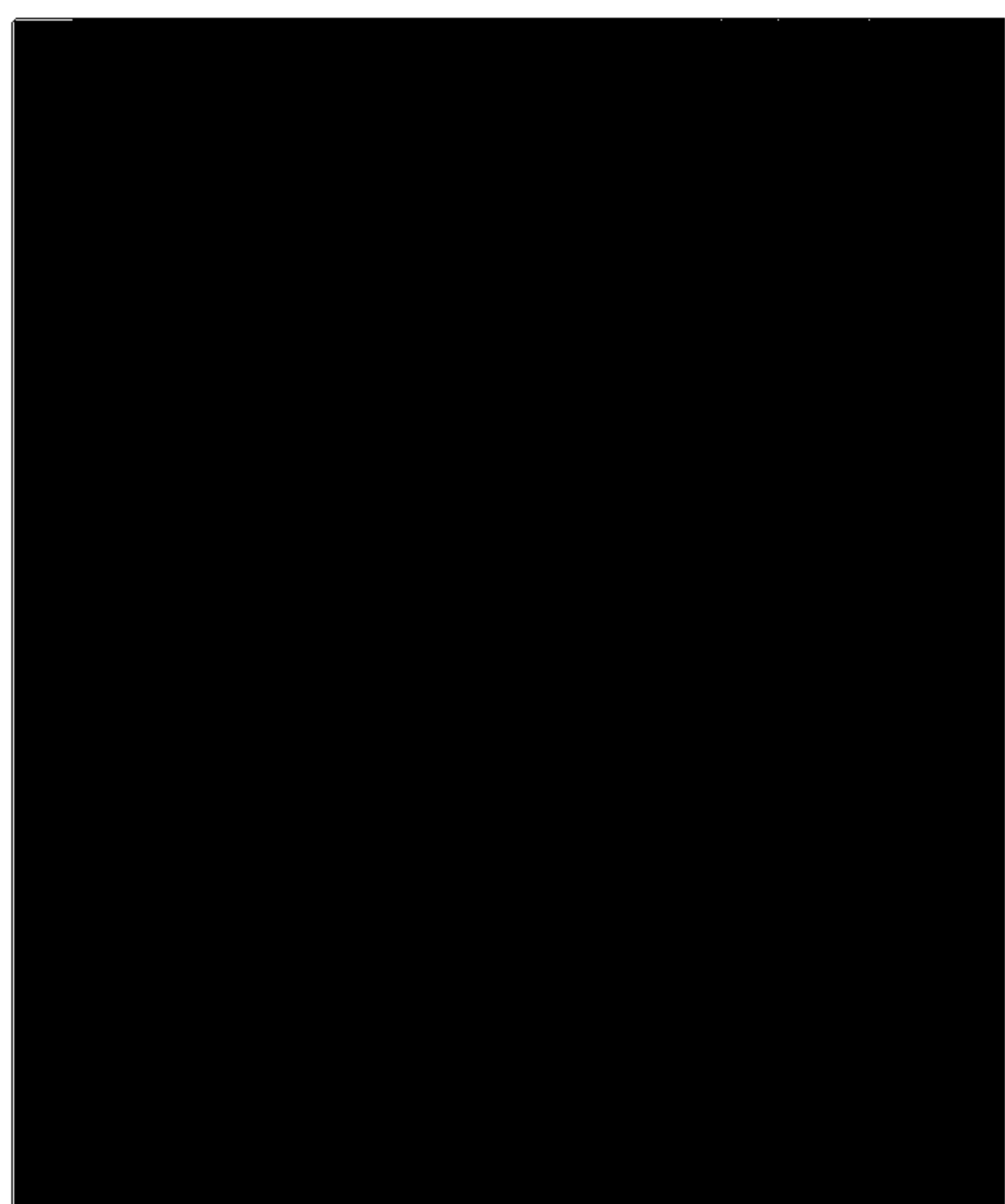
In the story (*vāṭṭhu*) of Teiktha Thera who practised meditation after putting his two thighs into dislocation, the Commentary says '*vedanāṃ vikkhambhatva* – overcoming or dispelling the *vedanā* (suffering)'. It is, however, very difficult to comprehend as to how the *vedanā* had been overcome or dispelled. This difficulty in comprehending its meaning has also been clarified in this New Nissaya.

Then, the method of contemplating and noting as 'walking', when walking, etc., had also been ridiculed by those who were ignorant. It seems that such an incidence had actually taken place even during the time of the commentators. Hence, comprehensive explanation must have been so given on this point in the Commentary. Be it as it may, as this explanation has been again amplified and elucidated in this New Nissaya, it is definitely sure that if this wider explanation had been read, the intention to deride

or ridicule would naturally pass off and would even invoke a feeling of respect and regard. It is also clearly revealed as to what extent the manner of contemplation to note as 'walking' when walking, etc., has become important in the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation. The statement written in support of the explanation given in the Commentary relating to the difference in degree of knowledge between the yogi practising contemplation and the ordinary layman in respect of their respective awareness of the act of 'walking' when walking, being a statement that can bring about the true realization or the right view, it is of immense value and is beneficial for the *Sāsana*. In the manner described above, the whole book – Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta New Nissaya in Pāli is exuberantly diffused with statements which would open the eyes of *vipassanā* knowledge.

Sayādaw had finished writing this New Nissaya on the first Waning day of the month of Tabodwe (February), 1310 M.E. (1948), and handed it over to Sayā Kyan and Sayā Kywet who had originally requested for the same.

THE RENDEZVOUS OF TWO U THWIN(S) OR THE MEETING OF TWO U THWIN(S)



SIR U THWIN
First President of BSNO
from 1947 to 1963

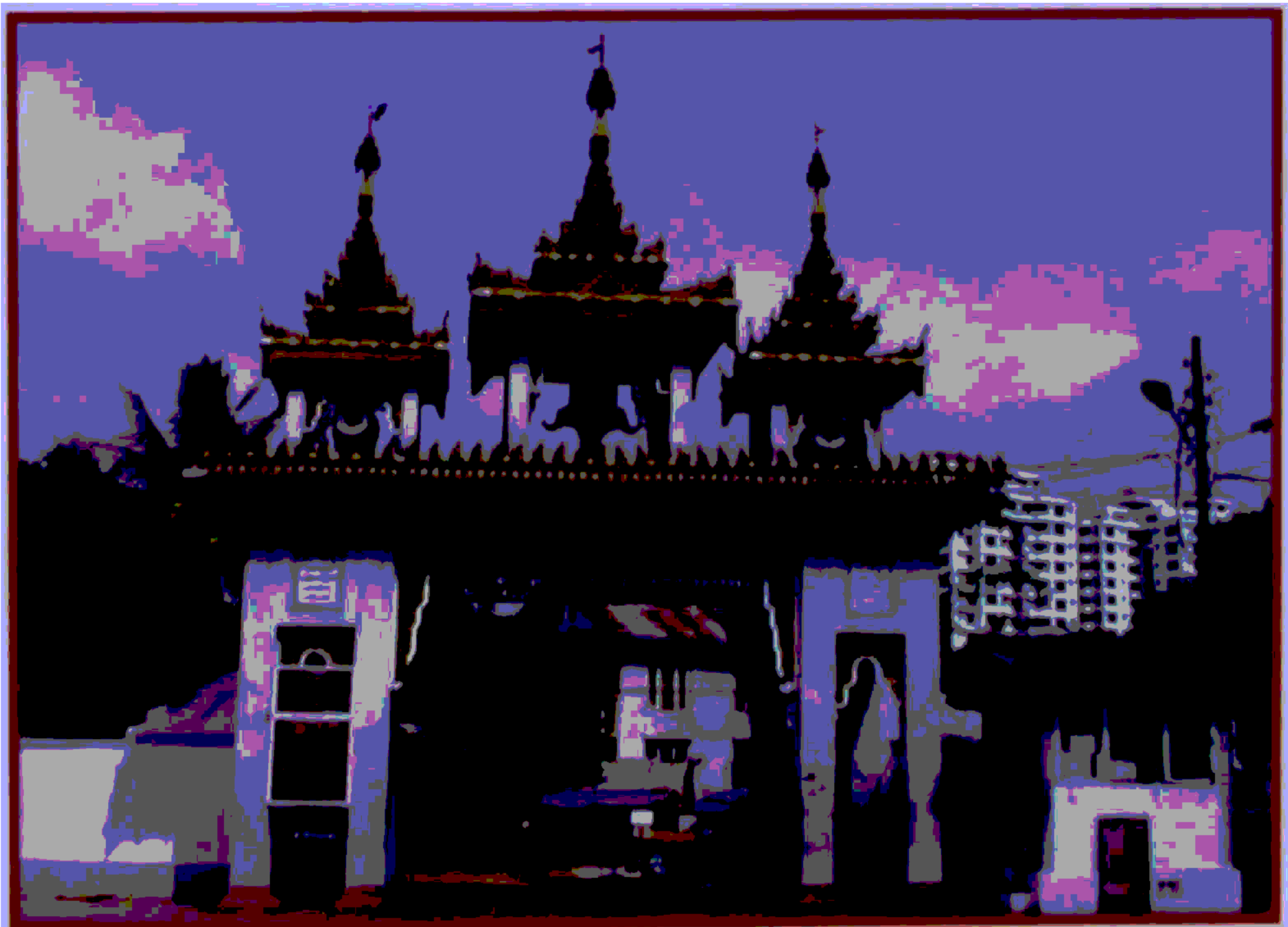
In Burma, there is hardly any person who does not know Sir U Thwin. He was reputedly a very wealthy person, opulent and rich in both tangible and intangible property so much as that he had been popularly addressed as a 'multi-millionaire'. He was also a person who had unremittingly performed many things in the interest of the country. Therefore, during the British regime, he was honoured with knighthood. During the time following Burma's achievement of Independence, he was conferred upon with a very eminent title of 'Thado Thiri Thudhamma'. He had made energetic efforts in the highest interests of the people of Burma, his religion

and *Sāsana*. This is quite evident from the list of his numerous meritorious deeds, and with an unwavering respect for deep devotion to the *Sāsana*, he had done enthusiastically all that which would help to flourish and promote the *Sāsana*. He was, however, not fully satisfied with the way the British had supported the *Sāsana* in Burma. He had in his heart the spiritual welfare of his country and kept his mind at work as to how he would carry into effect for the enhancement of the *Sāsana* when Burma gained Independence. To fulfill this objective, after the Second World War when attainment of Independence for Burma was rest assured, the rich man, Sir U Thwin, started making preparations to implement his project for the everlasting development of *Sāsana*. In his program for planning this scheme, priority was given to the founding of a religious organization in which all influential persons in power on the Government side starting from the President of the Union of Burma and the Prime Minister should partake, his idea being that this organization should make it a point to encourage all activities relating to the *Sāsana* within the entire country.

In considering the affairs of the *Sāsana*, there was not much difficulty to promote *Pariyatti Sāsana*. However, in regard to the matter of promoting *Paṭipatti Sāsana*, it was found not so easy. The problem was of course, the availability of a teacher in *paṭipatti*. A meditation teacher must be a person who could instruct the right method of meditational practice in accordance with the Teachings of the Buddha. Since he ought to be a person who would be placed in high esteem and reverence throughout the life time as a spiritual teacher, he must be worthy of respect and reverence from all viewpoints. To find such a person was far from being easy. Therefore, Sir U Thwin, the millionaire, was making enquiries on his own to get a qualified meditation teacher. He had to inquire as such to put himself in readiness when responsibility was given to him to look for a teacher in *paṭipatti* after the establishment of an organization for future promotion of the *Sāsana*. Thus, while Sir U Thwin was making consultations with the Prime Minister and other persons for the purpose of establishing an organization for the welfare of the *Sāsana*, he was at the same time enquiring to find out a teacher in *paṭipatti* of his own liking.

BUDDHA SĀSANA NUGGAHA ORGANIZATION AND SĀSANA YEIKTHĀ

Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization was founded by Sir U Thwin and other respectable persons on the thirteen day of November, 1947, no, the first Waxing day of Natdaw (December), 1309 M.E. (1947). Sir U Thwin was then elected as the President of that Organization. The aims and object of this Organization are to promote the *Sāsana* both in the field of *pariyatṭi* and *paṭipatti* to the best of its ability with utmost endeavour. With this end in view, when consideration was made to set up a meditation centre for the enhancement of *Paṭipatti Sāsana*, Sir U Thwin himself took the initiative in generously donating outright a plot of garden land, measuring over five acres, the place where the present *Sāsana Yeikthā* is situated, on the ninth Waning day of the month of Tawthalin, 1310 M.E. (6th September, 1948). Thereafter, full preparations were urgently launched for the construction of the buildings on the site where *Sāsana Yeikthā* now stands.



GATEWAY TO THE MAHĀSĪ SĀSANA YEIKTHĀ

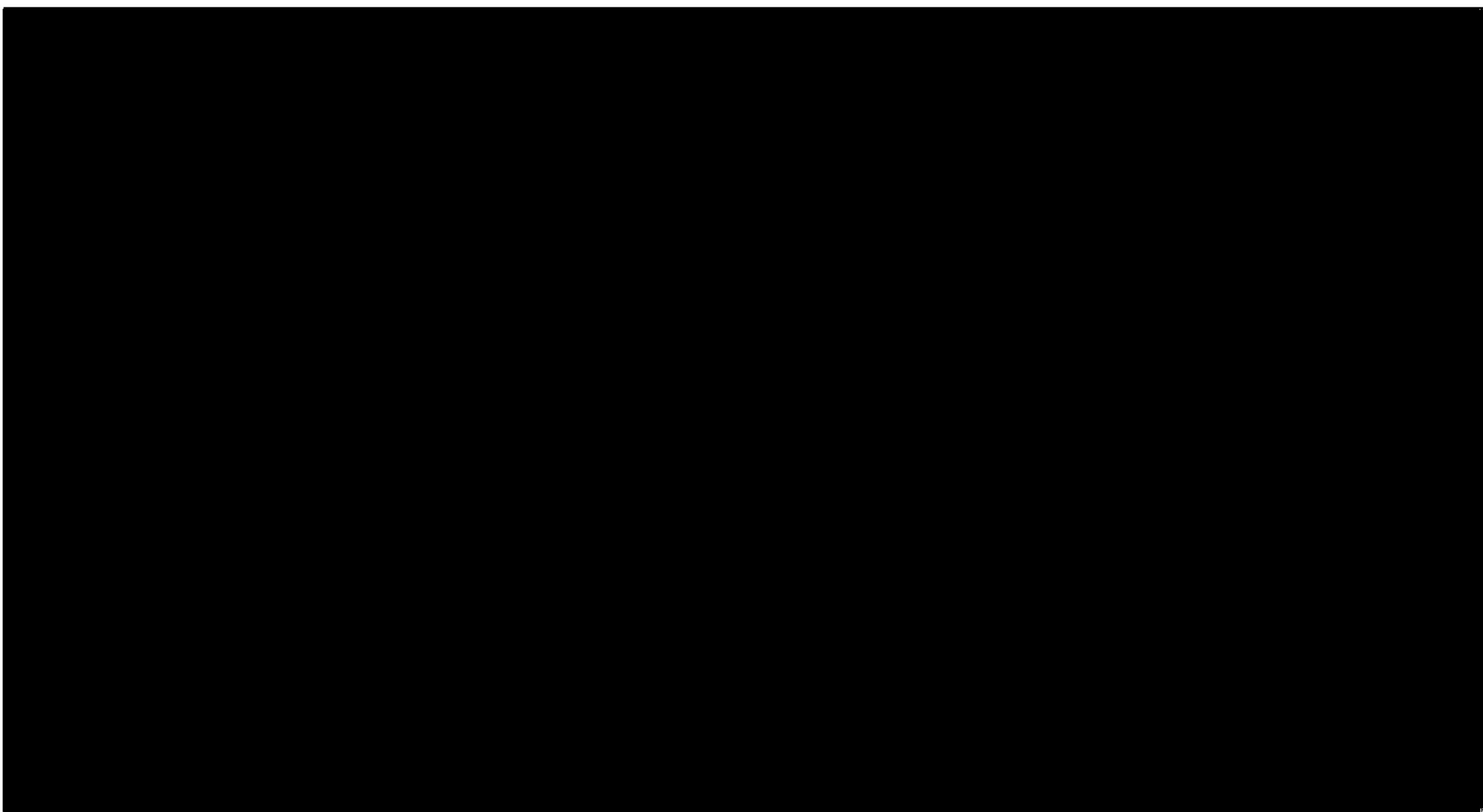
In the month of Wagaung (August), 1309 M.E. (1947), Sir U Thwin set out his journey to Upper Burma. He then proceeded from Mandalay to Sagaing where his daughter Daw Khin Khin Gyi was residing. While sojourning at Sagaing in his daughter's house, he

visited a place called Chat-thin Retreat in Sagaing Hills. At that time, a rich rice mill owner by the name of U Ba Thin happened to be staying at that Retreat, and in the course of an informal talk on current topics between Sir U Thwin and U Ba Thin, they came upon the subject relating to Sir U Thwin's quest for a teacher in *paṭipatti*. Thereupon, U Ba Thin claimed to know a senior monk at Seikkhun village in Shwebo Township by the name of Mahāsi Sayādaw and told Sir U Thwin that according to his honest opinion, this *Sayādaw* would probably meet with Sir U Thwin's satisfaction being endowed with the requisite ability and qualifications. Sir U Thwin then requested U Ba Thin to kindly invite the *Sayādaw* whose discourse, he said, he would relish to hear. U Ba Thin gladly took the responsibility and invited the *Sayādaw* to come over to Sagaing.

In fact, without even personally hearing the discourse taught by Mahāsi Sayādaw, a person would perhaps know the aptitude and many-sided genius of the *Sayādaw* as being an adept in both *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti* if he had the chance of reading through the Text 'The Method of Vipassanā Meditation' written by the *Sayādaw*. Sir U Thwin was in real earnest to meet the *Sayādaw* personally and judge him closely from all aspects. Hence, his request to U Ba Thin to invite the *Sayādaw* despite the fact that the time was during *vassa* - (rainy season for four months, a period of retreat for the Buddhist monks during which they are ordinarily forbidden to travel).

Persons who have practical wisdom, insight and sound imagination are generally scrupulous and highly disciplined in the matter of selecting a teacher. They do not usually acknowledge a person as acceptable solely on the strength of his perfect academic attainments and qualifications. A man's personality, feature, completeness of his bodily limbs or rather physical anomalies, mental behaviour, etc., must be looked into, and only when everything is found satisfactory, then they would hold their respect and veneration for him as a worthy teacher. According to what is mentioned in *Sāsana Lankara*, King Narapatisithu, the ruler of the kingdom of Pagan, at one time ordered his courtiers to investigate about a monk who was reputed to be 'well-learned, wise and talented' to know whether his bodily limbs were perfect and free of

anomalies, with a view to appointing that monk as the King's Prelate, if found satisfactory. But having heard that the monk had in his foot a severed big toe, the king regarded it as an anomaly and rejected to appoint this monk as his own Guru (master), and sent him away to Mon state to promote *Sāsana* after bestowing upon him the title of 'Vilāsa'. It seems that Sir U Thwin was making his own investigations just as King Narapatisithu had done. As such, reflecting that if the discourse were to be heard at the Assembly Hall of Chat-thin Gyaung (*gyaung* means centre of retreat), the presence of many standing pillars inside the Hall would probably obstruct his clear view of the *Sayādaw*, he made a request that the congregation be held in another spacious Assembly Hall with a hope that the arrangement so made would fulfill his wish according to his objective. Therefore, arrangements had to be made to hold a congregation at Thameikdawdaya Retreat (a well-known place in Sagaing Hills) with the permission of the Sayāgyī (Nun) Daw Marlaryi, the Chief Nun of Thameikdawdaya, where Mahāsī Sayādaw was to deliver his discourse.



SAGAING HILLS

There are more than 1,000 Monasteries and Nunneries with over 10,000 Monks, Novices & Nuns.

In response to the invitation, Mahāsī Sayādaw came on the second Waning day of the month of Wagaung (August). He had come over to Sagaing even during the period of the *vassa*, because it was not against the rule of discipline for a monk to spend the

night at a place away from the place (monastery) of his *vassa* if at all an invitation is accorded to him to come and deliver a discourse which the convener wishes to hear. At the time of delivering the discourse, Sir U Thwin occupied an appropriate place in the Hall from where he could see and observe and then hear the *Sayādaw* as he had already planned. From the time the *Sayādaw* alighted from the automobile, Sir U Thwin had been making his observation. While also listening to the discourse, he was constantly observing and watching the *Sayādaw's* personal behaviour, gait and manner of speech. Having been satisfied with regard to the *Sayādaw's* reputation since the time he had heard of him from U Ba Thin, Sir U Thwin had warily and discreetly examining with his own eyes, the entire physical structure and frame, limbs, joints etc., of the *Sayādaw* whether anomalies or abnormalities would be detected or not. In examining the *Sayādaw's* physical complexion and body, Sir U Thwin found no anomalies or defects whatsoever, and only noticed an extremely satisfactory state of the *Sayādaw's* striking personality and demeanour. From the moment of taking



Mahāsī Sayādaw
A Worthy Teacher

his seat on the *Dhammasana* throne or the pulpit, the *Sayādaw* was seen teaching in a state of serenity and calmness without even moving any part of his limbs. He was teaching with utmost dignity in a tranquil state of mind without any distraction. He was found delivering the discourse fully engrossed without slur, slander, scandal or prattle and without any superfluity, emphasizing only on the essence of the *Dhamma*. On that occasion, the discourse delivered was on *Malukyāputta Sutta Dhamma*. The *Dhamma* that was so expounded (the Venerable *Malukyāputta* being in seclusion and plunged in meditation) went in harmony with the composure, respectable appearance and behaviour of the *Sayādaw*. These facts

had been mentioned by Sir U Thwin to persons of his close acquaintance after the return of Mahāsī Sayādaw. It was stated that he had noticed the *Sayādaw's* well-built frame, conspicuous height, and dignified appearance even at the moment of his first sight. Certain parts of the limbs such as the hands and feet that had protruded from underneath the yellow robes he wore were carefully observed. In this connection also, Sir U Thwin found with satisfaction the noble features of the *Sayādaw* with manly characteristics, dignified, inspiring, stately to behold, neither too lean nor bulky and fine in presence. What has transpired to him from the looks, *Sayādaw* possessed a tranquil mind with absolute calmness and serenity, which reflected the inner profound wisdom and *samādhi*. Sir U Thwin was also gratified at the sight of the prominent ears – broad and big. Regarding the eyes, they were found to be penetrating, sharp and alert. When hearing the voice, the sound of teaching was mellow, modest and simple, yet audible, without any pretension, and exaggeration and without being flowery. On hearing the teachings of the *Sayādaw*, Sir U Thwin was highly pleased and therefore, mentally gave recognition to the *Sayādaw* as, “This eminent teacher is the saviour I have been searching for.”

Considering the above facts, it is vividly clear that Sir U Thwin had very thoroughly examined in the matter of selecting a teacher whom he would hold in reverence with adoration. Just as the examiner was completely thorough in all respects, the person who was subjected to observation and scrutiny was fully accomplished in every way. He had successfully gone through the crucial test. He possessed all the attributes and qualifications which Sir U Thwin had wished for and aspired. Persons who were so much in common and harmonious with one another could not possibly be men of ordinary calibre and standing. They could be persons who were closely knitted together in their relationship and had prayed for realization of the same objective in their previous existences. King Thīri Dhammāsoka (Asoka) had held his veneration for Nijhoda Sāmaṇera from the moment of his first sight at the young monk. Feeling of affection and attachment had also taken place. This unusual occurrence was not without reason. Of course, the reason

being that in their past existences, the *sāmaṇera* was the elder brother while the younger was the King and that they had together performed meritorious deeds.

Now that Sir U Thwin, the millionaire, had held great veneration for Mahāsī Sayādaw with a feeling of delight from the time he had first met the *Sayādaw*. These were the two personages who would jointly make their ceaseless efforts to re-enhance the *Paṭipatti Sāsana* in Burma with glory and splendour. Who could deny that such two great persons were not either the two brothers or close relatives in their previous existences? Amidst these congenial circumstances, the *Sayādaw's* name in his childhood was surprisingly found to be identical with the name of the Millionaire. The strange meeting between the two U Thwin(s) was indeed a memorable incident which should invariably be recorded in the annals or history of the Buddha's *Sāsana*.

At Thameikdawdaya Retreat Centre, Mahāsī Sayādaw gave his teachings on practical *vipassanā* meditation to over three hundred in the audience led by Sir U Thwin for five days in succession. The first three days were conducted according to the original program whereas the discourses delivered on the next two days were at the request of the Sayāgyī Daw Marlaryi, the Chief Nun of Thameikdawdaya Retreat.

The teachings that were delivered successively for five days on the practical aspect of *vipassanā* meditation exercise were greatly appreciated by the whole congregation. Among the congregation, those personages who had the experience of *Dhamma* were more keenly interested and exultant, it was not an easy task to teach on the subject of *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation in Sagaing Hills. The majority of the congregation who had listened to the *Dhamma* was mostly nuns. They had the background experience in the practice of meditation (*paṭipatti kammaṭṭhāna*) and studied the scriptural texts in the field of *pariyatti*. As it was stated that such a kind of assembly had highly extolled the *Dhamma* that was taught, it could be clearly known that the teachings of Mahāsī Sayādaw being in conformity with the principles of *pariyatti*, really proved to be beneficial in the practical sphere of the

work of *vipassanā* meditation. That was the reason why the Chief Nun of the Thameikdawdaya Retreat had fervently requested Mahāsī Sayādaw to teach for two more days, for not being satisfied with only three days.

And yet, the said Chief Nun still being discontented with the knowledge gained by mere listening to the *Dhamma*, went to Seikkhun village during the month of Tazaungmon (August) in that year and plunged herself in practical *vipassanā* meditation. After having found the true realization of the *Dhamma* through practical *vipassanā* meditation, she sent her information to Sir U Thwin relating to what she had personally experienced.

Again, the Chief Nun of Thameikdawdaya wishing others to attain insight knowledge through mindfulness just as she had gained, urged her close friends to go and indulge themselves in the practice of *kammaṭṭhāna* at Mahāsī Sayādaw Meditation Centre. At her insistence and encouragement, the Aungmyebon San-kyaung Sayādaw of the Sagaing Hills had visited Seikkhun Mahāsī Centre and practised *vipassanā* meditation with great success. The said *Sayādaw* later became a right-hand man (one of the most reliable monks) of the Mahāsī Sayādaw in both the fields of *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti*. This *Sayādaw* was no other person than the famous compiler and author of Sāsana Piṭaka Pāli-Burmese Dictionary, Sayādaw Ashin Nyanuttara Thera, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita, the Chief Nāyaka of Kabā-Aye-Zabudipa Monastery, who had passed away in the previous year.

LEAVING FOR RANGOON SĀSANA YEIKTHĀ

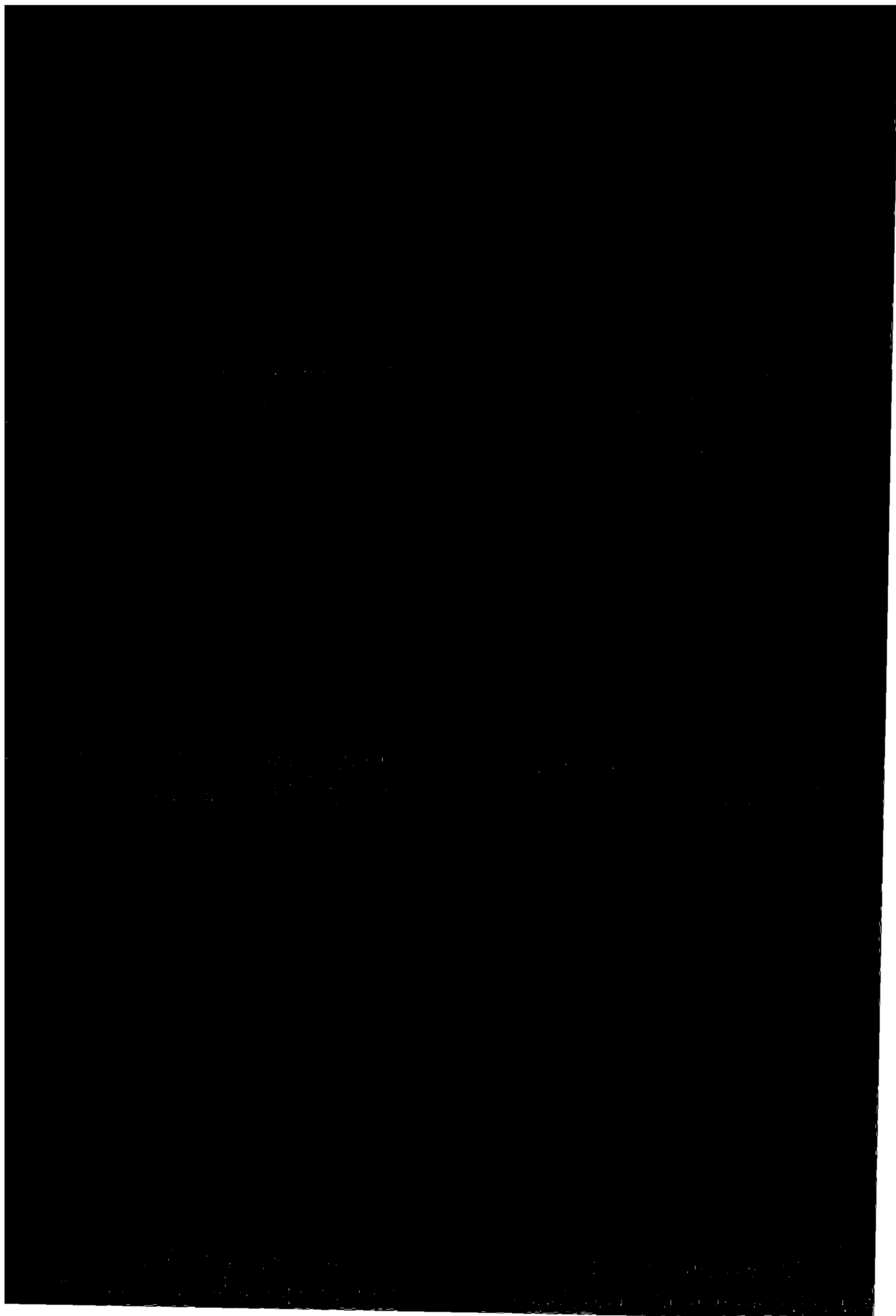
A fairly good number of buildings meant for yogis to meditate having been constructed within the precincts of Sāsana Yeikthā – the Meditation Centre - founded by the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization, Rangoon, consultations were made for the selection of a *kammaṭṭhāna* teacher. Sir U Thwin proposed the name of Mahāsī Sayādaw of Seikkhun, Shwebo Township, whom he had met and whose discourse he had heard, as the most suitable candidate for the appointment of a meditation teacher. With great delight, this proposal was unanimously accepted by all members of

the Executive Committee of the Organization who gave their consensus for approval to appointing the said *Sayādaw* as a meditation teacher, and also resolved that the *Sayādaw* be invited to Rangoon.

In the year 1311 M.E. (1949), during the period of the Waxing of Tazaungmon (early November), Mahāsī Sayādaw was temporarily residing at a meditation centre at the foot of Myodounk Zedi (shrine) in Shwebo town, generally known as Mawdaw-myintha Pagoda. *Sayādaw's* intentions of his stay there was to encourage that meditation centre. At the time while the *Sayādaw* was preaching and teaching at that meditation centre, it so happened that the Prime Minister was at Shwebo on tour and was paying his visit to Myodounk Zedi. The elders of the town who accompanied and escorted the Prime Minister to that pagoda, had incidentally mentioned in the course of their conversation, of the presence of Mahāsī Sayādaw at the meditation centre located at the foot of that Shrine. Thereupon, the Prime Minister immediately called on Mahāsī Sayādaw and after paying obeisance solicitously requested the *Sayādaw* to come over to Rangoon for the purpose of teaching *Dhamma*. The *Sayādaw* bearing in mind that the work of teaching *Dhamma* was his paramount duty, promised to visit Rangoon. After receiving the solemn assurance of the *Sayādaw*, the Prime Minister entrusted the persons concerned with the responsibility of making arrangement, to bring the *Sayādaw* from Shwebo to Mandalay via Sagaing. Later, according to the arrangements that had been made, Mahāsī Sayādaw left Shwebo taking along with him another monk by the name of U Muncinda of Shwebo. They first reached Sinmyar-shin Meditation Centre at Sagaing in the company of the responsible elders who acted as escorts. On the day of his arrival, the *Sayādaw* spent the night at that Centre after delivering a discourse. There Mahāsī Sayādaw also requested Shweminwun Sayādaw U Kawthalla to accompany him to Rangoon. On the following day, the sixth Waning day of Tazaungmon (November), they crossed over to Mandalay. Thereafter, Mahāsī Sayādaw together with Shwebo U Muncinda and Shwe-minwun Sayādaw U Kawthalla proceeded to Rangoon from Mandalay by air. On their arrival at Rangoon Airport, Mahāsī Sayādaw and his party were met

and accorded a warm welcome by Sir U Thwin and other members of the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization.

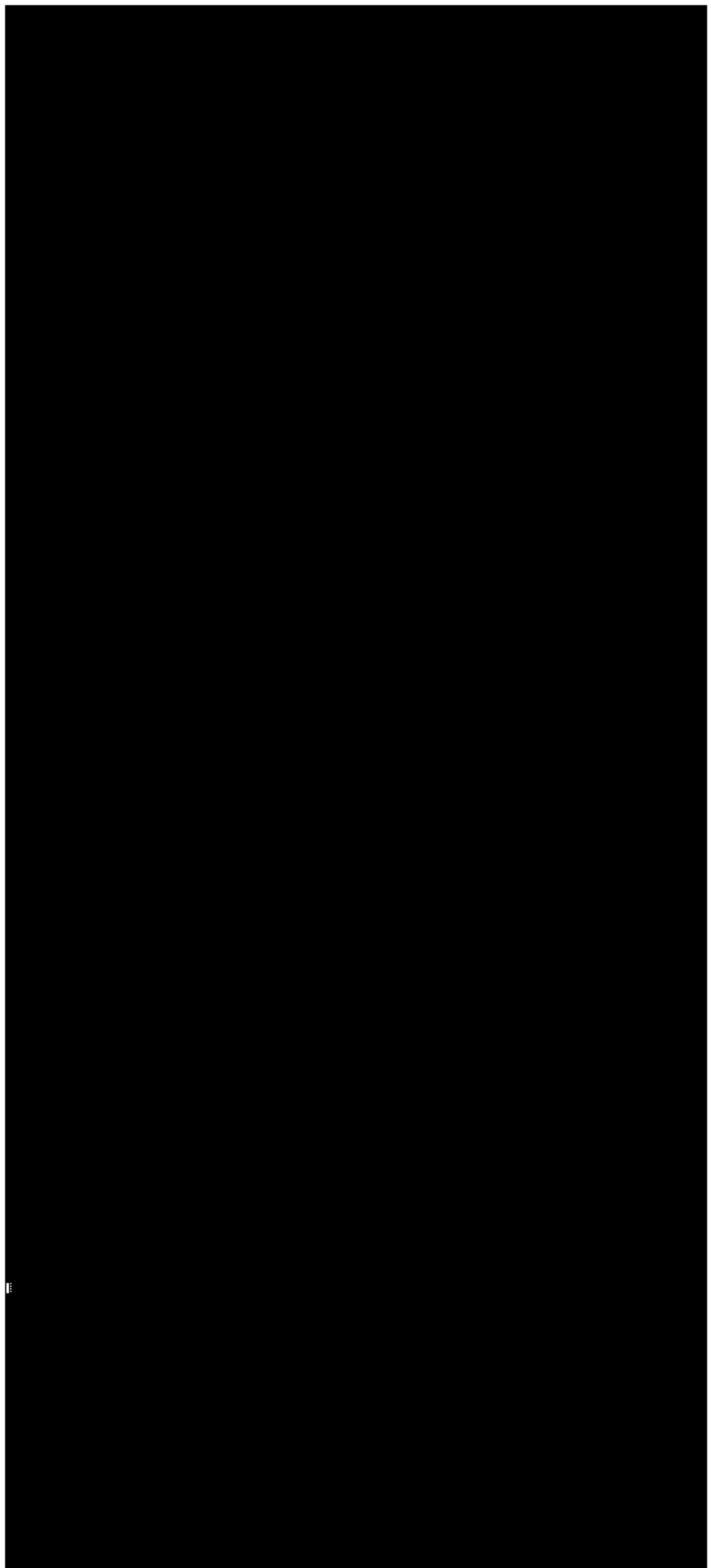
MAHĀSĪ MEDITATION CENTRE IN THE EARLY DAYS



THE GROWTH OF MEDITATION CENTRES

When making his way to Rangoon, Mahāsī Sayādaw carried with him only the eight requisites of a Buddhist monk, such as, the robes, begging bowl, etc., and he had no other extra things for his personal use, except a pair of slippers he had put on. Not even a diary was with him. At that time, there were only a few buildings at Rangoon Sāsana Yeikthā. To the south-east of the *Thein* (a temple meant for ordination of monks) stood four small-sized wooden *kyaungs* in a row for *kammaṭṭhāna* teachers to reside, a *kyaung* is a dwelling place for the *Sayādaw* and another building at one place where the *Sanghas* were to take their meals. Although the *Thein* was consecrated on the fifth Waxing day of Tagu (April), 1311 M.E. (1949), the appurtenances thereto had not yet been constructed. It was in a condition in which only rites of ordination could be temporarily performed. In the same manner, the assembly hall was just a kind of pandal made of white metallic material at the site where the present Hpanyin Dhammayon (Fan-Yin Assembly Hall) stands.

The yogis who would take up the practice of meditation were then still lacking. However, immediately after his arrival at the *yeikthā*, the *Sayādaw* had expressed his desire to teach the method of meditation if there were people who were bent upon meditating. From then on, the number of people desirous of taking up meditational practice had increased gradually reaching up to twenty-five in number in the month of Natdaw (December). Therefore, on the full moon day of Natdaw, the *Sayādaw* gave a discourse on the basic practice of the *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* to the group of the said twenty-five yogis. In the days that followed, every time the new yogis came over to stay at the *yeikthā*, the *Sayādaw* had given them the same methodical training in the right system of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā*. Owing to the increasingly large number of



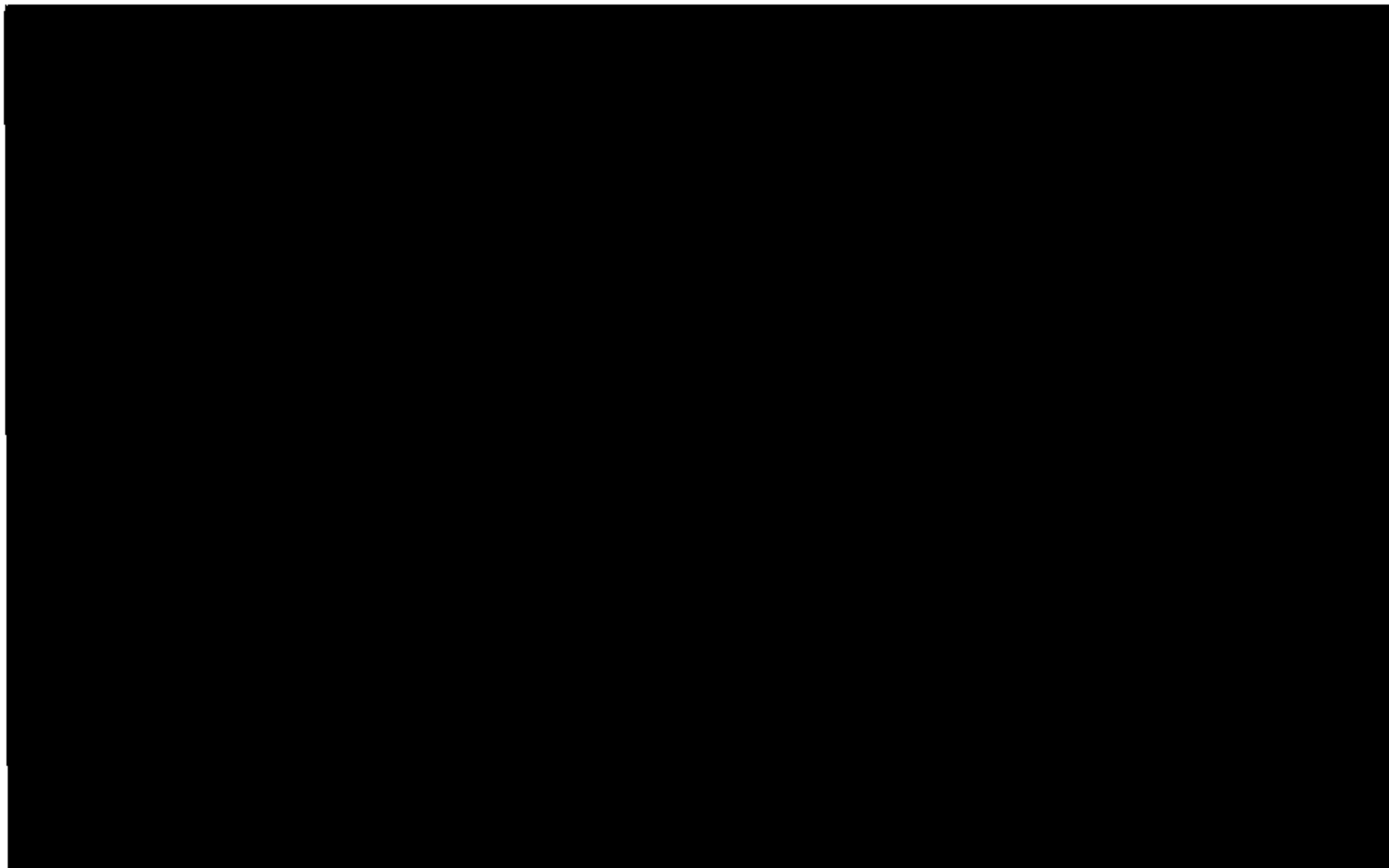
Mahāsī Sayādaw
Newly arrived at the
Mahasi Meditation
Centre, Yangon

yogis with the passage of time when the *Sayādaw* was unable to teach and preach personally, the recorded tape version of the *Dhamma* was given by himself with effect from the month of Waso (July) in 1313 M.E. (1951). In the year 1316 M.E. (1954), the discourse or the exposition of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā* was copied in writing from the recorded tape and then published in the form of a book. This discourse had been reprinted and has now run to the eighth edition.

This 'Discourse on the Basic Practice of the Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā' as its name implies, is the *Dhamma* which conveys instructions in detail to those who had originally no basic knowledge of the practice of *kammaṭṭhāna*. It carries the same spirit as contained in chapter V of the book 'The Method of Vipassanā Meditation'. However, as it is an instruction on practical training in meditation between the teacher and the pupil and as it is meant for the beginners only to gain fairly sufficient knowledge, it is not as fully amplified as in chapter V.

After giving *kammaṭṭhāna* religious exercises through the medium of this *Dhamma*, the meditators were orally examined by the *Sayādaw* everyday. The yogis had to explain and answer in detail truthfully without omitting anything relating to all occurrences they had experienced in the course of their meditation. They were guided on to the right track as might be considered necessary relevant to the experiences they had gone through. This method of examining the yogis daily is one of the most satisfactory methods of training in the system of practical meditation adopted and prescribed by Mahāsī Sayādaw. By following this method, there is no need to worry about the yogi going astray from the right path and getting on to a wrong track. As this path has been personally trodden and as instructions have also been given to many other people and also with the availability of a fully qualified teacher, it is indeed most encouraging. No feeling of anxiety need be entertained as to what one should do on reaching a certain stage of progress. The teacher is always standing by and is ready to offer his expertise as to what should be done depending upon the progress that has been achieved. Because of this fine system of training in meditation practice, Mahāsī Sayādaw's method of *kammaṭṭhāna*

practice has met with great success.



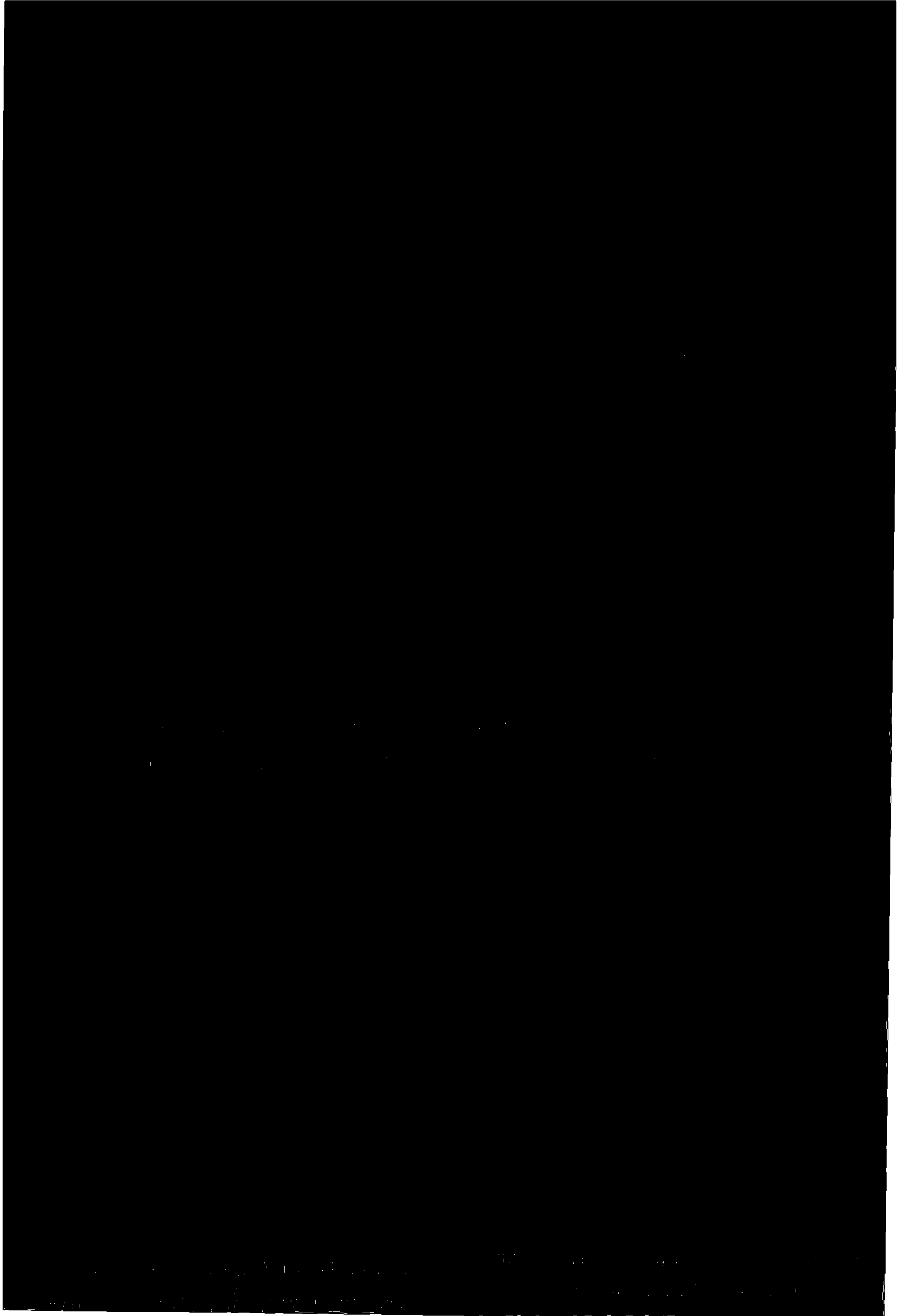
**Mahāsi Sayādaw giving dhamma talk
with his senior disciples at his side**

Among those who had come over to the *yeikthā* and had meditated under the guidance of the *Sayādaw*, (particularly the monks), there were some who would in turn disseminate the seeds of *vipassanā* knowledge when they go back to their own native places. To such

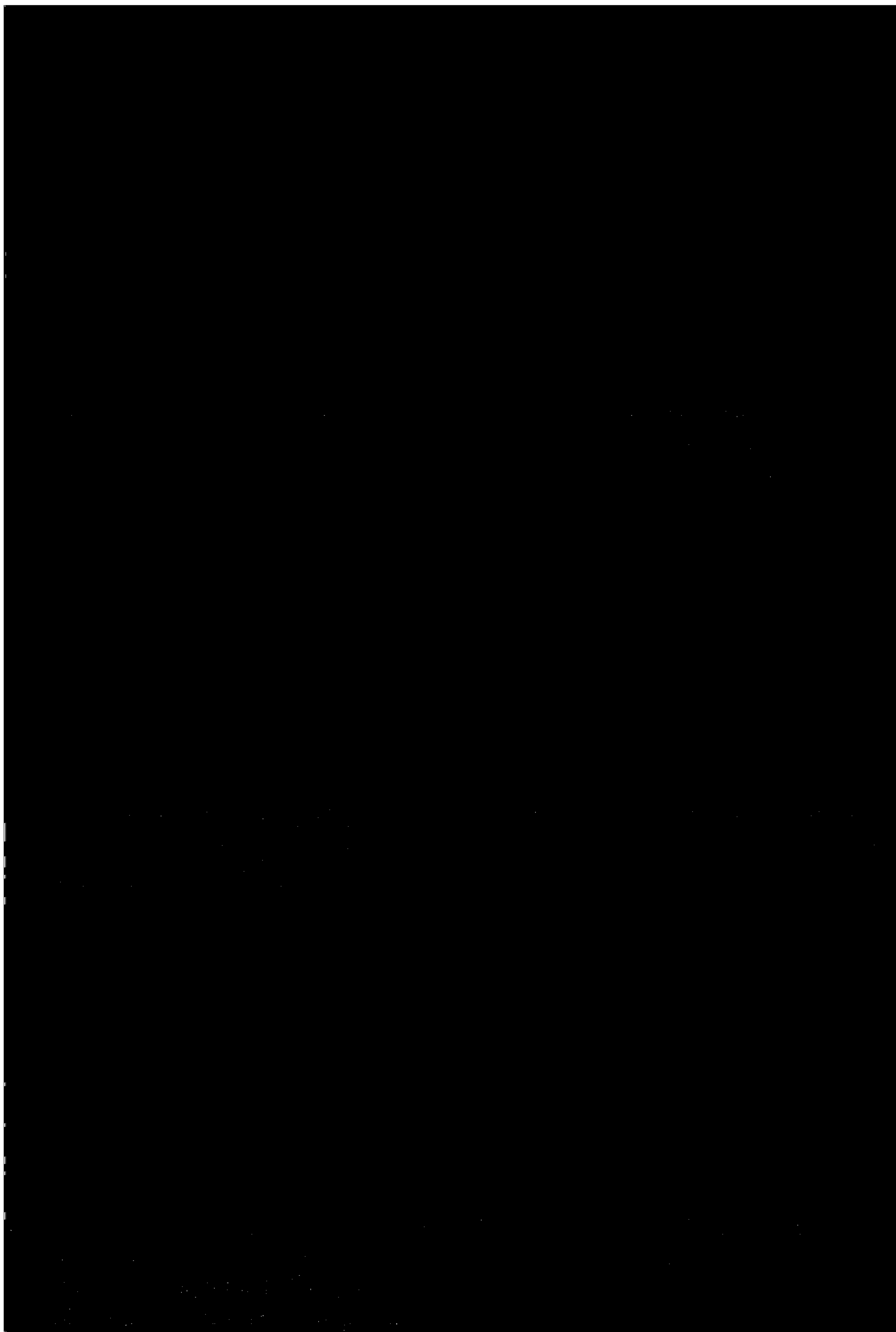
people Mahāsi Sayādaw had given particular care and attention to enable them to achieve the real *Dhamma* and to know the methods as well that could make them eligible to become good teachers. After their return to their respective places — towns and villages — they set up branch meditation centres under the patronage of Mahāsi Sayādaw and then carried on the task of enhancing *Vipassanā Sāsana*. Not many years after the arrival of Mahāsi Sayādaw at Rangoon, a considerable number of meditation centres had been established in various parts of Burma. Even in such places as Bhamo and Myitkyina, branches of meditation centres were found strictly adhering to the methods and practices prescribed by Mahāsi Sayādaw. The same thing had happened in the southern and northern Shan states. Just as there are Mahāsi Yeikthā branches in the southern edge of Burma, such as, Ye, Mergui and Tavoy, they are also found in Akyab town, etc., in the Arakan state. In fact, meditation centres have sprung up throughout the entire country; in almost every nook and corner of the country.

Later, meditation centres under the tutelage of Mahāsi Sayādaw appeared in countries outside the frontiers of Burma, such as, Thailand, Sri Lanka, etc. According to the list of Mahāsi yogis within the Union of Burma, put up at the twenty-third (23rd) Anniversary of the Festival of offerings, *Puja* (a gesture of respect) in honour of Mahāsi Sayādaw held in Rangoon *Sāsana Yeikthā* on the 4th Waxing day of Natdaw (December), 1334 M.E. (1972), there were 600,000 yogis. In Thailand also even in the previous

**SIX OF THE MANY BRANCHES OF MAHĀSĪ MEDITATION
CENTRES IN MYANMAR**



MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S VISITS





Bringing the statue (sitting pose) of Mahāsi Sayādaw to Meditation Centre, Yangon



Dhamma talk session at Meditation Centre, Yangon
Mahāsi Sayādaw seated in the center and his statue is seen on his left.



Mahāsi Sayādaw at the unveiling ceremony of his own statue
(Statue is in standing-pose, facing front)



Mahāsi Sayādaw (left) standing beside his own statue



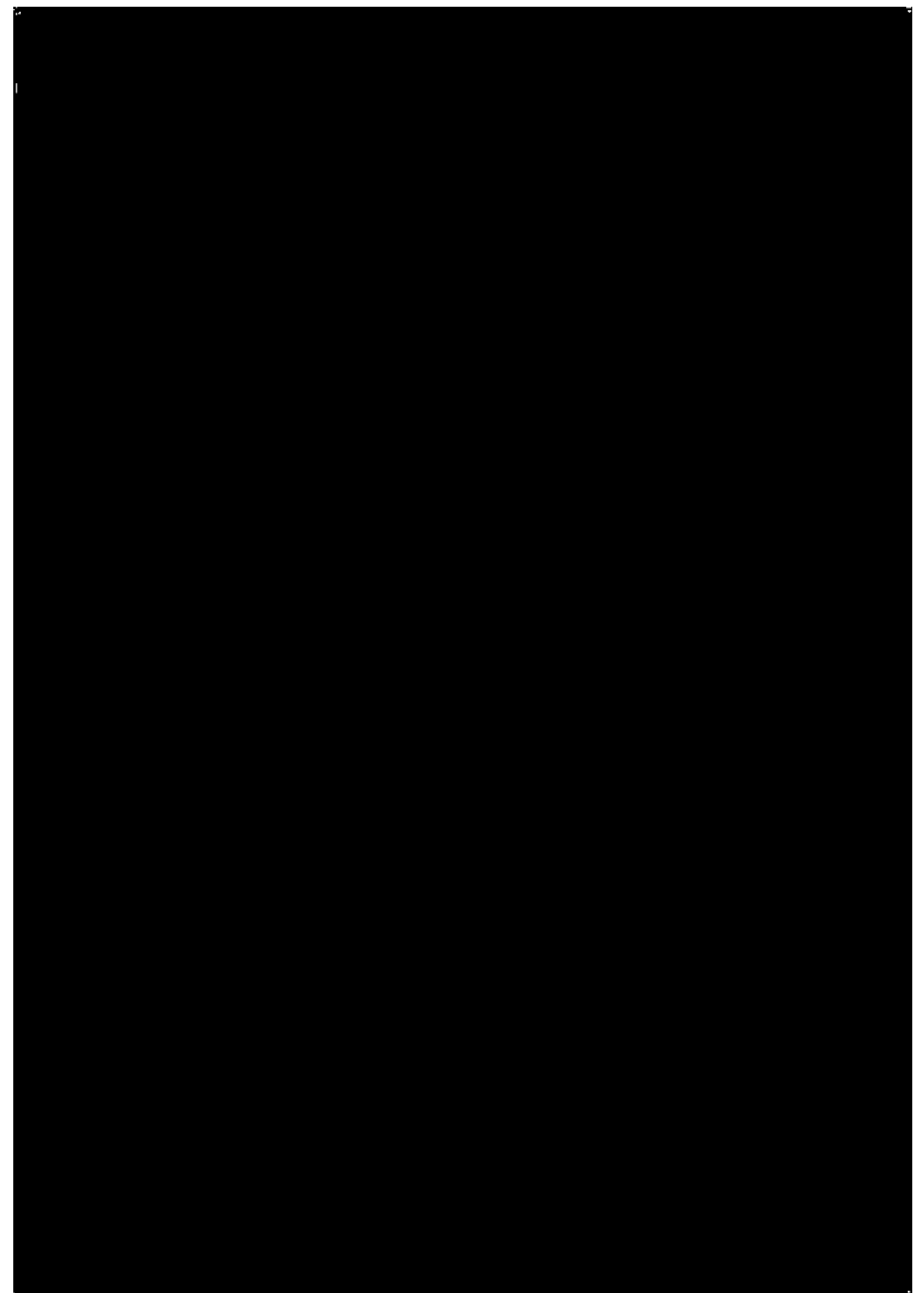
MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW AND SENIOR MEDITATION TEACHERS
(L to R) Sayādaw U Jāvana, Sayādaw U Wizaya, Sayādaw U Sujāta, Mahāsi Sayādaw, Sayādaw U Pandita Bhivamsa, Sayādaw U Thanwara, and Sayādaw U Janakabhivamsa

years, the number of yogis had risen to over 1,000,000 while in Sri Lanka there were over 10,000 yogis. There are a number of Mahāsī yogis in Cambodia (Khmer), India, etc., etc., as well. Even in the past years, the total number of yogis, both laymen and monks, had therefore gone up to more than 700,000. Hence the unbounded loving-kindness and outstanding achievements of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw have caused to bring about a heavy downpour of *vipassanā* in all places throughout the world including Burma. In recognition of his glorious contribution towards the promotion of *Paṭipatti Sāsana*, the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council has elected the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw as one of the fifteen *Ovada-Cariyas* concerning *kammaṭṭhāna*, an exalted rank which carries with it annually a highly honored award of *Kyats* 150/- worth of property, which is being offered up till now.

RECEIVING THE EMINENT TITLE OF AGGA MAHĀ PAṆḌITA

Just more than two years after his arrival at Sāsana Yeikthā in 1313 M.E. (1951), Mahāsī Sayādaw was conferred upon with the title of Agga Mahā Paṇḍita. In the same year, besides Mahāsī Sayādaw, Man-U Sayādaw of Rangoon Bahan Kyaung-dawyā Shwegyin Taik and Sāsanazawtikāyon Ok-kyaung Sayādaw U Nārada of Mandalay Dekkhinā-yāma Payagyi Taik also received the similar Title of Agga Mahā Paṇḍita.

Since the year 1303 M.E. (1941), Mahāsī Sayādaw had earned the title of Sāsana-daza-thīri-pavara Dhammacariya. To earn that title, Mahāsī Sayādaw had to sit for the Dhammacariya Teachership examination held by the Government. The title of Agga Mahā Paṇḍita is not the kind of title gained through an examination. As it is the kind of title that is bestowed upon the *Sayādaws* in recognition of their virtues and attributes of *sīla*, *samādhi* and



Mahāsī Sayādaw
(1904 – 1982)

paññā; it is highly eminent and distinctively superior. That is the title which can be received only by eminent *Sayādaws* endowed with the qualities of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. In brief, the title of Agga Mahā Paṇḍita is on par with or analogous to the title of 'Rāja Guru' that was given in the long ages past. Having accepted this title conferred upon by the Government, Mahāsī Sayādaw has automatically reached the status of a high ecclesiastic of equal rank with the holder of the title of 'Rāja Guru' who was revered and paid homage to by the monarch.

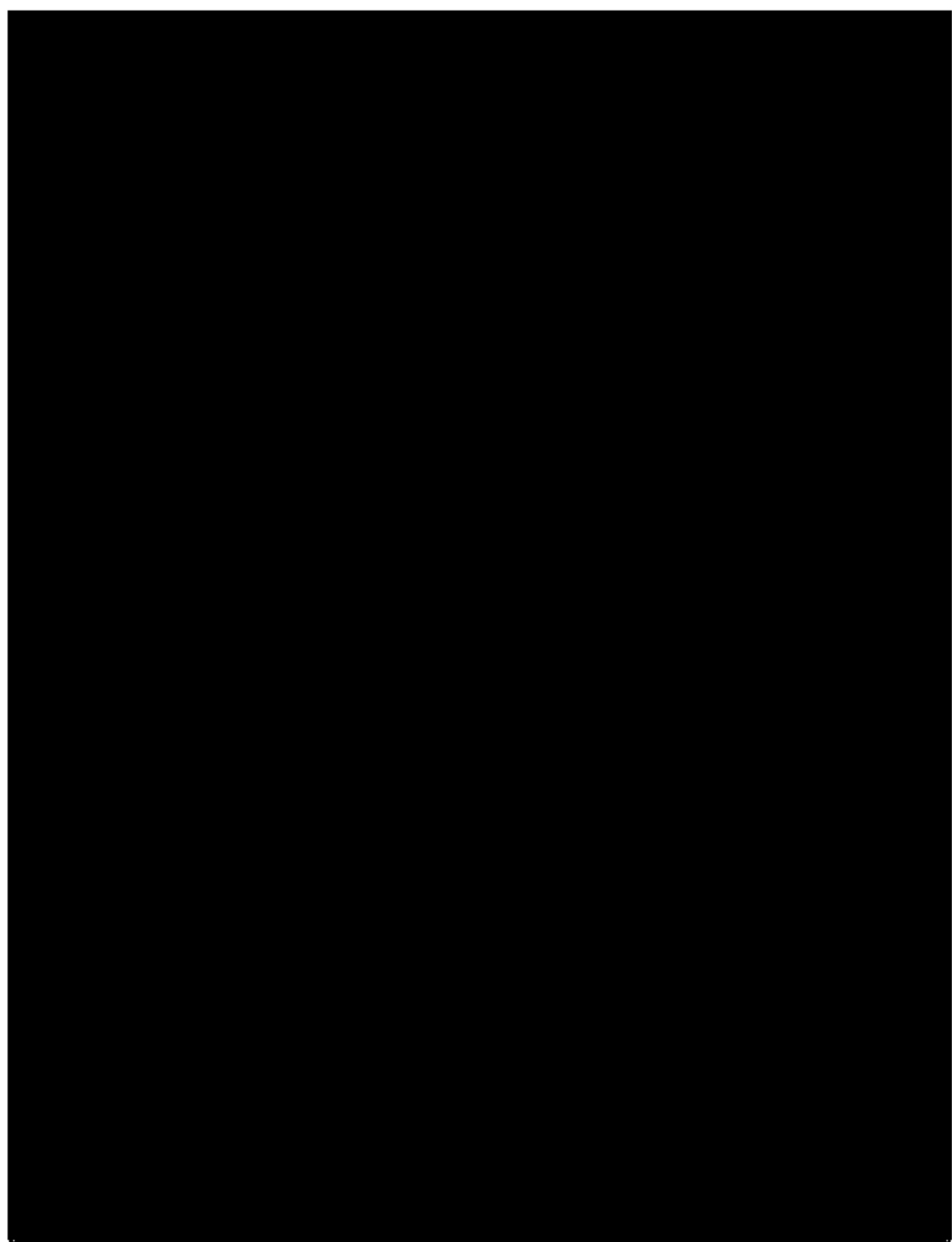
Sayādaws who have received this eminent title of Agga Mahā Paṇḍita are offered in donation by the Government annually with rice for meals in the shape of a grant of *Kyats* seven-hundred and fifty. The extent of his achievements gained by the Mahāsī Sayādaw in fulfillment of his spiritual fervour that has been glowing within him, may be stated thus: He had held the key position of Chaṭṭha-Saṅgīti-Pucchaka and had performed his onerous task on the occasion of the Sixth Buddhist Council; had disseminated the seeds of *vipassanā* in promoting *Sāsana* in the foreign countries; and had subscribed his talented genius to the welfare and interests of the *Sāsana* and of the Buddhists excelling others by making it possible for thousands of people to taste the flavour of *Dhamma* according to one's own *pāramītas* (perfections) and attain practical knowledge of the *Dhamma*. He had also contributed to the Buddhist literature in his own wonderful way of writing many books on *Dhamma*. For these reasons, on the part of the Government, it is fully justified and really worth donating by conferring upon the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw the title of Agga Mahā Paṇḍita.

JOURNEY TO THAILAND AND CAMBODIA

From the time of its Independence, the Government of the Union of Burma started making arrangements for convening the Sixth Buddhist Council. The sincere intention was to make it more distinguished than the conventions of the Buddhist Council held in the past. It was usual to hold such conventions only by *sanghas* of the country that sponsored it. However, with regard to this Sixth Buddhist Council, the desire being that not only the Burmese *sanghas* but also the *sanghas* (*bhikkhus*) from other Theravāda

countries should collaborate and participate. The objective was to hold this Council jointly by all five countries which had embraced the Theravāda Buddhism instead of by Burma alone. To achieve this end, it could be possible only if the Governments of the Theravāda countries and *sanghas* therefrom, such as, Thailand, etc., would assist and participate. Therefore, one of the first preliminary tasks was to initiate the work of organizing the other Theravāda countries to take part in the convention.

For that purpose, the Government of the Union of Burma deputed and sent a religious mission to Thailand in the year 1314 M.E. (1952) to implement the organization scheme for the ensuing Sixth Buddhist Council. This mission was composed of members among whom were Nyaungyan Sayādawpāyagyī and Mahāsī

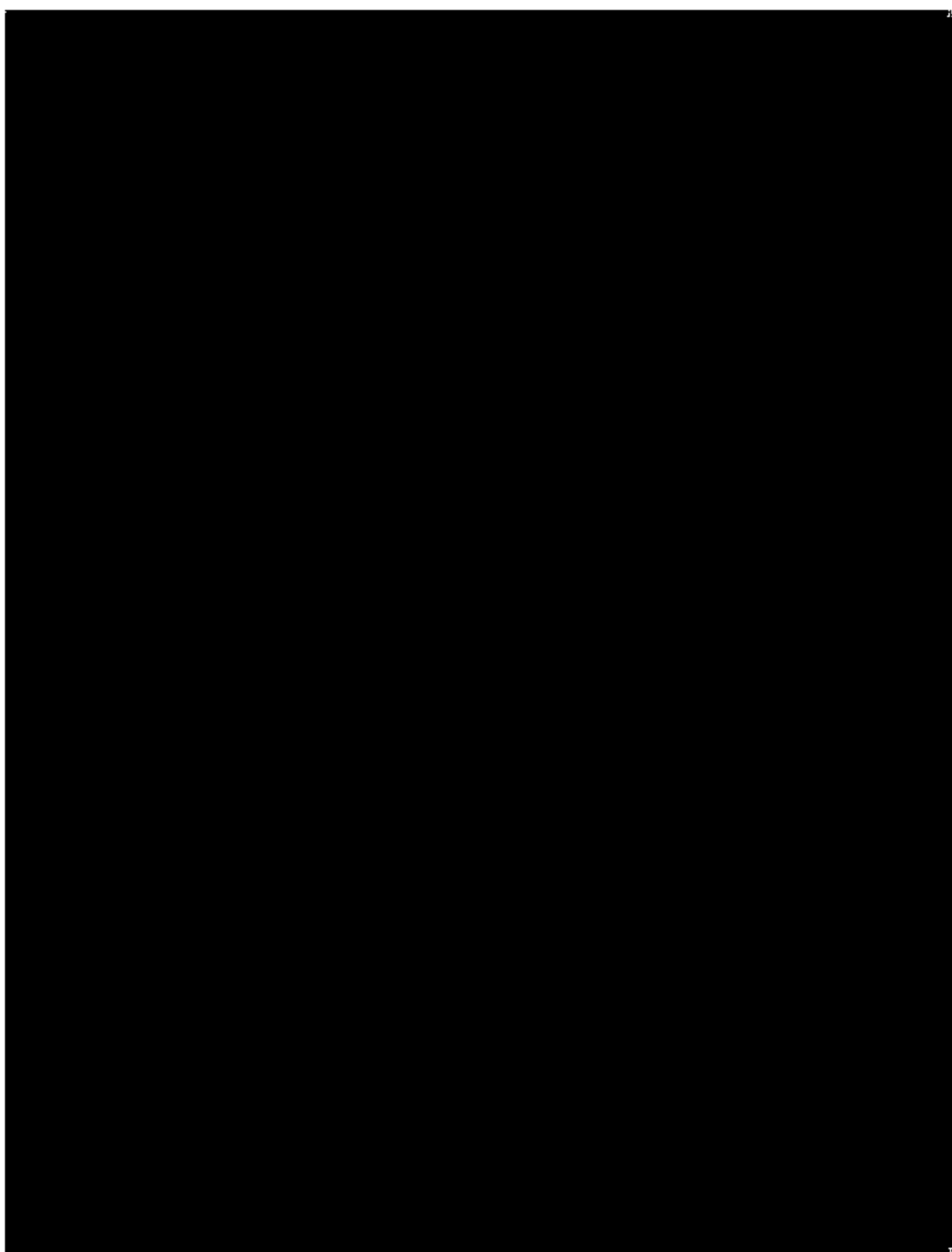


**Venerable Nyaungyan
Sayādawpāyagyī**
(1874 – 1955)

Sayādaw representing the Order of Sanghas, while Shwe-pyidaw U Ba Thin who was to act as a translator for the *Sayādaws* and U Than Sein, Parliamentary Secretary in the role of a *kappiya* (a lay attendant), represented the laymen. This four-member mission headed by Nyaungyan Sayādawpāyagyī left Burma by air on the sixth Waning day of the month of Thadingyut (October) in 1314 M.E. (1952).

The said mission first visited Thailand where they called on the *Sāsana-paing* (meaning *Sāsana Rāja*), the chief monk of the hierarchy of monks (the supreme Head of the Order) and apprised him of the fact relating to the proposed Sixth Buddhist Council. The hierarch expressed his opinion that it would be impossible to hold such a council in the absence of a ruling monarch and a *Sāsana-paing* – the chief monk of the hierarchy of monks in Burma under whose auspices such a council was usually to be held. The Venerable Nyaungyan Sayādawgyī, however, explained that undoubtedly there was no king in Burma, but being a republic, there was a President, popularly elected by the people of Burma, and he was a *de facto* as well as *de jure* Head of State who

must be considered a king. The *Sayādawgyī* then continued to make it clear that though there was no *Sāsana-paing* in Burma, the entire assemblage of monks who constituted the Order of *Sanghas* had been relentlessly making effort for the promotion of *Sāsana* in the field of both *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti*, and that because of this sustained effort, Burma had now already produced an eminent personage who was able to recite from memory the whole of Buddhist Scriptures, i.e., the Tipiṭaka, unsurpassed in her history. Under these circumstances, Nyaungyan Sayādaw precisely and effectively stated that Burma was competent to hold the Buddhist Council as envisaged. [At that time, Ashin U Vicittasārābhivaṃsa had not yet attained the title of Tipiṭaka Sayādaw but had already



**Tiptakadhara Sayādaw U
Vicittasārābhivaṃsa**
(1911 – 1993)

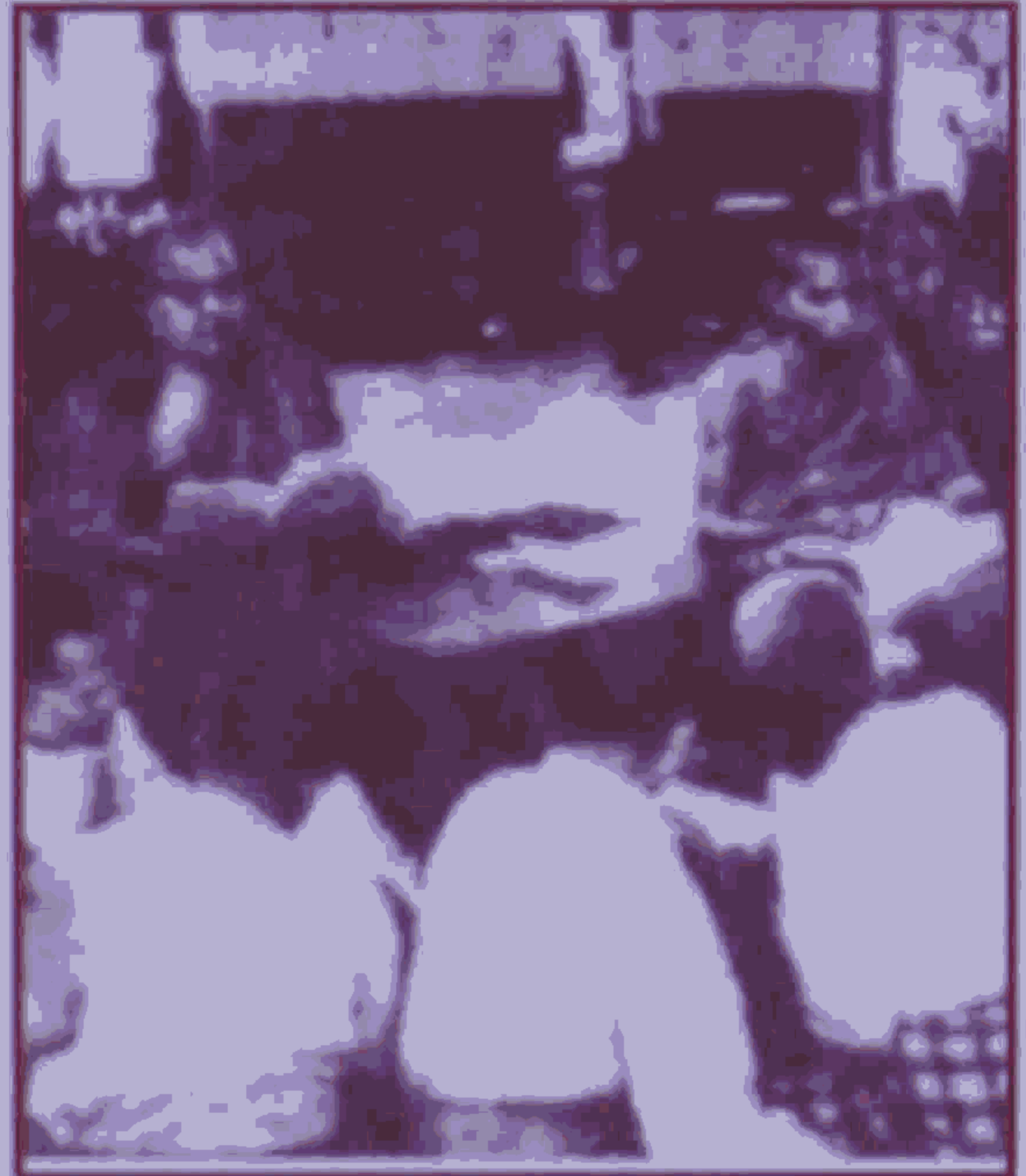
passed with distinction in the five divisions of Vinaya Piṭaka (a great Code of Monastic Discipline), and had been endeavoring to appear for the oral examination of reciting the first portion of the seven texts on Abhidhamma – Metaphysics (the third great division of Buddhist Scriptures). It seems therefore that Nyaungyan Sayādawgyī had left without an atom of doubt about the future success of Ashin U Vicittasārābhivaṃsa in the coming oral examination and that had probably prompted him to say that a Tipiṭaka

Sayādaw was already born in Burma.] Having heard this wonderful emergence of a Tipiṭaka Sayādaw in Burma, the *Sāsana-paing Sayādaw* – the chief patron of *Sāsana* of Thailand responded: “If that is so, Burma alone was in a position to hold the proposed Buddhist Council,” and further stated, “when Burma convened the Buddhist Council, Thailand would have no objection whatsoever and would even gladly encourage the holding of a Buddhist Council.”

After having done what was to be fulfilled in Thailand in conformity with the terms of reference laid down for the mission, the *Sayādaw* and party flew to Cambodia (the present Republic of Khmer). On the day of their arrival at Phnom Penh, as it coincided



Tipiṭakadhara Written Examination



Tipiṭakadhara Oral Examination

with the day of celebration for the veneration of Buddha's sacred relics brought from India, no one was present at the airport to meet them. Moreover, as French was the only language spoken at the airport, there was no one who was conversant with English. As U Ba Thin could not speak French, difficulty arose. Only later, with the assistance of one aerodrome officer who spoke English, the *Sayādaw* and party were conveyed to a hotel. At the hotel too, the visitors were only French people. At meal time, the hotel offered them only boiled chicken eggs. The Venerable Nyaungyan Sayādaw was all throughout his life a vegetarian. Mahāsī Sayādaw, though not strictly a vegetarian, considering that chicken and duck eggs implied an embryo life of flesh and blood, abstained himself from eating them. When the hotel management came to know that the two *Sayādaws* had refrained from taking eggs, they asked for pardon and then communicated the news by telephone to the monastery of the Cambodian Chief Monk. Soon afterwards, Cambodian monks arrived at the hotel by car and took away the members of the Burmese Mission to Onnalon Kyaung Taik which was the residence of the Chief Monk of the hierarchy of monks. As it was still before noon when they could have their meals in time, the *Sayādaws* were served with food (meals).

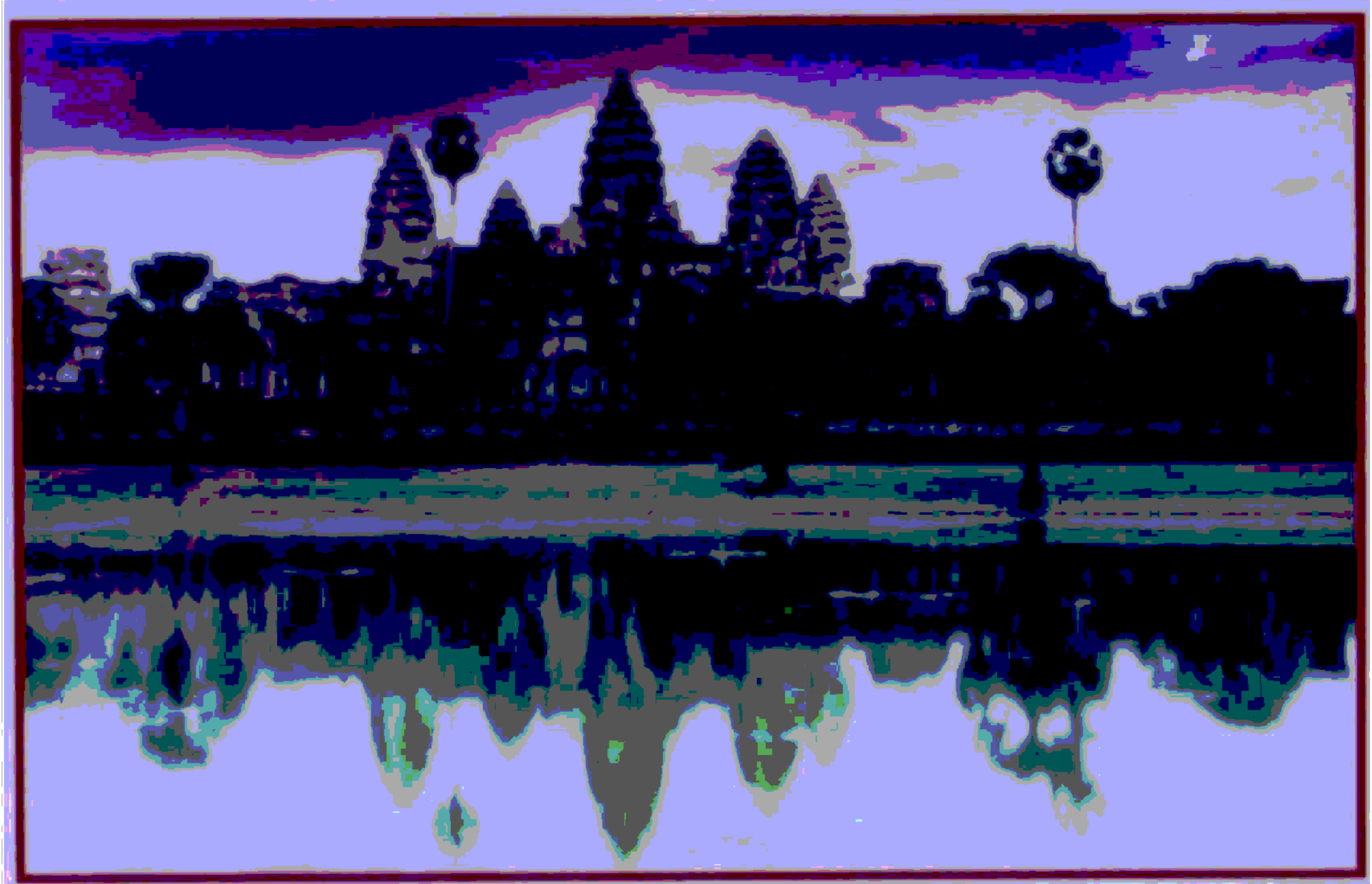
After meeting with the Cambodian Chief Monk at the said

monastery where they stayed, the affairs of the Sixth Buddhist Council were promptly discussed. As the Cambodian Chief Monk was originally interested in and satisfied with the idea of holding such a Convention as the Sixth Buddhist Council, no explanation was required or show reasons for justification by holding a Buddhist Council or Synod, as was done by them in Thailand.

One day while sojourning at Onnalon monastery, Mahāsī Sayādaw called on an eminent *Thera* belonging to a religious sect called Tamayut Dhammayuṭṭi to pay homage. Nyaungyan Sayādawgyī stayed back having a chat with the Chief Monk, the *Sāsana-paing*. When *Sayādaw* met Tamayut Sayādawgyī, the latter sought for information about Burma and Mahāsī Sayādaw had to reply in Pāli language, which was explained by a Cambodian translator. Mahāsī Sayādaw remarked that this translator, a monk, was fairly eloquent in the Pāli language. On his arrival back to Onnalon monastery, Mahāsī Sayādaw had witnessed a scene in which difficulty had arisen between the *Sāsana-paing Sayādawgyī* and Nyaungyan Sayādawgyī being unable to make one another understand in their vocal communication, though both of them spoke in Pāli. One could not understand what the other had said because of the difference in their twang. Nyaungyan Sayādawgyī had expressed his desire to have a Buddha's image from Cambodian Chief Monk. The meaning of this request was not grasped by the Chief Monk. At this moment, Mahāsī Sayādaw appeared and came to the rescue by joining in the conversation between the two *Sayādawgyīs*. Mahāsī Sayādaw spoke the Pāli words with a foreign twang. Only then, the Chief Monk was able to understand what Nyaungyan Sayādawgyī had actually meant to say. Nyaungyan Sayādawgyī thus commended saying, "Ay! The situation was better-off because of Mahāsī Sayādaw's presence and participation." Mahāsī Sayādaw having come across a good number of foreign monks at Sāsana Yeikthā in Rangoon, had had experience in Pāli phonetics rendered by the foreign yogis. He understood what they said and could make them understand by talking to them in their own vocal sound. That was the reason why Mahāsī Sayādaw was able to lend his help in the conversation and save the situation.

After the completion of their missionary business with the

Chief Monk, *Sayādaw* and his party visited the world famous site of the monastery or temple known as Angkor Wat (Angkor Wat).



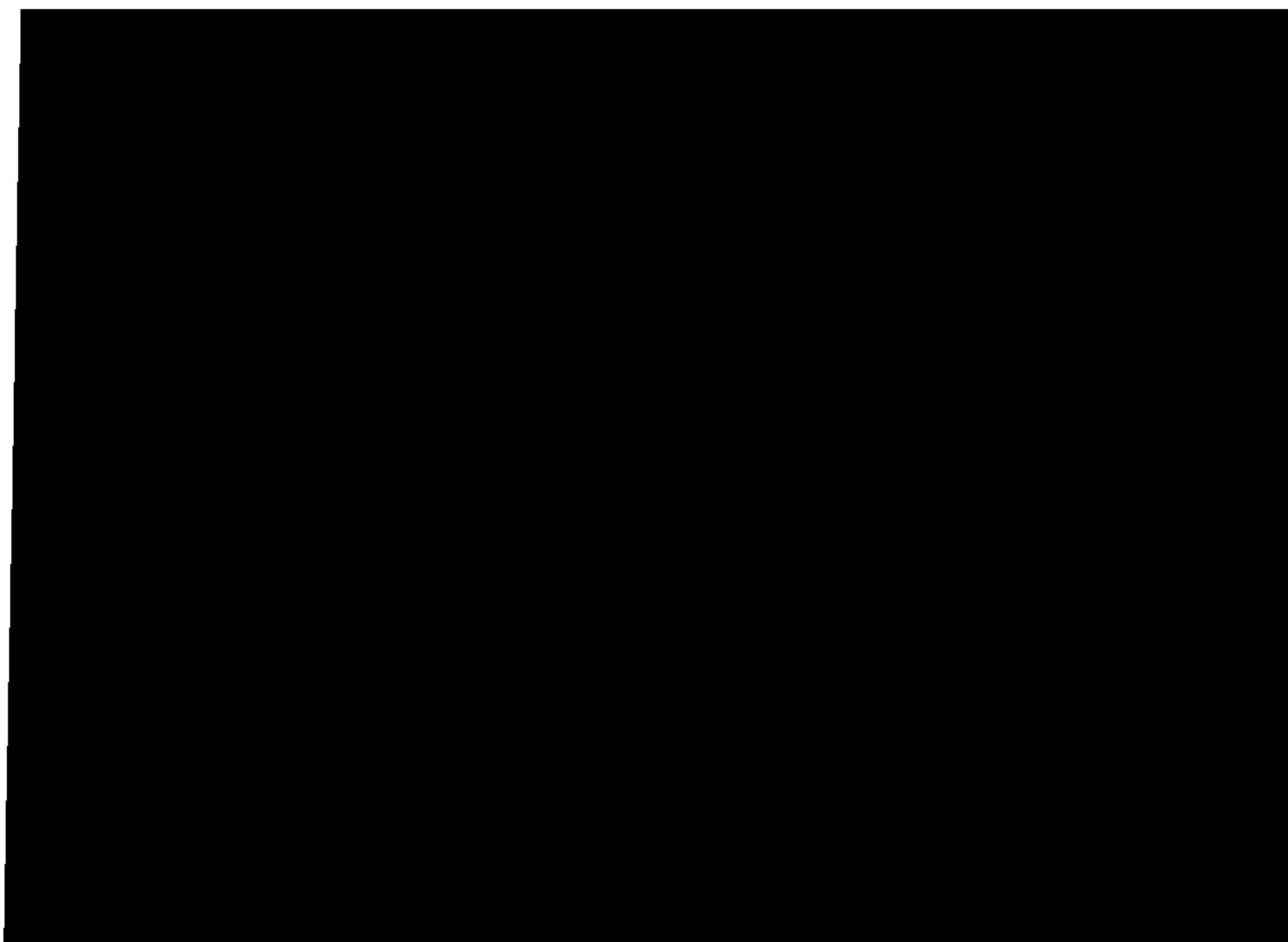
GENERAL VIEW OF ANGKOR WAT, CAMBODIA

Built in the early 12th Century as a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu. In the late 13th century the King Jayavarman VII was deposed by his son-in-law Sindravarman who was a Buddhist (having spent 10 years in Ceylon). Angkor Wat was then transformed into a Buddhist temple complex.



FOUR-FACED TOWERS, BAYON, ANGKOR THOM

Angkor Thom was established in the late 12th century by King Jayavarman VII. The faces depicted on the Bayon towers clearly resemble faces on known portrait statues of Jayavarman VII. It is thought that the smiling huge faces portray him in semi-divine form as a Bodhisattva.



**Wall with detailed and fine carvings,
Bayon, Angkor Thom**

which was about 150 miles away from Phnom Penh. This Angkar Vat monastery was a stupendous structure of immense dimension and was solidly built with pure marble. The general presumption was that this huge monastery or temple was constructed in the twelve century A.D. The Angkar Vat monastery together with

Angkar Hton (Angkor Thom) and other age-old religious edifices in its neighbourhood were rare specimens of Khmer's exquisite art and architecture, and craftsmanship which were well reputed all over the world and for which Cambodia should be proud of. As is usually the case with ancient architectural and monumental buildings, many such places or edifices had fallen into decay and destruction. Cambodian Government's Department of Research on Ancient Archaeology had renovated them so far as possible and had taken on the responsibility of their management and preservation.

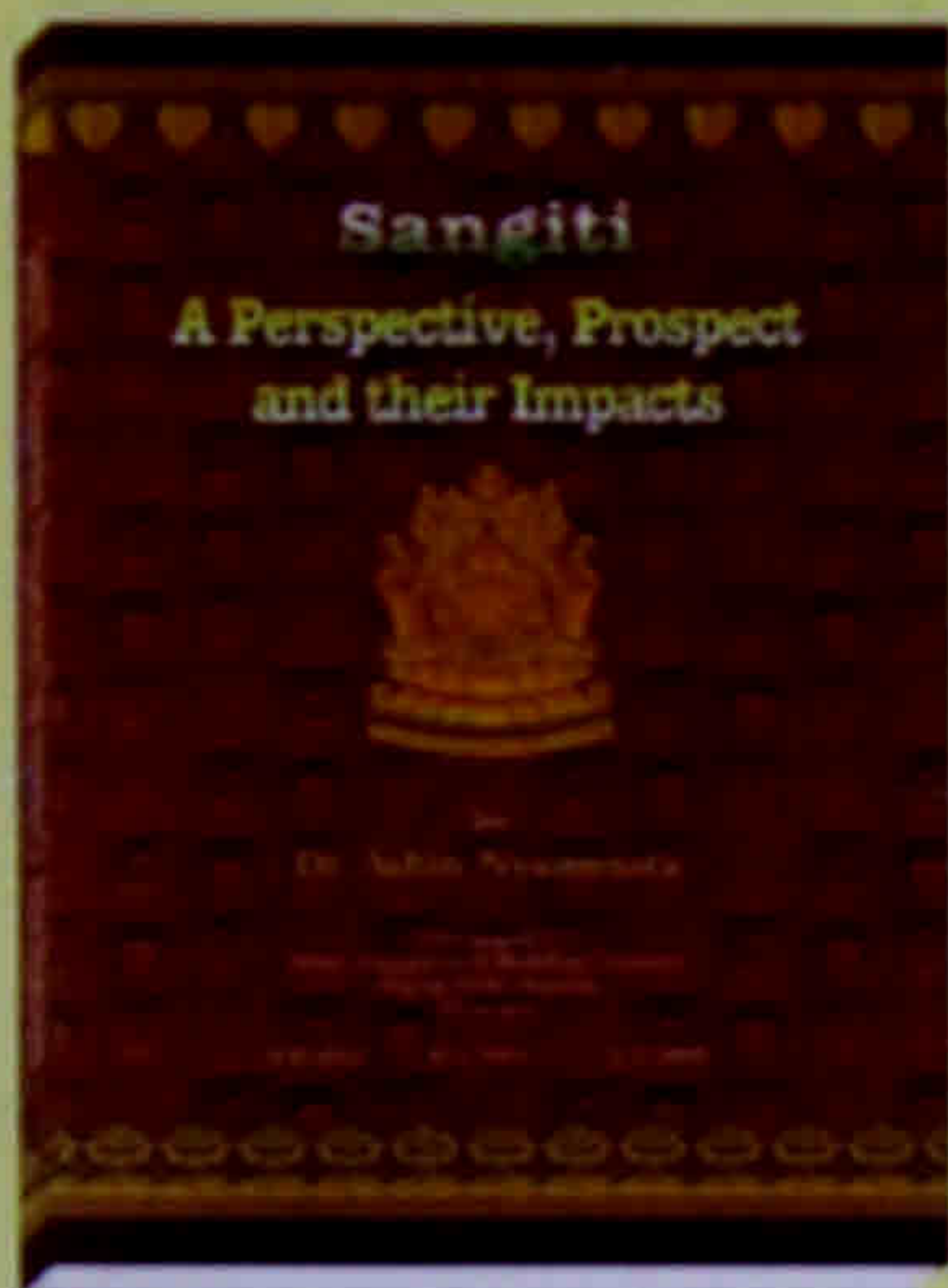
Sayādaw and party had also paid a visit to Vietnam from Cambodia. The reason for this visit was in response to the invitation of one Daw Hpyu (of Burma). Daw Hpyu (now probably in France) was the daughter of the well-known Myingun Prince. Daw Hpyu had a good business standing in Vietnam and was doing fine; getting prosperous. She got married to a Vietnamese national and had eleven children and grandchildren of both sexes. She was engaged in the business of manufacturing medicinal balm and of selling and distributing the products. Just as 'Tiger Balm' had its established reputation in Burma, Daw Hpyu's balm gained its standing popularity in Indo-China. Tiger Balm had a red colour, whereas Daw Hpyu's Balm was of green colour. Daw Hpyu being the daughter of Myingun Prince (of Burma) had nursed her inborn national spirit, and the royal blood was still running in her veins

with vigour despite the fact that she had become a naturalized citizen of Indo-China. Having heard of the arrival of the *Sayādaws* and lay benefactors from Burma at Cambodia, she had personally made a trip to Phnom Penh and entreated the *Sayādaws* to visit Vietnam. The main objective of her invitation was to request the *Sayādaws* to do the recitation of *parittas* (hymns to be chanted with a view to ward off the influence of evil spirits and to earn merits) after solemnly giving *Saragamanam*, i.e., The Three Refuges or objects of faith at the tomb of her deceased royal father Myingun Prince (as is customarily the case with Burmese Buddhists in the performance of burial rites). *Sayādaw* and party had to proceed to Saigon by plane. After reaching Saigon, they went to the graveyard where the tomb of the Myingun Prince was standing, the Prince being laid to rest at this graveyard. The graveyards or the cemeteries in Vietnam were unlike those of in Burma. They were found by the *Sayādaws* to be neat and clean and beautifully kept with great care. After the religious rites had been performed at the tomb and after imparting goodwill for the dead and merits to be shared for the meritorious performances done, *Sayādaw* and party went on an excursion in the City of Saigon particularly to see and observe the Buddhist monasteries. Thereafter, they returned to Cambodia and from there flew back to Burma via Thailand where they had a brief stop.

THE SIXTH SYNOD AND MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW (See BOOK REF. 4 on page 99)

The name Sixth Synod or Sixth Buddhist Council had become widely known since the eve of Burma's Independence. Soon after the attainment of Independence, the Burma Government had made a decision to hold the Sixth Buddhist Council for the promotion of the Buddha's *Sāsana* with all its might. The holding of this Buddhist Council would add lustre and bring about improvement to the *Sāsana*. It would also harmonize and erase the discrepancies in Buddha's teachings appearing in many Pāli texts of the *Dhamma* which would thereby bear the fruits of future positive beneficial results. With these aims and objects, the governments had striven in haste to hold the general council of Buddhist Clergy.

**BOOK REF. 4 : SAṄĠĪTI (Gathering) – A Perspective,
Prospect and Their Impacts**
by Sītagū Sayādaw Ven. Dr. Ashin Nyānissara



When the word of *Saṅgīti* is found, you may think of only the Six Great *Saṅgha* Councils, which were held after the demise of the Buddha. Actually, a Great *Saṅgha* Council was held during the lifetime of the Buddha. Then you will find that there are not only Six, but several Great *Saṅgha* Councils in this book.

Here a beautiful thought is given to you that the First Council was held not because of the claim of a

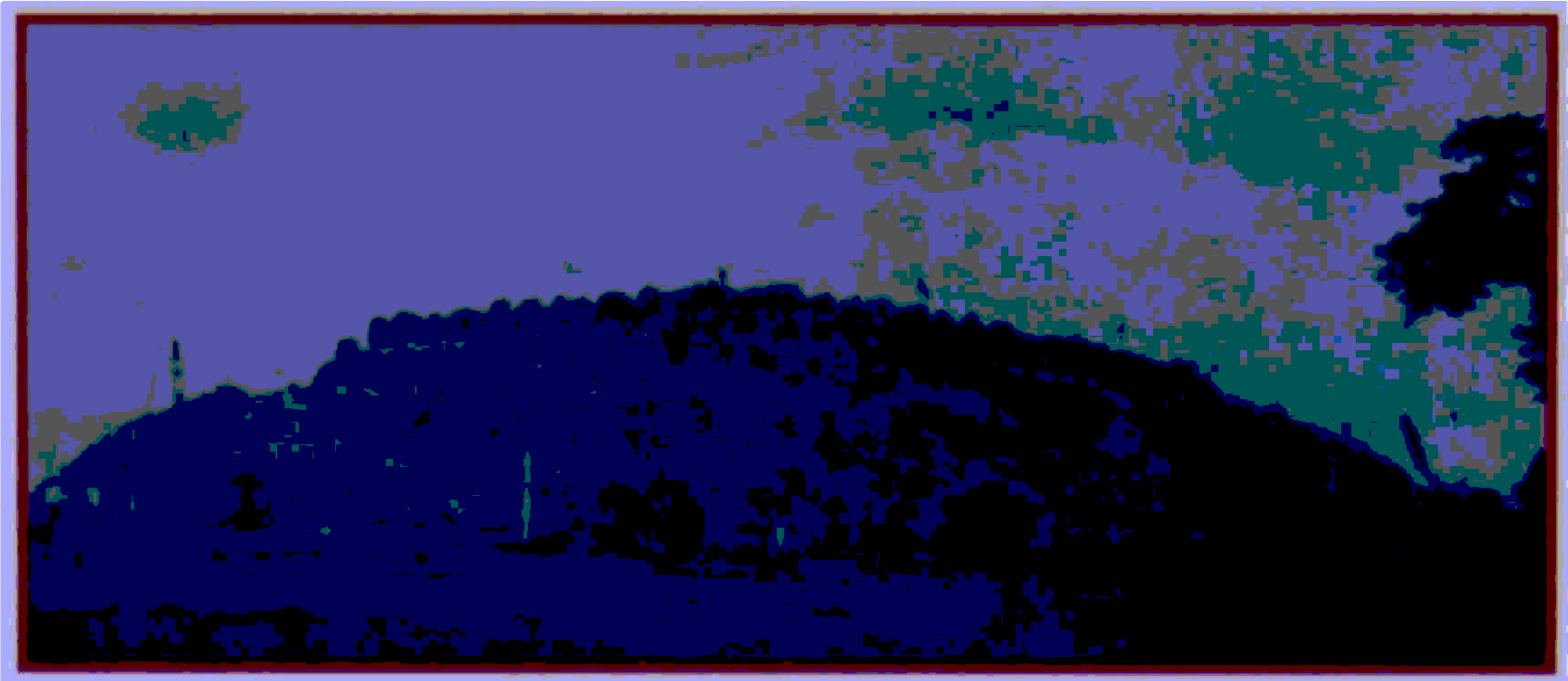
monk called Subhadda. It is not the main reason for organizing the First *Saṅgīti*, but it must be just one of many reasons. The author has pointed out the system applied in the election, compilation and convention of the system applied in the election, became the forerunner of the Parliament Democracy. That system is still alive in *Sāsana*. The *Sāsana* taught by the Buddha is perfect in every sense.

The *Dhamma* would have been lost if the elders delayed organizing the First *Saṅgīti*. We still have the *Dhamma* in our hands, which means that our teacher is still with us. This is the benefit of the First *Saṅgīti*, thus mentioned in this book.

By reading this book, you will find hidden points regarding the *Saṅgīti* clearly and I am sure you will definitely get into the good habit of logical thinking by which one can think scientifically and courageously instead of holding the traditional and normal thinking.

(Extract from 'Preface' of the book)

THE MAHĀPASANA GŪHA



The Mahāpasana Gūha (The Great Sacred Cave) in Ragoon, Burma, wherein the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana proceedings were held from 1954 – 1956.

Stones from all over the country were sent as a symbolic gift and thousands of volunteers helped with the construction. The cave is a replica of the Sattapanni Cave, located in India, where the first Buddhist Synod was convened.

ENTRANCE TO THE MAHĀPASANA GŪHA



Present day view of entrance gate to the Great Sacred Cave
(Photograph taken on 25th December 2006)

THE GREAT HALL OF THE CHAṬṬHA SAṄGĀYANA



This huge hall was built to house the Sixth Buddhist Council convened in 1954 to recite the Pāli Tipiṭaka and authenticate the texts. On the 2,500th Anniversary of the Buddha's final passing away (Mahāparinibbāna), 2,500 monks assembled from the Theravāda Buddhist countries.

THE REFURBISHED GREAT HALL



Present day view inside the huge hall.

It is now used as a location for the Dhammasari Examinations, Tipiṭaka Pāli Written Examinations and Tipiṭaka Pāli Oral Examinations.

(Photograph taken on 25th December 2006.)

SIR U THWIN AT THE SIXTH BUDDHIST COUNCIL (1954)

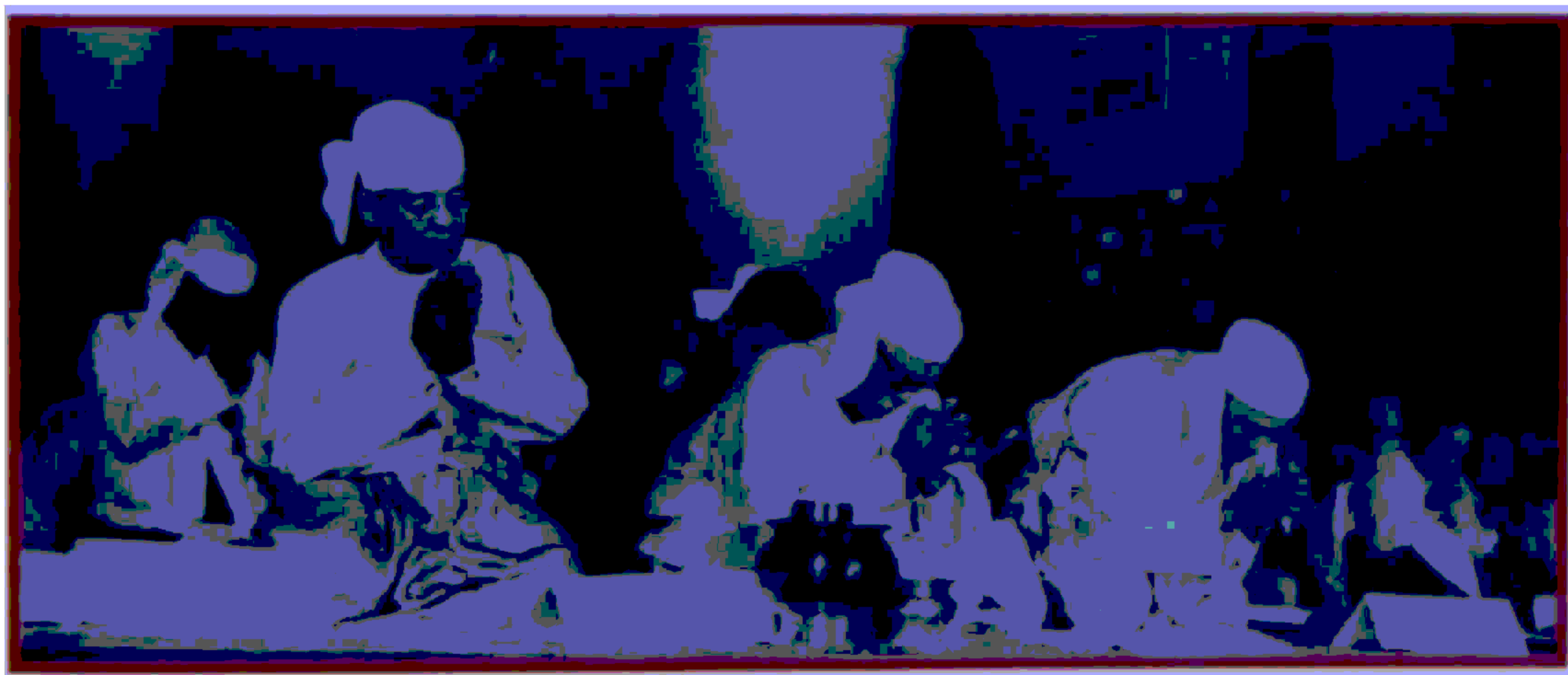


Sir U Thwin delivering an address of veneration, accepting full responsibility to support the bhikkhus with the four requisites.

Strictly speaking, the business of the Synod or the Buddhist Council is exclusively the function of the *sanghas*. However, a tremendous task such as this Council could not possibly be borne by the *sanghas* without the assistance of the lay benefactors. Moreover, as it was intended to make the Sixth Buddhist Council a grand ceremonious function of magnificent splendour with the joint participation and efforts of the five Theravāda countries namely, Burma, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Thailand, Cambodia (Khmer) and Laos, the volume of work involved became all the more expansive and wider in scope. In this regard, the Government of Burma took over all the responsibility that would normally be performed by the lay benefactors. In shouldering this responsibility, the Government not wishing to reserve the privileges entirely to itself, benevolently shared the responsibilities with the people to whom the chance of becoming benefactors of the Synod had been given, thereby making this Buddhist Council's Convention a glorious achievement of the entire populace. Therefore, after decision had been arrived at to convene the Buddhist Council, the Government with full co-operation of the people, joined together in their efforts in implementing the big projects, such as, the construction of the big

cave, The Pasāna Hlaing-gū', a place for accommodating the congregation for the convention. They started carrying out their duties in full swing with great earnest and diligence. For having accomplished this task with zeal and unanimity, it was possible to hold the great Sixth Buddhist Council with pomp and celebrity amidst great rejoicings commencing from the full moon day of Kason (May) in the year 1316 M.E. (1954).

The task of convening such a Buddhist Council was really stupendous since it had to be performed with world-wide co-operation. To implement such an enormous project to reach a successful completion, leaders of outstanding ability were indeed essential. It was probably because of the greatness and remarkable glory of the nature of the Sixth Synod or of the *Sāsana's* honourable fame and supremacy, three most essential prominent figures of distinctive character and ability, had appeared on the scene. They were (1) Mahāsī Sayādaw; (2) Vijja-Lakara Sayādaw U Visuddhabhivaṃsa and (3) Tipiṭakadara Dhamma-Bhandagarika Ashin Vicittasārābhivaṃsa.



PAYING RESPECTS TO THE SANGHA

Front row(R to L) : Prime Minister U Nu, Thado Thiri Thudhamma Sir U Thwin, President of the Union of Buddha Sāsana Council, and Agga Maha Thray Sithu U Thein Maung Chief Justice of the Union and Vice-President of the Union Sāsana Council, paying deep respects to venerable Mahatheras.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE MEMBERS OF SAṄGĀYANA

There were two main significant items of business or divisions of workload in the matter of holding such a convention. One was the performance of ceremony of the *Saṅgāyana* or

Buddhist Council and the other – the work of printing the Piṭaka Scriptures after close scrutiny and dissection. The said three *Sayādaws* had taken active part in the performance of these two immense tasks. Sayādaw U Visuddhabhivaṃsa had with utmost



**VENERABLE NYAUNGYAN SAYĀDAW AT THE SIXTH
BUDDHIST COUNCIL (1954)**

Lay devotees showing their deep veneration when the Venerable Nyaungyan Sayādaw, elected Sangha-Nāyaka accompanied by Ven. Hanthawaddy Sayādaw & Ven. Bāgayā Sayādaw, assumed his seat on the special dais known as Therāsana.



AGGA MAHĀ PAṆḌITA MAHĀTHERAS

Some of the Agga Mahā Pandita Mahātheras occupying seats of honour on the highest level of the balcony on the northern flank of the assembly hall.



THERAS AND MAHĀTHERAS

A section of Theras and Mahātheras occupying seats on the dais marked (A).

endeavour personally indulged in two of these supremely important tasks, while Sayādaw Ashin Vicittasārābhivaṃsa took the responsibility in sifting, analyzing and amending the Piṭaka Scriptures apart from taking the role of the *Sayādaw* in answering and explaining the questions put to him on Piṭaka Scriptures which might contain dissentient views or ambiguities. Mahāsī Sayādaw competently performed the onerous duties of revising and printing the Piṭaka Scriptures and also acted unremittingly as the Main Interrogator (*Chaṭṭha-Saṅgīti-Pucchaka*). In the Organizing Committee of *sanghas*, which might be regarded as the Central Committee with full authority of the Sixth Buddhist Council, Mahāsī Sayādaw and U Visuddhabhivaṃsa were also included as members.

OSANA SAYĀDAW OR THE FINAL PROOF-READING SAYĀDAW

Saṅgāyana, the Synod, means the assembly of clergy or *sanghas* of the Buddhist hierarchy for deliberation and recital of all the Buddha's Teachings or scriptures through consultations to harmonize the points of divergence and of errors found in the scriptural texts. There cannot be a Synod if there are no good, faithful, correct and errorless specimens of Piṭaka Scriptures. That is the reason why this task of paramount importance in vetting, amending, interpolating and explaining the abstrusive or erroneous

writings or misleading words or phrases contained in the Piṭaka Scriptures, was given the top priority.

First and foremost, for the purpose of amending the Piṭaka, the scriptures were sent to all places within the Union of Burma with a request to all intellectual *Theras* to compare the various draft copies with the originals of the scriptures within the ambit of their knowledge and capability, and correct the mistakes. The *Sayādaws* who first took the work of amending or correcting, purifying and cleansing the scriptures are called *Mūla Visodhaka Sayādaws*. Then, the amended drafts sent by them were again scrutinized and corrected by another Committee



Kabā-Aye Zapudipa Monastery

(Kaba-Aye World Peace Pagoda)

Built in 1952 by Prime Minister U Nu in preparation for the 6th Buddhist Council (1954-1956). The Mahā Pasana Gūhā was built simultaneously with the Kabā Aye Pagoda and is located in the same complex.

of *Visodhaka* formed for the purpose at Rangoon (first at Sāsana Yeikthā and later, at Kabā-Aye). This was done to make it more perfect and thorough by eliminating all possible mistakes in the least. These *Sayādaws* were called *Paṭi-Visodhaka*. The fair and final drafts were sent to the Buddha Sāsana Printing Press only after the final vetting and approval of the said *Paṭi-Visodhakas*. After putting the drafts into the printing press under the close supervision of skillful printers and press-

correctors, these had reached the stage of proofs. Again, these proofs were repeatedly put to careful scrutiny and then, the final proofs were put up to the Committee consisting of five *Sayādaws*. This Committee again went through the final proofs and after corrections were made where necessary, these were eventually approved as the final fair drafts and sent back to the press for final printing. The last Committee which vetted the proofs that came out of the printing press was called *Osanasodeya Pattapathaka* Committee. Later, it was given the name of *Osana* Committee, in brief.

Mahāsī Sayādaw was one of the members of the said *Osana* Committee. The other members of the Committee comprised Payagyi Sayādaw, Baghayā Sayādaw (of Rangoon), Ceylon Ashin Buddhadaṭṭha Sayādaw and Vija-Lakara Sayādaw Ashin Visuddhabhivaṃsa. All the above-named *Sayādaws* were included as members at the time of the first formation of the Committee. Later, owing to circumstances that had changed, three members whose names appeared in the middle were substituted by three new members.

The responsibility of the *Osana* Committee was really onerous. Although *Mūla Visodhaka* and *Paṭi-Visodhaka Sayādaws*' duties were to examine and confirm the correctness of the words and usages, *Osana Sayādaws* had to sift, correct or interpolate the words and usages of Pāḷi from the outset. They had also to examine thoroughly the sequence of tenses, appropriateness of the chronological order, the spelling, the punctuation marks, etc., and of the terminology. In short, the responsibility of *Osana* Committee was to vet and cleanse all the expressions, passages and writings in the whole book, and to make it faultless and flawless. Those who have read the Texts printed and published by the Sixth Buddhist Council will not be inclined to read the scriptural text books printed and published in the old days. Reading of *Chaṭṭha* Copies, the marvelous products of the Sixth Synod would make one at ease in the exertion of his knowledge with less strain on his eyes. The reading public, therefore, owed their profound gratitude to all the members of the *Osana* Committee, the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council and the press-printers for the remarkable improvement done in respect of all scriptural texts produced by the Sixth Synod.

Mahāsī Sayādaw had to invariably perform the duties as a member of that extremely responsible Committee. At the initial stage, the Buddha Sāsana Council being accommodated within the precincts of Sāsana Yeikthā, the meeting place for *Osana* Committee was allotted at *San-Kyang* i.e., the Monastery where Mahāsī Sayādaw was residing. The five *Sāyadaws* together with a layman editor sat together for consultation in a group at that monastery and implemented the Piṭaka Pāḷi Scriptures for the Sixth

Synod. When they came across difficult grammatical expressions, etymology and dictions, the other members of the Committee sought for the opinion of Mahāsī Sayādaw, and they were generally pleased to accept his decision. Mahāsī Sayādaw had performed this task of *Osana* from start to finish. The *Osana* Committee had to go along with the Buddha Sāsana Council when it changed its headquarters to Kabā-Aye just before the commencement of the Sixth Synod. At that time, Mahāsī Sayādaw had to attend to his duties of *Osana* by daily visiting Kabā-Aye. Eventually when he had to sift and examine the drafts relating to the Commentaries and Dīghas, there was hardly any time for him to go to Kabā-Aye and to carry out his duties there. Under such circumstances, one editor of the printing press had to furnish the proofs to Mahāsī Sayādaw ahead of the usual time. While remaining at his resident monastery, Mahāsī Sayādaw at free intervals had to scrutinize and finish up one proof letter-form everyday. Only on the following day, the editor had to collect the already scrutinized proof letter-form and put it up to *Osana* Committee. Another member of the *Osana* Committee had to take away to his own place the proof letter-form as corrected by Mahāsī Sayādaw, and thereafter, the members of the *Osana* Committee again vetted the proof letter-form as might be deemed necessary. In most cases, the advice and opinion given by Mahāsī Sayādaw in this regard were accepted by the Committee. (The 'proof letter-form' means a booklet of about 16 pages depending upon the size of the *Saṅgāyana* Text of *Dhamma*).

After the Pāli Scriptures had been recited and approved by the Synod, the Commentaries and Dīghas had to be also vetted and approved which thereby necessitated the printing of these amended scriptures. Mahāsī Sayādaw again had to take the role of a member of *Osana* responsible for the vetting of the Commentaries and Dīghas, and therefore it behoved him to carry out his duties. Sayādaw U Visuddhabhivaṃsa who was responsible for making arrangements in this work being greatly satisfied with the aptitude and intellectual ability and the mental attitude and behaviour of Mahāsī Sayādaw kept Mahāsī Sayādaw at his elbow making him constantly busy every time when printing had to be done. He could only find his satisfaction when Mahāsī Sayādaw took part in the

work of amending the scriptures. The reliance put on Mahāsī Sayādaw was indeed very great. Mahāsī Sayādaw realizing that he had been so much relied upon in carrying out this task, never avoided the responsibility given to him by Sayādaw U Visuddhabhivaṃsa, despite the fact that he was engaged in his multifarious duties. The entrustment of the work of vetting and rewriting of Visuddhi Magga Commentary to him by Sayādaw U Visuddhabhivaṃsa, bore testimony to the extent in which absolute reliance and confidence was put on Mahāsī Sayādaw by the former. Knowing fully well that Mahāsī Sayādaw was an adept in Visuddhi Magga text with his background experience as a *Kammaṭṭhāna-cariya*, the two text books on Visuddhi Magga Commentary were given to Mahāsī Sayādaw alone for the purpose of vetting and editing them. As had been entrusted, Mahāsī Sayādaw also examined, vetted and amended, putting his all-out individual effort without any one's aid. In the history of the Synod, 'Saṅgāyana', Mahāsī Sayādaw stands prominent as the only person who has ever been entrusted with the work of vetting, sifting, amending and editing single-handed for a single Text on *Dhamma*.

Mahāsī Sayādaw had amended the scriptural texts connected with the Synod with his extraordinary ability, talent and supreme efforts. The number of *Dhamma* texts which had been so vetted and amended were not ten, fifteen, twenty-five, or thirty in number but came to 117 in all, including all Pāli Texts, Commentaries and Dīghas. Each text book having contained about 350 pages, the total number of pages involved had reached an aggregate of over forty thousand. It was a rare meritorious deed – *kusala*, on the part of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw to have had an opportunity of vetting and amending such a considerable number of Piṭaka Scriptural Texts. These achievements would surely bestow immeasurable benefits upon posterity. This account of Mahāsī Sayādaw's performances and activities in connection with the affairs of the Sixth Buddhist Council was known only to a few.

PUCCHAKA SAYĀDAW

While performing the task of cleansing and amending the Piṭaka Scriptures on the one hand, Mahāsī Sayādaw had to shoulder



**Venerable Agga Mahā
Paṇḍita Mahāsī Sayādaw
as Pucchaka (Questioner)**



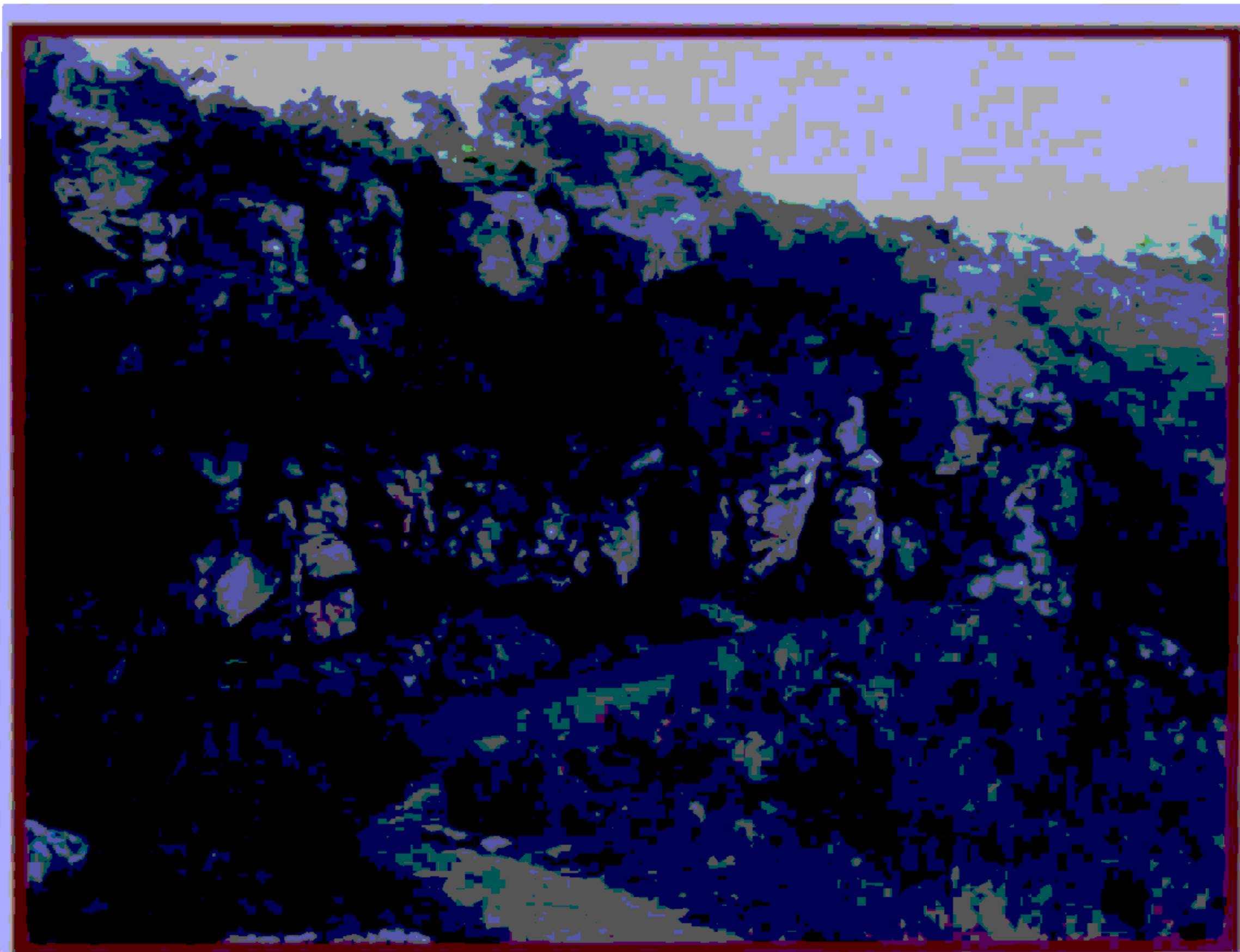
**Mahāsī Sayādaw
Conducting a questioning session at
the Chaṭṭha-Saṅgāyana Event.**

another responsibility relating to the affairs of the Buddhist Council, on the other. The assumption of this responsibility by Mahāsī Sayādaw was generally known by the people since it was related to his performance in the capacity of a *Pucchaka*, the Interrogator. *Saṅgāyana* had been already explained as relating to the group recitation or rehearsing of the scriptures. As is usually the custom, each and every one of the Pāli scriptural texts had to be examined. And to prove to the hilt that the teaching was actually made by the Buddha, preliminary questions had to be put in the following manner:

1. At which place (or Where) was this Sutta (Discourse) delivered by the Buddha?
2. For whose sake (or To Whom) was this discourse delivered?
3. Why was it delivered, and so on.

These were repeatedly asked and put to scrutiny. Only after being fully satisfied with the result of this scrutinization, the discourse was accepted and confirmed; and then, to make it more evident that it has been accepted and confirmed, all *sanghas* had to recite simultaneously. Such a process and mode of performance is called the convening of the Buddhist Council or *Saṅgāyana*. At the time of the First Buddhist Council of the *Sanghas* which convened

(at Rājagaha) to settle, if it were possible, the contents of the three Piṭakas, the Venerable Mahā Kassapa presided as *Pucchaka*, while Ashin Upāli and Ashin Ānanda repeated and recited the scriptures relevant to the questions put by the Interrogator. (*For an interesting account of the First Buddhist Council, refer to Chapter 16, pages 333 to 346, in 'The Life of the Buddha' by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli.*) In accordance with this precedent, eminent personages were necessary – one to act as an Interrogator (Questioner),



SATTAPANNI CAVES, RĀJAGAHA

Venue of the First Buddhist Council (543 BC)

and the other to act as a person responsible to reply or answer to the question. As questions and answers were to be rehearsed in the midst of the audience, it is not an easy task. It would be possible only if the persons responsible to do so, were really mature in their learnings and ripe in experience, and would dare face the audience who constituted the learned *sanghas*. As the work was to be prosecuted in the presence of many people, it would be improper to read the written prepared set of questions and answers. Both the Interrogator and the person giving the answer would have to declaim from memory. Then, the most difficult aspect being to speak both in Pāli and Burmese when interrogating and answering. Such being the case, the two responsible *Sayādaws* must be well-versed and competent in Pāli language and should also be able to speak Pāli eloquently. Hence, it was not at all easy to find persons who were fully endowed with such requisite qualifications.

Of the two persons who were to be assigned with the duties of an Interrogator and of a Reciter, respectively, luckily the quest for a *Sayādaw* who was to do the recitation had become easy. It was because of the availability of a Tipiṭaka Sayādaw Ashin Vicittasārābhivaṃsa who could memorize and recite all the contents

of the three Piṭakas or the three Baskets of the Canon. This *Sayādaw* had passed with distinction in all subjects both in written and oral examinations of the Tipiṭaka primarily held by the Buddha



**Venerable Tipiṭakadhara
Dhammabhandagarika
Bhaddanta Vicittasārābhivaṃsa
as Vissajjaka (Replier)**



**Tipiṭakadhara Sayādaw
U Vicittasārābhivaṃsa
Conducting an answering session at
the Chaṭṭha-Saṅgāyana Event.**

Sāsana Nuggaha Organization. For being successful in the subject of Vinaya Piṭaka (Rules of Discipline of the Order) in 1312 M.E. (1950), of Abhidhamma-Piṭaka (the Piṭaka of metaphysics, psychology and philosophy) in 1314 M.E. (1952) and of Sutta-Piṭaka (the Basket of Discourses) and Dīgha Nikāya in 1315 M.E. (1953), he had recently gained the title of 'TIPITAKADHARA BANDHAGHARIKA'. This *Sayādaw* was selected as a Reciter for the Convention by the Central Organizing Committee of *Saṅgāyana* or Synod. He was born at the opportune time due to the glorious attributes of the *Saṅgāyana*.

In the selection of a *Pucchaka Sayādaw* to assume the role of an Interrogator and Examiner, the Central Committee had already chosen the most deserving person in the personality of Mahāsī Sayādaw who was within their reach.

Mahāsī Sayādaw had to perform the duties of *Chaṭṭha Saṅgīti Pucchaka*. These two personalities were so compatible with

one another that everything went off smoothly without a slightest hitch. They had discharged their duties ably befitting the glory of *Saṅgāyana* which was made possible by their attributes to be celebrated with great success on a magnificent scale. In the days that followed till the completion of the *Saṅgāyana* relating to Pāḷi texts for the entire duration of two years, these two *Sayādaws* had acted as *Pucchaka* and *Vissajjaka*, respectively (i.e., as Interrogator and Reciter) at the Convention.

SIFTING AND REHEARSING OF COMMENTARIES

After the rehearsing of Pāḷi scriptures, the leading *Sayādaws* (*Sanghas*) and the Government decided to hold a convention for the rehearsing or recitations of the Commentaries and Dīghas. After the Convention held for the rehearsing of Pāḷi texts was over, the Convention for the rehearsing of Commentaries began on the second Waxing day of Pyatho (January) 1318 M.E. (1956). The rehearsing of Commentaries (Arthakathās) and Dīghas (Lengthy Collection of Discourses) was a peculiar feature. In the past old days of *Saṅgāyana*, rehearsing was done only in respect of Pāḷi texts. If the Commentaries and Dīghas were rehearsed at the *Saṅgāyana* in addition to Pāḷi texts; Commentaries and Dīghas would be regarded as more authentic texts on *Dhamma* that had been accepted and confirmed by the Sixth Buddhist Council (*Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana*). It was also intended that by doing so, more reliable Commentaries would come out. With this objective, rehearsing was done. As a result, the whole world has now accepted the Commentaries and Dīghas that were rehearsed at the Sixth Synod as authentic and as 'models'.

In rehearsing the Commentaries, it was not necessary to adopt the method of putting questions and replying the answers by reciting them daily as was done in the case of Pāḷi texts. The responsible Organizing Committee of *Sanghas* had ruled that only the selected portions worthy of note should be sifted and commented. The task of delivering a speech with running commentaries in the manner of sifting the Arthakathā was not easy. Only those persons who had fully studied the scriptures and were well-versed in Pāḷi texts, Commentaries (Arthakathās) and Dīghas

would be really deserving of performing this kind of work. Therefore, the duty of sifting or scrutinizing the Commentaries were given to Mahā Vijayarāma Sayādawpayāgyī, holder of the title of Abhidhaja Mahā Rattha Guru of Pokokku town, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita Mahā Visutarāma Sayādawpayāgyī of Pakokku (later became the recipient of the title of Abhidhaja Mahā Rattha Guru), and Mahāsī Sayādaw. Regarding this matter, Mahā Vijayarāma Sayādawpayāgyī and Mahā Visutarāma Sayādawpayāgyī gave explanatory remarks relating to the Commentaries and the first, second, third and sixth Buddhist Councils. Thereafter, Mahāsī Sayādaw daily rehearsed and taught on how the sifting of the Commentaries was done successively during the period that followed the Third Council commencing from the stage of dispatching missionaries to nine countries and places for the promotion of the *Sāsana* and the welfare of the many.

The rehearsing of Commentaries on the First Collections (Paṭṭhāna Sannipāta) was commenced on the second Waxing day of Pyatho (January), 1318 M.E. (1956). Effective from the date on which his turn of duty came, Mahāsī Sayādaw carried on with the sifting and rehearsing of the 'First Sannipāta' every day until it was completed. In the meantime, Mahāsī Sayādaw rehearsed after scrutiny, the Vinaya Arthakathā, Dīgha Nikāya Arthakathā and Abhidhamma Arthakathā. As regards the 'Second Sannipāta', the arrangement made was in the reverse order. First and foremost, in respect of Dīgha Nikāya Mahāpādāna Sutta Arthakathā, Mahāsī Sayādaw and Tipiṭakadara Dhammabhandāgārika Sayādaw Ashin Vicittasārābhivaṃsa acted as Interrogator and Reciter respectively, as had been done in the manner relating to the recitation of Pāli texts. Only afterwards, the role of sifting was carried on and rehearsed commencing from Mahāpādāna Sutta Arthakathā by Mahāsī Sayādaw alone as in the case of the 'First Sannipāta'. While the *Sayādaw* was thus performing this task, his father had died at Seikkhun. Mahāsī Sayādaw therefore, had to return to Seikkhun to attend his father's funeral after he had finalized the work of sifting the Mahāpādāna Sutta Arthakathā. Then, after his departure to Seikkhun, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita Anisakhan Sayādaw of the Sagaing Hills was substituted to perform the function of sifting, beginning

from Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta Commentary.

At the time of performing the duties of *Saṅgāyana* involving questions and answers relating to Pāli texts, Mahāsī Sayādaw's ability might be regarded as not yet been truly assessed or not yet clearly known as it should be. *Sayādaw* then had only the responsibility to interrogate on *suttas* selected from the Pāli texts as might be considered proper and appropriate. However, in regard to the matter of 'sifting' the *Saṅgāyana*, it was not done in the like manner. The nature of the work was to be performed by one individual only – single-handed, which would reveal his true colour. Only when it came to this hard task of sifting the Commentary, it became evidently clear that Mahāsī Sayādaw was a talented person with an outstanding knowledge in both *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti*. His keen absorption may be comparable to giant fishes of immense size measuring five hundred *yujanas* capable of finding amusements and feeding themselves leisurely at their own sweet will in the vast ocean of pasture. *Sayādaws* of intellectual fame only had the chance to know partially about the real aptitude and scholastic qualifications of Mahāsī Sayādaw after they had heard him rehearsing the sifting of the Commentaries (Arthakathās). Those *Sayādaws* who had formerly under-estimated him and looked upon him as merely an ordinary knowledgeable *Kammaṭṭhāna* Teacher, would surely have a different opinion of him from then on.

To those desirous of knowing how Mahāsī Sayādaw had sifted the Commentaries, advice will have to be given to read the chapter relating to the scrutinization of Arthakathā Saṅgāyana printed and published by the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council. In that chapter on scrutinization, Mahāsī Sayādaw did not simply put up or reproduce as contained in the Commentaries but had analytically rehearsed point by point with pertinence on all statements that were presented in the Commentaries to be in harmony with its obvious expression of the words 'Chapter on Scrutinization'. Since decision had been made relating to the use of diction, etymology and synthesis in the Commentaries at the time of interpolating, sifting and printing, priority was now given to the work of interpretation and of defining the words or phrases rather than the diction of Pāli words and their synthesis. If necessary, not

only comparisons would have to be made with the present modern usages but critical comments in connection with the foreign languages and their usages should also be made if such comments were called for. When one Commentary and another were not in agreement, analytical comments were to be made after scrutinization. In some places, explanation had to be given referring to what was stated in the *Dīghas* by comparisons. Occasion might sometimes arise when it would become necessary to comment on the relevant Commentary according to times by comparing it with the meaning conveyed in the *Dīghas*. To cite an illustration in the manner of testing the literature the results of scrutiny concerning 'Suvunnabhumi', the sifting of 'five-thousand years of *Sāsana*' (period of Buddha's *Dhamma* illumination) and 'Five Forms relating to Modern Technological Usages', 'Dhammapada *Dīgha*' (the way of the Truth or of the Doctrine), the sifting of the correctness of the chronological order of the years in which teaching of *Gāthā-vatthu* (verses and stories) was done, sifting of the part relating to the 'Conversion of Zambupati', the study and sifting of the languages spoken (dialects used) by the Buddha when teaching, and sifting of the aphorism - 'the expression of one word or syllable represents a Buddha', constituted the explanatory statements made on the real problematic points extracted from the *Piṭaka* Scriptures, and were of immense value. A reader, by just reading through this 'Chapter on Scrutinization', without specially putting in his personal effort would clearly understand those points which were previously found to be misunderstood even by people with a good knowledge of *Piṭaka*. Putting it in a nutshell, it would serve as a 'beacon' throwing a beam of light to the generations to come, indicating the way as to how sifting or scrutiny should be done.

VISIT TO JAPAN FOR PROMOTION OF THERAVĀDA SĀSANA

Members of the Armed Forces of Japan who had been to Burma during the World War II had had an opportunity of observing the Theravāda Buddha *Dhamma* to some extent. Among them there were some who, having become interested in Theravāda Doctrine, wished to develop Theravāda Buddhism in Japan. It was

because of their enthusiastic efforts and activities, twelve Japanese *bhikkhus* and one lay female Japanese had come over to Burma in 1955 while the Sixth Buddhist Council was holding its sessions in full swing. After their arrival in Burma, the twelve monks belonging to Mahāyana Sect were automatically converted into Theravāda *sāmaṇeras* while the Japanese lady had become a nun. All of them accepted the new faith and studied the doctrine of pure Theravāda Buddhism.



THE MAHĀYANA TRADITION

After their return to Japan, with the help and encouragement of the Buddha Sāsana Association of Moji town, the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council had agreed to send a delegation to Japan for the erection of a *zedi* (pagoda) at Moji – an exact replica of the World Peace Pagoda (Kabā-Aye Zedi) of Rangoon, on behalf of the Buddha Sāsana Council, and also for the construction of a monastery near that pagoda, meant for the permanent residence of five monks who were to promote the *Sāsana*. To crystallize this scheme into effect according to the agreement, the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council sent a religious mission to Japan in the year 1956. The members of that Mission comprised, among the *sanghas*, Weluwun Sayādawpayāgyī, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita Anisakhan Sayādaw, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita Mahāsī Sayādaw, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita Vijja Lakara Sayādaw Visuddhabhivaṃsa, Myingyan Kosaung Taik Sayādaw Ashin Sobita, Japanese missionary Sayādaw



**Dāna to members of Burmese
Sangha to Japan
(1956)**

Khemeinda, and among the laymen, the then Justice U Chan Htoon, his wife Daw Khin Thein and U Saing Kyaw, Administrative Officer of the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council.

This religious mission left Burma for Japan during the Waxing month of Nayon (June) at the beginning of the Buddhist Lent in 1319 M.E. (1957). The

members of the mission visited Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Nara and other big cities, and went round on an excursion to see and observe pagodas and monasteries and had consultations with the leaders of the *Sāsana* residing in those places. In particular, they first selected a site in Mary Gardens at Moji town for the erection of the World Peace Pagoda and also the site for consecration of a *Thein (Sima)* to be constructed. After the performance of certain religious rites by chanting *parittas*, etc., they consecrated a *Thein* which might be considered as the root that conveyed the nourishment for the prolongation of the life of *Sāsana*. At the time of the ceremonious function held for the consecration of the *Thein*, since there were no Theravāda monks other than the *Sayādaws* in the whole township of Moji as well as the whole of Kyushu Island where Moji stands, the *Sayādaws* could freely and happily consecrate the *Thein* without the trouble of going through the procedure in acquiring the site for the *Thein*. After the consecration, the leading members of the Moji Buddha Sāsana Association and the *Sayādaws* consulted the business of organizing the Theravāda Sāsana, and then went round to various places in Japan on an observation tour. Mahāsī Sayādaw took every available opportunity of observing the prevailing methods of meditation and nature of concepts entertained and practised by ZEN school of thought which had become popular and had spread to countries such as the United States of America.

The religious mission for the enhancement of Theravāda Sāsana of which Mahāsī Sayādaw was one of the members, arrived

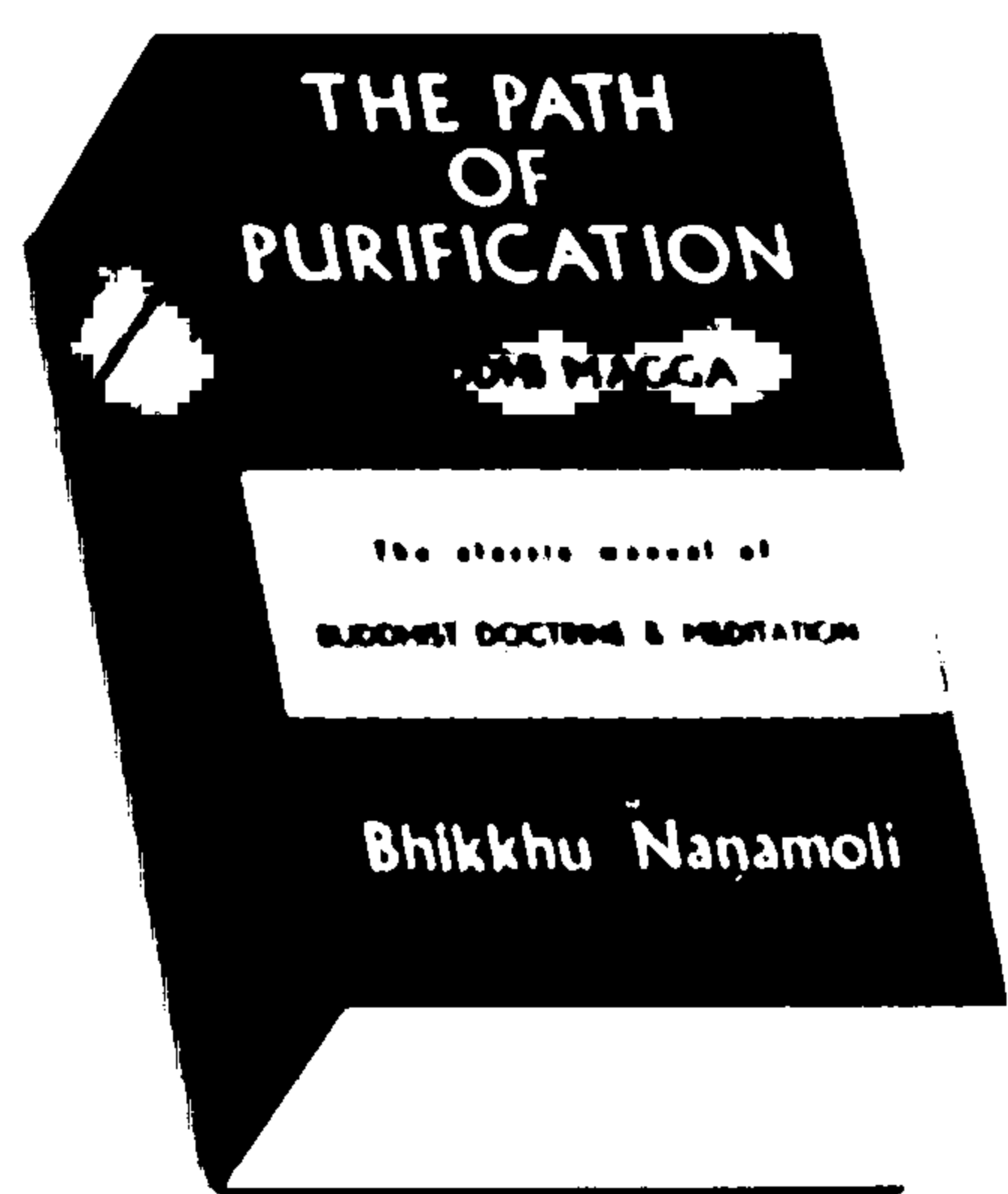
back to Burma in the month of Waso (July) of the same year after completely fulfilling their missionary duties in Japan.

INTRODUCTION TO VISUDDHI MAGGA WRITTEN

(See BOOK REF. 3 on page 28)

It was the time when Mahāsī Sayādaw was editing the Visuddhi Magga to be printed at the printing press of Kabā-Aye Buddha Sāsana Council in the year 1319 M.E. (1957). One day, Ashin Sīlānanda, author and compiler of scriptural texts of the department of Kabā-Aye Tipiṭaka Pāli-Burmese Dictionary, borrowed and read the big book of Visuddhi Magga printed in English (called the Roman Alphabets) and published by the Harvard University of the United States of America, from Vijja-Lakara Sayādaw U Visuddhabhivaṃsa, the Honorary Secretary of the Central Working Committee of *Sanghas*. The editor of this Visuddhi Magga was Henry Clarke Warrant.

This great man had however passed away in the year 1899 before completing the final editing of this book. His unfinished work was undertaken by Professor Dhammananda Kosambhi, an Indian national who had lived in Burma for a number of years. Though the work of editing this Visuddhi Magga had been completed since the year 1927, it could only be printed in 1950.



**THE PATH OF
PURIFICATION**
(Visuddhi Magga)
by Acariya Buddhaghosa

The preface contained in this book was written by Professor Dhammananda Kosambhi, who was the next editor. In the preface, a critical comment was written about the Commentator Acariya Buddhaghosa under the heading 'The life of Buddhaghosa'. The comments and remarks written therein being vicious containing unfair criticisms made on Acariya Buddhaghosa, it has impuled and stirred Ashin Sīlānanda in whom the burning sensation had occurred to refute and explain these criticisms after he had read them. He considered that

BHADANTĀCARIYA BUDDHAGHOSA – 430 C.E.
Author of the Visuddhi Magga



Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa offering his Visuddhi Magga to the Sangharāja of Mahāvihāra Monastery, Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. Picture taken from 200 year old wall-painting at the well known monastery of Kelaniya Vihāra (about 5 miles east of Colombo), by a local artist named Solius Mendis.

these critical statements should be rebutted in one way or the other. Therefore, the matter was put up to Sayādaw U Visuddhabhivaṃsa. In reading through the incriminating statements contained in the 'Preface', the *Sayādaw* was also of the same opinion that it should be refuted. The job of refuting was not a minor matter to be dealt with. Dhammananda Kosambhi was a celebrated writer who was internationally recognized. As such, if it was contemplated to refute his statements, it would have far reaching influence only if a very sound and effective rebuttal could be made, supported by irrefragable arguments with realistic and full-proof facts of evidence. Reflecting as such, *Sayādaw* ordered Ashin Sīlānanda to translate that preface into Burmese. After the rendering of this introductory statement into Burmese, a number of translated Burmese copies were reproduced by means of duplicating machine and then these were sent to the Central Working Committee of *Sanghas* of the Sixth Buddhist Council for perusal and orders.

On the fourth Waxing day of Tazaungmon (November) in 1319 M.E. (1957), a meeting was convened by the Central Working Committee of *Sanghas*. At this meeting, a critical survey was made on the subject matter in question and a statement of refutation was drawn up against the written accusation of Dhammananda Kosambhi, and then, it was also decided that an Introduction be written to counteract the indictment by revealing the veracity of the statement of Acariya Buddhaghosa and by disclosing its noble qualities. The responsibility for writing up the Introduction was entrusted to Anisakhan Sayādaw, Mahāsī Sayādaw, Ashin Vicittasarabhivaṃsa Sayādaw and Ashin Sīlānanda by the Central Working Committee by a unanimous vote of decision. Then again, the three members of the sub-committee gave the responsibility to Mahāsī Sayādaw to prepare a draft 'Introduction' in writing.

It was not an easy task to write an 'Introduction'. As the 'Introduction' would have to be written in Pāḷi, the person who was going to write it must be thoroughly proficient enough in Pāḷi language to be able to express clearly and efficiently. Mere knowledge of Pāḷi grammar would not be adequate. As the 'Introduction' WAS TO BE inserted as a preliminary presentation to

Acariya Buddhaghosa's Commentary (Arthakathā), it should be as smooth and eloquent and as graceful and refined in the literary style resembling the manner in which Acariya Buddhaghosa had himself made his presentation. As it would be an 'Introduction' to enable a wide circle of people to easily know and understand it without ambiguity, it should not be too profound, and difficult of easy apprehension. As the retort was to be made against the critical comments which were diffused with the present-day viewpoints and historical points of view, the writer of the 'Introduction' must be a person who was modern in his conception. He must also be a person who was well acquainted with the knowledge of historical background of the subject matter. Apart from that, according to the decision made by the Central Working Committee of *Sanghas*, wherein direction had been given to also study other fine specimens of 'Introduction' written in foreign languages, the writer of the 'Introduction' should be well-grounded in the knowledge of languages. To find such a well-qualified person was not easy at all. However, there was no need to worry about it. Mahāsī Sayādaw was fully endowed with the said qualifications.

Having accepted the responsibility of writing the 'Introduction', Mahāsī Sayādaw had to take a lot of time, which had to be split up, in repeatedly studying and making references to the Pāli Texts, Commentaries and Dīghas, continental history, history of kings and peoples, chronicles, and collections of approved Piṭakas, ancient historical researches, and many other scriptural texts both in Pāli and English relevant to the subject of the 'Introduction'. Later, after the completion of the draft 'Introduction' was so written, it was put up to the Committee for compilation. The members of the Committee including the *Sayādaw* then carefully re-scrutinized and edited the draft from various points of view. Having found the draft really circumspective and very comprehensive – par excellence; requiring no corrections, insertions or rejection, the Committee accepted the draft *in toto* as was originally written by the *Sayādaw*.

Not being satisfied yet with what had been so far done, the *Sayādaw* earnestly entreated Ashin Vasetthabhivamsa Anu-Nāyaka Sayādaw of Thabyekan Mahā Dhammikarāma Taik, who was well-

renowned as an eminent writer of Pāli literature, to kindly make corrections in the 'Introduction' as might be considered necessary after vetting and also to write in supplement amplified versions of Pāli verses. Sayādaw Ashin Vasetthabhivamsa was greatly pleased after reading the draft. Nothing was found in it which would require any corrections. Being highly elated, the *Sayādaw* wrote the Pāli verses (Anughīti-gāthās) with his keen and extremely buoyant intellect. As was characteristic of 'anughīti' since it was composed to fully comprehend the draft prose work, conveying the significant meaning direct to the point, the total number of verses had come up to seventy-four. The most outstanding characteristic was that among these verses there was none which was composed of stanzas in a set of eight words or syllables equally forming a group in a line. All these verses were made up of stanzas, the metrical composition of each forming equal groups of lines with eleven, twelve or fourteen words. Hence, these were really difficult to be composed with a good start since it was also essential to comply strictly with the underlying principles based upon guidelines, choice of weighty words, and the expression of the words which should be made up of short vowel alphabets conveying the quality of essence. These verses that had been written within a few days' time were returned together with the draft 'Introduction'.

The Committee members responsible for compiling the 'Introduction' again read and scrutinized the said Verses. The Verses having reflected the writer's genius that had graced the 'Introduction', in some places it was found even difficult to read. There were some parts where it was not possible to know the inspired feeling of the composer. If such parts were not definitely known and traced, it could have gone wrong in making parenthesis when printing was done. Therefore, when these Verses (*gāthās*) were copied in writing after scrutiny, reference and consultations had to be made in writing with the *Sayādaw*. Only after the literary essence and the meaning of the expression which the composer had in mind had been known, the Verses were accepted and confirmed. After having been fully satisfied with the work of editing, the draft 'Introduction' was handed over to the Honorary Secretary, Sayādaw U Visuddhabhivamsa.

Sayādaw U Visuddhabhivaṃsa was also delightfully impressed with the draft 'Introduction' after reading through it. Hence, the draft was sent to the printing press for necessary action. Only the proof that came out of the printing press was put up to the *Sayādaws* of the Central Working Committee for favour of perusal and for making corrections where necessary. Only when the Central Working Committee of *Sanghas* gave its approval, then the 'Visuddhi Magga Nidāna Kātha' was published subsequently followed by world-wide distribution. Mahāsī Sayādaw being extremely busy with other multifarious duties given him, had to fight against time to write this 'Introduction' since 1319 M.E. (1957) and had therefore been able to publish it in the year 1322 M.E. (1960). At that time as the two volumes of Visuddhi Magga Arthakathā had already been printed and published, the 'Visuddhi Magga Nidāna Kātha' had to be published separately.

'Visuddhi Magga Nidāna Kātha's fundamental aim and object was to explain and refute the false accusations made in the statement against the commentator Acariya Mahā Buddhaghosa. Nevertheless, not being fully contented with mere refutation of the false statement, Mahāsī Sayādaw had also written a praiseworthy account in connection with Acariya Buddhaghosa as was considered proper after collecting all the true facts from various texts of *Dhamma*.

First of all, after the false allegations made by Dhammananda Kosambhi had been fully refuted with sufficient evidence and authentic factual statements, a continuous account of the development process of the Buddha's doctrines had been explained from the time of Buddha's death (*Mahāparinibbāna*) up till the time of Acariya Buddhaghosa. After the Second Buddhist Council (at Vesāli), various sects with doctrinal differences appeared. Later, in Ceylon various Schools of Thought (Sects) such as Abayāgīri, Dhammaruci, etc., had sprung up. In the 'Introduction', mention was also made of the new faith called Vetulla which was generally despised in Ceylon, and as to how Jetāvana-vasi Sect had appeared in Ceylon. Thence, the biography of Acariya Buddhaghosa was explained and commented upon supported by fully verified statements. While making such

comments, written comparisons were made between the Visuddhi Magga and the Vimutti Text which had now undeservedly received a good name through mere hearsay. Some had even alleged that a few of the Commentaries said to have been written by Acariya Buddhaghosa, were not the product of his genius, but the work of any other contemporary *Thera*. Such allegations had been commented and criticized with all honesty of purpose supported by fair and truthful statements after proper scrutinization. Briefly stated, 'Visuddhi Magga Nidāna Kātha' may be claimed as a new biography of Acariya Buddhaghosa, which had been accepted and confirmed by the Sixth Buddhist Council.

Indeed, Burma has gained much benefit by its brilliant achievement of the Sixth Buddhist Council. It has reached a high status in regard to *Sāsana*, and the achievement of this position has given Burma a place to be highly respected by the world at large insofar as it concerns the affairs of the *Sāsana*. The Pāḷi Piṭakas, Commentaries and Dīghas having been carefully vetted, cleansed, revised and printed so as to become more reliable as fine specimens of Buddhist Canons, these have served as a big reward to all learned Pāḷi scholars all over the world including Burma. Such a Tipiṭaka complete in itself, easily readable, understandable and readily traceable cannot be found elsewhere except in Burma. The specimen scriptural texts relating to Tipiṭaka *Dhamma* produced by the Sixth Buddhist Council have received the approbation of the Western Pāḷi Scholars as being extremely fine in quality and easier to learn and study than any other specimens. From the point of view of the people who do not understand Pāḷi, the meaning and definitions of Pāḷi words and expressions given in Burmese as contained in Piṭaka could now be appreciated by them. Although in the past, the Pāḷi scriptures were solely meant for those who were competent in Pāḷi language, it has now come to a stage whereby all those who are acquainted with Burmese could easily read and understand them. For those who are inclined to study the history of Buddhism elaborately, the Big Chronicle of Buddha's life history is now available. Tipiṭaka Pāḷi-Burmese Dictionary and Pāḷipāda Text for purposes of reference, which constitute Pāḷi texts, Commentaries, Dīghas and their elucidated statements are being

published. The foregoing account vividly indicated only part and parcel of the many benefits reaped from the fruits of the Convention of the Sixth Buddhist Council. Among all these benefits, Mahāsī Sayādaw's 'Visuddhi Magga Nidāna Kātha' is really distinctive. The intrinsic quality of 'Nidāna Kātha' has amounted to giving wide publicity of the attributes of the present-day Burma as having possessed persons of great intellect and outstanding ability who can reach the intellectual standard of Ashin Buddhaghosa in being able to write with clarity and in a graceful style of composition. The *Sayādaws* (senior monks) of Burma are not only adept in scriptures but also excel in the knowledge of traditional beliefs in other religious doctrines. It has also been revealed that they are able to make analytical approach to and offer critical comment on any kind of faith with all fairness and impartiality and without prejudice. (If it is thought that this is an exaggerated statement, it may be urged that comparison be made between the 'Visuddhi Magga Nidāna Kātha' and 'Sāsanavaṃsappadipika' written during the time of King Mindon.) Hence, it has been learnt from others that intellectual Indian Pāḷi scholars have spoken very highly in praise of the 'Visuddhi Magga Nidāna Kātha'. This is indeed a thing of honour for the Burmese *Sayādaws*.

Furthermore, the very Central Working Committee of *Sanghas* which had decided to print the Nidāna Kātha for publication, gave Mahāsī Sayādaw the responsibility to translate the said 'Introduction' into plain Burmese. After translating it into Burmese, Mahāsī Sayādaw had directed that this translation be incorporated and published in the new edition of Visuddhi Magga in Burmese (the fundamentals together with the part relating to *vipassanā*) written by him as assigned, and also in the first volume of the Burmese version of Visuddhi Magga, written by him on his own accord. It has therefore been urged to all those who are not conversant with Pāḷi to read through the Visuddhi Magga, the translated Burmese version, so that they would personally know about the 'Visuddhi Magga Nidāna Kātha' instead of knowing it by mere hearsay.

In the translated Burmese version of Visuddhi Magga (the fundamentals together with the part relating to *vipassanā*), not only

the Burmese translation of the ‘Introduction’ to Visuddhi Magga, but also the Nissaya concerning the seventy-four (74) verses (Anughīti-gāthā) written by the *Sayādaw* himself while rewriting the verses in Pāḷi, had been inserted and printed for the Pāḷi Research Scholars of the future generation.

The *Sayādaw*, the composer and writer of the Anughīti-gāthā in the course of extolling the qualities of Acariya Buddhaghosa came to a conclusion with the following verse:

“*Khiyetha vunno na mu samuddhatopi,
nanussa nekahi gunā anantā.
Ko nuddhareyyā khilasagarode,
tatthāpi maññamtu mukhī sadāte.*”

The meaning of the above Pāḷi verse denotes: “**The qualities and attributes of Acariya Buddhaghosa cannot possibly be exhaustive no matter how completely these may be extracted to the minutest detail from all available sources, and described. It is because the attributes ascribed to Acariya Buddhaghosa are so numerous that they are boundless. Who can possibly pump out the voluminous wide expanse of waters from the endless ocean? May all those men of wisdom and intellect who could particularly appreciate the many-sided genius and innumerable attributes of Acariya Buddhaghosa be able to always, or rather, eternally perpetuate them in their memory for ever and anon!**”

The above-mentioned verse (*gāthā*) had been written and composed in extolling the noble qualities and attributes of Acariya Buddhaghosa. Be it as it may, could this verse be the one written with great enthusiasm in praise of Mahāsī Sayādaw? Who could say that it was not so?

PROMOTION OF SĀSANA IN CEYLON (SRI LANKA)

“Our noble *Sāsana* (Buddhist religion) embraces three main constituent parts or categories, namely *pariyatti*, *paṭipatti* and *paṭivedha*. The first two categories: *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti* can be found in a fairly satisfactory state in every country adopting Theravāda Buddhism. As regards *Paṭivedha*, the third category, it is in a state of deficiency. In Burma, however, we can dare say quite

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candidly that not only *Pariyatti* and *Paṭipatti Sāsanas*, but also *Paṭivedha Sāsana* are flourishing. We do firmly believe that in this friendly nation of yours, a good number of *Ariyas* or holy men who are walking on the Four Paths will be found in almost every nook and corner. Development of this *Paṭivedha Sāsana* far surpasses in Burma than in any other country.”

The above-quoted statement is part of the opening speech given by Ceylonese Sayādawgyī Ānanda Maitreya on the second inaugural day of the Sixth Buddhist Council. This *Sayādawgyī's* speech is not an exaggeration falling short of the truth. He had in fact; opening expressed these words in approbation amidst the audience of the world for being delightfully pleased. The reading public will probably have guessed for whom and for what kind of work, the above statement so uttered was really meant.

This *Sayādaw* had arrived in Burma well before the inauguration of *Saṅgāyana* for the purpose of sifting and amending the Piṭaka Scriptures to be put up to the Sixth Buddhist Council. At that time, the Buddha Sāsana Council being accommodated at Sāsana Yeikthā, the *Sayādawgyī* himself had to temporarily reside at the Sāsana Yeikthā. He had come to Burma as a substitute in place of Ceylonese Sayādaw Ashin Buddhathatta, a member of the *Osana* Committee, who had gone back to Ceylon. This *Sayādawgyī* had also been to Burma previously. He has a feeling of goodwill (*cetanā*) towards all Burmese people. It seemed that this *Sayādawgyī's* intention was to find out personally whether the information he had previously heard about Mahāsī Sayādaw, was correct or not. It was not very difficult to judge, or form an opinion of Mahāsī Sayādaw since he had been in contact with Mahāsī



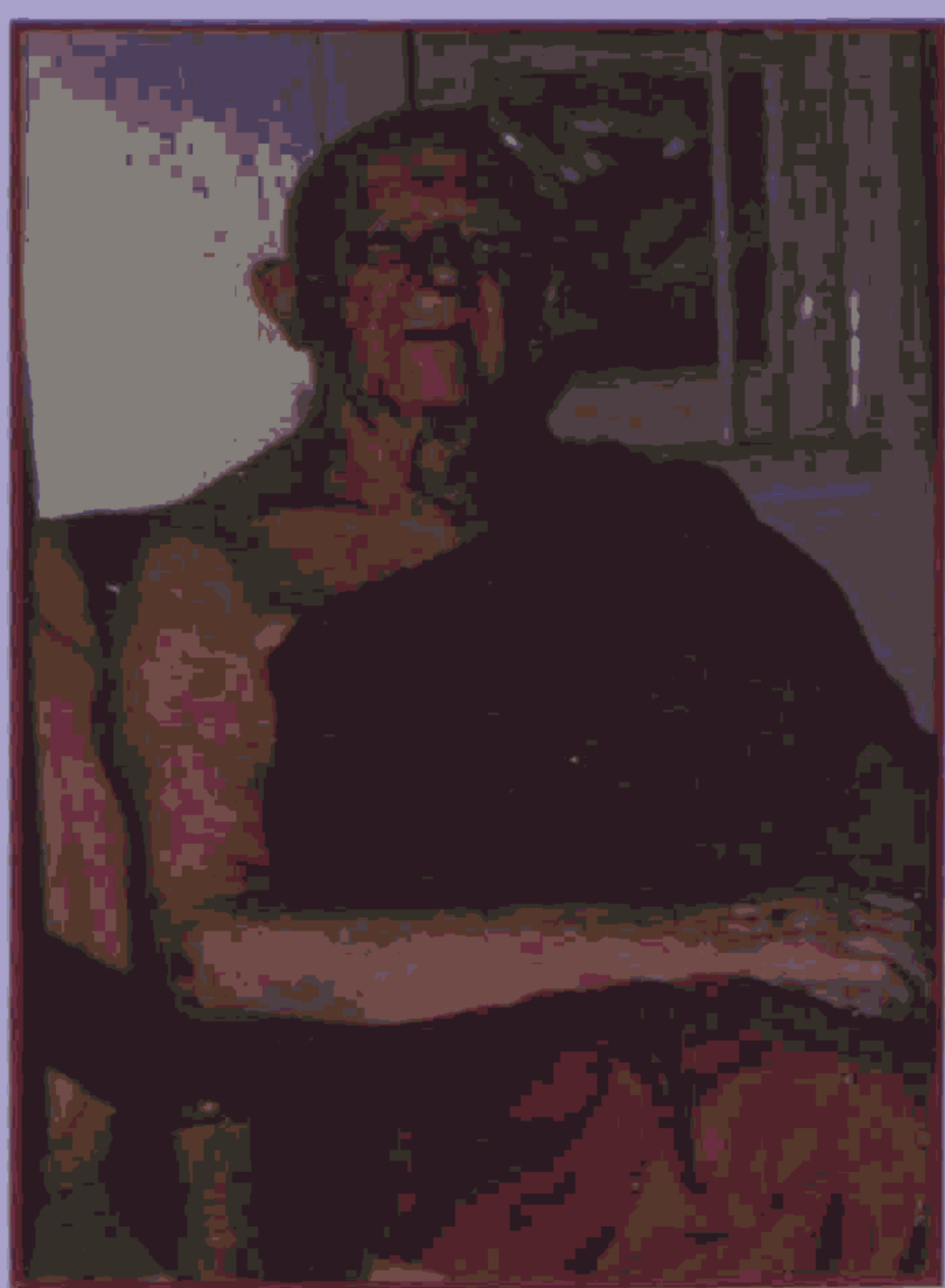
**Venerable Bhaddanta
Ānanda Maitreya**
(1896-1998)

At the Sixth Buddhist Council
in Myanmar, 1954

Sayādaw daily while carrying out the duties of amending the scriptural texts.

Moreover, since he had had his discussions with Mahāsī Sayādaw on every Sabbath Day, which was a day of rest, he was able to assess the latter and was very pleased with Mahāsī Sayādaw in both the field of *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti*. With deep satisfaction and heartfelt sincerity, he had directly extolled the qualities of Mahāsī Sayādaw by directly pouring out a highly commendable speech in praise of Burma, couched in fine words of admiration which would very rarely be uttered by Ceylonese nationals.

Even prior to the commencement of the Sixth Buddhist Council, Mahāsī Sayādaw's fame had been world-wide. Foreigners who were interested in the methods of controlling and restraining the Mind which can lead to a state of tranquility and calmness (*cum*) the techniques of contemplating Mindfulness, had approached Mahāsī Sayādaw in person and had practised



Ashin Nyānaponika
(1901 – 1994)

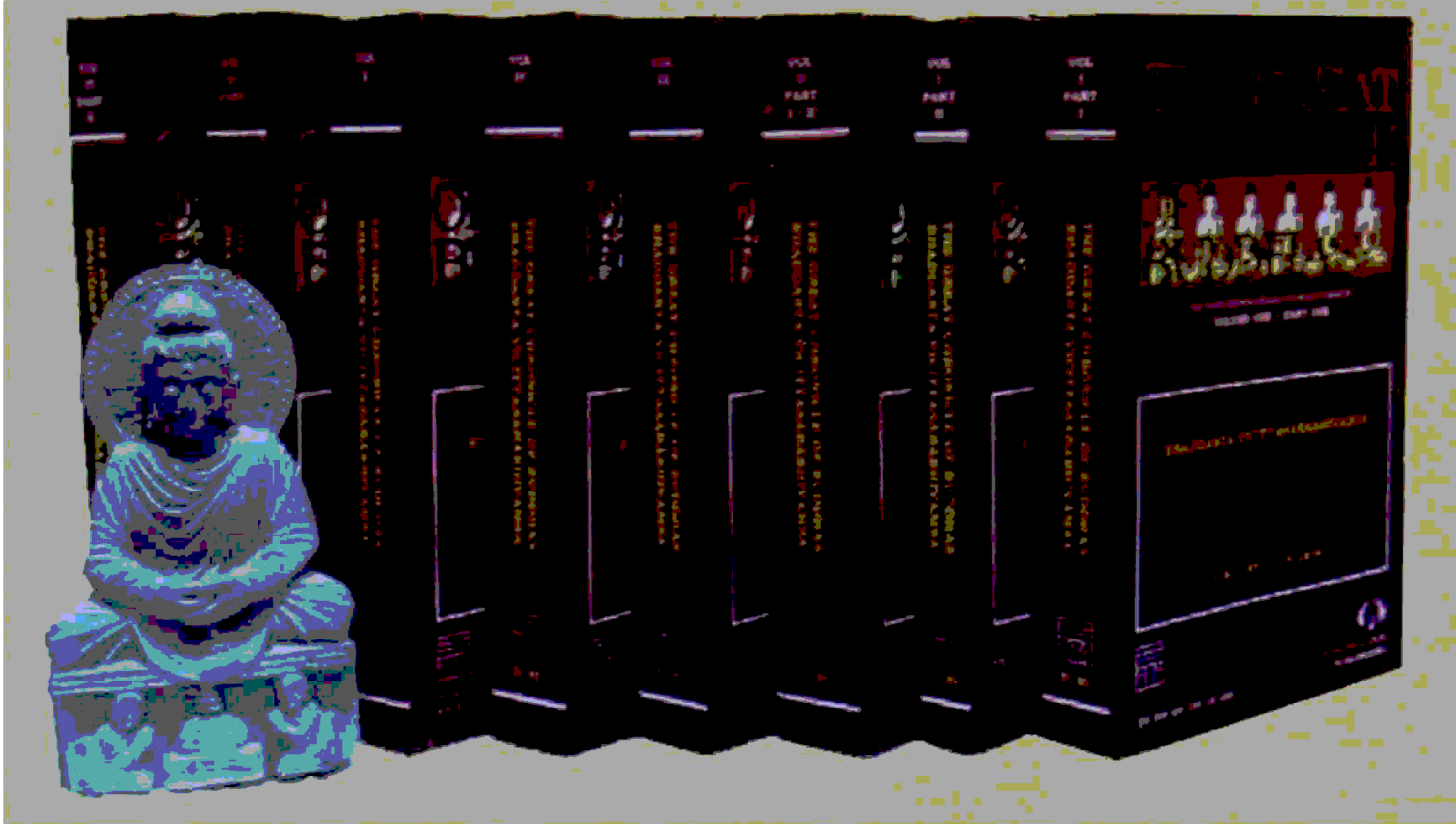


**Venerable Bhaddanta
Ānanda Maitreya**
(1896 – 1998)

Going through The Great
Chronicle of Buddhas
(See BOOK REF. 5
on page 130-131)

meditation as instructed by the *Sayādaw*. Among such persons, was a German Monk by the name of Ashin Nyānaponika and an Englishman Dr. E. Graham Howe. The Doctor had come over to Rangoon Sāsana Yeikthā and practised meditation under the guidance of Mahāsī Sayādaw on the introduction given by Ashin Nyānaponika whom he met in Ceylon and from whom he had learnt about the methods of *satipaṭṭhāna*. He was very much

BOOK REF. 5 : THE GREAT CHRONICLE OF BUDDHAS by The Most Venerable Mingun Sayādaw Bhaddanta Vicittasārābhivaṃsa



When the Venerable Mingun Sayādaw had successfully passed the examination on the Vinaya, the Prime Minister requested him to write a Chronicle of Buddhas. The *Sayādaw* declined as he was engaged with the Tipiṭakadhara Examination. Three years later the Prime Minister repeated the request, but the Sayādaw requested postponement till after the redaction of the Pāḷi Canon in the Sixth Buddhist Council. After the successful conclusion of the Sixth Buddhist Council, the Venerable Mingun Sayādaw began work on the Great Chronicle of Buddhas.

When completed this magnum opus of 5516 pages was in 6 volumes to commemorate the Sixth Council, in 8 books for the Eightfold Path and in 45 chapters for the 45 years the Lord Buddha promulgated the *Dhamma*.

The First volume which is of two books deals with the story of Sumedha, the Future Buddha, when he asked for and received the Prophecy uttered by Dīpaṅkara Buddha. The second book is devoted to the various aspects of *Pāramī*, Perfections, to be fulfilled by the *Bodhisatta* and with the life stories of twenty four earlier Buddhas.

The volumes from the Second to the Fourth and the first book of the Fifth volume are devoted to the Buddha Jewel. The Second volume contains the events leading to the birth of the Buddha, seeing the Four Signs, Renunciation, the Ascetic Practices, Enlightenment,

the conversion of the Kassapa brothers and the visit to Rājagaha.

The Third Volume presents the attainment of *Arahatship* by the Venerable Sāriputta and Mahā Moggallāna, the visit to Kapilavastu, the initiation of cousin Venerable Ānanda into the Order, the establishment of Jetāvana Monastery, the founding of Vesāli, the recitation of *paritta* and the rule prohibiting display of supreme powers.

The Fourth Volume contains many *suttas* preached by the Buddha while travelling widely in the middle country.

Part I of the Fifth Volume contains the events leading to the final passing away of the Lord Buddha into *Parinibbāna* with no more birth. It also contains an account of the distribution of the holy Relics.

Part II of the Fifth Volume is devoted to the Qualities of the *Dhamma* Jewel and expositions of the Paṭiccasamuppāda (Dependent Origination), the Dhammacakka and the Anattalakkhaṇa Suttas.

The two books of the Sixth Volume are devoted to the Sangha Jewel and provide accounts of the male and female *Arahats* and famous lay devotees.

This is the general framework. Within that framework, the Venerable *Sayādaw* has supplied so much information from the Canon, Commentaries and Sub-commentaries touching on so many topics that the Great Chronicle is virtually encyclopedic. The Venerable Mingun Sayādaw has applied a literary style that is appropriate to the topic being presented. He arouses reverence, devotion and awe when describing the qualities, endeavours and accomplishments of the *Arahats* and noble personages. Deep religious feelings suffuse the reader when the Venerable *Sayādaw* propounds the profound aspects of the *Dhamma*. The reader is pleasantly calmed by descriptions of natural beauty and wonderment is aroused by the splendor of cities. To read the Venerable *Sayādaw's* Great Chronicle is to set forth on a valuable journey of edification, illumination and bliss.

(An Extract from book 'In Honour of Sayadaw's 80th Birthday'.)

gratified with the practice of meditation he had exercised. It was revealed that this method of *satipaṭṭhāna* or contemplation on Mindfulness which had been in vogue in the East, also proved to have brought about beneficial results to the Westerners as well. Ashin Nyānaponika had written a book of *Dhamma* concerning *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation on Mindfulness based upon Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. He had also described the techniques adopted by Mahāsī Sayādaw in this book of *Dhamma*. The 'Foreword' in that book was written by Dr. Howe. It was published in March 1954 in Ceylon well in time for the Sixth Buddhist Council to come. Thanks to the attributes of this text book, the world became all the more aware of the techniques of meditation on Mindfulness prescribed by Mahāsī Sayādaw.

While the world was thus directing its attention and made more conscious of the practical side of *Dhamma*, the Government of Ceylon requested the Prime Minister to depute one *Kammaṭṭhāna-cariya* (a meditation teacher) to Ceylon for the promotion of *Sāsana*. The Prime Minister, therefore, respectfully entreated Mahāsī Sayādaw to spread *Vipassanā Sāsana* in Ceylon. As it was the time when the Sixth Buddhist Council was in progress, Mahāsī Sayādaw was unable to visit Ceylon personally. As such, in the year 1317 M.E. (1955), Mahāsī Sayādaw sent his chief disciples Ashin Sujāta, Ashin Ottarabhivaṃsa and Ashin Zawana (Ashin Jāvana), his reliable *Kammaṭṭhāna* Teachers, to Ceylon for the propagation of *Vipassanā Sāsana*. To make the journey more convenient, U Thein Han, Foreign Relations Officer of the Buddha Sāsana Council was deputed to accompany the three missionaries up to Colombo, in the role of a *kappiya*, on behalf of the Government of the Union of Burma.

The Mission for the propagation of *Vipassanā Sāsana* headed by Sayādaw Ashin Sujāta left Burma by air on the 2nd Waxing day of Second Waso (July) 1317 M.E. (1955), reaching Colombo in Ceylon on the 10th, Waxing day. They were warmly welcomed at the Colombo airport by the Minister for Home Affairs of the Government of Ceylon, Minister for Food and Supplies, Secretaries to the Government, Burmese Ambassador U Ba Lwin and his wife Daw Than, members of the Vipassanā Promotion

Society and Ceylon-Burmese *sanghas*. On the day of their arrival at night time, *puja* was performed at King George's Hall of the University of Colombo. On that ceremonious occasion, U Thein Han, Foreign Relations Officer read and presented in English messages of goodwill from Mahāsī Sayādaw and the Buddha Sāsana Council. Thereafter, the Minister for Food and Supplies, the Prime Minister, and the Burmese Ambassador U Ba Lwin respectively made their speeches followed by an introductory address in Burmese by the leader of the religious Mission – Sayādaw U Sujāta. The address delivered by Sayādaw U Sujāta was translated by Sayādaw Ashin Nyānavamsaka of Visuddhirāma Taik.

At the time of the arrival of the Mission to Ceylon, there was no separate building to house the missionaries for propagation of *vipassanā*. However, one *dayikā*, a female benefactor, by the name of Mrs. Nissanka came forward with her immense generosity and offered in donation her own residential building where she and her family were living, for the *Sayādaws* to reside. In that building the *Sayādaws* spent the whole of *vassa* (rainy season). Among the *Sayādaws*, Ashin Zawana (Jāvana) alone knows English. None of them, however understood Sinhalese. Therefore, to assist the three *Sayādaws*, Ashin Zagara Thera of the Colombo Burmese Monastery stayed together with the three *Sayādaws* for the whole period of *vassa*. The building belonging to the donor Mrs. Nissanka was in Mayā Street at Colombo, and the said building and the compound bore the name of Yamuna. Commencing from the date of *Sayādaws'* stay in that building Yamuna, it had become a Meditation Centre. It had become so popular that the moment the name of Yamuna was mentioned; everybody knew it to be the Burmese Vipassanā Meditation Centre.

Although Mahāsī Sayādaw himself did not come over to Ceylon, the work of disseminating the seeds of *vipassanā* in that country had found great success. It was the time when the method of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation was almost obliterated in Ceylon. There had been no Centre or Retreat where meditation practice was systematically taught to yogis who were bent upon meditating. As such, when Burmese monks came over and gave them practical instructions as to how contemplation should be made on

Mindfulness, they were extremely gratified. After plunging themselves into meditation for some time when they began to realize the higher consciousness leading to enlightenment, they became greatly encouraged and very enthusiastic. One yogi, a Ceylonese national, who had then just completed the course in practical exercise of contemplation on Mindfulness stated, “Formerly I was very pleased with the English proverb which says ‘Seeing is believing’. Now that since I have indulged in meditation, I have found the said proverb to be entirely wrong. The bodily and mental processes are very swift and that is, the phenomenal nature of *rūpa* and *nāma* (body and mind) is such that it is constantly in a state of flux being continuously arising and passing away in a whirling motion. Therefore, it cannot possibly be discerned by the naked eyes. It could only be perceived clearly and realized by *vipassanā ñāṇa*, i.e., knowledge of insight. Now seeing and looking at my hands, I have noticed and comprehended the material elements in them incessantly arising and dissolving without remaining constant even for a moment, undergoing a process of continual change being impermanent. (Many times swifter than the wink of an eye or a flash of lightning – nothing lasts). I have therefore corrected and changed the said proverb as ‘Seeing is deceiving’ (a mere deception of the eye, which is apt to mislead).” There is hardly any room to doubt that many people will be found among the Ceylonese yogis who are similar to the aforesaid yogi, i.e., who have had the same experience as the aforesaid yogi.

The members of the Burmese mission for propagation of *vipassanā* were in Ceylon for over a year only. If expressed in terms of *vassas*, they had spent two *vassas*. However, even within a short period of just over one year, twelve permanent meditation centres and seventeen temporary centres had sprung up in all parts of Ceylon. It may therefore be said that the work of propagating *vipassanā* performed by Ashin Sujāta and party was entirely satisfactory. In considering the reason as to why such a remarkable achievement of success had been made in so short a time, it may be stated that it was due to the sound and proper instructions of the Mahāsī Sayādaw and to the correct manner in which the three missionary *Sayādaws* had performed their duties. Of the three

Sayādaws, Ashin Sujāta's aptitude and ability deserved special commendation in this regard. The reason for the spread of *Vipassanā Dhamma* in Ceylon must be attributed to the inexorable effort and perseverance of the *Sayādaw*. Besides, had it not been for the services rendered by the Sinhalese translator – Master (teacher) Ariyaratana to interpret the teachings and instructions of Sayādaw Ashin Sujāta, the propagation of *vipassanā* would not have been as easy as stated. Hence, the fine performances of that teacher must be placed on record in the history of this religious missionary work. This teacher was a learned man who had abandoned the yellow robes. He was fairly well-acquainted with certain portions of the texts of Pāli and Commentaries. He was therefore able to recite the Pāli phrases and explain their meanings as well, in the course of his interpretation of the teachings and recitations made by Sayādaw U Sujāta in Burmese. When interpreting, it was not done one sentence after another at every pause in the delivery of the discourse, but done after about every fifteen minutes' speech at any one time. Ordinary intelligent persons might not be able to interpret in the like manner. The speech or the discourse made by the *Sayādaw* was not prepared in writing beforehand, but was extempore. Hence, the ability of the teacher Ariyaratana was indeed worthy of high praise.

To get the opportunity of utilizing the services of that personage as an Interpreter was a stroke of luck for the promotion of *Vipassanā Dhamma* in Ceylon. Another person who was to be equally thankful for was Ashin Sutimatipala, the Ceylonese *Sayādaw*. The said *Sayādaw* knew Burmese language as much as the teacher Ariyaratana did. That *Sayādaw*'s teachings and practical instructions had served as a great supporting factor in the propagation of *vipassanā*. It must be stated that no matter how efficient and skilful the missionaries might be, and how many good interpreters might have been available, *Vipassanā Sāsana* would not have spread so quickly without the enthusiastic and energetic assistance of the Ambassador U Ban Lwin. From the time of making initial overtures by the Burma Government to promote *Vipassanā Sāsana* in Ceylon till his return to Burma, the Burmese Ambassador to Ceylon, had relentlessly taught and earnestly made

exhortations in connection with the dissemination of *vipassanā*. Being a man of eloquence, his speeches were greatly appreciated by the audience. It would not be incorrect to say that it was because of this popularity and influence, people belonging to the higher strata of society had come to the meditation centres to practise contemplation on mindfulness. Such being the case, the presence of the Ambassador U Ba Lwin in Ceylon at that juncture had proved to be a supporting factor in the matter of enhancing *Vipassanā Dhamma* in Ceylon.

After the successful establishment of the 12 permanent meditation centres and 17 temporary retreats, the three members of the missionary team left Ceylon by ship on the second Waxing day of Tazaungmon (November) in the year 1318 M.E. (1956).

MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S VISIT TO CEYLON

The missionary work for the propagation of *Sāsana* in Ceylon was carried out by Sayādaw Ashin Sujāta and party while residing temporarily at the residence of the lay female devotee Mrs. Nissanka. With sheer generosity, Mrs. Nissanka offered her residential building in donation to the *Sayādaw*. She requested the *Sayādaw* to accept that building which was donated by her and to make use of it freely for the promotion of *Sāsana*. Considering that the building was not suitable for the purpose because of its close proximity to the main thoroughfare and its lack of space, *Sayādaw* had refused to accept the offer. The need for a permanent headquarters for the promotion of *Sāsana* being considered essential, *Sayādaw* had spoken about it to the Vipassanā Propagation Society. According to this advice, the members of the Society had requested the government to provide a suitable place in Colombo. The request had met with no success during the time of the Prime Minister Kotawalla. Only later, when the new Government came into power under the leadership of Bandernaikē, the request was granted. The site allotted was a plot of land measuring about one acre along the McCarthy Road near the British Embassy. Being a quiet place, it was suitable for the purpose of using it as a meditation centre. On the second Waxing day of Thadingyut (October) in 1318 M.E. (1956), the Prime Minister

himself laid the foundation stone for the building to be constructed. The *Sayādaws* had however, returned to Burma while the buildings were under construction. Owing to the untiring efforts of the Lanka Vipassanā Propagation Society in connection with the construction of *kammaṭṭhāna* buildings, two *lakhs* rupees worth of one Dhammayon building, and two buildings worth twenty-thousand rupees, for the accommodation of yogis, were completed in the year 1320 M.E. (1958). In the same year, the said society had extended an invitation to Mahāsī Sayādaw, Sayādaw Ashin Sujāta and one other monk to pay a visit to Ceylon. In response to this invitation, Mahāsī Sayādaw and party proceeded to Ceylon by plane via India on the 12th Waxing day of Natdaw (December) 1320 M.E. (1958). *Sayādaw's* party comprised Ashin Sujāta, Ashin Nandavaṁsa, Ashin Ariawka, Ashin Paṇḍita and Sayādaw Ashin Pannava of Pegu Yeikthā and also other lay disciples, both male and female, apart from Mahāsī Sayādaw himself.

JOURNEY TO INDIA

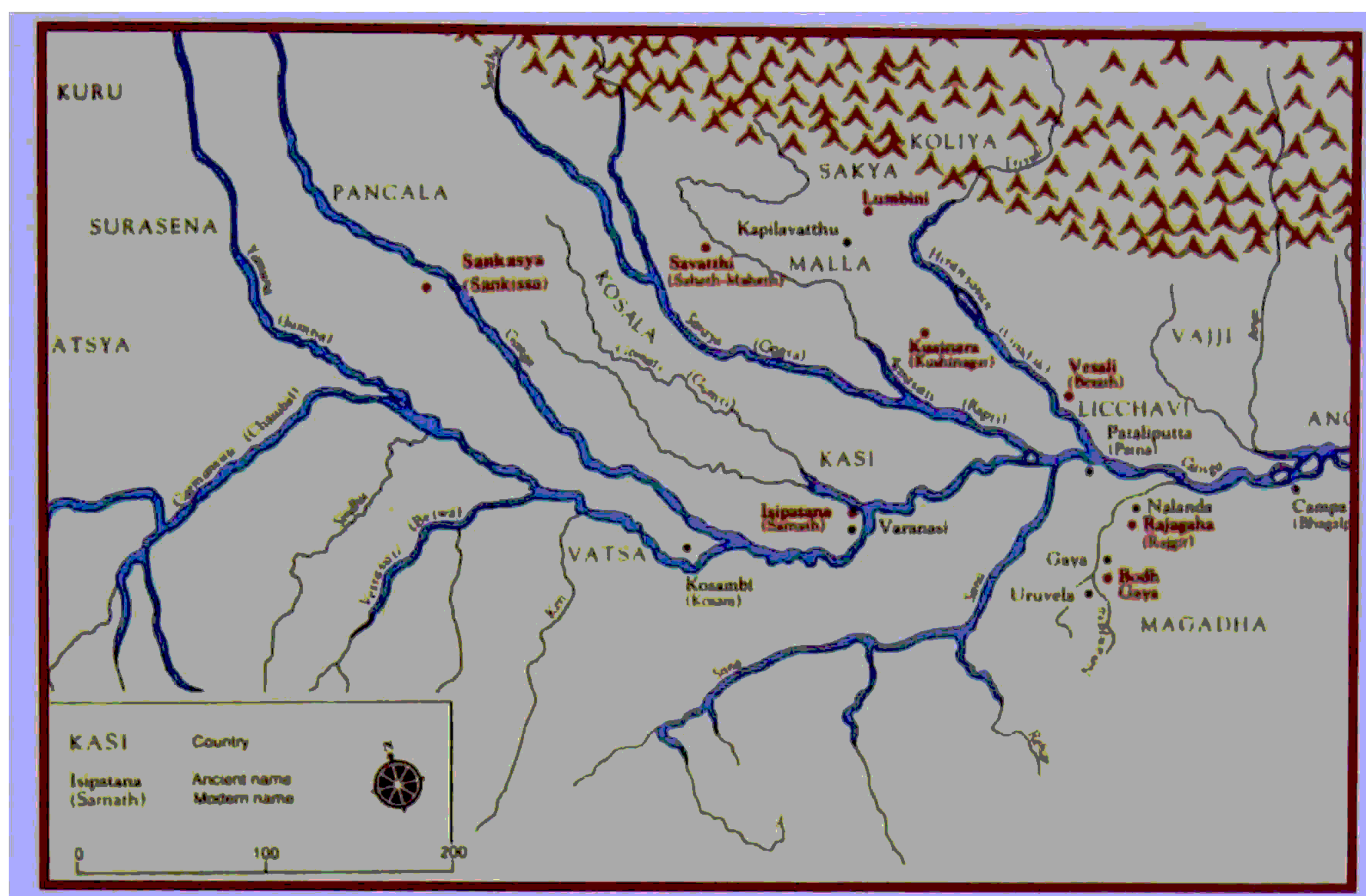
This was not the first trip to India for Mahāsī Sayādaw. Previously, he had been to many places of pilgrimage in India. For those people who had not been to India before, a program was included to enable them to visit the most renowned sacred places. Moreover, *Sayādaw* himself having had an intention to revisit certain places of pilgrimage which were worth keeping in memory forever, and to visit new places where *Sayādaw* had not been before, the overall pilgrimage tour that had been covered was pretty extensive. In the course of visiting such places, *Sayādaw* had also delivered discourses and made consultations relating to *Dhamma* to gain benefits for the *Sāsana*. He had also taken notes of a number of things which were worthy of special attention.

After their departures from Rangoon, the first stop was at Calcutta. In Calcutta, there were no ancient religious monuments of historical renown. Therefore, to acquire general knowledge, the museum and the Jain Monastery were visited. In the course of his visit to the museum, special attention was given to the observation of a dead body of a man preserved in chemical solution over 4,000 years ago. The general opinion was that ancient people were taller

MAP OF INDIA



The Lotus Path – 8 Places of Worship
(See BOOK REF. 6 on page 140)



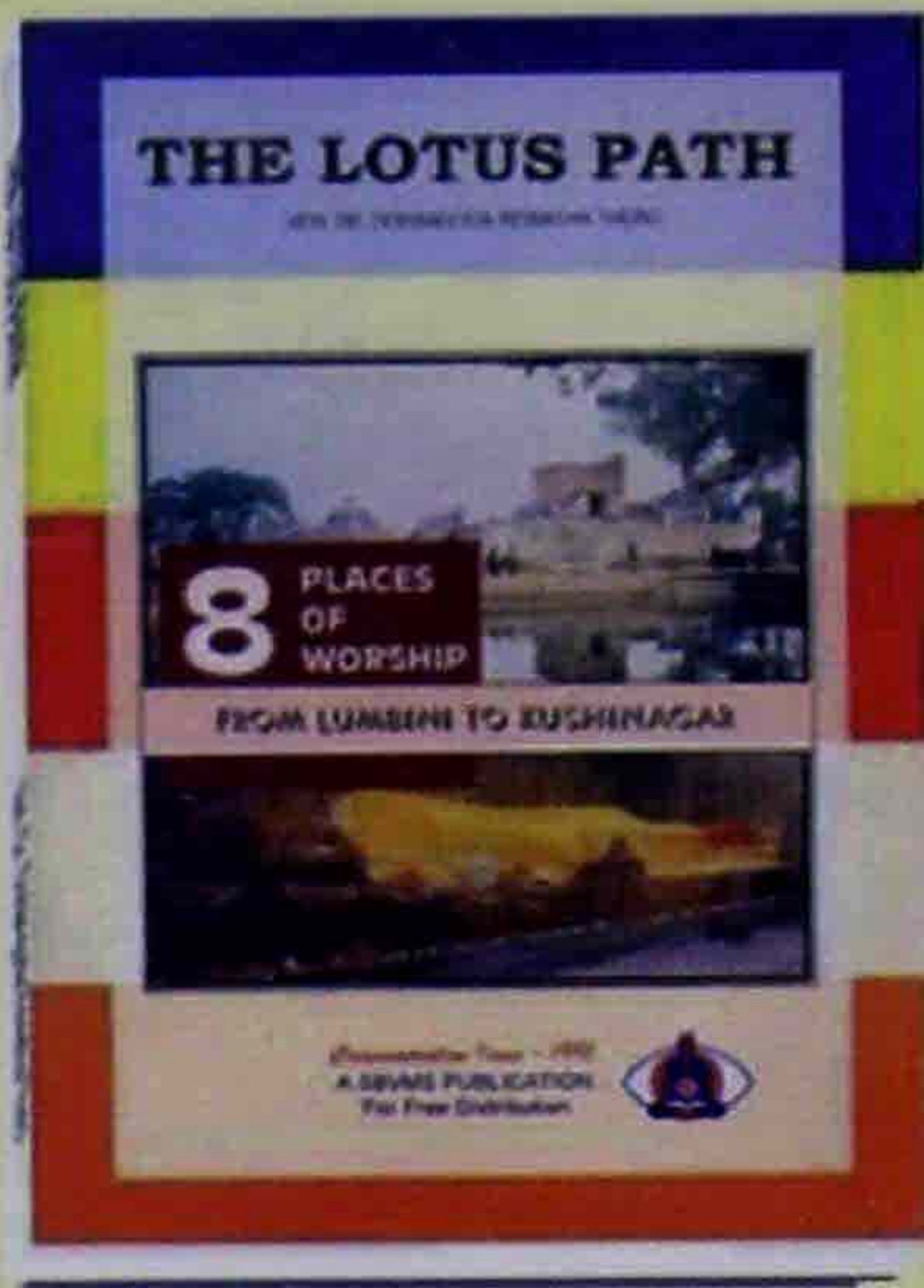
MAP OF THE GANGES BASIN

The 8 Places of interest concerned with the Buddha's life are highlighted in red.

in height than the present-day people. Now that it was disclosed that the man who was said to have lived at a period over 4,000 years ago, was only about 5 feet and 4 inches in height. The height of that dead man did not even come up to that of the *Sayādaw*. Hence, *Sayādaw* had remarked that there could not be much difference in height and stature between the people of the ancient times and those living at present. Later, this remark was found to have been confirmed all the more after having seen the old site and ruins of Jetāvana Monastery and Nalanda Kyaung.

From Calcutta, *Sayādaw* and party continued their journey to Buddhagāyā (Bodhgāyā). Thereafter, places, such as, Bodhgāyā Mahābodi Shrine which stands on the site where Buddha had gained Enlightenment, the Nerajarā River and Senā Nigon (village) were visited. The river Nerajarā was very famous in the literary world as the river where the Blessed One floated the golden jar in making a vow. This is the river generally yearned for and visualized through book knowledge. It was considered to be a big river like the Irrawaddy flowing ceaselessly throughout the whole year. However, at the time of *Sayādaw's* arrival there in the month of Pyatho (January), the river had turned into a stretch of sand-bank without any trace of water in it. The river could hold water only

BOOK REF. 6 : THE LOTUS PATH **by Ven. Dr. Dodangoda Rewatha Thero**



The LOTUS PATH gives basic information about the Eight important places of the Buddha's life. The eight places mentioned in the book, from Lumbini to Kushinagar, are collectively termed 'The Buddha's Empire' in India.

For an ordinary person, before going into the deeper philosophy of Buddhism, it is beneficial to study the Buddha's life

and the important places that were connected with the life he led and His Doctrine.

It was Anagarika Dharmapala who rescued Bodhgāyā when it was in a neglected and desolated condition. He fought a legal battle and dedicated his life to the restoration of the Bodhgāyā Temple for the Buddhists of the world and revived the noble religion in the land of its origin.

This book by Ven. Dr. Dadangoda Rewatha Thero is a fitting tribute to Anagarika Dharmapala, the greatest Buddhist missionary of modern times after the Arahāt Mahā Mahinda.



Anagarika Dhamapala

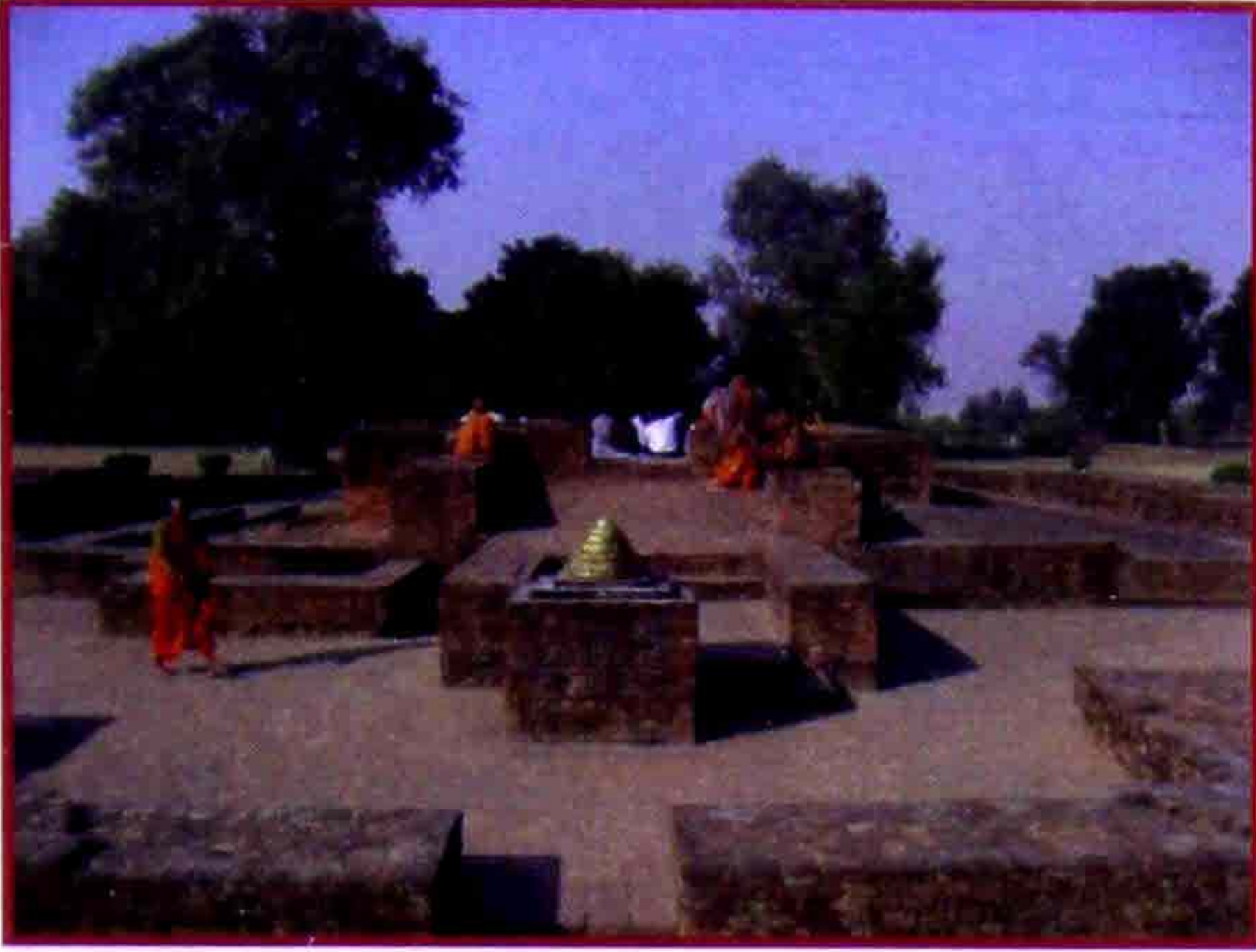
(Ven. Sri Devamitta Dharmapala)
17.9.1864 – 29.4.1933

Calcutta

12th August 1991

(Extracted from Preface & Introduction of the book)

during the rainy season.



Monks at ruins of Jetavana Monastery, Sravasti



Gandhakuti – Remains of Buddha's hut at Jetavana Monastery, Sravasti



The Magnificent Buddha Rupa in main shrine hall of the Mahabodhi Temple.

Bodhgāyā is undoubtedly the holiest of Buddhist shrines.

The image of the Buddha is in sitting posture touching the earth by his right hand. In this posture the Buddha accomplished the supreme enlightenment. The statue is of black stone but it has been gilded by the devotees.



BODHGĀYĀ SHRINE

The present structure is relatively recent dating back to the 19th century and stands on a site of a series of temples built here since Emperor Asoka's reign, c. 3rd century B.C.

ONE YUJANA EQUALS EIGHT MILES

Sayādaw and party went to Rājagaha from Bodhgāyā. The

distance between the two being only about 40 miles, they reached Rājagaha in about 1 ½ hours' time. At that stage, discussions went on making comparisons between 'mile' and 'yujana'. If calculated according to Abhidhanappadipika, a *yujana* would be about twelve and a half miles (12 ½ miles). Some said eight miles equal one *yujana* while others stated that a thousand *ta(s)* would make a *yujana*. As such, if one would come across the word *yujana* in a text book, it became well-nigh impossible to decide as to how it should be calculated to know by the linear measure. Now that since an opportunity had afforded the *Sayādaw* while journeying, to find out the distance between places according to what was given in the texts, a distance of five (5) *yujana* between Gayā and Rājagaha as stated in the Commentary, was found to be forty (40) miles when calculation was done; hence, it falls in line with the statement that ONE YUJANA equals EIGHT MILES. The Bo-trees was about three (3) *gavuts* away from Gayā according to the Commentary. As ONE *yujana* equals FOUR *gavuts*, it will come to 3/5 (three-fifths) of a *yujana*. In terms of miles, as the distance is a little over six miles, one *yujana* would be equal to eight miles. The Commentary says that Rājagaha and Nalanda have a distance of one *yujana*. The two places are now therefore eight miles away from one another. Mahāsī Sayādaw had therefore given his remarks that when distances were to be worked out from place to place or from village to town, etc., in terms of *yujana*, it seems proper to calculate the distance on the scale of 'One *Yujana*' to 'Eight Miles', i.e., (1 YUJANA = 8 MILES).

Again, from Rājagaha, *Sayādaw* and party went to Nalanda town where the famous ancient Nalanda University of Buddha's *Sāsana* had once stood. This Nalanda town was well-known even in the lifetime of the Lord Buddha. It was the town resided by the layman Upāli who had originally revered and adopted the Niganda (Jain Sect), but who had later become a close disciple of Buddha with whom he met after coming over to contest his doctrine with the Blessed One. It was a town that was included in the last Journey of Buddha before his *Mahāparinibbāna*. It has become very popular up till the present day because of the existence of the Buddha *Sāsana* University which was established since about 700 years after



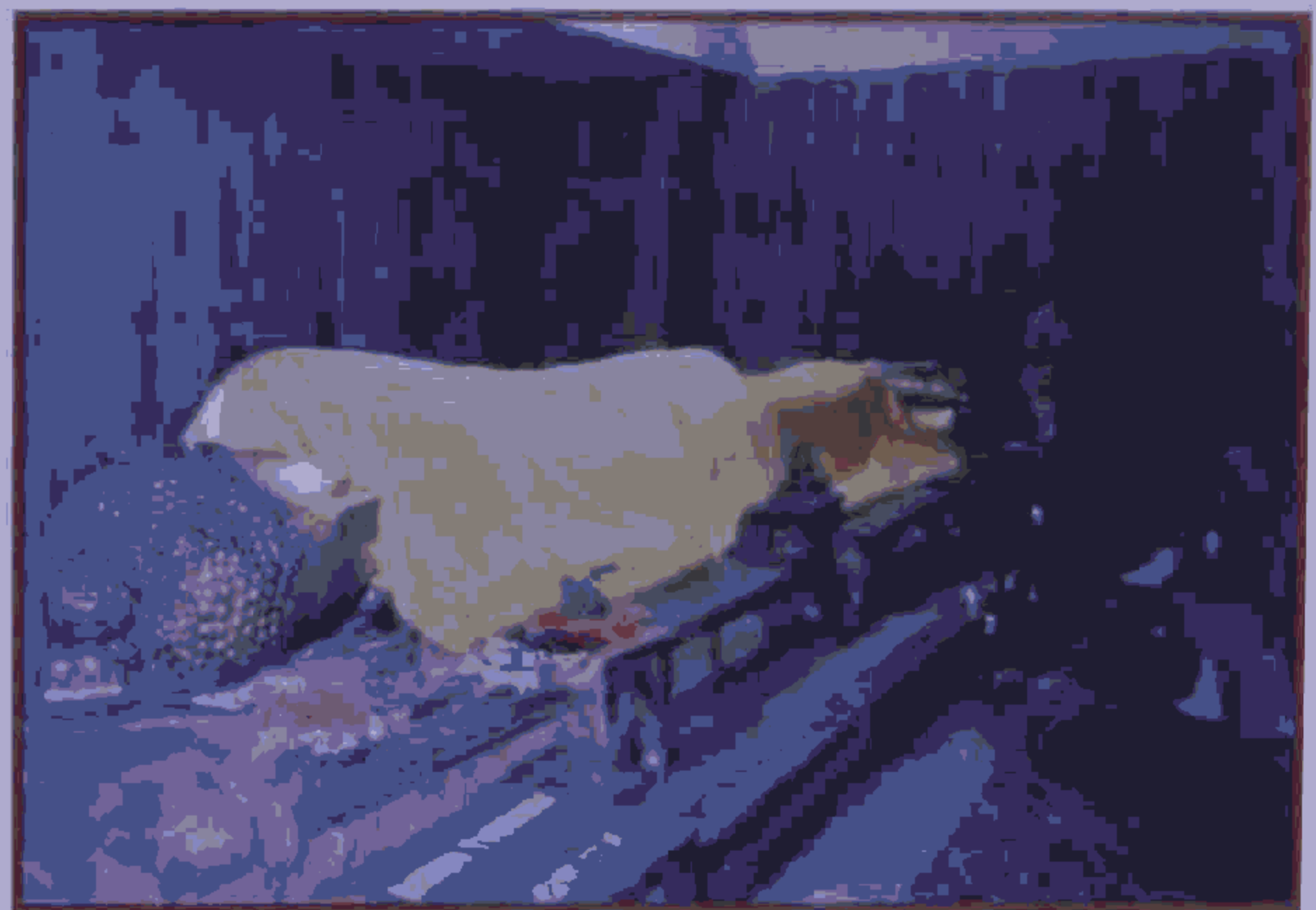
THE SĀRIPUTTA STUPA - RUINS OF NALANDA UNIVERSITY

Nalanda – one of the world's first residential universities (with dormitories for students) was founded in the 5th Century. At its peak, in the 7th century A.D., it accommodated over 10,000 students and 2,000 teachers.



The Dhammacakka (Dhamek) Stupa, Sarnath

Marks the exact spot where the Buddha delivered His first Discourse



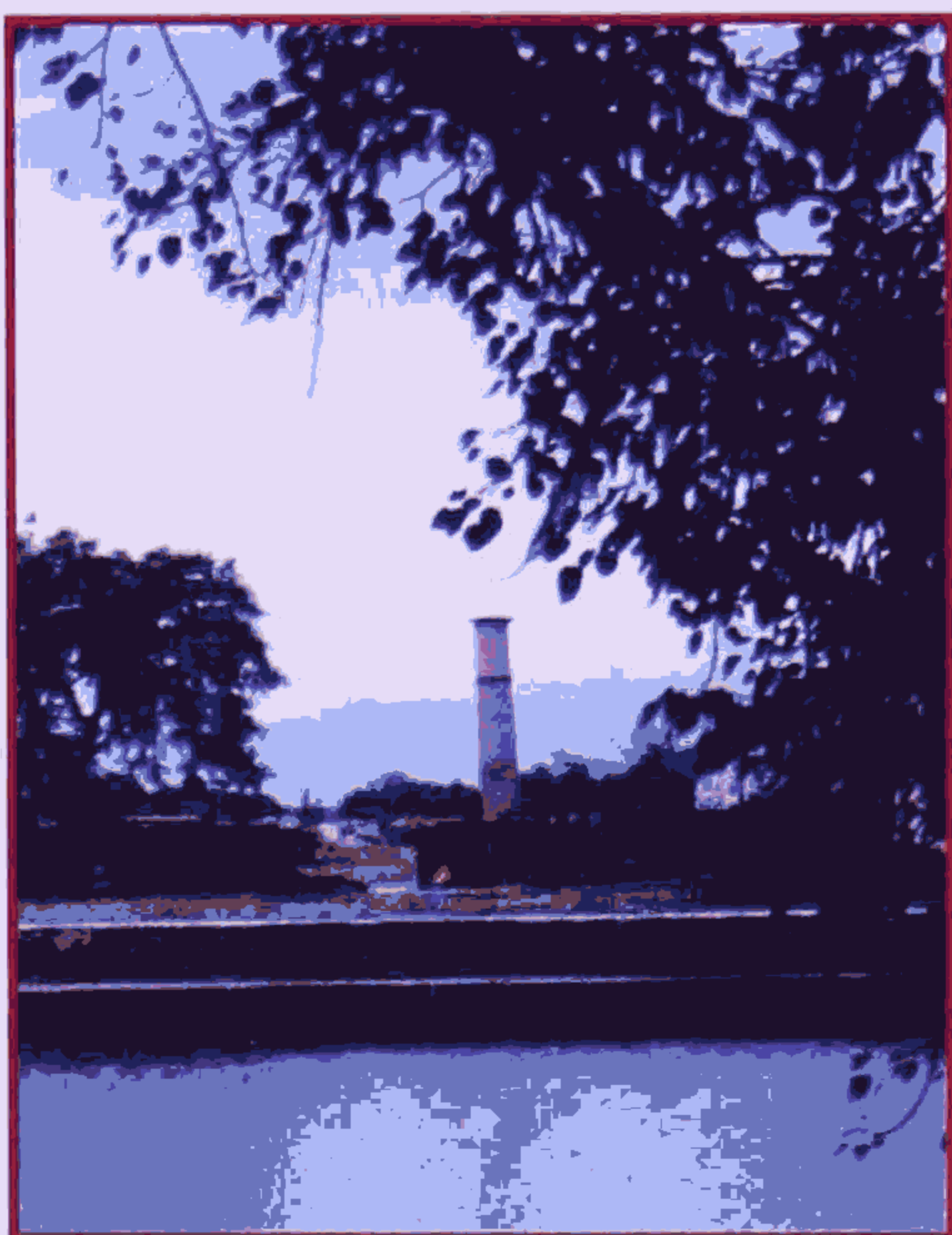
Reclining Buddha rūpa in the Nirvana Temple at Kusinara

“Subject to decay are all component things. Strive on with diligence.”
- the last words of the Buddha -

the *Mahāparinibbāna* of the Lord Buddha.

From thence, *Sayādaw* and party proceeded to Benares. From Benares they went on to the Deer Park at Sarnath (Holy Isipatana) the place the Buddha first proclaimed His First Discourse after his Enlightenment; and then they continued their journey to Kusinara. On return from Kusinara, they dropped in at Gorakhpur where at one religious Society's premises, Mahāsī Sayādaw

delivered a discourse on *Vipassanā-Dhamma*. The discourse was translated into English by an interpreter, U Ba San. From there, they made their way to Lumbini Gardens and then went to Srāvasti (Savutthi). At Srāvasti after seeing the site of the famous Jetāvana Monastery, etc., they returned to New Delhi via Lucknow and Agra.



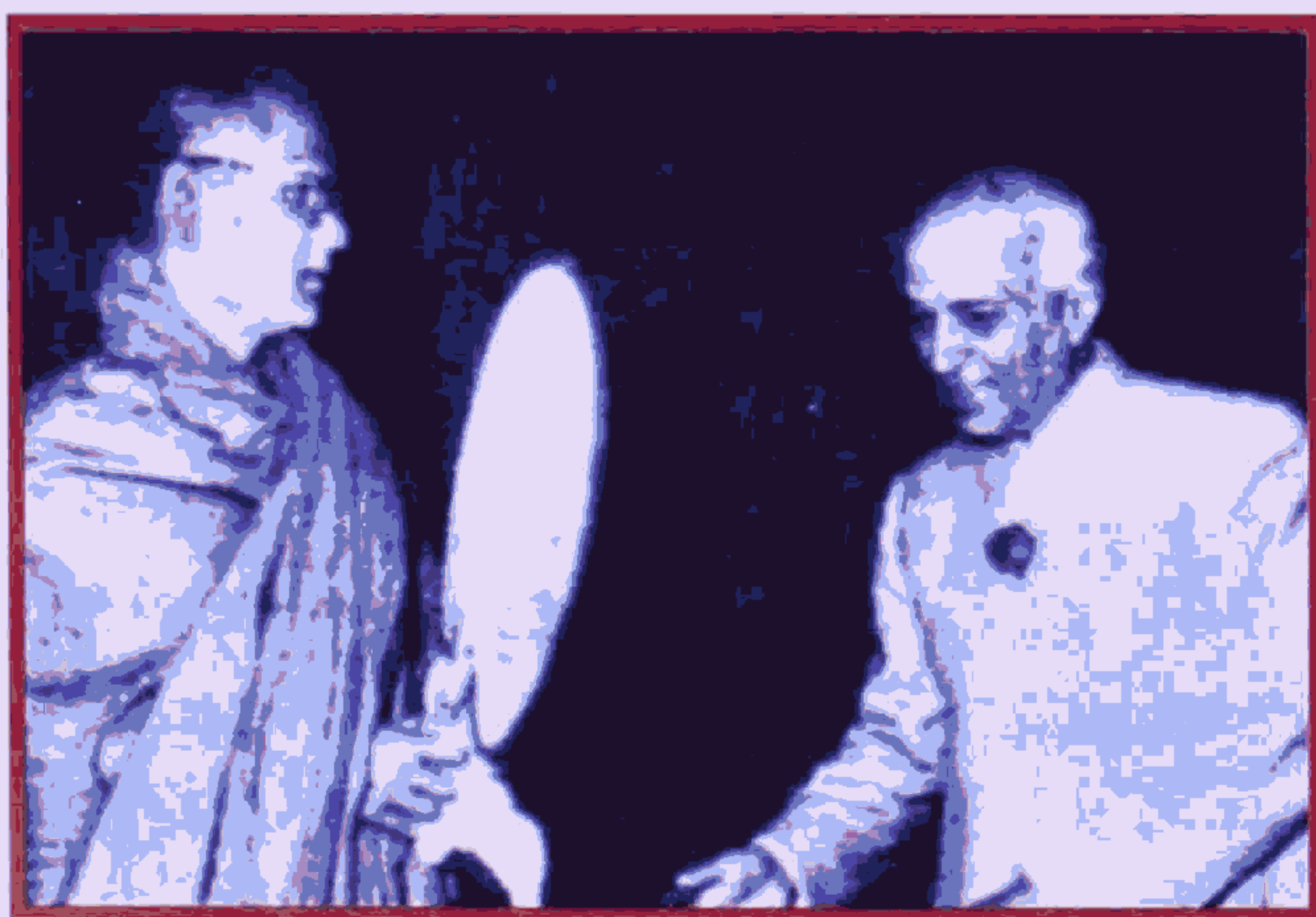
The Royal Lumbini Gardens



**The Mahā Māyā Devi Temple,
Lumbini Gardens**

The pond marks location where Queen Mahā Māyā took a bath before giving birth to the Lord Buddha.

MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER NEHRU



**Mahāsī Sayādaw with Prime Minister
of India, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru**

Office where he had an interview with Shri Nehru, the Prime Minister of India.

The next day after his arrival at New Delhi, Mahāsī Sayādaw gave his blessings to all down-trodden Untouchables who were Buddhists, and all of them took the Eight Precepts, i.e., the eight rules of morality (*sīla*) as given by the *Sayādaw*. At 9.30 a.m., *Sayādaw* visited the Foreign

The conversation that had taken place between the two were as stated below:

Nehru: “Your Reverend Sir. Have you ever been to India in the past? If so, what were the places you have visited?”

Sayādaw: “Yes, I had been to Bodhgāyā, Sarnath and Kusinara previously. I’m very pleased with my present trip for having found a lot of improvement in a number of Buddhist shrines, temples and other religious edifices for which repairs have been done. I hope the Government will continue to make more endeavour in bringing about better improvements.”

Nehru: “Your Reverend Sir. It has been possible for the Government of India to make such improvements in view of its policy to hold the Buddha Jayanti Celebrations.”

Sayādaw: “O, Yes. According to the old saying of Buddhist religion, the coming 2,500th *Mahāparinibbāna* Annual Celebration will be a precursor of the revival of Buddha’s *Sāsana* and *Dhamma* in the Continent of India.”

Nehru: “If the Rules of Life and Discipline, the preachings and the teachings of the Buddha, can be propagated more widely, it would, I think be of great benefit to this country. This point would also concern the whole world which really needs to have that kind of doctrine. This kind of noble *Dhamma* which can bring the inner peace of mind and serenity will be able to extirpate and dispel the growing vicious and raging inner feelings and thoughts of human beings and the inherent dangers of atomic bombs.”

Sayādaw: (Getting pleased). “In this mundane world, greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) are at the root of all quarrels and conflicts. All kinds of activities relating to the affairs of the *Sāsana* are meant to eradicate or completely destroy all vices, evils and injustices. I’m hoping against hope that the Prime Minister will give encouragement to the affairs of the *Sāsana*.”

Nehru: “In this Universe even during the lifetime of the Buddha, the existence of good and virtuous men and women who had striven hard to lead a noble life and of those who had held dissentient or diametrically opposite views of thought had brought about much trouble and annoyance. I have my deepest reverence and regards for the Buddha’s *Dhamma* (Teachings). However, as a Prime Minister,

I cannot possibly give special favour to any one particular religion in preference to another. In any case, as all the Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and other religionists living in the country have been doing their best for the welfare and interests of the people, I must inevitably encourage all their religious doctrines. The business of propagating the *Dhamma* is, of course, within the domain of the missionaries or senior monks like the *Sayādaw*.”

Sayādaw: (With *mettā* to the Prime Minister) – “I give my best wishes for your Excellency’s personal happiness and well-being and prosperity of your country.”

(*Ref: Personal History of Mahāsī Thera, page 237-238*)

In the evening, *Sayādaw* personally visited the Asoka Vihāra monastery which was earmarked to be used as a meditation centre. On the following morning, he visited the Khit-Thit School in response to the invitation accorded to him and then taught on *Mettā Dhamma* and the virtues of fostering compassionate feeling by putting oneself into the shoes of another, to all students of both sexes. On that same day in the afternoon, *Sayādaw* made a courtesy call on the President of the Republic of India, Dr Rajandara Prasad, and at 5.30pm in the evening, he delivered a discourse on *vipassanā Dhamma* at the Burmese Embassy. On the next day, he paid a visit to the Vice-President of the Republic of India at the latter’s invitation and had had some talks.

The Vice-President was Dr. Saravepalli Radha Krishnan, a man of intellect who had played a significant role in disseminating the Indian Abhidhamma in the Western countries. He had not only written the two volumes of *Dhamma* called the Indian Dassana and many other texts of *Dhamma* concerning Dassana, but also had written the texts on Gotama Buddha Dhammapada Pāli (English-Burmese translation). He had also assimilated a vast knowledge of Pāli Piṭaka. However, being a man of erudition who had a firm conviction in Hinduism, his writings was the reiteration of the new expressions of thoughts according to the Upanishads concerning Buddha’s teachings or utterances. In other words, he was a person who had written with his sole conviction according to his

unshakeable belief in Upanishads describing the Buddha's teachings or Buddhism as a different version of faith and original conception contained in Upanishads. For having written as such, he had been very vehemently criticized and attacked by Rāhula San-kicci (Please see 'Buddhist View' by Rāhula San-kicci). This person (Dr. S. Rahda Krishnan) was quite astute and shrewd. He had confined his conversations with Mahāsī Sayādaw only to some portions of Pāḷi from the Pāḷi Piṭaka on which both of them would have identical views. No discussions were made. It is likely that he had already known Mahāsī Sayādaw as an intellectual person well-versed in Buddhist doctrines and literature. Hence, it seems probable that he avoided discussions relating to the affairs of the *Sāsana* because if he had by chance mentioned the relationship between Upanishads and Buddhism, he could have met with a rebuff from Mahāsī Sayādaw with a number of relevant Pāḷi quotations and concrete supporting evidences which he wouldn't, of course, like to hear.



The Great Stupa, Sanchi

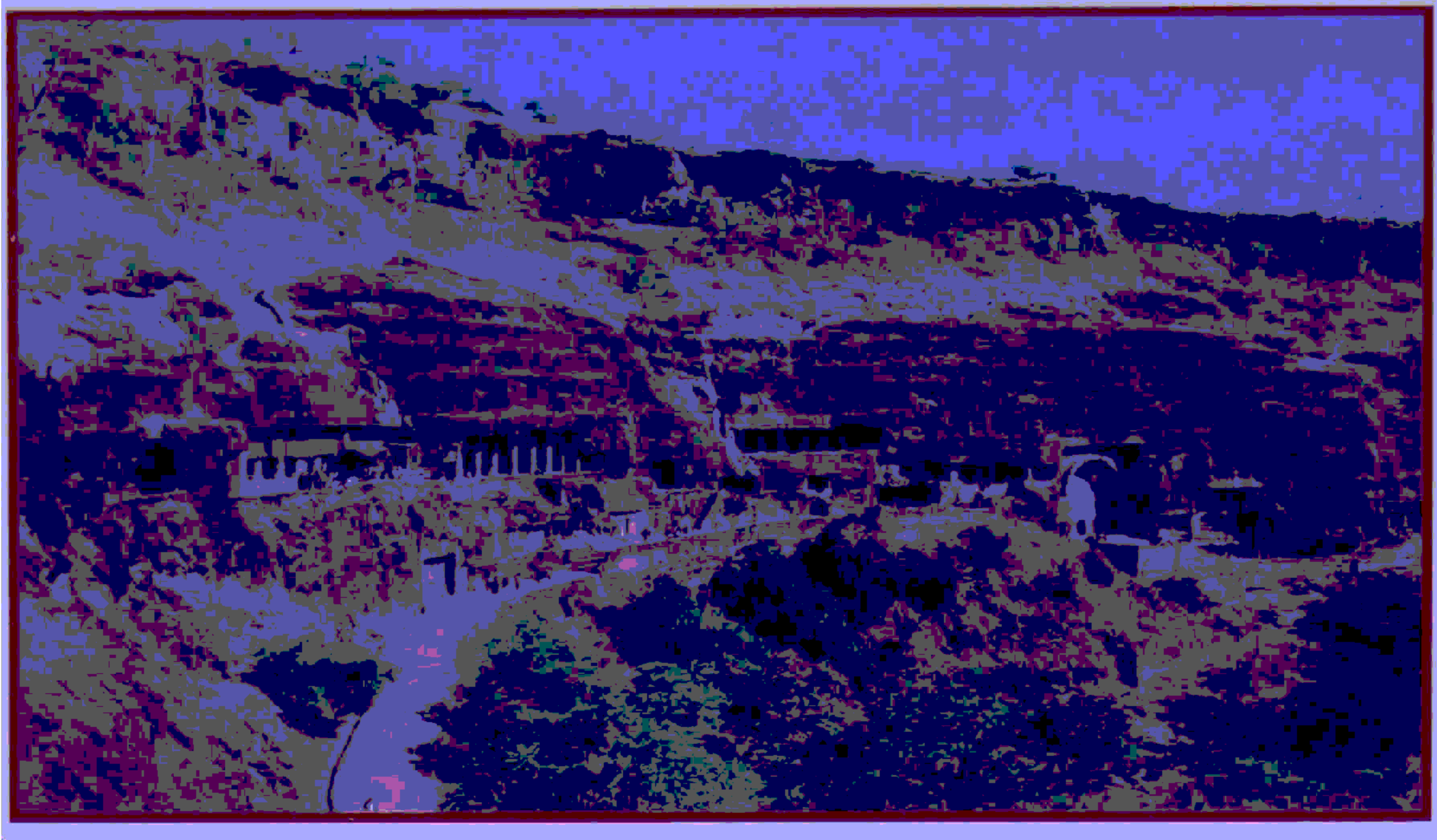
The oldest stupa in the world is thought to date back to the reign of Emperor Asoka, c. 3rd century B.C.



Close View of Gateway

The gateway is decorated with intricate carved scenes depicting the life of the Buddha.

Mahāsī Sayādaw and party then went from New Delhi to Sanchi, and from there, proceeded to Ajanta Caves. At Sanchi, there was a *stupa* which resembled the Kaunghumdaw Zedi (shrine) in Sagaing, Burma. Ajanta was of international renown. Big caves were hewn out of a very big solid mass of stony earth of a mountain. In the interior walls of these caves, a number of exquisite frescoes and paintings could be found. In some of the caves out of a total of twenty-nine enormous caves, mural paintings on the walls were in



THE AJANTA CAVES

The caves are strung out along the sheer rock face of a cliff. The caves are decorated with pillars and elaborate doorways. Since 1983, the Ajanta Caves have been a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Entrance to one of the caves



Walkway – Ajanta Caves

fairly good condition. Though it was not exactly known when these big caves were hewn, the ancient archaeologists had guessed that these were hewn during the period between the Second Century B.C. and Seventh Century A.D. It was stated that Buddhist monks had dwelt in these caves. These frescoes and sculptures portraying in epic form ecclesiastical and secular life with which the caves at Ajanta were adorned, were believed to have been the work of art of the said Buddhist monks, since at that time Mahāyāna Buddhism had already made great strides in India. The original wall paintings which had been truthfully copied were distributed in the form of books and other documents. These frescoes and paintings of Ajanta



BODHISATTA PADMAPANI
(in Ajanta Cave 1)

One of the most famous murals showing lotus-bearing Bodhisatta.



MURAL OF THE BUDDHA
(in Ajanta Cave 17)

Mural showing the Buddha standing before his wife and son.

have now become world-famous. The interesting point for the Burmese is that the frescoes and paintings found in the various temples of Pagan were similar to the paintings and frescoes of the Ajanta. Mahāsī Sayādaw had made a passing remark that the brilliant frescoes and sculptures such as the figure of Buddha's mother (Mahā Māyā), etc., are very much similar to the mural paintings and frescoes on inner faces of walls in the prominent Ānanda Temple of Pagan.

From Ajanta, Mahāsī Sayādaw and party went to Bombay. Immediately after their arrival, at the request of all Bombay Buddhists, Mahāsī Sayādaw visited the Mahā Bohdi Society and delivered a discourse on *vipassanā*. The entire congregation was highly pleased with the teachings which had indeed given them full satisfaction.

From Bombay, Mahāsī Sayādaw and party continued their journey to Madras where they rested for three days. While staying

thus, at their own leisure, they visited a place called Kanchipuram Town, 45 miles away from Madras, where the eminent Commentator Acariya Buddhaghosa, Ashin Dhammapāla, the ‘*Sango*’ instructor Ashin Anuruddha, had once lived. Being a place where famous personages such as the first Buddhist Commentator and Buddha’s apostle had resided, it must have been very prosperous and popular with Buddha’s *Sāsana* highly flourishing in those old days. However, at the present time, all traces of Buddha’s *Sāsana* have become obliterated. Only dignified and imposing Hindu Sriva Temples were found standing. What a sorrowful sight indeed! But *Sayādaw* and party had to find solace by looking at them with the eye of *Dhamma* reflecting on the Law of Impermanence. After three days’ rest in Madras, they continued their journey to Ceylon by plane.

Throughout their journey in India, just as *Sayādaw* and party had found happiness in having opportunity to go on pilgrimages, to teach and seek for general knowledge of the historical sites in the country, and the characteristics of its people, etc., they had also come across a great deal of annoyances and interferences from the high caste Hindu Brahmins. Their interferences and meddlings were found ineffective, but prior arrangements made relating to the tour programme had to be scratched. This had caused a nuisance and brought about a lot of awkwardness. The reason for such interferences was because of the *Sayādaw* and party’s relationship in communicating with the down-caste Indian nationals – the Untouchables who were Buddhists.

In India, at one time, there had been a most detestable and meaningless superstition of caste distinctions. The Hindus of the high Brahmin class believed that they were the noblest, while the rest were ignoble and abominable. The fourfold caste system was classified as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra (Sudra). Among them, the position of an individual who belonged to the lowest caste (viz.: Shudra) was the worst. Persons belonging to this caste were regarded by other people of higher caste as the meanest of the lot, and were employed only in menial jobs. Though their religion was Hinduism, they were prevented from listening to Veda texts on *Dhamma*. There had been many restrictions deterring them from listening to Veda *Dhamma*. Even lower than the caste of

Sudra, was a class known as Untouchables. It was believed that a Brahmin of a higher caste would get 'contaminated' by the 'touch' of any Untouchables. If he perchance happened to 'touch' a Brahmin, the one who was so touched bodily had immediately become contaminated, and if the incident took place on his way to any other place, he should return home quickly, bathe and cleanse himself, instead of proceeding further. In short, despite the fact that the Untouchables are human beings, they had been deprived of their just human rights. They were not allowed to draw or use water from a well in use by other persons belonging to the higher caste. If they want to have some water, they were to wait for hours at the well and if a person of higher caste would come, they had to fall upon their knees, as it were, or in other words, humbly implore that person to get water from that well and give them a little by pouring some water down into their water-pots or receptacles.

If they luckily found some Brahmins who were kind-hearted, they might get some water. If however, they came across a conservative and heartless Brahmin, they might even be scolded, howled or driven out. They were so much down-trodden. This sort of condition was looked upon with displeasure by the great Indian Leader Mahatma Gandhi who had made the greatest gesture of his life on behalf of the Untouchables. Likewise, Premier Nehru and others who were wise and broadminded did not approve of this caste distinction. Therefore, even before India's attainment of independence, they had been endeavouring very hard for the total abolishment of the privileged class called Brahmins and their inhumane treatment of other human beings living on the same soil. After her Independence, Indian Government had by law authorized the judicial and executive authorities of the country to give the offenders their due punishment so that they might refrain from such unsocial practices in future. But as this system of unjust social discrimination had its root as far back as over many thousand years, it had become almost an incurable malady which will not be easily treated and got rid of from the minds of their staunch countrymen.

The man who had vehemently fought against this unfair oppression and who had helped to erase the caste system in human society was an Untouchable by the name of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

(M.A., Ph.D., D. Litt., LL.D.). Ambedekar after completing his basic education in India went to the United States and England for further studies eventually attaining the Doctorate Degree and LL.D. with flying colours. Later, he came back to India to promote the education of his own class of people, the Untouchables, and also made numerous attempts to remove this unfair and unreasonable barrier of class distinction. After India had achieved its independence, he became a Judicial Minister to the Government of India, and drew up the Constitution of India. In part III 'Fundamental Rights', Article 15 (1) (2) of the Constitution of India, it was prescribed that there should be no discrimination against any citizen on grounds of any religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, etc., etc. This Constitutional Law had been prescribed with the unanimous approval of the Congress amidst echoes of the great applause.



Dr. Ambedekar

(1891 – 1956)

It seemed that Dr. Ambedekar had his grievance against Hindu religion which had so cruelly prescribed downright discrimination between the same human beings giving Brahmanism the complete predominance over the social and economic life of the people. Therefore, he together with millions of his followers had become converts as Buddhists and professed the Buddhist religion which imposes no restriction whatsoever against anyone or any race, caste, sex, faith, etc. Up till the present day, a considerable number of low-caste Hindus have gradually and inspiringly come into the domain of Buddha *Sāsana* on their own free will.

The so-called low-caste people who had been converted into Buddhists quite recently, made arrangements to pay their homage to Mahāsī Sayādaw, to offer meals – '*soon*', to listen to his discourses and to practise meditation, immediately after they had heard of the *Sayādaw's* arrival in India. On the other hand, the high class Brahmins felt dissatisfied when they came to know that these low caste Hindus who were oppressed by them had become Buddhists. As the law of the country had already prohibited the class

distinctions, high caste Hindus would not dare openly interfere. Therefore, the railway station masters who were Brahmins made all possible attempts to frustrate the arrangements made for the reception of the *Sayādaw* by the low-caste Hindus. As Mahāsī Sayādaw and his entourage had been allotted a Special Railway Carriage to travel by train, the station masters of the Railway Department purposely let the Special Carriage be attached to the next train instead of an earlier train to which the carriage should have been attached. By doing so, Mahāsī Sayādaw and party would reach the appointed destination quite late. In this manner, Mahāsī Sayādaw had met hindrances, three times, namely, once when visiting Agra; once when visiting Busit from Ajanta; and once *en route* to Bombay. Nevertheless, although the arrangements for feeding the monks fell out of place, the holding of the Assemblies for teaching and delivering discourses were not affected. On the occasion of teaching a discourse at Busit, after Mahāsī Sayādaw had been molested in the manner stated above on his way to Agra, the *Sayādaw* gave the audience a lengthy teaching for a duration of two hours fully supported by relevant Pāli texts of the *Dhamma* on a subject in which he mentioned in explicit terms that there was no creator of human beings or of sentient beings according to Buddha's teachings, and that a person could not simply become 'noble' because of his caste or of his birth and could not become lowly or ignoble because of his humble birth. All these and the state of prosperity or poverty, etc., could only be brought about or caused by one's own action (*kamma*), good or bad, committed in past existences and then, *Sayādaw* had emphasized the facts that according to what the Buddha had taught, the high and low status of a person, the noble and ignoble, is the resultant effect of the past *kamma* – meritorious or demeritorious deeds performed by one in his past existences and not because of his caste. The whole audience gave their unanimous approval with great applause by hand-clapping.

A few of the die-hard caste Brahmins who had given as much interference as possible to Buddhist low-caste people has been described in the foregoing. As what had been done by them being within their power to do so, the aggrieved party could not find

any remedy. The situation was such that it would be proper for the aggrieved party to nurse the spirit of tolerance, without ill-will, and to consider the episode as merely an incident regarding it as just ‘unfortunate’ and looking upon those people as merely ‘mischievous’, or ‘evil-doers’. These people might have felt more or less happy for their being able to molest in the way described but this sort of molestation or interference would only deepen the wounded feelings of hatred borne by the low-caste oppressed people, and therefore what momentary happiness they had seemingly enjoyed was obviously not as commensurate with the increasing hatred that had gripped the minds of those poor people, against them. In the long run, this sort of attitude could bring disastrous results. May this unfair and unnatural creed and social class distinction become extinct completely in India, and even more than that, may this vicious and unjustifiable obnoxious institution like the caste system be totally erased from the whole continent of India.

TRIP TO CEYLON (SRI LANKA)

As has been stated earlier, the primary intention of Mahāsī Sayādaw’s leaving Burma for abroad was to visit Ceylon. His travel tour in India was merely incidental as it was on the way. That was the reason why on the 6th Waning day of Pyatho (January) 1320 M.E. (1958), he proceeded to Ceylon from Madras by air. The arrival time at Colombo Airport was 7 p.m., and at McCarthy Centre, 7.30 p.m.

McCarthy Centre was and is the Main Mahāsī Meditation Centre in Ceylon. In Sinhalese, it is called Bhāvanāmadrechathana. In Pāli, it is known as Bhāvanāmajjhaṭṭhāna. At the time of Sayādaw Ashin Sujāta and party’s first visit to Ceylon to promote *Sāsana*, as there was no proper Main Meditation Centre (Headquarters), the seeds of *Vipassanā Sāsana* had not been very widely disseminated. To be able to expand the *Sāsana* to a considerable extent, the Lanka Vipassanā Propagation Society had established that McCarthy Headquarters. The present visit of the *Sayādaws* was to open the said Headquarters of the McCarthy Meditation Centre and to leave behind the three *Kammaṭṭhāna*

(meditation) Teachers to carry on propagating the *Sāsana*.



MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW IN INDIA

Mahāsī Sayādaw and the three Kammatṭhāna Teachers with other Indian monks and devotees.

The moment Mahāsī Sayādaw and Sayādaw Ashin Sujāta had arrived at the Headquarters of the Meditation Centre, old yogis, both male and females appeared to pay homage. At the assembly, the total number of yogis had reached a figure of about two hundred. Seeing the audience sitting in a proper posture, calm and tranquil, it behoved Mahāsī Sayādaw to impart his teachings. Meanwhile, as a Ceylonese monk who knew Burmese had appeared, Mahāsī Sayādaw commenced his teachings for over an hour letting the discourse delivered by him to be interpreted by the said monk. The next day was spent in perusing different kinds of scriptural text books at the house of Mrs. Nissanka.

On Sunday, the ninth Waning day of Pyatho (January), opening ceremony of the Main Meditation (*Bhāvanā*) Centre was inaugurated. At this ceremonial function, speeches were made by *Sayādaws* of the respective Religious Sects or Schools of Thought. Later, U Chan Htoon (Justice), the President of the World Buddha Sāsana Organization, and Mr. Bandaranaike, the Prime Minister of the Government of Ceylon, gave their speeches. Then, the ceremony came to a close after a brief talk in Pāḷi given by the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw and Sayādaw Ashin Sujāta, respectively.

Although the Main Meditation Centre had been opened, no arrangements had yet been made to teach and look after the welfare of the yogis. Hence, only day-time yogis could be admitted for meditation purposes. After completion of the opening ceremony of the said Main Centre, Mahāsī Sayādaw visited a number of places of pilgrimage and also delivered discourses at various meditation centres where he had passed through. Effective only from the 12th Waning day of Pyatho (January), Mahāsī Sayādaw started giving his discourses on *Vipassanā* and *Satipaṭṭhāna Dhamma* at the McCarthy Centre. The lay teacher Ariyaratana himself acted as an interpreter and explained the discourses so taught in Sinhalese. It took one and a half hours to teach lasting from 4.30 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. daily. Following the end of the discourse, the audience was requested to meditate with right contemplation for fifteen minutes (15 mins.). The number of yogis who formed the audience every day ranged from over 300 to about 400.

On the 5th Waning day of Pyatho (January), Mahāsī Sayādaw and party went on a pilgrimage. In those days, the island of Ceylon was a country, very lovely, peaceful and pleasant, though small. They had never heard of a civil war. All motorable roads covering the whole island were good. There were hardly any rough or rugged roads. Thieves and robbers were scarce. Hence, there was nothing to fear or worry when traveling on pilgrimage or for pleasure, and one could move about freely on pleasure trips with complete peace of mind and happiness. Railroads or rail connections were few. Limousine service was readily available and taxis could easily be hired. The Burmese pilgrims only traveled by car, and when travel arrangements were made for Mahāsī Sayādaw and party, the lay disciples who personally owned cars provided the mode of conveyance.

Leaving Colombo at 7 a.m. in the morning, *Sayādaw* and party arrived at an old city named Pawlawnaruwa, 158 miles away to the north-east of Colombo. It was the Capital City of the first king by the name of Parekkama Bahu who was a very outstanding figure in the history of Ceylon. He had his grand palace in that city which was then known as Polatthinagara. Though this place might appear to ordinary persons who were unfamiliar to Pāḷi literature as

a common place of antiquity, to those who were well acquainted with Pāli literature like Mahāsī Sayādaw, it was extraordinarily meaningful.

In Ceylon from the time of Anuradhapura, conflicting religious ideologies had appeared causing a schism into three different schools of thoughts, viz.: Mahā Vihāra Vāthi Sect; Abayagiri Vāthi Sect; and Jetāvanavasi Sect. It was then the first King Prekkama Bahu who took a decisive step and made a tremendous effort in getting these three schools of divergent views to merge into one single sect. In this very City of Pulatti, King Parekkama Bahu had brought about the unity of the formerly three splitted sects and properly organized them into one and the only sect known as Nikayattayā Samaggi. It was a renowned place of residence of Ashin Sāriputtrā, the compiler of 'Saratthadīpanī-dīgha' Text, etc., which was the exposition of the Vinaya Dhamma and the Commentary, and the residence of one of his disciples named Ashin Sumingalasami, the compiler of the famous Dīgha, and also another disciple Ashin Sangarakkhita, the compiler of 'Can', 'Alinka', 'Sambandhaceindā', 'Khuddhasikkhā', new Dīpanī (details of canonical law), etc., and then also of another disciple Ashin Buddhanāga, compiler of 'Kankhā New Dīgha'; and of the grammarian Ashin Moggallāna, compiler of 'Abhidhanappadipika', (at the end of 12th century), and many other intellectual *theras*. All these texts of *Dhamma* are the basic scriptural and doctrinal texts relying upon which the monks are being taught. These facts were made known by Mahāsī Sayādaw to his accompanying disciples while he himself several times paid his homage to those noble *Theras* of rare ability and wisdom in recognition of their extreme benevolence for having contributed to the promotion of *Sāsana*. Though at one time a place might have been prominent, splendid and highly distinguished, it has gone into decay leaving only a heap of broken remnants of the buildings due to the effects of *sankhāra*, i.e., being subjected to the Law of Impermanence. *Sayādaw* had borne in mind that such man-made objects like all compounded things are subject to the law of nature, a process of continual change, decay and final destruction.

Later, after leaving Pulatti at 6 p.m., they reached Anuradha

which was about 63 miles away. The time of arrival was about 8 p.m. Anuradhapura is one of the most ancient cities in the history of Ceylon. It had a very long life as a capital city for over 1,200 years. According to the Great History, it was established as a capital city by King Pandukabaya in the year 107 (*Sāsana* year) when he became a ruling monarch, and as such, the life of this city has reached over 2,400 years. In the history of Buddha *Sāsana* in Ceylon, it is regarded as a pre-eminent city. When Ashin Mahinda (also spelled Mahendra) Thera came over to Ceylon on a mission, the first person who was converted to Buddhism was the then ruling monarch Devanampiyatissa residing in that City. From this City, Buddhism had spread to other places in Ceylon. Mahā Vihāra Monastery which was well reputed in Theravāda *Sāsana* was the one first founded by Ashin Mahinda at this City, and then it had been made the headquarters of Theravāda *Sāsana*. When Ashin Buddhaghosa first started compiling the new Commentaries based upon Mahā Arthakathā which was a translated Ceylonese version of the original Commentary brought by Ashin Mahinda (Mahendra), the work of compilation was done while residing at this famous city. Those Commentaries compiled by Acariya Buddhaghosa in the year 909 (*Sāsana* Era) are those that have been adhered to and accepted as authentic and as true Arthakathā of the Theravāda Piṭaka up till the present day and revered to as the actual teachings of the Lord Buddha. These are being studied by the *sanghas* in Burma. Commentaries had also been rehearsed at the convention of the great Sixth Buddhist Council. For this reason, the City of Anuradhapura happened to be a very interesting place not only for the Ceylonese nationals but for all members of the Theravāda Buddhism. Mahāsī Sayādaw had therefore come to visit this City.

Although there were a lot of things for a deep reflection or pondering on the truth of the nature relating to *Dhamma* at Pullati City, from the viewpoint of the affairs of the *Sāsana*, only a very few pagoda could be found there. However, Anuradhapura being full of venerable things to be pondered over and over again from the point of view of *Dhamma*, was abundantly rich in delightful and pleasant places of beauty and interest. After reaching Anuradhapura,

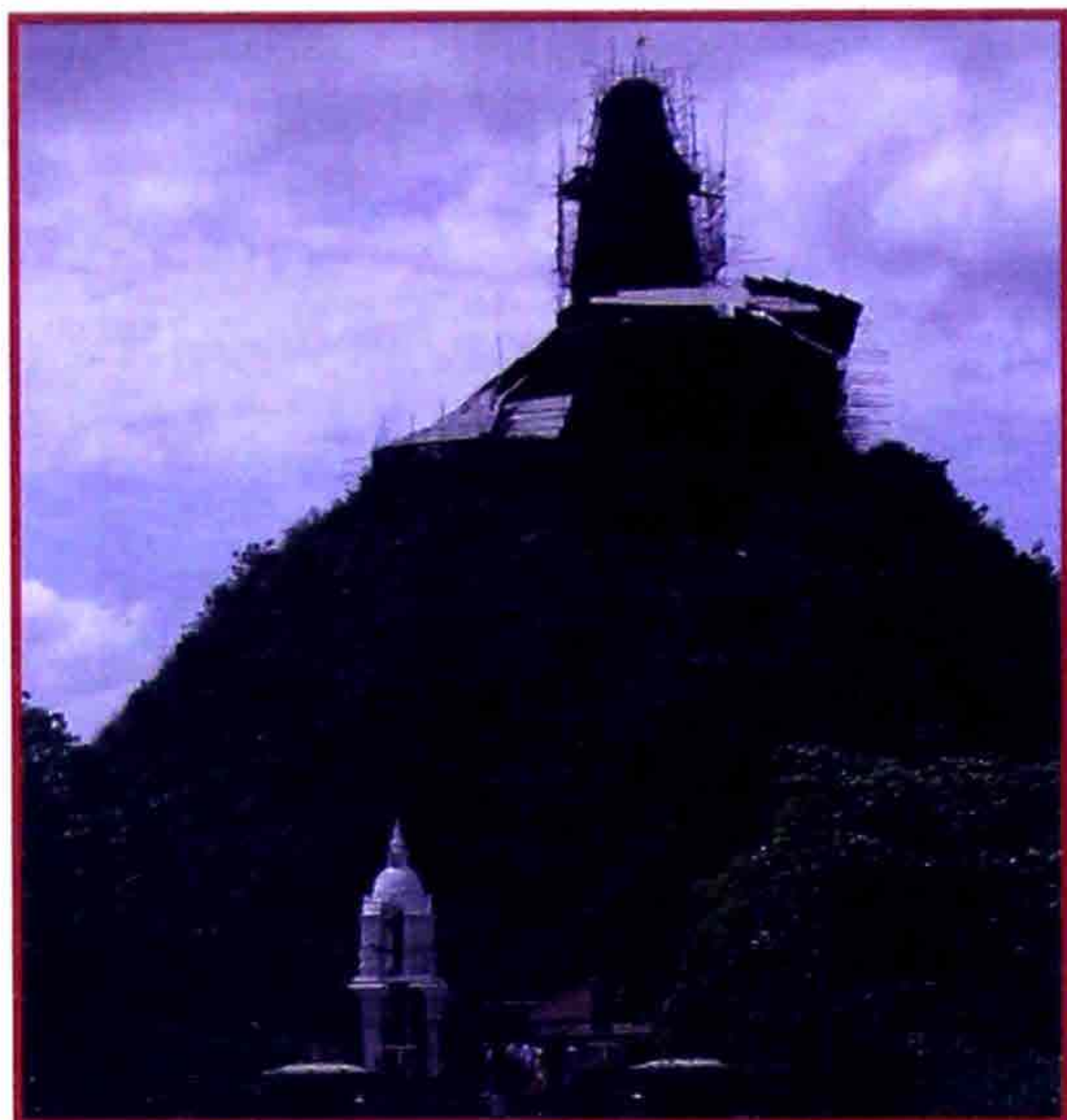
Mahāsī Sayādaw and party took rest for a while and then, visited Htūpayon Zedi, and did the worshipping. They also made offerings of candle-lights and incense. Htūpayon (Thuparama) shrine was the first pagoda that was built in Ceylon. As it was a shrine erected under the supervision of Shin



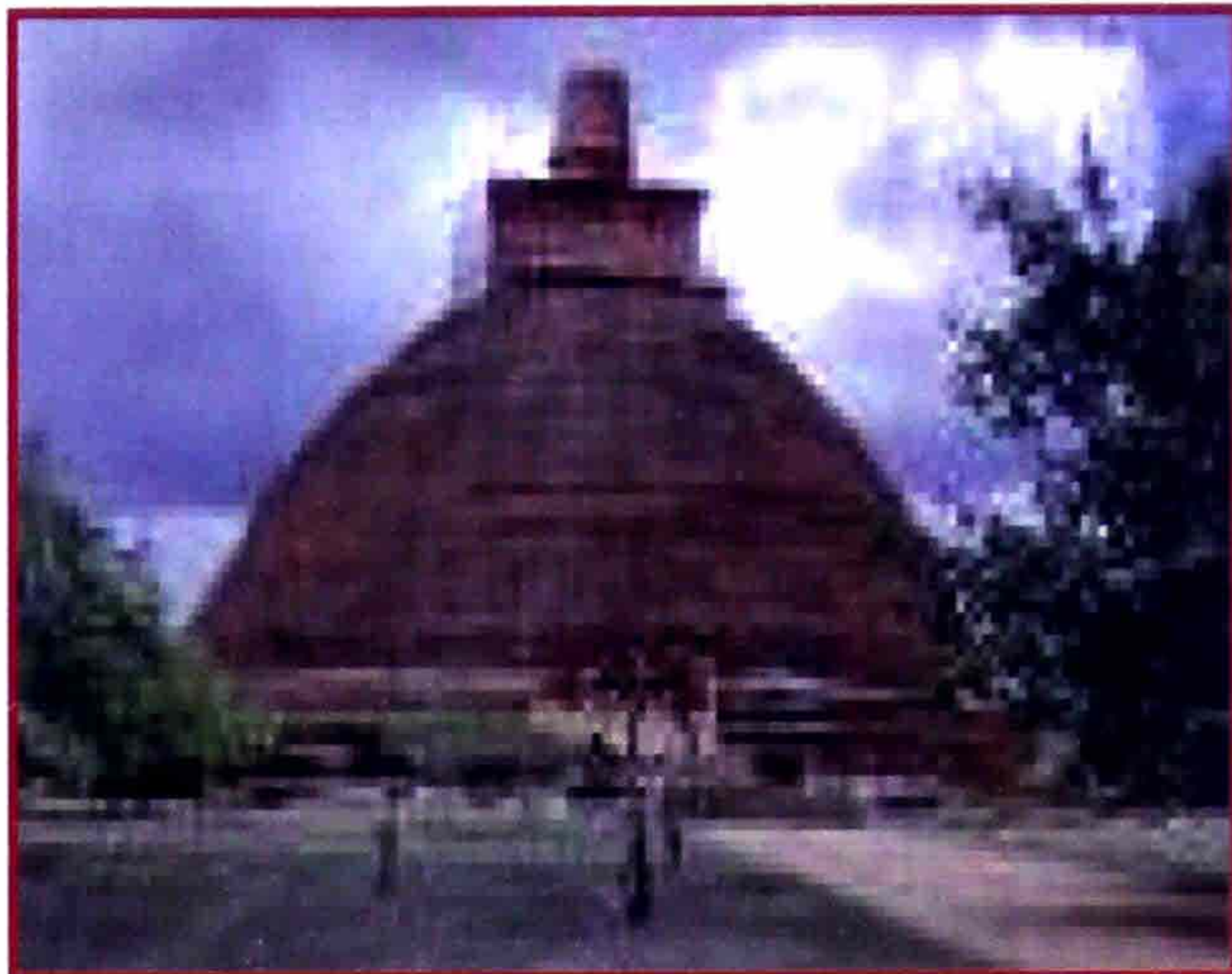
**THUPARAMA SHRINE IN ANURADHAPURA,
SRI LANKA**

Mahendra, and because it was enshrined with the relics of the previous four Buddhas (Dīpinkāra, etc.), such as, the girdle, the water-strainer, water-cup, collar bone of the Buddha and such other requisites, it invoked a feeling of immense reverence which was indescribable. Peace reigned at the site of the shrine without any sign of people other than those present with the *Sayādaw*. As it was also night time, not a single sound was heard. As rapturous feeling had pervaded the whole body, it enveloped the entire physical and mental structure. Mahāsī Sayādaw had fully explained all these facts to his followers at the site of the shrine to let them acquire more merit.

On the next day, they all visited the famous Mahā Zedi where the ‘*Sein-Bu*’ (bulbous cylindrical shape of metallic substance, gold gilded and studded with diamonds and gems) donated from Burma, could be found at the top of the Shrine. The other places visited for reverence were the ‘Dakkhina-thakha’ Mahā Bodhi tree brought by Sanghamitta Theri from Buddha



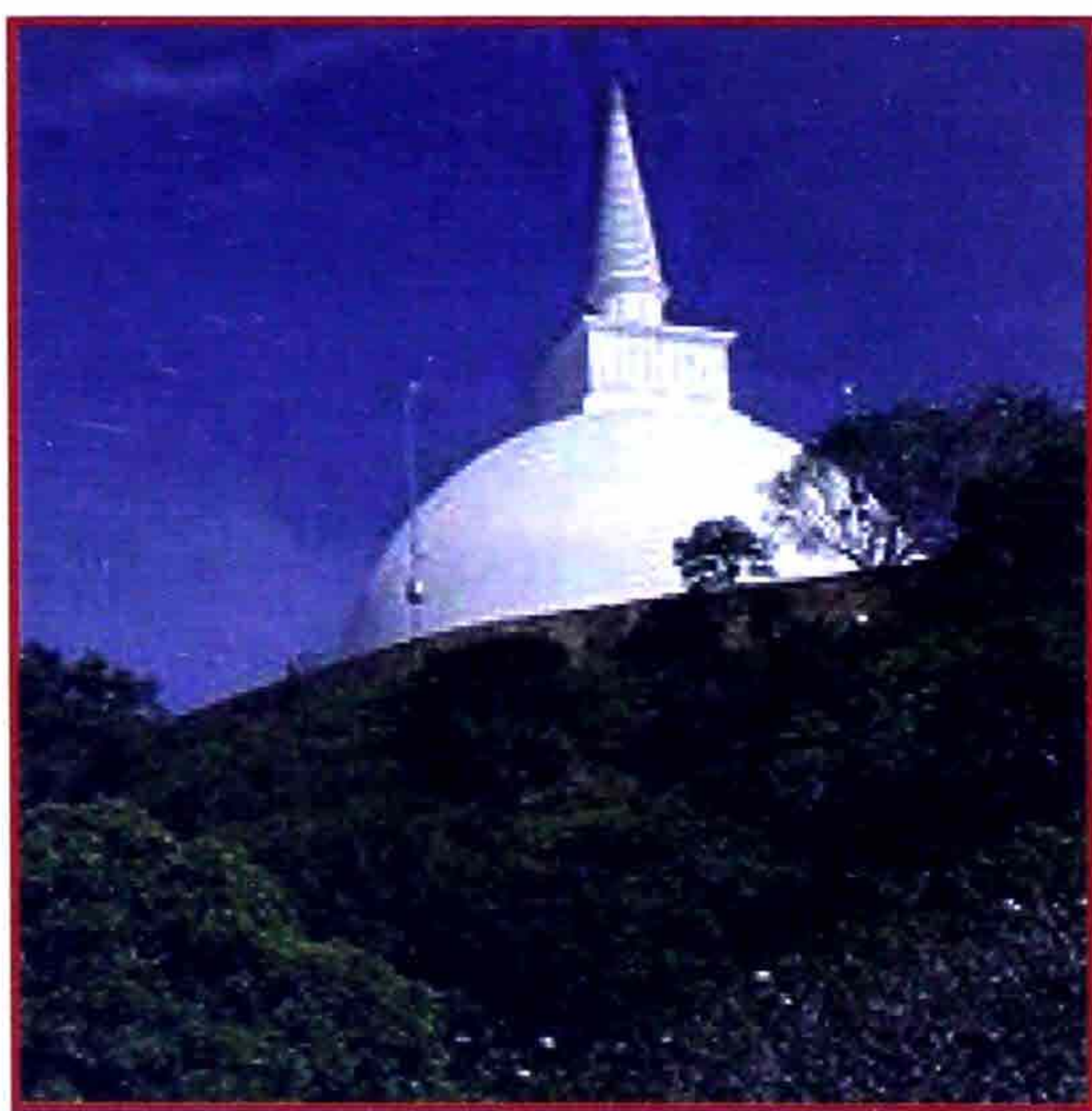
Abayagiri Dagoba in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka



Jetavana Stupa, Sri Lanka

It is believed to be the 2nd largest brick structure in the world.

Gayā (Bodhgāyā), the Abayagiri and Jetavana Shrine which became conspicuous in connection with the appearance of the three diverse schools of thought, the Mahā Vihāra Monastery where Commentaries were first written and the bronze *Pyat-that* of Lohapathada.



Mahintale Mahā Stupa

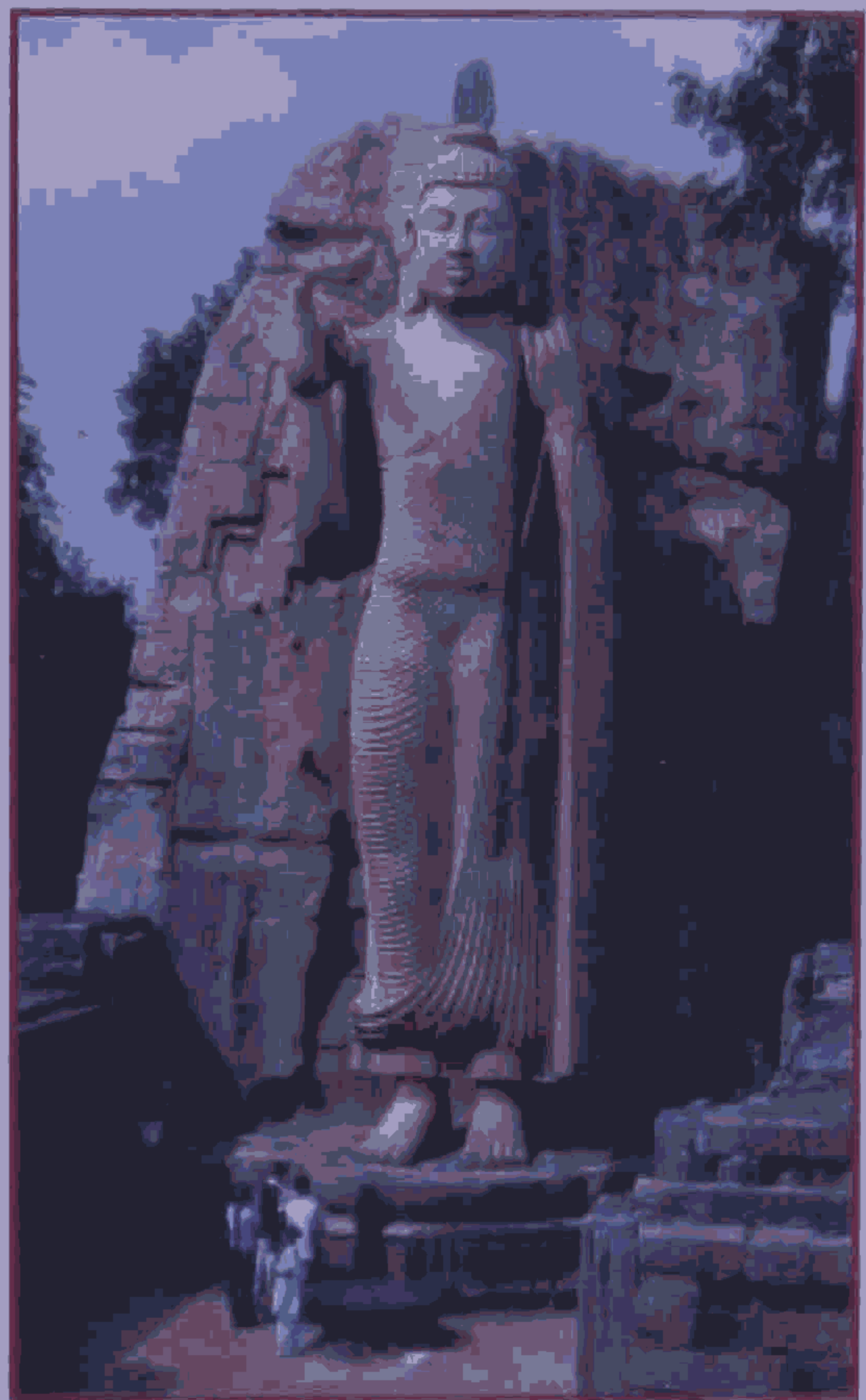
Seen from a distance.

On that same day at two o'clock in the afternoon, they proceeded to a place called MAHINTALE, a hill where Bhikkhu Ashin Mahinda had made his headquarters which was about 8 miles away from Anuradhapura in the east. This hill is well-known in Pāli Scriptures as 'Zediyapabbata' or 'Zediyagiri' or 'Meikthakapabbata'. This was the hill originally resided by Ashin Mahinda Thera. On this very hill,

King Devananpiyatissa while roaming about hunting for a deer, met Ashin Mahinda, and then became a Buddhist lay adherent. At that place, Devananpiyatissa King built a shrine by the name of Ampattala where the relics of Ashin Mahinda were enshrined. From then onwards, this Ashin Mahinda Hill had become a hill-retreating centre for the monks. Mahāsī Sayādaw and party had seen

and worshipped many holy places such as the Hill and monasteries, where Ashin Mahindra had resided, and the shrine as well. The place where Kalabuddharakkhita Thera, the reincarnated monk named Siccaka acetic, had resided and taught, was also visited. On the return journey to Anuradhapura, Mahāsī Sayādaw and party, dropped in at a monastery which was situated in the ‘Myat-lay’ Flower Gardens and took notes of this particular building and site, the reason being that this place deserved to be kept in memory as a souvenir because there was a story behind it in those old days. It was when Mahātissa Thera was residing on that hill. One day, he went to Anuradha City to beg for meals. On his way, he heard the sound of laughing of a woman who had come out of her premises dressed in full attire after quarrelling with her husband. When he had a look at her, the *Thera* saw her teeth, the sight of which repulsed him and brought him the realization of the impurity of the bones and bodily self, and then, in developing *vipassanā* on the spur of the moment, it carried him on to the four paths (*maggas*) which finally led him to the achievement of *Arahatship*.

On the 2nd Waxing day of Tabodwe (February), at 8 a.m., *Sayādaw* and party left Anuradha for Kandy, a hill station. They had their morning meal at a place called Avukana. At this place, there was a standing statue of Buddha made of solid granite about thirty feet in height. It is said to be the sculptural work belonging to the Era of Polonnaruwa. The place where they had their morning meal was quite close to this



**Avukana Buddha Statue
(Polonnaruwa Era)**

It is one of the tallest statues in Sri Lanka situated in the Anuradhapura District. The 38' 10" high statue, carved out of solid granite and dates back to the 5th century.

image. At 2 p.m., they reached a place called Dhampula. At that place, there was a huge cave alongside the wall of a mountain; and inside the cave, a number of Buddha's images were found. Leaving this place at 4 p.m., they arrived at Arloka Cave, a place where the scriptural texts were written and recorded. The time was 5 p.m. in the evening. This Arloka Cave was hewn and renovated and was on a very high slope of a mountain. The five hundred noble *Arahats* then resided in that big cave and put on record on the palm



**Outside of Dhampula
(Dambulla) Caves**

Dates back to the 1st century BC. It has five caves under a vast overhanging rock, carved with a drip line to keep the interiors dry. Inside the caves, the ceilings are painted with intricate patterns of religious images of the Lord Buddha and bodhisattvas following the contours of the rock.



**A Section of Arloka Cave
(Alu Vihāra)**

A rock-cave shelter where Buddhist monks in King Valagamba's reign (104 – 77 B.C.) wrote the Tipiṭaka in Pāli on Ola leaves. The Tipiṭaka committed to memory by Buddhist monks of the time were originally handed down by mere word of mouth.

leaves all the Piṭaka Scriptures in writing. The main purpose of putting this in writing was that in future, as monks would be lacking in mindfulness and knowledge, there would be none who could recite the Pāli Scriptures. If so, as these Pāli Scriptures might

probably dwindle into oblivion, it was considered to be wise to put them on record in time. The gratitude owed to these noble *Arahats-Theras* for their foresight and efforts was immeasurable. For so long as the Buddha *Sāsana* lasts, this indebtedness owed by mankind to these *Arahats* can never be forgotten; shall never be forgotten. Mahāsī Sayādaw and party went into contemplation dwelling on the glorious attributes and benevolence of these *Mahātheras* and their dedicated efforts to make the *Sāsana* always everlasting and shining.

Then, after leaving Alu Vihāra or Arloka cave at about 5 p.m., they reached the Burmese monastery in Kandy town at about 6.30 p.m. before darkness fell.

On the following day in the morning at 6 a.m., the members of the Mission worshipped the Tooth Relic of the Buddha at Kandy. The morning meal was served by the Burmese nuns who lived in their own monastery. This monastery or rather nunnery was established by the Burmese nun Sayāgyi Daw Vicari. Sayāgyi being learned and eloquent both in speaking and teaching had a considerable number of devoted disciple nuns. The Ceylonese monk Bhikkhu Kassapa who had come along with the *Sayādaw*



TEMPLE OF THE TOOTH RELIC, KANDY, SRI LANKA

Tradition holds that the Tooth Relic is one of the few remnants of the Buddha to survive his cremation more than 2,500 years ago.



**Procession of the Tooth Relic,
Kandy**



**Sanctuary of the Tooth Relic
in Temple**

and party from Colombo did the translation in Sinhalese. They all left Kandy at 4.15 p.m. and arrived at McCarthy meditation centre in Colombo at 8 p.m. On the 4th Waxing day of Tabodwe (February), Mahāsī Sayādaw and his disciples were invited to Kandubhoda by the Ceylonese lay disciples. At this centre, Ceylonese *Sayādaw* first delivered the teachings after the opening of the religious session. On that day, as time did not permit, Mahāsī Sayādaw only gave a short teaching and after adjourning the session to be held on the next day, the present congregation came to a close, and dispersed.

On the next day, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., Mahāsī Sayādaw delivered a discourse on the Four Noble Truths relating to *Kammaṭṭhāna Dhamma*. Teacher Ariyaratana performed the role of an interpreter. As it was the centre where meditation was practised in full swing by the yogis, it was really heartening and encouraging to teach.

Kandu-Bodha Centre must be regarded as having closer relationship with Burma. Because, this centre lay within easy distance from a centre where a Burmese *Sayādaw* (Monk) had once resided while promoting the *Sāsana*, in the distant past. During the time of Ava Dynasty in Burma in the *Sāsana* Year 1990 (808 M.E.; 1446) when the Htūpayon benefactor Narapatigyi was in power, a famous monk by the name of Sappada Thera - Ashin Saddhamma Jotipala Thera went to Ceylon. At that time, in the City of Zayawaddana in the island of Ceylon, there lived a King by the name of Satthaparakkamaba. The City of Zayawaddana was then at

the site now called Ko Tay in the south-east of Colombo. Sappada Thera after obtaining a favored and honourable treatment from that King, continued to reside in that City and taught the Ceylonese monks the Rules of Vinaya and Abhidhamma. A *Thein (Sima)* was also consecrated free from all faults and defects in accordance with the Rules of Discipline. This *Thein* still stands not very far from Kandu-Bhoda Centre. It has therefore been closely connected with Burma. The Centre at McCarthy Road, Colombo, may be said to be the main centre of *bhāvanā*, but in reality this Kandu-Bhoda Centre is presently the largest, the most stabilized and accomplished *kammaṭṭhāna* centre in Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

On the 6th Waxing day of Tabodwe (February), Kandu-Bhoda *sangha* invited Mahāsī Sayādaw to visit a place called Danavukanda to where they escorted him. At this place, there was a big garden, a couple – husband and wife – were extremely generous and pious. They had constructed many buildings inside the coconut garden, providing accommodation for both monks and laymen yogis for the purpose of meditation. They themselves indulged in *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation and let all their labourers practise meditation taking responsibility even for their meals. At this place, Mahāsī Sayādaw stayed for two days teaching the devotees. On the 8th Waxing day of Tabodwe (February), *Sayādaw* was again conducted to a forest monastery named Naga Garden. This forest retreat being situated in a thickly forested area was calm and peaceful. The view of the mountain with its crystal clear water welling up from invisible crevices and pouring forth incessantly into mountain springs presented a wonderfully pleasant sight. After proceeding from this place, the party reached a place known as Kurumegala town. There, a congregation which had assembled and was eagerly waiting for the *Sayādaw*, was fed with a discourse on *Vipassanā Dhamma* based on the three memoranda of the Deva Loka. From there, *Sayādaw* and party returned to Colombo reaching McCarthy Centre at about 7 p.m.

On the 10th Waxing day of Tabodwe (February), Mahāsī Sayādaw and his disciples were invited to Tissa Mahārama. Leaving at about 7 a.m., they reached Galle town a few minutes past 10 o'clock in the same morning. Feasting ceremony (offering of meals)

was done at the residence of one Dithanayaka, a lay benefactor of that town. This gentleman's hospitality and faith was beyond description. He built a forest *kyaung* (monastery) and was supporting all meditators residing in that *kyaung* in every way taking sole responsibility for their welfare. As no sufficient time was available to give a lengthy discourse, *Anumodāna Dhamma*, i.e., joyous expression of gratitude was only uttered in the form of a short blessing for the benefit of this donor.

Then, after leaving Galle at approximately 1 p.m., they reached Martara town (Mahātettha) at about 3 p.m. In this town, a fairly large number of yogis were found waiting at a school all in readiness to listen to the discourse. They had grouped themselves separately between male and female when they were seated in the Assembly. Besides, all of them were found in a fitting composure, peaceful, calm and serene and sitting gracefully without uttering a single word among themselves. Seeing the audience in very fine composure as stated, Mahāsī Sayādaw made his recollection of the introductory speech as contained in 'Anāpānāssati Sutta' which runs as:

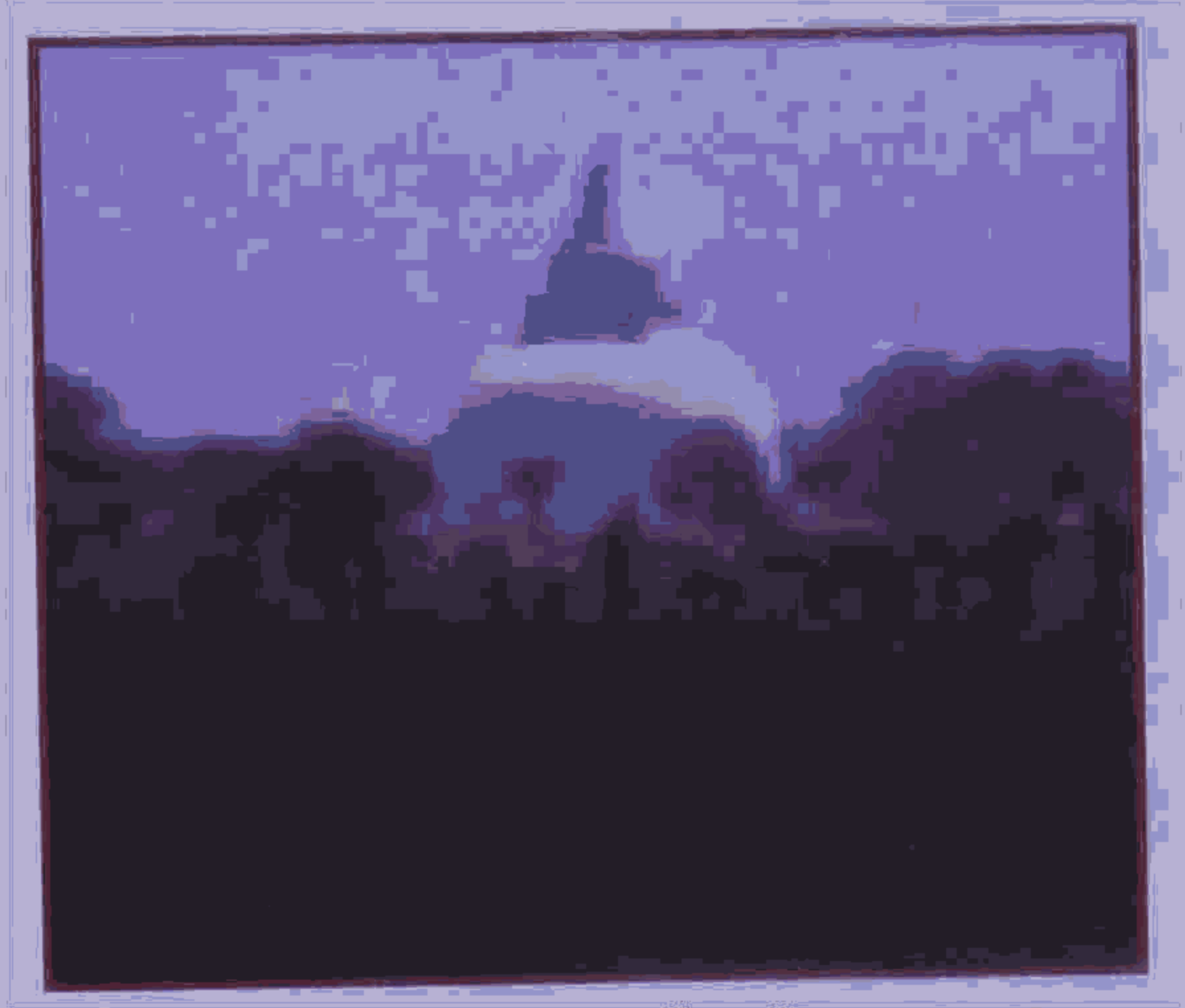
*'Āraddhosami bhikkhave imāya patipadāya,
āradhacittaosami bhikkhave imāya patipadāya,
tassamā hita bhikkhave bhiyyosomattaya viriyam
ārabhata appatassa patipattiya anudigatassa
adhigamaya asiccatassa siccikiriya.'*

'Monks, I am content with this practice.
I am content at heart with this practice.
So arouse even more intense persistence
for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained,
the reaching of the as-yet-unreached,
the realization of the as-yet-unrealized.'

Therefore, based on this verse, *Sayādaw* delivered a discourse on *Vipassanā Dhamma* for about an hour. They left Martara town at 4.20 p.m., reaching Tissa-Mahārāma monastery of Māgadha village at about 7 p.m.

Tissa-Mahārāma monastery stands on a site at a distance of

over 160 miles away to the south-east of Colombo. To reach this place is to follow a route by car to the south of Colombo along the sea coast and on reaching Galle to proceed to the east right along the coast. Then, when getting on to the town called Humbota, turn towards the inside a bit. Though the journey was performed all along the sea-shore, Tissa-Mahārāma is only six miles away from the sea coast. Māgadha village where this substantial monastery stands was, at one time, not only the Capital City of Rohana country where King Karkavunna Tissa had resided, but also the King Dutthagāmini's birth place called Mahāgāma, the main village. At the time when Brahmana Tissa, the reputed thief had met with danger, it was the residence of 12,000 *Sanghas*. It was also a place where Mahābhida Thera famous for his connection with Commentaries, had taught Piṭaka scriptures and given his advice and instructions. At one time, a woman by the name of Sumanā after her ordination as a *bhikkhuni* and after having heard the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta had attained the stage of *Sotāpanna*.



**TISSA MAHĀRĀMA
MONASTERY, MĀGADHA**

Within the precincts of that Tissa Mahā Vihāra monastery, there was a shrine (*stupa*) known as Tissa similar in form and shape to Kaunghmudaw Zedi which had been erected by King Karkawunna Tissa, father of Dutthagāmini. To the north-west of that shrine stands a Tamaga tree whose leaves were used to be plucked and chewed by every pilgrim who had arrived at this spot. It was stated that the leaves of the tree branch which had reached the side of the shrine after shooting forth from the root that had gone underneath the shrine itself and had coiled the casket of the relics enshrined in the *Zedi*, had a sweet taste instead of a bitter taste. When Mahāsī Sayādaw reached close to that Tamaga tree (Botanical name: *Azadirachta Indica*), a *kappiya* plucked a leaf from the branch and gave it to the *Sayādaw* who when personally

tasted it found it to be really sweet. The place where the monastery and the shrine were situated being in a quiet spot, was found to be very delightfully pleasant. The Ceylonese *Sayādaw* who was then residing at this monastery being very pious and generous, use to offer meals to and look after the welfare of all those pilgrims who visited the place, with all what they had derived from the monastic properties, land and wealth. Mahāsī Sayādaw still recollected and thanked the Ceylonese *Sayādaw* for the generosity and warm reception that had been accorded to him and his party.

On the next day, they escorted Mahāsī Sayādaw and party to Cittalapabbata. Cittalapabbata is the name of a hill in the midst of a dense forest. At one time, King Karkavunna Tissa built a *kyaung* on this hill and had donated it, and that Vasata King also had erected a pagoda (shrine) on it. Though at the present day, there was hardly any person living on this hill, it was stated that in those bygone days, about ten to twenty thousand monks had resided there. In the ancient days, it was a forest monastery reputed in the field of Buddhist literature. As it was a place very seldom reached by visitors, it seemed that the *Sayādaw* and party were purposely brought to this remote place. The way to this place was through a forest road which cut across a very densely forested area. Wild animals such as deer, monkeys, peacocks, wild buffaloes, etc., were found prowling about on the way. Sometimes, even the wild elephants were seen roaming about. The road was not good enough for fine cars to be driven, and yet, the car owners with all their goodwill roughly made use of their automobiles to convey the *Sayādaw* and party to the said far-off place. After their arrival at the hill, they went round worshipping the images of Buddha inside the cave and dwelt their mind with consciousness upon the many *Arahats* who had attained *Arahatta-phala* while residing in the cave in those old days. They returned from Cittalapabbata at 2.30 p.m. and reached Tissa Mahārāma at 4 p.m. From there, they got back to the forest monastery near Galle town at 7 p.m. The donor of this monastery was the lay benefactor Disanayaka, who provided the *Sayādaw* and party with the car to proceed to the forested hill from Galle town.

After spending the night at that forest monastery, they left the place in the morning at 8 a.m., and arrived at the town called Panadura at 10 a.m. At 2.30 p.m. in the afternoon, *Sayādaw* taught *Ovadakathā*, giving due admonition, to the audience at the Town Hall, and after leaving there at 3.30 p.m., they reached back to McCarthy Centre in Colombo a little after 4 p.m. Not long after their arrival, at 5.30 p.m., *Sayādaw* started teaching *Satipaṭṭhāna Dhamma* at this Centre. While remaining in Colombo, Mahāsī Sayādaw delivered the discourses every day at the McCarthy Centre and at other Centres also. Among these centres where teaching was done, were included Minuwunghada Kammatṭhāna Centre, Colombo prison and the Kalagala Kammatṭhāna Centre – exclusively a monastery for female yogis called Anulavijjalaya.

On the 3rd Waning day of Tabodwe (February), they invited the *Sayādaw* to Balanghoda. Balanghoda is a small hill station lying about 84 miles away to the south-east of Colombo. It is not only the birth place of the Ceylonese Sayādawgyī Ānanda Maitreya who



Ānanda Maitreya
Sayadāwgyī
(1896 – 1998)

had spoken extolling the attributes of the *Sāsana* in Burma at the time of the *Saṅgāyana* was inaugurated, but also his place of permanent residence. Ānanda Maitreya Sayadāwgyī being very satisfied with Mahāsī Sayādaw's method of *satipaṭṭhāna kammaṭṭhāna* after practising himself in meditation, has established a meditation centre at the monastery where he is presently residing. Now then, Mahāsī Sayādaw had come over to this place at the invitation of

the said *Sayādawgyī*. Leaving Colombo by car at 2 p.m., they arrived at Balanghoda a few minutes past 6 p.m. At this Centre, Mahāsī Sayādaw delivered his teachings on the Noble Eightfold Path and after departing from that place at 9.30 p.m., they reached back to Colombo McCarthy Centre at past midnight (1.30 a.m.), the following morning. It was a very strenuous journey. Leaving at 14.00 hours in the day time and arriving back at night time about

1 a.m. consumed nearly twelve hours traveling time. Throughout this journeying time, there was hardly any chance to take rest, involving constant move from one place to another, getting down from the car and then taking a ride on it, followed by delivery of speech and teaching and then traveling again – sitting in the car all along the long way. On that night, *Sayādaw* had hardly any time to sleep. However, judging from the fact that in the ancient days, all *Theras* who had propagated the *Sāsana* in their lifetime had likewise gone through the same sort of trouble and discomfort, *Sayādaw* had even found delight in being fortunate for having had a similar opportunity as those *Sayādaws* of the past.

The day for the return to Burma by Mahāsī Sayādaw and party was by then fast approaching. Meanwhile, discourses on *Vipassanā Dhamma* were delivered by Mahāsī Sayādaw once every day at Colombo German Dhammadhuta Centre, and at the McCarthy Centre. On the 11th Waning day of Tabodwe (February), *Sayādaw* gave an exhortation relating to *Paṭipatti Sāsana* to all members of Lanka Vipassanā Bhāvanā Society which has its connection with the McCarthy Centre.

On the next day (on the 12th Waning day of the month of Tabodwe (February), 1320 M.E. (1958) at 2 p.m., Mahāsī Sayādaw and party comprising his disciples who were to return to Burma, left Ceylon for Burma. However, of the *Sayādaw's* disciples, Ashin Sujāta, Ashin Arloka and Ashin Paṇḍita, the three *Kammaṭṭhāna-cariyas* were left behind in Ceylon for the work of propagating the *Vipassanā Sāsana*. All *Sayādaw's* disciples, Ceylonese *Sayādaws* and a good number of members of Lanka Vipassanā Bhāvanā Society gave a send-off at the Colombo jetty. Mahāsī Sayādaw after receiving homage from all in the audience got on to a small motor launch which conveyed the passengers to where the big ocean liner of the Bibby Line Shipping Company, was anchoring. The big ship left at 4 p.m. The time being nearly sunset at dusk, a glimpse of the glittering town lights could be seen from the ship as it gradually moved away from the shore. The city of Colombo stands on the west coast of the Island of Ceylon. Therefore, the ship on its voyage to Burma had to steer along the west coast and on reaching exactly to a place opposite Galle town, it had to keep its course to the east

until it arrived towards Martara when it had to steam towards the north-east. As the ship had to be moving round the Island the whole night, the shore was within sight till about 8 a.m., on the following day. Only at about 9 a.m., the shore line and mountain ranges along the coast slowly began to disappear from the view until it faded away and was completely left behind. Mahāsī Sayādaw was imparting *mettā* to all the inhabitants of the Island of Ceylon from the time the ship had left the wharf, by keeping in his mind's eyes the twinkling lights on the shore that could be faintly discerned from afar. In particular, *Sayādaw* had spread his network of loving kindness and goodwill on the lay benefactor Mrs. Nissanka and members of the Vipassanā Propagation Society and also prayed for the development of *vipassanā*. *Sayādaw* gave his sincere wishes for the well-being of *Vipassanā Sāsana* and sent his *mettā* for the successful propagation of *vipassanā* by his disciple *Sayādaws* who stayed behind in Ceylon.

This trip to Ceylon was not the first for Mahāsī Sayādaw. *Sayādaw* had been to Ceylon for the first time in the year 1314 M.E. (1952) as a member of the Religious Mission from Burma sent out in connection with the affairs of the Sixth Buddhist Council. On that occasion, his stay at Ceylon was not fairly long as this trip because the former visit made was for the purpose of convening the Sixth Buddhist Council. At that time, he had not been to many places as was done during this trip. On the present occasion, the sole purpose of his visit being to propagate *vipassanā Dhamma*, his length of stay in Ceylon was a little more than a month. During this period of over one month, the program for itinerary was tight being occupied almost every day with traveling and teaching. For the purpose of gaining experience, *Sayādaw* had visited all those places of pilgrimage which deserved visiting apart from honouring a number of meditation centres as well. It was a meaningful visit to those places since *Sayādaw* had been already equipped with the knowledge of the paramount importance of the place in Ceylon connected with Commentaries, Dīghas and their history. He could appreciate and taste both the theoretical and practical aspects combined together. This journey to Ceylon for the *Sayādaw* was therefore extremely beneficial.

Sayādaw's trip to Ceylon was not merely for pleasure, but it is a journey lending out a gift of *Dhamma*. Ceylon owed much gratitude to other countries in connection with Theravāda *Sāsana* and Theravāda Pāḷi Scriptures. Commentaries and Dīghas which had been relied upon and taught in Burma up till the present day are mostly the product of Ceylon. As a matter of course, it was Burma's reciprocity in return for the thanks owed to Ceylon. Relating to the scriptural text, the Pāḷi Grammar called 'Saddhati' compiled by Ashin Aggavaṃsa Thera of Pagan, was considered as a gift of *Dhamma* offered to Ceylon by Burma as a gesture of goodwill and thanks in return. Similarly, Ceylonese Rāmanya Sect and Amarapura Sect are the gifts of *Dhamma* tendered by Burma. Although there had been reciprocal exchanges in Buddhist literature between Ceylon and Burma, there had so far been no reciprocity with regard to *Kammaṭṭhāna Dhamma*. The Commentaries, etc., received from Ceylon, contained a number of techniques concerning *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation. *Kammaṭṭhāna Dhamma* was expounded by the meditation teachers of Burma after due compliance with the methods and techniques obtained from Ceylon. In Ceylon, before the propagation of *Vipassanā Sāsana* by Mahāsī Sayādaw, the practice of *vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna* meditation had nearly been obliterated. There were hardly any meditation teachers who could impart or give lessons on practical *vipassanā*. Hence, the contribution made by Mahāsī Sayādaw filling up the gap in the field of practical *vipassanā* meditation was indeed an invaluable gift of *Dhamma* to Ceylon. As this gift of *Dhamma* happened to be highly acceptable, the people of Ceylon had enthusiastically welcomed this *Dhamma*, tenderly germinated it to make it grow stronger and perennial. The fact that there are at present over ten thousand yogis meditating on the guidelines laid down by Mahāsī Sayādaw bore testimony to the willing acceptance of the techniques of *vipassanā* meditation as prescribed by the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw.

Ashin Mahinda Thera had striven to make the Buddha *Sāsana* firmly rooted in the Island of Ceylon. Thanks to Ashin Mahinda, Theravāda *Sāsana* has up till the present moment shone brightly not only in Ceylon but also in Burma, Thailand, and other countries. The tree of *Sāsana* that had been planted by Ashin

Mahinda with its root firmly established in Ceylon had shown obvious signs of total decay in one of its branches, viz.: *Vipassanā Sāsana*, which was, before the appearance of Māhasī, withering. Mahāsī Sayādaw had endeavoured to resuscitate the withering big branch of *vipassanā*. It was because of the initiation and accomplishments of Mahāsī Sayādaw and his disciple *Sayādaws* who had actuated the propagation of *vipassanā* that this big branch of *vipassanā* has been enlivened and has now shown signs of future vitality and vigour. Just as it is well-nigh impossible to eschew putting on record the name of Ashin Mahinda Thera as a benefactor in the annals of the *Sāsana*, it would be absurd to leave the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw unrecognized as a brilliant beacon in the present history of *Vipassanā Sāsana* in Ceylon. As the Venerable Ashin Mahinda was really dutiful in respect of Buddha *Sāsana*, the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw is also a noble sage who has successfully performed his duties in the field of Buddha's *Sāsana*.

Mahāsī Sayādaw had left Ceylon obviously with delight and satisfaction like a gardener who has noticed the tree planted by him taking its root firmly in the earth with strength, vigour and freshness. Colombo and Rangoon are 1,234 miles apart by sea. It took four nights and five days by Bibby Line steamship. The second day of the departure from Ceylon was the full Waning day of Tabodwe (February). Being a Sabbath day for monks, Mahāsī Sayādaw together with Sayādaw U Pyinnyāwuntha of Pegu meditation centre, who had accompanied the *Sayādaw*, performed the rites of *Parisuddhi* between the two, i.e., obtaining the consent of other as well as his own assurance of the innocence of an expiatory offence before they hold the *Uposatha* meeting to purify themselves from any blame. This is the way of monks in holding *Parisuddhi Uposatha* – Sabbath. Two days later on the 2nd Waxing day of Tabaung (March) 1320 M.E. (1958), Mahāsī Sayādaw and his party of monks and lay disciples reached Rangoon.

On their arrival at *Sāsana Yeithā* in Rangoon at his resident monastery, Mahāsī Sayādaw even before giving a conventional word of greeting to the disciples – both monks and laymen benefactors who had waited for him, went straight to where the

Buddha's image was laid on a throne, and worshipped fervently making himself feel that he was in the presence of the living Buddha and absorbing his consciousness in the three jewels of Buddhism. Thereafter only, *Sayādaw* spoke a few words to the audience that gathered around him. On that night, *Sayādaw* sent his *mettā*, in particular to the three disciples who were left behind in Ceylon for the promotion of *Sāsana*, Mrs. Nissanka – the lay benefactor, the members of the Lanka Vipassanā and all other yogis.



'GO FORTH'

With this special blessing of loving kindness and goodwill towards all, the work of propagating *vipassanā* in Ceylon had come to an end. The Blessed One addressed the sixty foremost *Arahats* of the *Sāsana*, and sent them forth into the world with the famous exhortation:

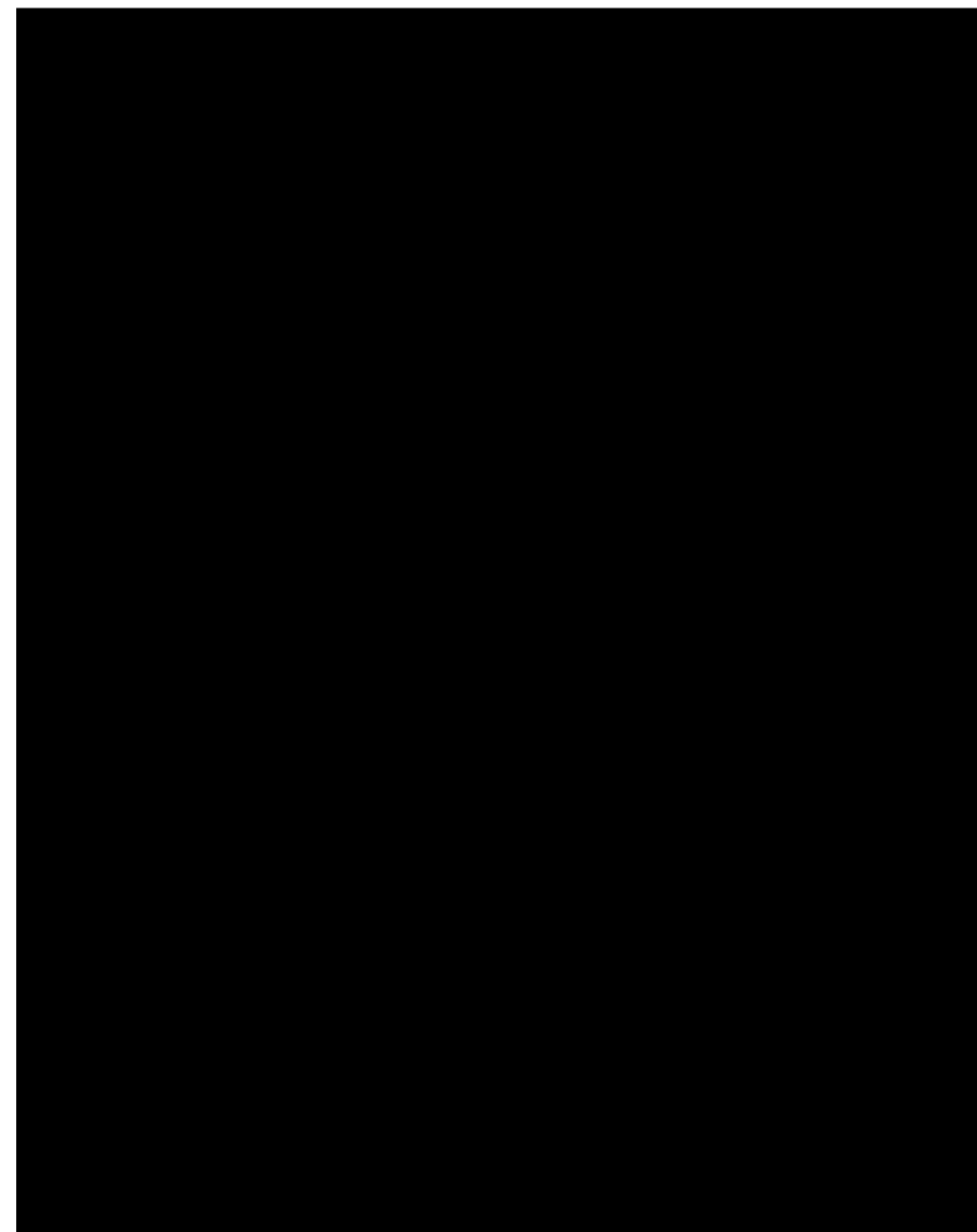
“Go forth, O *Bhikkhus* for the good of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, benefit and happiness of gods and men. Let not two go by one way. Teach O *Bhikkhus*, the *Dhamma*, excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent in the end, both in the spirit and the letter. Proclaim the Holy Life, altogether perfect and pure.”

It means that the journey to be performed by the *Arahats* should be to proclaim the *Dhamma* to all mankind so as to bring benefit for the many and for their welfare. The journeys now

performed by Mahāsī Sayādaw to India and Ceylon were therefore in accordance with the noble wish of the Lord Buddha and in strict conformity with His instructions and resolution. As it was the journey which brought success in the dissemination of *Dhamma*, it deserved to be named ‘Dhamma Vijaya Desacari’.

VISIT TO INDONESIA FOR PROMOTION OF SĀSANA

During the latter part of Pyatho (January) and Tabodwe (February) months 1315 M.E. (1953), before the Convention of the Sixth Buddhist Council, if a person happened to visit the Rangoon Sāsana Yeikthā, a middle-aged man who looked like a Malaysian would be found practising meditation. This person had a very fair complexion, neat, tidy and immaculate. His gait and mannerism were graceful and saintly befitting a yogi practising *vipassanā* on the right lines with all seriousness. He was wearing a white garb which went in harmony with the holiness of the meditation centre. He put on a pair of trousers very much like the ‘Shan’ pants, and thus, bore the semblance of a young Malaysian. He was however, not a Malaysian. He was an Indonesian national, a teacher of a Chinese school, by his profession, by the name of Mr. Boon Aun, who had come over to practise meditation at the feet of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw.



Ashin Jinarakkhita
(1923 – 2002)

It would appear strange to find an Indonesian national contemplating Mindfulness. The majority of us know that Indonesia is a country which has adopted Islamic Religion. Out of a population of eighty-two millions (as estimated in 1956), Muslims formed a majority. From the President of the Republic of Indonesia down to the lower echelon of Government Officials, all are Muslims having faith in Mohammedan religion. It is therefore surprising that a national of a country where Muslims reigned supreme, had come over to Burma to take up the practice of *vipassanā* meditation, which is a Buddhist Doctrine.

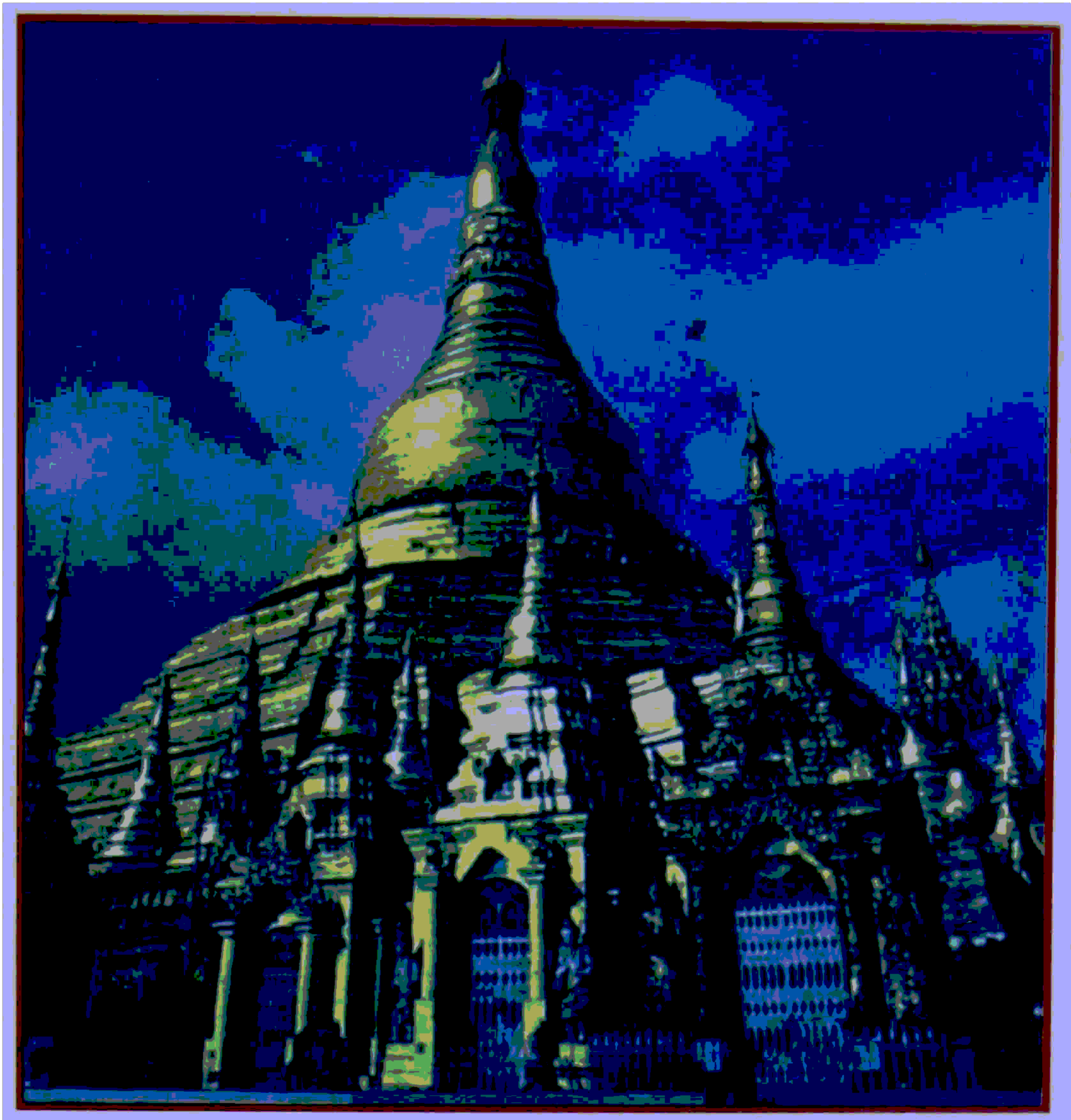
However, looking back the past history of Indonesia, it is even more strange that this country has become an Islamic State. In the island of Java, the largest island in the country of Indonesia, there was a world famous *Stupa* (shrine) called Borobudhur. It has a height of 133 feet, while at the base, the width and length are



Borobodour, Indonesia

Borobodour, deep in the jungle of Java was discovered by the Dutch in the 19th Century. The temple complex started construction in the year 760 by Buddhist King Samaratungga. The gigantic stone structure built with nearly 2 million cubic feet of stones took about 70 years to complete. The complex has nearly 2,700 reliefs and 504 Buddha statues.

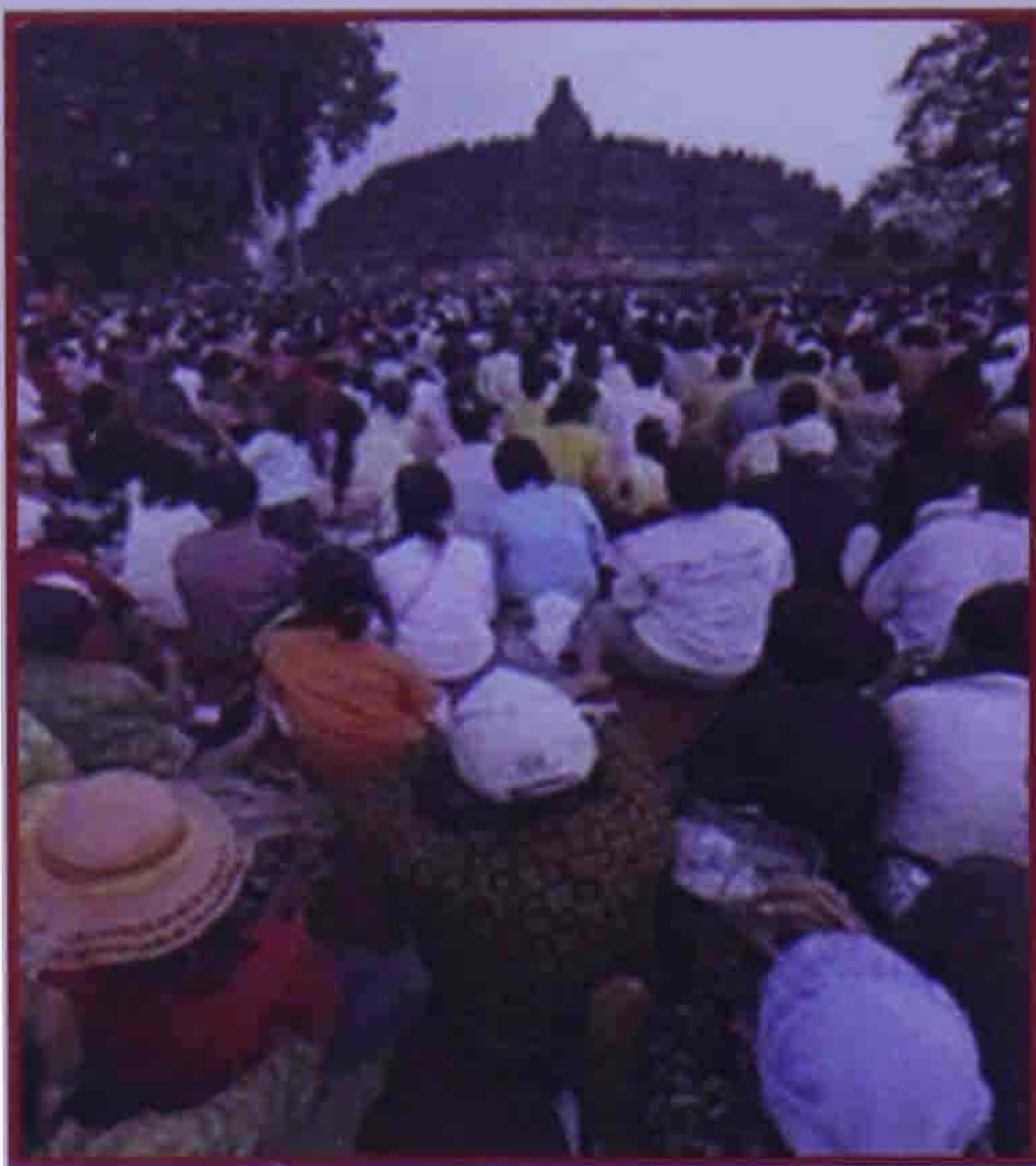
394 feet each. The base-end or the foot of this *stupa* is about the size of the base of the Shwedagon Pagoda and its height reaches to about the level (of the Shwedagon) where the circular rim of bowl is, i.e., (the reverse bowl-shaped masonry work). The base-end or the foot is of a rectangular shape. Above that at the upper level of the pagoda platform there are four tiers followed higher up by three more tiers. In the middle of the third tier, there is a bell-shaped shrine. Though it is said to be a shrine, it is not very large. Neither is it high because it is said to be a shrine, it is not very large. Neither is it high because it is shaped like a bell. Therefore, the height is only about half that of the Shwedagon Pagoda. On the seventh tier, there are 504 miniature shrines. Inside each of these small shrines is a marble image of Buddha about the size of a man. In the lower level at the fourth tier, there are the inner and outer walls, richly



SHWEDAGON PAGODA, MYANMAR

The Shwedagon Pagoda, the golden hallmark of Buddhism in Myanmar, is both a religious and a national monument. It is unknown exactly when the pagoda was built but legend has it that it is 2,500 years old, although archaeologists estimated it was built between the 6th and 10th century. The Shwedagon Stupa houses the relics, comprising of 8 hairs from the head of Gotama Buddha.

carved with base-reliefs illustrating the 550 Jātaka tales, scenes in the earlier life existences of the Lord Buddha, were found. Sculptured images portraying the scenes from Gotama's life existence as *Bodhisatta* to the latter part of His life history after attainment of Enlightenment, were all the marvelous Buddhist art of architectural and sculptural beauty. Judging from the looks of these motifs in this huge *stupa*, one could very well imagine to what extent the Buddha *Sāsana* had once flourished in Indonesia in the past long ages. In connection with this matter, Mahāsī Sayādaw had described as follows in his memoirs relating to the promotion of

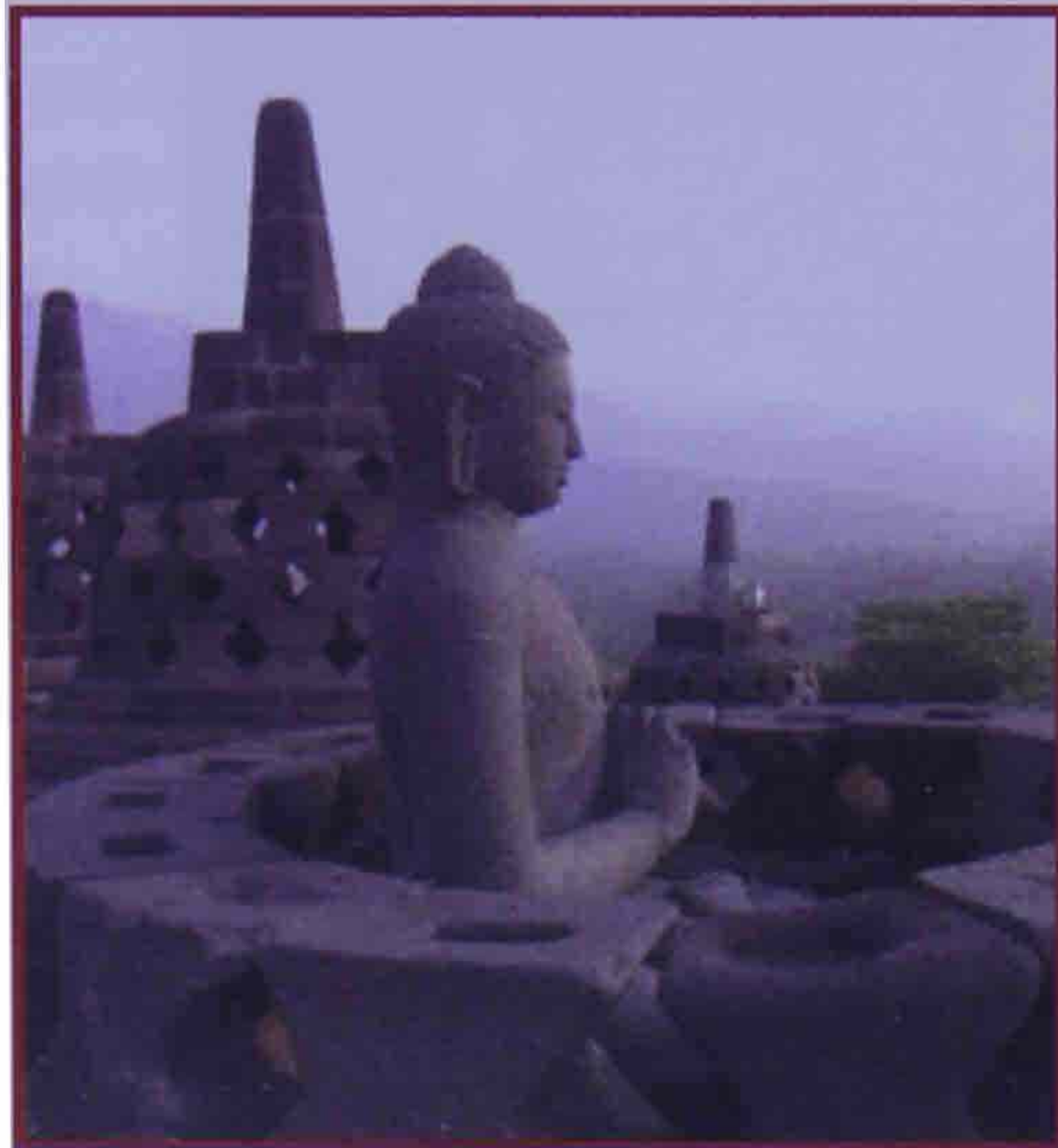


The Great Monument of Borobodour, Java



Atop Borobodour with stupas and Buddha Rūpas

Note the active volcano in the background.



Buddha Rūpa



Bas relief panel at Borobodour

With hand position of Dhammacakka mudra (turning of the Wheel of the Law). This mudra refers directly to the Buddha's first discourse in the deer park at Sarnath.

Prince Siddharta Gautama shaves the hair off his head as the sign to decline his status as ksatriya (warrior class) and become an ascetic hermit while his servants hold his sword, crown, and princely jewellery. His horse Kanthaka is seen on the right.

Sāsana.

In the historical records of Borobudhur, it has been mentioned that 'this big *stupa* was erected in the 8th Century A.D. and completed in the year 775. Although at present it is not definitely known as to who was the benefactor of this magnificent and famous *stupa* which was built with numerous marble stones that had involved tremendous labour in their removal and renovation,

and because of the fact that the *stupa* was inlaid with marvelous sculptures carved, casted and modeled into life-like human figures depicting the well-known family stories of *Jātaka*, there is hardly any doubt that the person who had built this *stupa* must be a very powerful king ruling in Indonesia during that century. Nevertheless, no matter how powerful and influential the ruler might be, as no *stupa* of such a dimension and splendour could have been successfully built and established without the encouragement and support of the people in the country, it seems that almost all the inhabitants in the whole of Java Island at that particular time must have been undoubtedly Buddhists' (page 46-47 of the Memoirs).

Regard being had to the existence of this tremendous *stupa* and other memorable events that had been witnessed, it could be presumed that Buddha *Sāsana* had flourished in Indonesia within the period from about the seventh century to the ninth century A.D.

Not only the Borobudhur was there, but also ancient buildings of Brahmanical culture were evidently found in Indonesia. Up to the present day, there are people who worship Hinduism – (Vishnuism), particularly in Bali. Therefore, in those ancient days, it can be clearly known that Brahmanism had also flourished in Indonesia.

Even during the thirteenth century A.D., when Hinduism was thriving, Muslim traders from Arabia, Persia and west coast of India had reached Indonesia and since then had commanded popular respect and become overwhelmingly powerful up till now.

It is not that Buddha *Sāsana* is non-existent at the present time in Indonesia. According to the news report or memorandum presented by Ashin Jinarakkhita (Mr. Boon Aun) at the opening ceremony of the Sixth Buddhist Council, it was known that there was then 21 million Buddhists in Indonesia. However, as all Buddhists in Indonesia being persons belonging to the School of Mahāyāna or Northern Buddhism, there were hardly any Theravāda Buddhists. Hence, finding Mr. Boon Aun absorbing himself in the practice of meditation relating to Theravāda doctrine at *Sāsana Yeikthā*, was in itself said to be really wonderful.

Mr. Boon Aun having diligently practised meditation in accordance with the instructions given him by Mahāsī Sayādaw and Sayādaw U Nyanuttara, soon attained a stage in the path of progressive insight which enabled him to appreciate, assess and gauge the degree of his own personal achievement in the knowledge of the *Dhamma* by comparing it with his relative theoretical knowledge. On the third Waxing day of Tābaung (April), Mahāsī Sayādaw elucidated the full exposition of the progress of insight to Mr. Boon Aun.

Thereafter, as he had become very enthusiastic in Buddha's *Dhamma*, Mr. Boon Aun decided to enter into monkhood. On the fifteenth Waning day of Tabaung 1315 M.E. (5th April 1954), Thado Thiri Sudhamma Sir U Thwin and his wife took the role of his benefactors for his higher ordination as a senior monk at the *Thein (Sima)* in the precincts of Sāsana Yeikthā, where the *Sayādaws* headed by Mahāsī Sayādaw formally admitted Mr. Boon Aun to the Order of *Sanghas*. His *kammaṭṭhāna* teacher, Mahāsī Sayādaw, casted himself at this Ordination Ceremony in the role of a Preceptor.

The newly ordained Indonesian monk was given the name (title) of 'Jinarakkhita', which means 'a person deserving of care and attention by the Lord Buddha, the Victorious'. It is exactly so. It is only with the blessings of the Lord Buddha and the help of the celestial *devas*, would Ashin Jinarakkhita be able to make his endeavours in firmly rooting the Theravāda Buddhism in the soil of Indonesia as he had hoped for.



Ashin Jinarakkhita
(1923 - 2002)

As has been earlier mentioned, Mr. Boon Aun as a monk had attended the ceremonial function of the opening of the Sixth Buddhist Council, and had submitted his memorandum. After devotedly studying the Buddhist doctrines under the supervision of Mahāsī Sayādaw over a period of one year, Ashin Jinarakkhita returned to his native country – Indonesia.

When leaving Indonesia, Ashin

Jinarakkhita was a layman in the name of Mr. Boon Aun. On his return, however, donning the brownish-yellow robe of a monk, he had found it difficult even to put up for a day in his own native place. Where would he find a Buddhist monastery in a country where the name of Theravāda was hardly known and where the Muslims formed the ruling class in majority? Ashin Jinarakkhita having been properly trained in accordance with the Rules of Discipline (*Vinaya*), he could not possibly live under the same roof with the laymen. Hence, while spending his days temporarily at the monasteries in Malaysia, Singapore and Ceylon, he visited Indonesia only occasionally, and gradually taught the Buddha's *Dhamma* to those who were acquainted with him. With unremitting effort, zeal and ardour for five years at a stretch, he strove to promote the *Sāsana*, and as a result, was able to establish two monasteries (*vihāras*) in Indonesia and convert over six hundred people who began to take Refuge in the Three Noble Gems, viz.: Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*, and observe the *Pāncha Sīla*, the five rules of morality. Among them were those who undertook to permanently observe the Eight Precepts (*Aṭṭhāngasīla*) and also who practised either *samatha* or *vipassanā*. Moreover, there were people who took interest in and were bent upon Buddhism though they had not yet accepted the Buddhist faith. Apart from that, religious organizations had sprung up to promote Buddha *Sāsana* along with the people who were keen to enter the realm of *Sāsana* as *bhikkhus*. Such being the case, Indonesia Buddhist Organizations led by Ashin Jinarakkhita made arrangements to invite a number of missionaries from the five Theravada countries, viz.: Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia for the enhancement of *Sāsana* in Indonesia.

These organizations working in cohesion sent a letter of request to the Buddha *Sāsana* Council of Burma through the Burmese Embassy in Indonesia to depute missionaries from Burma to Indonesia. The Buddha *Sāsana* Council after making consultations eventually decided to send the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw, Ashin Jinarakkhita's own Preceptor, whom they considered as the most suitable delegate, and then requested the *Sayādaw* to visit Indonesia for the promotion of *Sāsana* on behalf of the Union of Burma. *Sayādaw* had pondered upon this matter and

then considering that though he was unable to teach the *Dhamma* in a foreign language, Indonesia would greatly profit if he, as a teacher of Ashin Jinarakkhita, were to personally encourage the promotion of *Sāsana*, finally accepted the proposal of the Council, and later, proceeded to Indonesia.

Though Burma was represented for the said purpose by one man delegate in the personality of Mahāsī Sayādaw, other countries had deputed more than one member. As such, altogether fourteen Theravāda monks including Mahāsī Sayādaw were present at that time in Java at Djakarta, the Capital City of Indonesia. It was a marvelous historic event to be recorded in the history of that Island since so many Theravāda Buddhist monks had assembled in Indonesia for the first time during the period of one thousand years! These Theravāda monks including Mahāsī Sayādaw visited many cities and villages throughout Indonesia and propagated the *Sāsana*. They also visited and worshipped the world famous shrine Borobudhur. They had also included in their itinerary such places as Madura Island and Bali besides Java, and had disseminated the *Sāsana* in all these places. They had come across various kinds of people who had put all kinds of searching questions relating to Buddhism. The *Sayādaws* had also delivered their teachings in these places.

The most significant contribution made in the interests of the *Sāsana* by these Theravāda missionary *Sayādaws* including Mahāsī Sayādaw were the consecration of a *Thein (Sima)*, for the holding of *pabbajjā* ceremony (novitiation into monkhood), and higher ordination of senior monks for admission into the Order of *Sanghas*.

King Devanampiya-tissa, after becoming a Buddhist, donated the Mahā Megawun garden to the missionary Ashin Mahendra Thera. At that time, the Queen Anula Devi together with a company of five hundred female attendants had already reached the stage of *Anāgāmi*. A considerable number of male devotees had also attained *Sotāpanna* after hearing the discourse given by Ashin Mahinda (also spelt Mahendra). Afterwards, the King respectfully asked Ashin Mahendra, “Your Reverend! Has Buddha’s *Sāsana*

become stabilized in Ceylon?” To this query, Ashin Mahendra replied, “Buddha’s *Sāsana* will abide only after the consecration of a *sima* – *thein*, by an ecclesiastical vote of resolution of a chapter of monks, i.e., (*Kammavaca*).” However, numerous there might be laymen who have attained the stage of higher consciousness of *Dhamma* which leads to Enlightenment; they are incapable of making the *Sāsana* everlasting. This task in bringing about the perpetuation of the *Sāsana* can only be performed by the monks. To become a monk, there should be a *thein* where the proceedings of an ecclesiastical act or of a *Kammavaca*, are to be performed. Hence, for the establishment of the noble *Sāsana*, a *thein* is of paramount importance. This is what Ashin Mahinda had meant to say. Therefore, according to the said answer, it must be borne in mind that in any country, it is to be understood that no *Sāsana* will endure without the existence of a *thein*. This being the case, Mahāsī Sayādaw and party had consecrated a Buddha *thein* for the first time in Indonesia. This *Thein (Sima)* was consecrated at a site called Buddha Jayanti Vihāra, a place eleven miles away from Samaritz Town which is situated at a distance of 228 miles from the Capital City of Djakarta, on the thirteenth Waxing day of Kason, 1321 M.E. (19-5-59). According to Ashin Mahinda’s word of honour, it may be stated that Indonesia’s Buddha *Sāsana* has taken its root commencing from that day.

The prolongation and perpetuation of *Sāsana* in a country depends upon itself in being able to generate a number of monks of its own nationality. It is important to make efforts for the availability of monks from among Indonesian nationals if it is desired to keep the *Sāsana* alive forever in Indonesia. Mahāsī Sayādaw and party had fulfilled their task in this regard. On the first Waning day of Kason (May), the *Sayādaw* successfully ordained Ashin Jinaputta, a *sāmaṇera* of Indonesian nationality to become a senior monk at the said Buddha *Thein* which they themselves had consecrated. Moreover, after visiting the abode of Besakhi deity (*Nat*) at Bali, they ordained a Bali Islander *sāmaṇera* by the name of Jinappiya to become a senior monk on the 13th Waning day of Kason (May). The place where Jinappiya received the higher ordination as a senior monk was known as *gama thein* and not a

Buddha *thein*. When all the monks in the *gama* (villages) could be assembled into one place, a novice (*sāmaṇera*) can be admitted into the Order of *Sanghas* by a collective resolution made on *Kammavaca*. Furthermore, Bali nationals wishing to become *sāmaṇeras* were also admitted to monkhood (*pabbajjā*) at this *gama thein*. A group of senior monks consisting of the *Sayādaw* held the ceremony of *pabbajjā* in Indonesia three times. The first occasion was at Djakarta on the 11th Waxing day of Kason (May) when one Mr. Ong, the Headmaster of Sāriputtrā School, had been invested with the robe and formally admitted to monkhood. On the Full Moon day of Kāson at Vihāra Buddhagaya monastery, Watugan Ward in Sarmaram Town, a layman from Sarmaram and another person from Bali were novitiated into monkhood. They were given the names of Jinanda and Jinappiya respectively. Hence, because of the effort originally initiated by Mahāsī Sayādaw and then, by the Theravāda Sayādaws including Mahāsī Sayādaw in promoting the *Sāsana*, Indonesia was graced with the appearance of the two senior monks and three *sāmaṇeras* – a total of five monks of its own nationality on its own mother earth.

The Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw wrote a Memoir entitled ‘A Record of Journey to Indonesia for Promotion of *Sāsana*’ on the tenth Waning day of Nayon (30-6-59) after his arrival in Burma from where he had departed on the eighth Waxing day of Kason, 1321 M.E. (14-5-59). The recording was done in brief describing his visit to Indonesia for propagation of *Sāsana*. The preface to this book contains the words, beginning: ‘An Abbreviated Account’. However, this book has 185 pages and is made up of eight-folded sheets of Crown paper size. In this book of memorandum, it will be noticed that the *Sayādaw* had written an interesting account of the relevant facts about Indonesia, and his experiences in the course of his journey and his teachings as well as the speeches delivered in Indonesia. The chapter on questions and answers which usually follow his teachings are really noteworthy and interesting. The *Dhamma* that was taught was not profound but the questions which were raised after the discourse, were varied, and included such types as ‘Why are the monks bald-headed? etc.’. These questions and answers were elaborated in this memoir. His memoir reveals how

precise and particular Mahāsī Sayādaw is.

If one wishes to get himself acquainted with a detailed account of how Mahāsī Sayādaw and other Theravāda *Sayādaws* had propagated Buddha *Sāsana*, it is earnestly entreated to read through this memoir. Putting it in a nutshell, Mahāsī Sayādaw's visit to Indonesia is not only beneficial to the Buddha *Sāsana* but also profitable to the country as well. Mingala U Aung Myint in his introduction to this book had mentioned about these beneficial results accrued to the *Sāsana* and the country. In view of these facts, Mahāsī Sayādaw's visit to Indonesia for promotion of *Sāsana* is as triumphant as a 'Dhamma Vijjaya Travel' to Ceylon.

PROMOTION OF SĀSANA IN THAILAND

The Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw had previously been to Thailand on a religious mission and also to give encouragement to the commemoration of Buddha Jayanti on the occasion of the 2,500th anniversary of the *Sāsana* Year. He had not been there for the mere purpose of promoting the *Sāsana*. However, at the request of Sangharāja Ashin U Wimaladhamma Sayādaw to send one *Kammaṭṭhāna-cariya*, Mahāsī Sayādaw deputed his disciple Sayādaw U Arthaba together with U Eindavaṃsa as an assistant to proceed to Thailand commencing from the year 1314 M.E. (1952), for the propagation of *Sāsana*. Due to their untiring efforts, Mahāsī Sayādaw's method of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* meditation had spread far and wide in Thailand. Altogether over three hundred meditation centres were established with the number of meditators rising above 1,000,000 even prior to 1325 M.E. (1963). (A more complete narrative can be found in the book 'History of Buddha *Sāsana* Nuggaha Organization' at page 132, etc.). The number of meditating yogis has increased by leaps and bounds at the present moment. The progress that has been achieved can be evidently known if the biographical account of Sayādaw Ashin Arthaba, the promoter of *Sāsana* in Thailand, were read through.

VISUDDHI MAGGA MAHĀ DĪGHA NISSAYA WRITTEN

At the time of convoking the First Buddhist Council*, Ashin Upāli, the oldest disciple, was entrusted with the work of teaching the Rules of Discipline of the Order (the Vinaya Piṭaka) to his pupils, by five hundred *Arahats* after the Convention of *Sangāyanā* was over. In the same manner, Ashin Ānanda was assigned with the responsibility to elucidate Dīgha Nikāya, while a close disciple of Ashin Sāriputtrā was to expound and teach Majjhima Nikāya (at that time Ashin Sāriputtrā had already passed away); Ashin Mahā Kassapa himself was to take up teaching Saṃyutta Nikāya; and Ashin Anuruddha was to take responsibility for teaching Aṅguttara Nikāya for the benefit of the disciples concerned. These arrangements had proved to be the remarkable precedents after the Convention in order to keep the Order of *Sangha* always on the alert without forgetfulness, and to let the Piṭaka – Scriptural Texts, remain intact continuously for the benefit of the *Sāsana* in the long run.

This procedure and program laid down by the *Mahātheras* of the First Council of *Sanghas* with great foresight being exemplary and highly appreciated by the presiding Nāyaka of the Sixth Buddhist Council and Chairman of the Organization for *Sanghas* – Abhidaza Mahāratthaguru Masoyein Sayādawpayāgyī, he had urged all *Sayādaws* who had taken part in the *Saṅgāyana* to take respective responsibility in imparting lessons on Nikāya after the conclusion of the Great Sixth Buddhist Council in consonance with the precedent adopted by the First Council.

On that occasion, the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw had taken the responsibility to give lessons at his Meditation Centre (Sāsana Yeikthā) on the Five Texts, viz.: Visuddhi Magga Pāḷi and Mahā Dīgha, Paṭisambhida Magga Pāḷi and its Commentary, and Milanda Paññā. The said Texts of *Dhamma* being directly concerned with *kammaṭṭhāna* and problems relating to Buddha's doctrines, if they could be properly studied and well-digested, it would not only be possible to give a firm decision on any problematic or controversial issue that might arise in connection with the Buddha's Teachings,

*First Buddhist Council – For more information see Chapter 16 on pages 333 to 346, in 'The Life of the Buddha' by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli.

but also gain better and worthy experience in matters concerning *kammaṭṭhāna* and the doctrines of the Blessed One. Mahāsī Sayādaw had accepted to shoulder that responsibility knowing fully well that these Texts of *Dhamma* being essential must be invariably studied by those who will in due course become *kammaṭṭhāna-cariyas* after taking from him a course of instructions which he must compulsorily prescribe.

After accepting this responsibility, Mahāsī Sayādaw taught lessons on Visuddhi Magga Commentary and Mahā Dīgha both together every day for about one and a half hours to two hours with effect from Thursday, the 3rd Waxing day of Tabodwe (February), 1322 M.E. (1960). When giving lectures, explanations had to be given to enable the pupils to grasp the meaning of Pāḷi; and only thereafter, the meaning of Nissaya was given with the intention of letting the pupils note down the principle of Nissaya. The pupils first noted the meaning and then the draft Nissaya, and only later, derivatives of the words expressed in Pāḷi and its meaning were type-written and put up to the *Sayādaw*. The draft was repeatedly reviewed, sifted, revised and amended and then the decisions with insertions of the explanatory notes where necessary, were made after editing. The edited version was again typed out as fair draft. In this manner, the Visuddhi Magga Mahā Dīgha Nissaya was formulated or rather, conceived and born. Mahā Dīgha Nissaya that was first written on the third Waxing day of Tabodwe (February), 1322 M.E. (1960) was completed only on the fourteenth Waxing day of Tabodwe (February) 1328 M.E. (1966). It therefore took six years, but deducting the Sabbath days and other days on which the *Sayādaw* was absent from headquarters being on tour, the number of days involved in teaching came to 830 days. This fact was particularly mentioned in the concluding part of the Nissaya.

The fair draft of Nissaya was first printed in the year 1328 M.E. (1966). All necessary corrections were made repeatedly before the draft was finally sent to the printing press. The proof that was sent back by the printing press was also thoroughly checked and examined and all necessary corrections had to be made before sending it back again to the press for final printing. Visuddhi Magga Mahā Dīgha in Pāḷi has two volumes. For one volume of Pāḷi, there

being two volumes of Nissaya, the Nissaya in all is made up of FOUR volumes. The first volume could be published in 1328 M.E. (1966), the second and third volumes in 1329 M.E. (1967) and the fourth in 1330 M.E. (1968).

THE ORIGINATION OF NISSAYA



Mahāsī Sayādaw
(1904 -1982)

It was not that Mahāsī Sayādaw had become familiar with Visuddhi Magga Dīgha only after he had accepted an undertaking to deal with it from Masoyein Sayādawpayāgyī. He had studied the Visuddhi Magga since his early days immediately after he received higher ordination at Seikkhun, under the guidance of Sayādaw U Parama. He had learned it and familiarized with it when he taught others on Visuddhi Magga and Mahā Dīgha. When teaching others, he had elucidated only those portions

which were within his competence to explain relating to the statements concerning Diṭṭhi Visuddhi Niddesa Samayantara Mahā Dīgha. However, in regard to the statements relating to Daravyadhi, Jivadhi, Kayadivathi, he had omitted them without explaining their meaning. It was because as he had not found the original Texts concerning Bamayantara-vāda, it had occurred to him that it would not be natural if he taught others by explaining the meaning, and also that it would be of no advantage to the pupils if they were to note the meanings which were unnatural. It was stated as such by Mahāsī Sayādaw himself. He had also become well-versed in Visuddhi Magga by his constant application in the study of that *Dhamma* since his days of residence at Moulmein Taungwainggale Taik Kyaung. Having chewed and digested it, he could very well pin point where difficult statements were. (Please refer back to his meeting with Abāyārama Sayādaw). The difficult portions were particularly those where comparisons had been made with Parasamaya (a) Samayantara called Hindu Dassanas. These are

so difficult that those who know only Pāli would be incapable of tendering any explanation. Even if there is background knowledge of Sanskrit, neither could such portions be possibly elucidated with the mere knowledge of the Texts, such as, 'Grammar', 'Kosa', 'Kāvya' and 'Can'. These are the intricate portions which could be explained only if one is capable of reading and observing them with the full knowledge of all major and minor Texts connected with Dassana. In Burma, the *Sayādaw* who had the adequate knowledge of Dassana including Indian Dassana as was with Sayādaw Abāyārama. This eminent and learned *Sayādaw* had written and clarified some of the Hindu Dassanas in his New Nissaya Abhidham.

Nevertheless, only with what had so far been acquired, it would not be sufficient enough to dissect and solve the difficulties that were connected with the portion of Samayantara as contained in Visuddhi Mahā Dīgha. Therefore, Mahāsī Sayādaw had to search for and scrutinize the main Sanskrit texts and the religious text books written in English relating to Indian Dassana, as might be available, while he was carrying on with the lectures on Visuddhi Magga and Mahā Dīgha. Comparative study and references were also made. Only after making his best endeavours to personally grasp the entire subject of Dassanas, Mahāsī Sayādaw started delivering lectures on the portion of Samayantara of the Nissaya, and thereafter only, wrote the Nissaya. In the year 1324 M.E. (1962), the said Nissaya without the inclusion of the Samayantara portion was published under the title of 'Visuddhi Magga Mahā Dīgha Samayantara portion of Ganthi Nissaya'. It was indeed a very well-written treatise of a very high standard, decorated and marshalled with explanatory notes adequately and in proper sequence which suited the name of 'Ganthi-Nissaya'. After the publication of this text, a number of letters expressing approbation as well as words of praise came showering upon the author. Since then, some of the *Sayādaws* had even entreated Mahāsī Sayādaw to write a Nissaya for the entire Dīgha. Only when this small version of Nissaya text had appeared, Mahāsī Sayādaw's reputation became prominent as a person of erudition thoroughly proficient in Indian Dassana also. It must be stated that this small Text had enhanced

the glory and fame of Mahāsī Sayādaw. This small book was in fact the latent seed with its inherent quality that would germinate as a forerunner of the great Visuddhi Magga Mahā Dīgha Nissaya to come into being.

ANCIENT NISSAYAS

Mahāsī Sayādaw had heard and known that there were Nissayas relating to Mahā Dīgha written by the ancient scholars and *Sayādaws*. He had come across two bundles of Nissaya and also a book on Visuddhi Magga Mahā Dīgha Nissaya compiled by the Piṭaka librarian U Yan during the time of King Mindon and ‘Naymyo Dhamma Kyawthu’ the official reader (proof corrector). Moreover, in the biography of Sagaing Wutchet Minkyaung Sayādaw, it was mentioned that this *Sayādaw* had completely finalized the compilation of a book on Nissaya concerning the portion of *vipassanā* which was in the old days left unfinished, at the request of Taungbalu Sayādaw, with a single attempt by writing it on the palm leaves with a quill using his knees as a flat board. The Nissaya written by *Sayādawpayāgyī* was the fourth book containing thirty ‘Angas’ or divisions of the subject matter and it was found that this text was completed on Monday, the 13th Waning day of Tabodwe (February), 1257 M.E. (1895). These Nissayas being existed in the form of palm leaves, it was difficult to search for them. If serious efforts were made to trace them, one packet or so, if not all, might be found. However, Mahāsī Sayādaw did not seem to be keen to peruse these old Nissayas. This lack of eagerness was not due to his pride but probably because of his impression that it would not make any difference. The most difficult parts in Visuddhi Magga Dīgha were those related to Samayantara portions. No satisfactory solution or explanations would be possible if lacking in the knowledge of Sanskrit or if no reference could be made to the relevant texts even though Sanskrit was fairly comprehended. There was no evidence that these *Sayādaws* were well-learned in Dassana texts. Therefore, it would appear that Mahāsī Sayādaw was probably of the opinion that searching for them would not be commensurate with the amount of labourious work that would be involved. There are many supporting evidences

for such a presumption. The *Sayādaws* of the past ages were mostly very learned with outstanding genius in the knowledge of Pāḷi language only. They had compiled Nissayas relating to all Pāḷi Texts. Because of the invaluable contribution of these Nissayas, Burma has excelled all other countries in the knowledge of Pāḷi, Commentary, Dīgha and other scriptural texts. There will perhaps be no text which is comparable as an equal to Burma Nissaya in other countries. It is really beneficial to that extent. (That was why Mahāsī Sayādaw had remarked in the course of his lectures on Visuddhi Magga Mahā Dīgha that the Visuddhi Magga Nissaya written by Prome Sayādawpayāgyī was highly beneficial for the *Sāsana*). In any case, Burma *Sayādaws* had not studied thoroughly or rather, not made adequate efforts in learning Sanskrit language. Hence, in matters connected with Sanskrit relating to what was contained in many a Nissaya, a lot of discrepancies and irregularities were found without getting on the right track.

An example may be cited. Appearing at the beginning of Atthasālini Commentary Samaya Grammar, the phrase '*Evam dipenetana cānena ekasseva dhammassa uppatti patisedhitā hoti* – page 113' was expounded in Mūla Dīgha – page 63, as '*Pakati vadinam mahato viya anuvadinam dvi anukassa viya ca ekasseva*'. The meaning of this Pāḷi Dīgha was given in Mūla Dīgha Nissaya. In Atthasālini Nissaya, the meaning was rendered based solely on the said Pāḷi. However, in both the Nissayas, no attempt was made to convey the true meaning of the words '*Pakati Vadinam*'. The word '*Anuvadinam*' still appear in Atthasālini Nissaya. It may be an error made by the copyist. Furthermore, '*mahato*' being given the meaning of 'many teachings', when combined with the word '*ekassa*', the meaning conveyed was 'many of the one benefit' and hence, it had become inappropriate. This was not properly and fittingly explained by the *Sayādaws*. In point of fact, it had become defective from the very outset when '*mahataw*' (*mahato*) was given the meaning of 'many'. This phrase forms only a little more than a line of words in the original copy approved as authentic by the Sixth Synod. Even in this very short sentence, the explanatory meaning given by the eminent two Nissaya *Sayādawgyīs* happened to be unsatisfactory for acceptance. As a matter of fact, this small

sentence though short, having been written with reference to ‘Sancha-dassana’ and ‘Visesike-dassana’ called the two Hindu-dassana, the brief sentence would be fully grasped only if those two kinds of ‘*dassanas*’ were properly understood. The meaning of this small sentence will automatically become clear either if the portion concerning the new Nissaya Abhidam is read or if the basis for inference were read and known as contained in the relevant portions of this Visuddhi Magga Mahā Dīgha Nissaya Indriya Sacca-niddesa, and Dīgha Visuddhi-niddesa.

If anything is associated with or related to classical Sanskrit (in particular if closely connected with Indian *Sāsana*), inasmuch as the ancient Nissayas in general cannot be relied upon or rest assured, Mahāsi Sayādaw had avoided seeking for these ancient Nissayas, and instead, had written the Mahā Dīgha Nissaya from the beginning to the end greatly depending only upon his own talented ability. If at all no feeling of gratification or satisfaction can be entertained because ‘Mahāsi Sayādaw has not read through the ancient Mahā Dīgha Nissayas’, those who have so entertained that kind of thought might as well seek for the ancient original copies of Mahā Dīgha Nissaya written on the palm leaves, and then make comparative study after scanning through them. It may be reminded with a few words of advice that if such reading and verification were made, the extremely difficult portions relating to Samayantara may please be resorted to.

QUALITY OF NISSAYA

After the First Volume of Mahā Dīgha Nissaya had been published, *Sayādaw* offered the book in donation to a number of *Sayādaws* who were well-learned in *pariyatti*. The Second Volume, etc., were also offered as gifts of *Dhamma* in the same manner at the time of their publication. The replies in writing and letters conveying commendation received from the *Sayādaws* were included and mentioned in the epilogue of the Nissaya Text. The letters of commendation were received from Ashin Nāndiya Thera, the Presiding monk of Mahā Visutarāma Monastery of Pakokku and Ashin Vasettha-bhivaṃsa Thera of Thabyekan, the compiler of Thabyekan Mahā-paritta and Nissaya Text. Both the

said two *Sayādaws* were the most outstanding personalities learned in Pāli, Commentaries, Dīghas and other Scriptural Texts with adequate background of practical experience in teaching. The fact that the quality of the Text was extolled by such eminent *Sayādaws* would clearly justify the high estimation of this Mahā Dīgha Nissaya as one which is really superb and remarkable, without even perusing it, and that it is evidently not just an ordinary text. If the Text has been read, one would personally have to admit that it is a Text of fine quality – par excellence.

HIS ACT OF PERSEVERENCE

Mahāsī Sayādaw has fully realized that the Visuddhi Magga Text is not just ordinary. Therefore, to the best of his ability *Sayādaw* had endeavoured in compiling this Nissaya. Mahā Dīgha had been printed as an approved original copy of the Sixth Buddhist Council. Hence, ordinarily it may be assumed that Mahā Dīgha copy is free from mistakes. However, if the book were properly scrutinized, some minor errors would still be found. In some places, unsatisfactory Pāli dialectic expressions were detected. Variant form of words or expressions was not shown in these places. Neither could these be compared with other dialectic expressions as relevant originals were not accessible to the *Sayādaw*. Particularly, the *Sayādaw* wished to know how these were written and expressed in the Ceylonese original scripts. *Sayādaw* had therefore made a note of all those phrases and words where he had his suspicion of the mistakes and then, wrote to Burmese Sayādaw Ashin Nyaneinda Thera who was then residing at Mahā-Vishudharama Kyaung in Colombo, Ceylon, requesting for help. In his letter, *Sayādaw* had requested that verification be made with the printed book, if there was any, or, if no such printed book was available, to search for the original palm leaf writings and verify. Sayādaw Ashin Nyaneinda tried his utmost and after overcoming tremendous difficulties, got hold of some of the printed originals and a few of the palm-leaf writings, made his verification, and then, sent back his findings to Mahāsī Sayādaw. The outward flow of correspondences alone was said to be about ten times in number according to what had been mentioned in the introduction to Mahā Dīgha Nissaya. Mahāsī

Sayādaw had to strive to such an extent in order to find the true originals. Although what could be found in Ceylon were not entirely true originals, it was nevertheless greatly beneficially for making it possible to compare and verify with different forms of usages or variety of the originals.

Moreover, there were a considerable number of phrases concerning Samayantara in the Mahā Dīgha. The original Dassana texts relating to Samayantara were mostly written in Sanskrit language in the form of *suttam*. The pattern of *suttam* writing means the method of writing in *sutta* as in the case of *Kicci Grammar* (written in Pāli). If in *Kicci Grammar*, there is ambiguity of *sutta* meaning, such meaning or explanation can be found, in case, reference is made to *vutti*, i.e., the explanations of the *suttas*, or condensed rules of *kaccayana's* (or any other) grammar. These Dassana texts are unlike grammatical texts. Generally, they have no *vutti*. Though there are texts expounding the speeches or languages called *bhassa* and other kinds of texts, the method of exposition is not similar to that of *vutti* but mainly deals with the words or expressions and concepts which are considered difficult so much so that it becomes extremely hard to get the true meaning of *sutta*. Mahāsī Sayādaw had to master himself to fully understand these embarrassingly difficult Dassana texts. He had to study the texts written both in Sanskrit language and in English. There were occasions when he had to read through the whole of the relevant chapter to be able to understand even the meaning of a single word. Much effort had been made by Mahāsī Sayādaw to arrive at a correct interpretation or get the true meaning. This text having been compiled by the Sayādaw with unflagging industry to make it comprehensive, the Mahā Dīgha Nissaya has become a masterly piece that has graced the *Sāsana* no matter from whatever angle it is viewed. In view of these qualities, it has occupied a prominent place in the history of Buddhist literature.

THE GLORY OF THE TEXT

This Visuddhi Magga Mahā Dīgha Nissaya is pregnant with special features. Hence, if anyone desires to know these special features and characteristics, he is advised to go through the whole of

this Nissaya text. If one is asked to point out the most extraordinary features among them, the explanation tendered relating to Samayantara must necessarily be known. The usages and words connected with Samayantara are those which ordinary persons may not well appreciate. These words, being vividly explained and amplified with the usages contained in the original texts, have in fact revealed the glorious attributes of this Text.

Ashin Dhammapala Thera, the compiler of Visuddhi Magga Dīgha was an adept in the subject of Samayantara. Such being the case, in all the relevant portions, the conceptual idea or inference drawn from Samayantara have been mentioned and explained. In especial, the *Dhamma* known as *Tattva* contained in the Ditṭhi Visuddhi Niddesa and Samayantara had been divided into four distinct categories as (1) Pakatiārdhi, (2) Dravyārdhi, (3) Jivadhi and (4) Kayārdhi, and after writing them at length and then, examining them critically from the point of view of Buddha-*vāda*, it was decided that under appropriate circumstances, these *Dhammas* being involved only in the *paññatta Dhamma* and *nāma-rūpa Dhamma*, were not distinctively true and correct. These statements are of immense value to all Buddhists. However, as they were besprinkled with irregular and erroneous Pāli usages and as peculiar terminologies relating to Samayantara were also included in them, the majority of the people failed to grasp the main significance which Ashin Dhammapala was driving at. It was something that resembled a puzzling scroll relating to the existence of a treasure-trove, incapable of correct interpretation. Some had even given up hope that it had become an absurdity to know the real meaning of these phrases. Under these prevailing circumstances, the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw had explained broadly the meaning of those words and phrases in the language used in the relative original texts as if the scroll indicating where the hidden treasure lay, had been fully interpreted. Only after the publication of the Nissaya, opportunity has afforded us to know the true meaning of the said ambiguities. These words or expressions were the derivatives from ancient Indian Dassanas. It has now been disclosed that these texts relating to such Dassanas are still in existence. If the intention of the writer is to make others understand, and yet, if such writings cannot be

understood, how regrettable it would be on the part of the writer. Such is exactly the case with Ashin Dhammapala insofar as it concerns the portion of this Samayantara. Through the medium of this Nissaya, Mahāsī Sayādaw has explained and interpreted these portions to enable all mankind to understand, and if the original compiler and teacher Ashin Dhammapala Thera were still living today, he would have bestowed his boundless gratitude upon Mahāsī Sayādaw. He would have extolled Mahāsī Sayādaw in words beyond his ability to express. It is also sure that people who have found difficulty in interpreting the meaning of those phrases, could not help expressing their sincere thanks to Mahāsī Sayādaw if they have read through this Nissaya. The quality of this Nissaya can be truly assessed in the light of what has been stated above. Other distinguishing and praise-worthy points can be found in the introduction to this Nissaya written by Ashin Janakabhivamsa of Taungdwingyi, and in the prelude to the Nissaya as well as in the remarks made at the conclusion of the Nissaya.

And yet, despite the involvement of the driving effort with his persistent patience and zeal to successfully produce the Text of Nissaya which is deserving of high praise by noble personages of intellectual fame with all-round wisdom, Mahāsī Sayādaw does not at all regard his Nissaya Text as being completely comprehensive and fully circumspective. Considering as such, he has requested all other intellectuals capable of amending and making insertions, to contribute their invaluable knowledge to make the Nissaya more accurate and perfect. While making this earnest request, he had concluded the Visudhhi Mahā Dīgha Nissaya with the following verse (*gāthā*). Indeed, how really true is the proverb, ‘The more a person becomes accomplished, the more humble he becomes’, as uttered by ancient men of wisdom!

*“Ye ca sakkunkanti puretum, ūnathānāni ettha ce,
Tāni te paripūrantu, esā me abhiyācanā.”*

Ca – Let me say a few words of request. *Ye* – Such men of wisdom; *ettha* – in (making) this Nissaya text; *ūnathānāni* – to become more accurate and complete so as to fill in where wanting; *puretum* – (and) by correcting it precisely and completely with

insertions; *ce sakkunkanti* – if at all capable of so doing; *te* – may such men of wisdom who are so capable; *tāni* – wherever anything is found lacking or incomplete, *paripūrantu* – be able to illumine with the light of their genius by making insertions to become more precise, complete and perfect in all matters without exception. *Esā* – This statement of words; *me* – of mine who has compiled this profound and comprehensive Nissaya Text with utmost endeavour; *abhiyācanā* – is just an honest request made with all humbleness for the promotion of *Sāsana*.

THE PROBLEM OF LIFE EXISTENCE (See BOOK REF. 2 on page *li*)

After Burma's attainment of Independence, modern intelligentsia class has been paying more attention to the Buddhist doctrines. They become interested in *Dhamma*. According to the extent they have become interested, their devotion to the study of the *Dhamma* has become diligently intense. Whatever has been observed and known relating to the points of *Dhamma*, they start deliberating and analyzing them with the application of modern knowledge which they have acquired.

Among such intellectuals, Wunna Kyaw Htin Dr. U Myint Swe was one. U Myint Swe was one of the off-springs of U San Kyu, a well-known physician of Mandalay. Like his father, he was a pious and sincere devotee of Buddha *Sāsana*. Being devoted to Mahāsī Sayādaw and being closely acquainted with the rich man, Sir U Thwin, he had, out of sheer compassion and with the humanitarian spirit, extended his free medical treatment to all meditating yogis and *Kammaṭṭhāna-cariya Sayadaws* in Mahāsī Yeikthā (Rangoon *Sāsana Yeikthā*) to enable them to pursue *Dhamma* and meditate without having to worry about their health.

U Myint Swe being an educated person of modern times and a medical doctor as well, was used to making a critical observation of things from modern educational point of view and the aspect of medical science in learning and examining the facts relating to Buddha's *Dhamma*. When critically analyzing the facts about *Dhamma* with his background knowledge, he had found a number of points which he wished to understand clearly and precisely.



HONOURING Dr. U MYINT SWE

Sir U Thwin honoring Dr. U Myint Swe with a gold-medal at the opening ceremony of free clinic, in recognition of his free medical service to all yogis at the meditation center. L to R: Dr. U Myint Swe, Sir U Thwin and Mahāsi Sayādaw

U Myint Swe had his firm conviction in the *Dhamma* in that a person has to go through the present life existence and future existences. However, the true nature of *Dhamma* needs be realized and noted with an unshaken resolve. He wanted to know vividly how life continuum of life existence has come about after death in spite of the fact that both matter and mind have ceased and dissolved when a sentient being is said to have died.

He had in fact previously requested other *Sayādaws* for clarification on this point. These *Sayādawgyīs* had answered him describing the manner in which the law of causation, origin of life and cause and effect of a thing are interrelated according to the method of *Patthana* (*Dhamma* relating to Causes). Although the answers given by the *Sayādawgyīs* were true and correct according to the phenomenal nature of living beings, he had not been fully satisfied as the terminology used and spoken were not clear enough for the present-day educated man like U Myint Swe, to understand. In the same way, according to the Western medical science many diseases are caused by the diseased germs. To prevent or cure the disease caused by these germs, doctors have to use drugs and

injections that can kill the germs. In this regard, U Myint Swe wanted to know the answer explicitly whether by administering such drugs or by giving injections to kill these disease-carrying germs according to the knowledge of the present-day medical science, doctors will have committed the sinful act of killing living beings (act of *pāṇātipātā*) or not.

Moreover, U Myint Swe was keen to verify and draw comparisons between the cause to produce another life existence for a living being by way of conceiving in the mother's womb, or in other words, the production of foetus as contained in the Buddha's doctrines, and the stated process of causing pregnancy as is apprehended by the modern medical school of thought. According to the view point of the present-day biologist, life becomes noticeable (viable) at four months of gestational period, he therefore desired to make a comparative study of this assumption as against what was contained in the *Dhamma* that 'life called *jīvita* occurs simultaneously at the moment of conceiving in the mother's womb' and as to how these two views should be reconciled.

Dr. U Myint Swe had thus come across such obstacles or impediments concerning the doctrinal points of view. From the conceptual point of view of modern educated man, these doctrines have become very interesting. U Myint Swe had faced with the problem of finding a person who would be competent to explain categorically the problematic points in issue that could be accepted by a person endowed with the knowledge of modern medical science. He had searched for a learned person, both from among laymen and monks adroit in Buddhist doctrines, and had inquired every time he came into contact with such learned persons, but received no satisfactory answers to his queries. Fortunately, one day he met Mingala U Aung Myint with whom he had a chat on this subject matter. On U Aung Myint's suggestions, he had the chance of submitting these problematic issues to the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw for clarification.

Dr. U Myint Swe didn't put up the problematic points by word of mouth but in writing. His written queries contained the points for which he wanted clarification as also the concepts of

medical science which were fundamental to the points raised by him.

Mahāsī Sayādaw after accepting U Myint Swe's written queries gave the answers also in writing. In answering the interrogations, Mahāsī Sayādaw first set forth his explanations with the remarks: "U Myint Swe's set of questions involves four major difficulties as cited in the Texts of *Dhamma*. All questions are not only difficult to be answered satisfactorily but also required to be fully explained citing practical examples with full references so much so that they have become all the more difficult." And then, only after revealing the importance of seriously accepting the points stressed in this regard with firm conviction, Mahāsī Sayādaw proceeded to give convincing answers to the entire satisfaction of U Myint Swe.

The answer given by the *Sayādaw* was invariably firm and amenable to satisfactory acceptance by modern educated persons simply because the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw is fully competent in dealing with the Texts of *Dhamma* and the law of nature and is capable of giving satisfactory answers with relevance to the *Dhamma* and the Law of Nature. It is clear, brilliant and precise like a beam of bright light that has dispelled the darkness of the night by illumination. The answer which was couched in easily understandable expression of simple language for ordinary people to grasp the difficult knowledge relative to the past existence and future (new) existences, is really worthy of note. It is extremely remarkable to find an explanation on the correlativity between the two concepts, viz.: what is stated according to the Buddhist Scriptural Texts and what is set forth in modern medical science as to how pregnancy is conceived in the mother's womb. As regards the statements of answer relating to diseases and the commission of the act of killing and its *kammic* effects, these should be read and noted by all those who may be interested.

After receipt of the answers from Mahāsī Sayādaw, Dr. U Myint Swe again approached and solicited the *Sayādaw* for elucidation of certain points which were not yet convincingly clear to him. *Sayādaw* had accordingly given further elucidation. Having received all the answers he wished to have, to his full satisfaction, U

Myint Swe printed the said questions and answers for the benefit of the people in general in a book form under the title 'The Problem of Life Existence' in the year 1958, and after its publication, distributed (2,000) books *gratis*, i.e., in the form of a gift of *Dhamma* offered by his family.

'SĀVITTI GĀTHĀ' WHICH HAS BECOME SUBMERGED (OBSOLETE) IN THE WORLD OF PĀLI LITERATURE

In Burma, there is hardly anyone among Buddhist monks who have not heard of the word *sāvitti*. The reason being that this word is included in the Texts: the Great *Kicci* Grammar, and *Abhidhanappadipika*, which have been prescribed as primary lessons for the Buddhist monks. However, persons who are aware of what is that kind of Verse known as '*sāvitti-gāthā*', are indeed extremely rare. The meaning of the expression '*Sāvitti Chandhaso Mukham*' which has been derived from *Viniya Mahavābesajjakkhadhakā*, *Majjhima-pannasa* and *Sutta-Nipāta Pāli* and also *Sela Sutta*, has not been given in conformity with the Commentary exposition in the ancient Great Grammar *Nissaya*. Even in the *Nissaya* and other texts wherein the *sāvitti-gāthā* has been described, '*Buddham Saranam Gicchami*', etc., called *Ariya sāvitti* as contained in the Commentaries on *Sutta Nipāta Sundarika Baradvāja Sutta*, had only been mentioned. The basic meaning of *sāvitti-gāthā* as intended in the *Viniya Mahavā* and *Sela Sutta*, was not however revealed. In the *Sela Sutta* Commentary also this *sāvitti-gāthā* was just disclosed as the 'beginning' of the recitation or chanting of *Veda* (Hindu scriptures written in old Sanskrit) but the Verse (*gāthā*) was not described. It seems that it was not so described probably because it would be of no benefit. In the *Abhidhanappadipikā*, it was stated that *sāvitti* was the beginning of *Vedas* with three lines (*pādā*) having twenty-four syllables. Although exposition was made in respect of other informative points in its *Dīgha* and in *Nissayas*, no revelation had been made as regards '*Veda sāvitti-gāthā*'. The text that had described part and parcel of *sāvitti-gāthā* as contained in *Vedas* was *Majjhima-pannasa Dīgha*, which was compiled by *Ashin Dhammapala Mahāthera*, the author of *Visuddhi Magga Mahā Dīgha*. However, *sāvitti* that was

described in that Dīgha, being a prefatory word without essence, 'Veda sāvitti' had remained submerged or out of sight. This 'Veda sāvitti' which had sunk into oblivion was salvaged by the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw and then included and printed as an appendix to Samayantara portion to the Visuddhi Magga Mahā Dīgha Nissaya, which is a Text dealing with the exposition of the knotty points in the Vedas. *Sayādaw* had said that it had been possible for him to explain as such because he had obtained a booklet translated in English language relating to *sāvitti-gāthā*.

The statement of explanation and exposition of this matter relating to *sāvitti-gāthā* being a revelation of an expression which had submerged in the world of Pāli Literature, it is extremely worthy of note and remembrance. Moreover, nowadays as it is very difficult to find that Mahā Dīgha Nissaya Text, the said expression is fully described below for the sake of the Researchers.

APPENDIX TO MAHĀ DĪGHA SAMAYANTARA PORTION OF GANTHI NISSAYA 'MATTER RELATING TO SĀVITTI-GĀTHĀ'

Sāvitti-gāthā is of two different kinds, one being the *Lokiya* (worldly) *sāvitti-gāthā* of the Brahmana and the other, Buddha's *Ariya* (noble) *sāvitti-gāthā*, as reflected in the Piṭaka. Because the Three Refuges '*Buddham Saranam Gacchami, Dhammam Saranam Gacchami, Sangham Saranam Gacchami*' have been clearly explained as *Ariya sāvitti-gāthā* at the beginning of the Commentary (2-130) of the Pāli Sutta Nipāta (Collected Discourses) which runs as '*tan tam sāvittam pucchami, banpadaṃ catuvisakkharam*', this verse (*gāthā*) is fully understood by men of wisdom who are well-learned in Pāli. However, as the Brahmana's *Lokiya sāvitti-gāthā* having been found in the *sandhi* portion of the *kicca* text in accordance with what has been stated in Sela Sutta Pāli as '*Sāvitti Chandaso Mukham*', there appears to be only a very few who know it thoroughly. For this very reason, instead of giving the meaning of '*Chandaso* (Vedas), or rather the recitation of Vedas is the forerunner (*mukham*)' it has been found that the meaning is given in Sanskrit as '*Chandaso Mukham*', i.e., the forerunner or beginning of the text in Sanskrit. Though this *gāthā* is of no value in the realm of *Sāsana*, since it is evidently

found in the Suttam Piṭaka Mājjhima Nikāya and Khuddaka Nikāya, it appears necessary to understand the meaning of *sāvitti-gāthā* to that extent. Therefore, a brief explanation of it will be given.

In the statement of exposition of Sela Sutta (ma-ha: 3-278 and suttani-ha: 2-177), it has been explained that when reciting the Vedas, as the said *sāvitti-gāthā* had to be chanted first and foremost, it was taught as '*Sāvitti Chandaso Mukham*'. This exposition (ma-di, 3-184) was again expounded as '*Bhūr Bhūva Sva* (spell: *thwa*) *iti sāvittipubba kattā mukham pubbangamaṃ*'. Abāyārama Sayādaw had instructed that the original text of Brahmanas (Brahmanism) upon which this Dīgha had relied, was the eighty-first verse of the second volume of Manu Dhammathat. The said verse (*gāthā*) was as follows:

'2-81: *Ôn kārāpubhikatissé, mahāvyahitiyó, vyayā.*
Tipādāceva sāvitti, viññeyam brahmuno mukham.'

'*Ôn*' - *kārāpubbhikā*, *Ā-U-Ma*, the three particles added together forming a compounded word '*Ôn*' of one vowel sound becomes a prefix to *Tissó* – the three, *āvyayā*, indestructible words, *mahāvyāhariti: Bhū(r)*: Bhūva: Sva* for noble recitation of *sāvitticeva - sāvitti* verse, *tipādā* – comprising three lines *viññeyam* – should be known (as), *mukham*, the word which becomes the forerunner of the Veda (*Brahmuno*).

'*Ā*' - indicates the name of Vishnu. '*U*' - is the name of Siva. '*Ma*' - is the name of Brahma. The combination of these three particles is written in Sanskrit (*sakkata*) as '*Ôm*'. In Burma, it is written as '*Ôn*'. It will be more obvious and prominent if it is written as '*Ôn*'. In this portion of Manu Dhammathat text – verse No.74, it is stated that when Veda is to be recited, the word '*Ôn*' should be uttered first and that it should also end with '*Ôn*'. If at the beginning no utterance is made with '*Ôn*', it could gradually slip from memory. It is also said that if it is not concluded with '*Ôn*', no stability could even be maintained. The Brahmanas have laid so much emphasis on '*Ôn*'. It is not even feasible to recite the

* *Bhū(r)* = Earth. *Bhūva* = sky or firmament.

Sva = celestial abode of *devas*

word 'Ôn' which indicates respect and regard for Vishnu, Siva and Brahma gods.

In the exposition of the text (Dīpāni) which throws light on the meaning, it has been elucidated as '*Mahāvyahati yobhur bhūva sva eccetā*'. In the Sanskrit - English Dictionary of Samonia Monia William, it has been stated that it amounts to '*vyāhariti*' if recitation or chanting is done of the names of seven kinds of Abode which are difficult to understand and that these seven kinds of names are '*Bhūr Bhūva Sva Mahā Jana Tapa Cicca*'. Among them the first three, namely, '*Bhūr Bhūva Sva*' are called '*vyāhariti*'. It has been explained that the Brahmanas or Brahmins are used to first make utterance of the word 'Ôn' just before Veda is recited and then chanted the '*Mahāvyahariti*' in making prayers. Hence, the word '*Mahāvyahatiyo*' has been illustrated and explained as the noble recitation of '*Bhūr Bhūva Sva*'. Also in the Manu Dhammathat, in the seventy-sixth verse which referred to the four ancient verses, it has been stated as below:

2-76: *Ākaram̐ ca pyukāram̐ ca, mahāram̐ ca pajāpati;*
Vedakkayā niradhūha, bhūr bhūva sva etiti ca.

It means that the Brahma god named Pajapati has squeezed out of the three Vedas the particle 'Ā', the particle 'U', the particle 'Ma', and the three *Mahāvyahariti* - *Bhūr Bhūva Sva*.

However, the three words – '*Bhūr Bhūva Sva*' as shown in Paññāsa Dīgha are not yet in conformity with the statement that '*Sāvitti-gāthā* having three lines of eight syllables each, has 24 (twenty-four) syllables'. The genuine *sāvitti-gāthā* which is in agreement with that statement is as stated as hereunder.

Tat savibhūr va renyam̐
bhar gó devasara dī mahi
diyo yó na praso dhyayat

It should be as follows if translated into Pāli.

Tam̐ savitu va renyam̐
bhaggó devasa dhi mahi
dhisó yó nó pasodaye

The above *Sāvitti* verse is to be found in verse number Eruveda 3, Mandala 62, and Sutta 10. In the first line of this verse, one syllable is missing. Therefore, to make it two syllables in the word '*nyam̐*', it should be divided into two separate syllables viz.: - '*Na*' as one syllable, and '*yam̐*' as one syllable. When '*nayam̐*' is recited, it should be pronounced as '*niyam̐*' and at the beginning, the particle or the syllable '*Ôn*' together with '*Ôn tat savibhū va renyam̐*' should be counted as eight syllables. The foregoing are the three different versions. The meaning is interpreted in many different ways. The following meaning or explanation given is one of them.

'*Yó savita*' - the sun king or rather the Sun-god, is capable of reminding, urging and encouraging, i.e., '*pacodhaya*' our, i.e., '*No*', awareness or consciousness or rather, performance of rites to pay homage, i.e., '*Miyo*'. *Savitu* - the Sun, the so-called '*Tassadevassa*' - Sun-god's '*va renyam̐*' - much coveted '*Tanbhagoo*' - brilliant light or rather, the powerful glory should be regarded as making '*Ān*' to become '*Ô*' as in '*Vaco sutvā*', (In Sanskrit '*Bhargarth* - is *bhakārantana* neutral gender). We (*mayam̐*) do keep in mind, think and imagine as much (*mimahidhihmé*).

According to the above meaning, it is obvious that the name '*Sāvitti*' is the Verse (the Vedic verse *Sāvitrī*) that gives tribute and respects to the Sun God or the guardian angel of the Sun by the name of '*Sāvitā*'.

For the present, such is the case with the Brahmins or Brahmanas who when reciting or chanting the Vedas, first of all utter either '*Ôn Bhūr Sva*', or '*Ôn tatsavibhūr va renyam̐, bhargo devasaya dhimahi, dhiyo yó na pracodhayat.*', or '*Ôn bhūr bhūva sva tatsavi bhūrva renyam̐, bhar gó devasaya dhimahi, dhiyo yó na pracodhayatsa*'. Only after uttering as such, the Vedas are recited and chanted. Therefore, it seems sufficient enough to understand what the Blessed One had taught the ascetic Brahmin Kayniya who having understood and appreciated the '*Sāvitti-gāthā*', had his high regards for it, as '*Sāvitti Chandhaso Mukham̐*' with delight and satisfaction.

Note: Here ends the matter relating to '*Sāvitti-gāthā*'.

Although this ‘*Sāvitti-gāthā*’ is not of much benefit to the Buddhists, the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw had searched for the facts relating to it from the Sanskrit Texts considering that it is a Verse which ought to be known because of the fact that its name appears in the Buddhist Pāli Scriptures.

As a matter of fact, many people have come to know clearly about this ‘*Sāvitti-gāthā*’ only when *Sayādaw* has thrown light on it in writing.

Once again when *Sayādaw* was asked about the matter relating to ‘*Sāvitti-gāthā*’, he had revealed that this Verse was also found in Dhivyāvadhana Text. In that text book, this *gāthā* was mentioned as Brahmana Sāvitti wherein Khatthiya-sāvitti, Vussa-sāvitti, Suddhā-sāvitti and other *sāvittis* were also described. In that book, the mere words ‘*Ōn Bhūr Bhūva Sva*’ were shown as Suddhā-sāvitti. (These *sāvittis* can be found in Divyāvadhana Text and Saddūlakattavadhana on pages 333-4). In the said manner, Mahāsī Sayādaw has divulged a point which had once submerged and fallen into desuetude in the Pāli Literature.

COMPACT OF BHĀRATA KINGS

In the Commentaries, if it is connected with the exposition of ‘*samphappalāpa*’, that is, frivolous talk, it is usual to expound by using the words expressed in Bhāratayuddha Sitahāranādinirattakathā. Similarly, in setting forth in detail the Tiracchanakathā, the explanation is given including Bhāratayuddha. What is meant by these Commentaries is that the presentation relating to the kind of the wordy warfare of Bhārata Kings, the statement as to how Ravana ogre had stolen the Queen Sita and so on, are mere worthless fables or fictitious tales. These words if spoken earnestly and seriously as if they were the real truth, would amount to frivolous and trifling talks, i.e., *samphappalāpa*. It means to say that this kind of prattle being contrary to *magga-phala* would be tantamount to Tiracchanakathā, i.e., low or unprofitable conversation.

In this, Rāmayana text was referred to by secret abduction of Queen Sita. This story of Rāma is well-known to all Burmese people. The popularity so gained is because the *jātaka* stories (tales)

of Rāma had been handed down to us in writing since the time of the ancient kings and also because Rāma Jātaka or story has been, up to this day, exhibited as stage-play or theatrical performances.

Reference was made to Mahā Bhārata text by means of describing the combat of Bhārata Kings. Very few people in Burma know about the story of Mahā Bhārata. Only a handful of persons who have English education could acquire knowledge about it by reading the translated English versions of this text. When making speech about *samphappalāpa*, this Mahā Bhārata story is unavoidable. One should therefore know a brief account of it in the least. Hence, the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw had mentioned a concise account of this Mahā Bhārata story in *Sallekha Sutta Dhamma* (First Part, pages 283-286). The facts about Mahā Bhārata story being scarcely known by people in Burma, its exposition presents an extraordinary feature. While it was being expounded, Kanhā Devi also called Dayawpadi as indicated in that story, was not only the Kanhā Devi of Kondalā Jātaka from the 550 Jātaka stories, but also found to be similar to the name of the stories and also found to be similar to the name of the five sons of King Manda. By revealing this point of similarity, it would appear as if the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw had simultaneously disclosed his talent in analytical knowledge of observation, his versatility and complete knowledge of the Scriptural texts.

MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW – SANSKRIT AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES

Many people in Burma think it is unnecessary for the monks to know different kinds of languages, such as English, etc. In particular, they do not look upon with favour the pursuit of linguistic study by young monks. Some even speak with prejudice in thinking that the acquisition of knowledge in foreign languages would probably make the monks become heretics. However, if Mahāsī Sayādaw was not proficient in Sanskrit and English languages, he would not have been able to write *Visuddhi Magga* and the *Samayantara* portion of the *Dīgha Nissaya* to reach the high level of standard. In point of fact, if Mahāsī Sayādaw has no knowledge of the Sanskrit and English languages (particularly Sanskrit), he would not even contemplate writing the *Mahā Dīgha*



Mahāsī Sayādaw

At work

Nissaya. The compilation and writing of this Nissaya itself clearly indicates the real need for acquirement of knowledge in linguistics by the monks.

The majority of the people are under the impression that Mahāsī Sayādaw had pursued and studied the Sanskrit and English languages after his arrival at the Sāsana Yeikthā. It is not so. Mahāsī Sayādaw had studied these languages since his young days. He had learnt Sanskrit while he was residing at Taungwaingale. As no teacher was available at hand, he had conscientiously studied personally by

reading Hitopadesa Nissaya, Muddhabodha Nissaya and Moggallāna Nissaya written by Abāyārama Sayādaw. To know the proper and correct pronunciation, he had daily approached Mahāmyaing Sayādaw and took lessons on pronunciation daily for about one hour. Mahāmyaing Sayādaw was very good in pronunciation as he had stayed together with Ceylonese monks when he was young. Having been originally and fully equipped himself with the knowledge of Pāli language, and grammar and gifted with his 'ready wit' or rather quick witted-intelligence, he had gained mastery in Sanskrit language without much exertion. By observing the 'Introduction' and 'Conclusion' of the text 'Vipassanā Method of Meditation', it can be clearly known that he had since then acquired a good knowledge of the Sanskrit language.

As regards English language, *Sayādaw* had studied it since the time of his *sāmaṇera* days. At that time, his distant relative by the name of U Sandhimā, an *upazin* who knew English language was residing at Chiba village. During his stay at Chiba for one *vassa* (rainy season), the *Sayādaw* had taken lessons in English from that *upazin* (senior monk). Therefore, while he residing in Mandalay, he continued his studies in English. On his arrival at Moulmein, his residence was a forest monastery. And because there was no occasion for using English language, he had temporarily abandoned

his pursuit of the English language. Again while residing at Seikkhun during the period of Japanese occupation of Burma, having incidentally found the book of 'Asoka Inscriptions Carved Upon Pillars and Rocks', written in English and an English book called 'The World of Wonders', he had perused them. After he had reached Sāsana Yeikthā (in Rangoon), English became more essential for the purpose of dealing with the foreigners who visited the meditation centre. Therefore, with the help of his prominent benefactors who knew English, he again devoted himself to his study of English. Among these benefactors, U Pe Thin, ex Personal Assistant to the Commissioner of Pegu Division, who had great reverence for *Sayādaw*, rendered the best service in teaching English. With the assistance of these personages, Mahāsī Sayādaw was able to read and understand various religious texts, such as the Indian Philosophy.

Although his knowledge of English is limited to the extent falling short of teaching in English, he had reached the stage whereby he could teach and discuss the *Dhamma* in English. When I once visited the *Sayādaw* to pay homage, I found him reading the 'History of Indian Literature' written by Mr. Winternitz. Mahāsī Sayādaw has endeavoured to that extent in order to accomplish himself in English language.

DHAMMA TEXTS WRITTEN AND COMPILED BY MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

In the course of writing the outstanding *Dhamma* texts, such as *Visuddhi Magga Mahā Dīgha Nissaya*, etc., Mahāsī Sayādaw had also compiled smaller *Dhamma* texts which would be of benefit to the reading public. These texts are the *Dhammas* which the Venerable *Sayādaw* had taught in a number of places where he had visited including Sāsana Yeikthā where he had resided. These *Dhammas* that were delivered as discourses had been originally tape-recorded at the time of delivery and thereafter only, they were transcribed and printed in book form and then published. He composed a number of books throughout the period of about 38 years and had so far published over 76 religious text books; among them the most outstanding are as enumerated below:



Mahāsī Sayādaw busy at his writing desk, being helped by Mingala U Aung Myint.



Mahāsī Sayādaw typing by himself and putting on the finishing touches on the scripts he wrote.

1. Vipassanā Meditation - volume I & II
2. Diary of Kammatṭhāna Sayādaws
3. Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta Pāḷi Nissaya
4. Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Dhamma - (abridged): Four Parts
5. Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Dhamma (Kāyānupassanā Part)
6. Vedanā Nupassana Dhamma
7. Practical Vipassanā Meditation Exercises
8. Visuddhi and Progress of Insight
9. Visuddhi Nyanakathā
10. Purpose of Practising Kammatṭhāna Meditation
11. Dhammacakkapavattana
12. Anattā Lakhana Sutta
13. The Problem of Life Existence
14. Memoirs on Promotion of Sāsana in Indonesia
15. Fundamentals of Vipassanā Meditation
16. Visuddhi Magga Mahā Dīgha (Samayantara portion) Nissaya
17. Visuddhi Magga (in Burmese) - Four volumes
18. Ariyāvāsa Sutta
19. Vammika Sutta
20. Visuddhi Magga Mahā Dīgha Nissaya
21. Purabeda Sutta
22. Paṭiccasamuppāda Dhamma
23. Bhāra Sutta
24. Brahma Vihāra Dhamma
25. Kyaung Anumodhana Dhamma

26. Lokadhamma
27. Sallekha Sutta - Two volumes
28. Hemavata Sutta
29. Takatho Vipassanā
30. Dhammadāyāda Sutta
31. Mālukyaputta Sutta
32. Mahā Samaya Sutta
33. Practical Basic Exercises in Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā Meditation
34. Vipassanā Meditation (abridged)
35. Sakkapanha Sutta
36. Sīlavata Sutta
37. Samaparibbhājaniya Sutta
38. Journey through Sāsana
39. Mahāsī Vutta Recitation Dhamma
40. Dhamma Concerning Nibbāna
41. Tivuttaka Sutta
42. Vinaya Vinissaya Sangha
43. Silver Jubilee Dhamma
44. To Nibbāna via the Noble Eightfold Path
45. Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā Meditation
46. Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā Meditation - Criticisms and Replies
47. Cūlavedalla Sutta
48. Sakka-Panha Sutta
49. Progress of Insight through Seven Stages of Purification
50. Dhamma on Protection of Dangers to Buddha Sāsana
51. Mahāsī Abroad - Part I and II
52. Nibbāna Paṭisaṃyutta Kathā
53. The Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā Meditation
54. Vipassanā: Spiritual Insight

N.B. A number of above texts have been translated into English. Some are still being printed while a few others are in the process of translation.

Up till now, Mahāsī Sayādaw has been delivering the discourses off and on. The *Dhamma* that have been taught by the Venerable Sayādaw comprised the profound *Dhamma* which were delivered in amplification based upon selected prominent *suttas* from



Mahāsī Sayādaw

Delivering a Dhamma Discourse

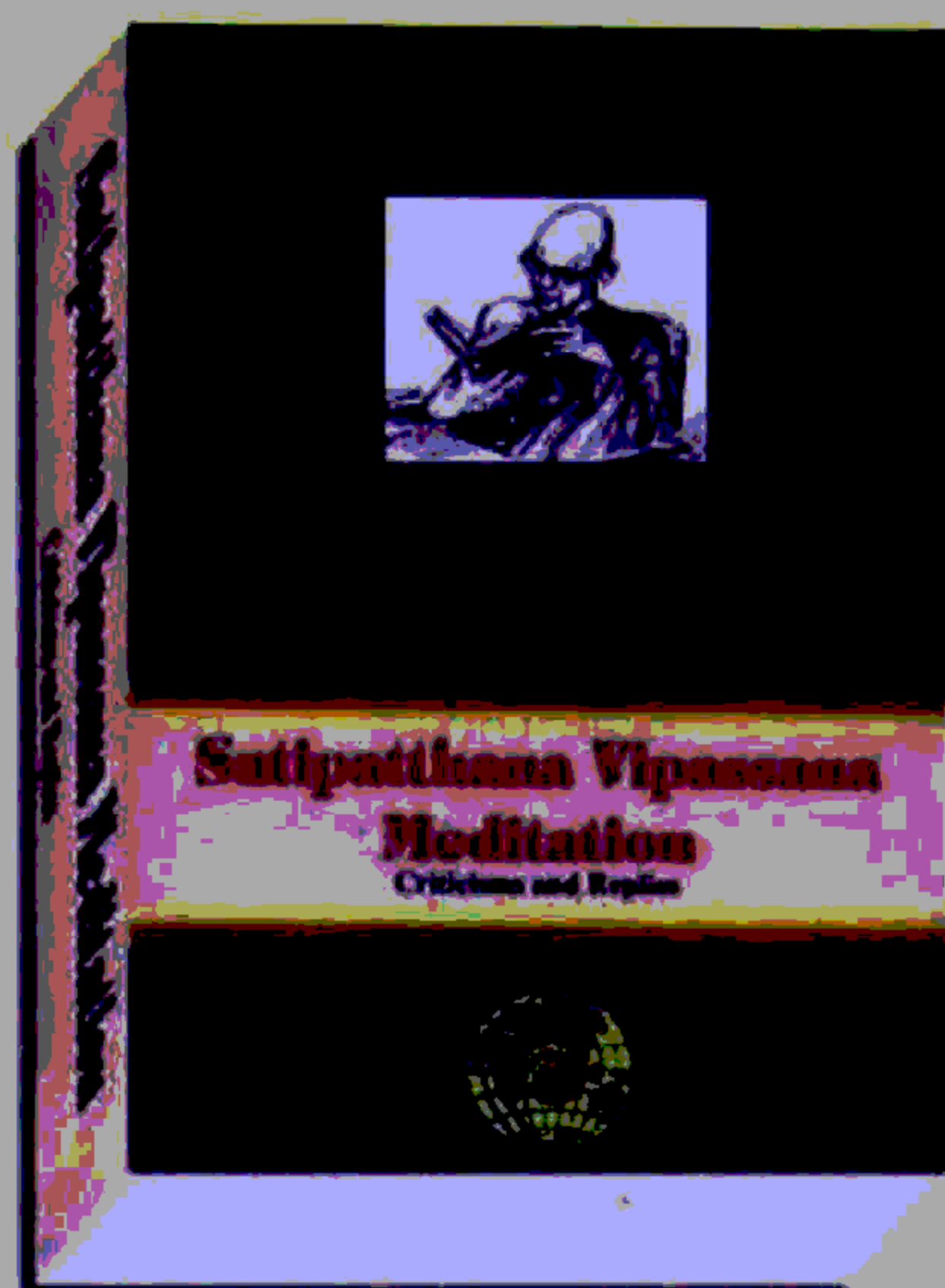
the Pāli Scriptures. These *Dhammas* though highly profound were taught after harmonizing them with the practical aspect of *vipassanā* effectively with an analytical approach and after making them perfect with his penetrating genius so as to enable everybody to understand clearly. A good many of these *Dhammas* would one day come out in book form. Therefore, the text books enumerated in the above list are the most popular among those

that have been published so far, and more will be added to the list for so long as the Venerable *Sayādaw* lives.

The moment the name of Mahāsī Sayādaw or of Sāsana Yeikthā is heard of, the words ‘arising’ and ‘falling’ (of the abdomen) – *kammaṭṭhāna* (i.e., the words connected with the practice of meditation), would automatically occur in the personality of the persons who have heard it. To that extent even, the method of practising contemplation on mindfulness or of the movements of ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ (of the abdomen) and Mahāsī Sayādaw have become closely connected and inseparable. Mahāsī Sayādaw had earned his reputation because of this method of practice in *vipassanā* meditation as ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ of the abdomen. And then, also because of this method of contemplation, Mahāsī Sayādaw had been subjected to the violent attacks of criticisms made by some of the people. (See BOOK REF. 7 on page 213).

A good number of the people were under the wrong impression that this method of instruction to contemplation on the ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ movements of the abdomen was initiated by Mahāsī Sayādaw himself. This wrong presumption was perhaps due to the fact that this gained popularity and become conspicuous because of Mahāsī Sayādaw. Beginning from the year 1300 M.E. (1938), Mahāsī Sayādaw has preached and taught the *vipassanā* meditation practice. However, this method of contemplation of the ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ had become prominent since the past many

**BOOK REF. 7 : SATIPAṬṬHĀNA VIPASSANĀ MEDITATION
- Criticisms and Replies
by Mahāsi Sayādaw**



“ . . . I would like to say, in conclusion, that I had seen all these Rejoinders, Rebuttals and Replies before they were sent out, and I have hardly anything to add to or detract from them. My blessings go to all concerned.

I must avail myself of this opportunity to place on record my great appreciation, with a drop sense of gratitude, of the services of the Ven. Nyanaponika Thera, who has spared no pains to spread the *Satipaṭṭhāna* Meditation method to the whole world.”

Mahāsi Sayādaw

Bhaddanta Sobhana

22.2.77

(An Extract from the Foreword of the book)

years before it was imparted by Mahāsī Sayādaw. This method of contemplation was found in Satipaṭṭhāna Dīpāni Text (page 272) written and compiled by Dhammakathika teacher U Chit Aung of Myohla town, who was a pupil of U San Tun, meditation teacher of Pyawbwe, the first original disciple of the Mingun Jetāvan (Mūla or Origin) Sayādawpayāgyī. As it has been mentioned in the said book that this text was printed in the year 1299 M.E. (1937), it must be stated that the method of contemplating the ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ of the abdomen had been in vogue ten years earlier to Mahāsī’s revival of the method. If the book itself was ten years earlier, the method itself must have been actually practised before that period of ten years.

Because of the fact that the compiler of this Text was the pupil of Mingun (Mūla) Sayādawpayāgyī’s pupil, and because it had been explained in the front cover-page that the method prescribed therein was written and compiled based on the method of Mingun Jetāvan Sayādawgyī, it could be surmised that this method of contemplation was one which had been approved by the Mingun (Mūla) Sayādawpayāgyī. The more reliable supporting evidence is the First Volume of Vipassanā Dīgha written by *Kammaṭṭhāna-cariya* Sayādaw U Myat Kyaw who is a close disciple of Mingun Jetāvan (Mūla) Sayādawpayāgyī. In the said Dīgha at page 189, it is found to have been written as ‘In regard to Mingun Sect, since some have fixed their mind with concentration on the abdomen and contemplated as ‘hot’ and ‘falling’, or ‘rising’ and ‘falling’, those who are not aware of it get surprised and so on, and as such, the method of contemplation of ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ of the abdomen is considered as one of the methods of Mingun Sect and is truly natural and correct in accord with the reality. Furthermore, there is a memorandum definitely indicating that this text was scrutinized by the Mingun Sayādawpayāgyī and then printed as desired by the *Sayādawgyī* after amending it with insertions and deletions. Therefore, according to this Vipassanā Dīgha Text, it is certainly beyond doubt that the method of contemplating on the ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ of the abdomen is the one that was accepted by the Mingun (Mūla) Sayādawpayāgyī. As the said text was printed in the year 1298 M.E. (1936), it was two years earlier than the date on which

Mahāsī Sayādaw first started teaching the *Dhamma*. (These facts were obtained from the ‘Introduction’ to the Second Mahāggayatana and Sallekha Sutta Dhamma). Hence, this method of contemplating on the ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ of the abdomen that has been instructed is obviously NOT the method initiated by Mahāsī Sayādaw. If it is alleged that this method of contemplation was introduced by Mahāsī Sayādaw, much as it would amount to telling lies, it would have gone to the extent of disparaging the people who had originated the method and laid down the instructions.

Mahāsī Sayādaw had instructed to meditate starting from the contemplation of ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ of the abdomen as a ground work since the time of giving his first lessons in Seikkhun in 1300 M.E. (1938). (Please see Basic Vipassanā Meditation Exercises - 2nd printing on page 124 and 3rd printing on page 128). Why did Mahāsī Sayādaw give such instructions? There are reasons for doing so. Firstly, the *Sayādaw* had ordinarily instructed to contemplate on the more obvious phenomenal occurrences in the body that are amenable to easy comprehension. It was because some of the yogis who had meditated as instructed, not knowing what was to be contemplated and noted, had to find for the object of contemplation. Secondly, the ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ movement of the abdomen being *vāyokāya* (material element of air or wind) among the *pathavikāya*, *āpokāya*, etc., it is included in the bodily sensation of *kāyānupassanā* mindfulness. Thirdly, it was because being easier in practice for yogis contemplating on the more conspicuous or easily discernible occurrences based upon that ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ phenomena. Fourthly, it was known that the branches of Meditation Centre under Mingun (Mūla) Sayādawpayāgyī had adopted this method of contemplating on ‘hotness’ and ‘falling’. Lastly, it was to bring about a fixed standard of uniformity among his yogis in recounting their experiences about contemplation. For the reasons as stated, Mahāsī Sayādaw had instructed that all physical behaviour, all sensations (*vedanā*), all mental behaviour and all bodily phenomena that become manifest, should be contemplated and noted relying upon the basic ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ of the abdomen as a starting point. It is a method of contemplation by which concentration is easily gained resulting in speedy attainment

of *vipassanā-ñāṇa* without making effort to search for the ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ movements. That is the reason why in the Text ‘Vipassanā Meditation Practice’, firm instructions have been given to contemplate based upon the ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ movements of the abdomen. *Sayādaw* had therefore given instructions similar to that method of contemplation after his arrival at the Rangoon Sāsana Yeikthā.

Although instructions have been so given to contemplate on ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ movements of the abdomen as a foundation, this method is by no means compulsorily enforced. To those yogis who have meditated by means of *ānāpāna*, i.e., by inhaling and exhaling of breath, they have been and are being permitted to contemplate and note the ‘in and out breathing’ by fixing their mind on the tip of the nostrils basically, and then to contemplate and note as and when occurrences are taking place in the body. Therefore, it is clear that the *Kammaṭṭhāna-cariyas* under the patronage of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw (*Sayādaw’s* mandate) are not bigoted persons prejudicially in favour of the ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ movement of the abdomen, but are personages who give priority to the yogis for their easy and joyful achievement of *vipassanā* insight knowledge and for the attainment of *Magga-Phala-Nibbāna*, and who could observe the noble quality of keeping in heart and mind to work for the benefit of and fulfill the wish of the person concerned.

However, beginners who have never had any experience in meditational practice are instructed to contemplate and note the ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ of the abdomen regarding it as fundamental. The instructions so given to contemplate and note are only meant for those whose *samādhi-ñāṇa* is still immature. Those, whose powers of concentration have already been mature or strengthened, can start contemplating on what is clearly arising at the Six-Sense-doors. There are already thousands and thousands of people at all meditation centres, such as



Mahāsī Sayādaw
Delivering a Dhamma talk

Rangoon Sāsana Yeikthā and other meditation retreats within and outside Burma, who have reached the higher stages of *vipassanā*-insight and who are in a position to decide for themselves and have attained stages whereby they are able to distinguish between matter and mind and realize the arising and dissolution or passing away of *rūpa* and *nāma*, etc., etc. Among these yogis, there are well-educated Westerners. Undoubtedly, such people will not blindly accept and adhere to the said method of contemplation, if it were not really beneficial to them. It is obvious that they are following this method of meditational exercise only because it must have the quality of pushing them on to the higher states of awakening consciousness as they plunge themselves in meditation in a practical way.

Much as there are many people adopting this method of *vipassanā* practice, there are a number of people who regard this method with bitterness. Of course, just as there are people who honestly deny to accept this method on the ground that it did not exactly fall in agreement with what is stated in the literature, there were those who had resented or disliked it with a different mental attitude. Such people with sour views had ferociously attacked the *Sayādaw*, making use of the literary weapons, such as writing books, and giving publicity by writing articles containing hostile criticisms in the columns of newspapers and journals. They had alleged in many ways in writing that this method was introduced by Mahāsī Sayādaw wishing to get himself into the limelight and to excel others, and that this fancy notion of ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ was not found in the texts written by Mingun (Mūla) Sayādawgyī and his pupils, and that also in all the Buddha’s teachings, namely, the Tipiṭaka consisting of eighty-four thousand *Dhammakkhandas*-articles, ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ is not enunciated. Despite of all these malicious and disparaging attacks, Mahāsī Sayādaw had refrained from rebutting them and remained silent. Sure enough, it will be of no benefit to write by way of refuting these wild gossips. Such refutations in retaliation will only cause to bring demerits to the reading public. Buddha *Sāsana* is concerned with all Buddhists. Those who prefer their methods will follow their dictates and accordingly meditate. If they were honestly dissatisfied with this

method, they would come personally for consultation. It was learnt that Mahāsī Sayādaw had taken a firm stand with his own conviction to explain the matter to their entire satisfaction with sound supporting facts and complete references only if and when they called on him.

When Mahāsī Sayādaw remained mute without retorting their criticisms, persons who had launched their allegations together with their partisans became encouraged. They had become more brazen, daring and impulsive. False propaganda was on the swing that Mahāsī Sayādaw had not responded to the challenge and had remained submissive realizing his own mistake. Even neutral persons had thought so. On the other hand, those who have great respect for Mahāsī Sayādaw including monks and lay disciples became intolerable. Yet, refutation was withheld.

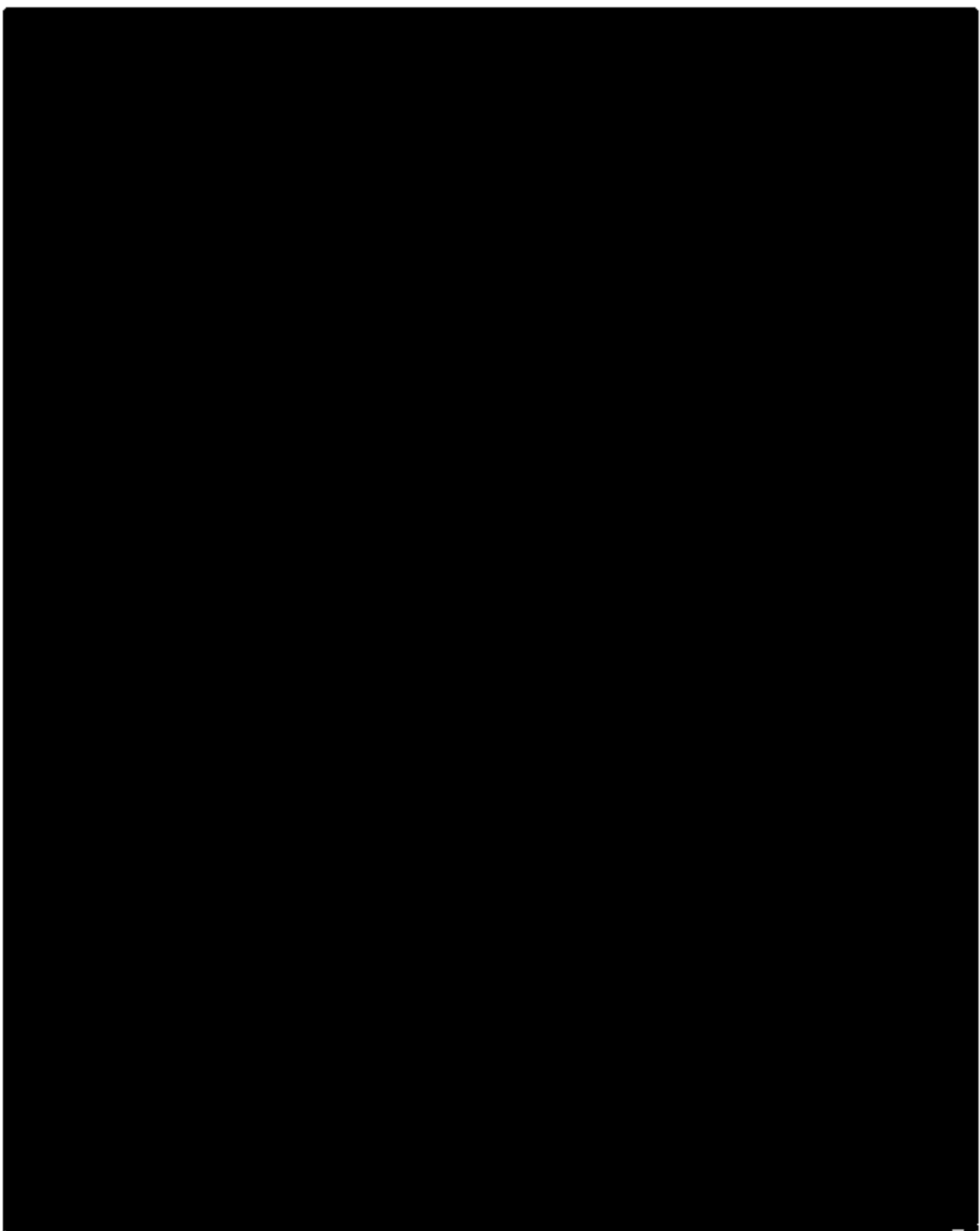
While so happening, a book entitled ‘Mahāggayatana’ appeared in the month of Pyatho (January), 1324 M.E. (1962). The writer of this book was Sayādaw U Teiktha of Wetlet Masoyein Kyaung-taik. From the time he had read the book: ‘The Method of Vipassanā Meditation’, he has his great reverence for and high estimation of Mahāsī Sayādaw, and has successfully and diligently practised *vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna* in accordance with the method of Mahāsī *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* meditation which is to contemplate ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ from the start. Imagining that ‘if remained complacent, it would not only be harmful to Mahāsī Sayādaw but also to the noble *Sāsana*’, he wrote a book under the title of ‘Mahāggayatana’. Only after the book had been printed, he offered the book through personal dispatch to Mahāsī Sayādaw and not before printing after he had written it for the simple reason that if he let the *Sayādaw* know about that book before it was printed, he feared the *Sayādaw* might deter him from printing the book. The false allegations of those ill-minded opponents were effectively and thoroughly pulverized by Sayādaw U Teiktha in the ‘Mahāggayatana’ Text. Though the book contains points of rebuttal with sound and valid arguments, as it was written and couched in the fine language effectively and discreetly, those who have read it have extolled the ability of the writer finding the book extremely readable and pleasant. Then only, the disciples of Mahāsī Sayādaw

had found relief.

At the request of one yogi by the name of Aung Moe who had read this Mahāggayatana Text, to continue writing such a book (without being acquainted with that *Sayādaw*), Sayādaw U Teiktha wrote the ‘Second Mahāggayatana’ to fulfill the wish of the yogi Aung Moe. This Second Book appeared in the month of Natdaw (December) in 1325 M.E. (1963). Following the publication of that treatise, a text named Padatthan Rulings written by Dhammacariya Ashin Nyanabala, a monk who is well-versed in Piṭaka, came out almost in succession. Only when these books appeared, the people could weigh the points of arguments raised by both parties, and then came to realize the rights and wrongs of the dissentient views with an eye of a critic.

In stating that Mahāsī Sayādaw had refrained from rebutting the persons who had seriously made their false allegations or rather, accusations against him, it means to say that no ‘direct’ refutation had been done in retaliation. He had however, repulsed the other party’s impingement in an indirect and subtle way explaining that his belief is in accordance with the wish of the Blessed One. The said explanatory statements can be found in the text ‘Method of Vipassanā Meditation’ – the First Volume (1st printing) page 288-9; and the Second Volume of the same (7th printing) page 3,4, & 55; Ariyāvāsa Dhamma – page 184-189; and its annexure page 244, etc; Vammika Sutta page 217, etc.; and the annexure (appendix) to Mahāsī Sayādaw’s Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta Pāli Nissaya.

Mahāsī Sayādaw had not only been assailed with criticisms in Burma but also in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Soon after the arrival of Sayādaw Ashin Sujāta at Colombo on his first trip, opposition began to take place. In Colombo, there were Ceylonese *Sayādaws* who assumed the role of religious leaders, and who were imparting religious knowledge to



Sayādaw Ashin Sujāta
Chief Disciple of Mahāsī
Sayādaw (1909 - 1982)

male and female benefactors through text books and written articles on religion and also by teaching. These *Sayādaws* were those who had earned respect from both the intellectual and wealthy class of people in Ceylon. Although the *Sayādaws* were capable of giving instructions on *dāna* (charitableness), and *sīla* (morality), they were not competent to give reliable guidance in respect of the practical aspect of meditation (*Kammaṭṭhāna Dhamma*). Without personal experience in *kammaṭṭhāna*, they were only able to instruct as contained in the scriptural texts. These instructions being given on mere book-knowledge without the basic personal knowledge achieved through practical meditation, they fell short of the target, from the practical point of view.

Under such conditions when Ashin Sujāta revisited Ceylon and promoted the *Vipassanā Sāsana* by introducing Mahāsī's practical method of *vipassanā* meditation exercise, a large number of people came over to Yamuna, the temporary meditation centre, in batches forming a sort of an assembly. Within a space of a few days after indulging themselves in practical meditation, these people had attained insight *vipassanā* knowledge which they had never before realized, and they became highly jubilant. At this juncture, the said *Sayādaws* started slinging mud by criticizing and attacking violently through the medium of newspapers, pamphlets and journals. They had written very cleverly to let the reading public have a false notion that Mahāsī Sayādaw's method was an act of sacrilege and a kind of magic art. Nevertheless, Ashin Sujāta and party refrained from refuting the accusations as instructed by Mahāsī Sayādaw, and carried on with the work of propagating the *Sāsana* boldly and steadily without getting perturbed.

However, as the articles written by the said *Sayādaws* were in English, these had gone into world-wide publicity through various journals and other periodicals. Such being the case, as the matter could create a wrong impression in the Buddhist world at large in the absence of any rebuttal, U Nyānuttara, the Kabā-Aye Sayādaw, had refuted the criticisms and dissentient views expressed in those articles by the Ceylonese *Sayādaws*. The explanations written by Sayādaw U Nyānuttara were found in the journal called 'World Buddhism' which was published in Ceylon.

This bitter attack happened to be the most violent and furious storm in the life-career of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw. While this violent storm was raging with vehemence, ill-wishers were looking on with great expectation when would *Sayādaw* be thrown from his pedestal, whereas those who have great respect for the *Sayādaw* were closely watching with anxiety whether the *Sayādaw* would be able to withstand the terrific force of onslaught. However, Mahāsī Sayādaw had been able to stand against all such attacks with firmness (of faith) like a huge and solid rocky mountain, no, like Gibraltar. The answer to his being able to hold out against this fierce attack is simply because of the genuineness of the method of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* of Mahāsī Sayādaw who always weighs things guided by the principle of ‘remaining humble for consequential fruit or reward’, which gives strength to imagine the ‘cause’ foreseeing what the resultant ‘effect’ would be. When judging a situation, only if the pros and cons are properly considered and analyzed, a correct decision could be reached. It is not just right and adequate to gain only benefit. Only when it is free from fault, it will be on the safe-side and be free from danger. At Mahāsī’s Meditation Centre (Sāsana Yeikthā), there has never been an instance where a yogi is found lying naked and prostrate stating that he has attained *phala-samāpatti*, induced by ecstatic meditation, or, plunged in a religious trance – *nirodha-samāpatti*. Nor has any publicity been made of the unbelievable propaganda stating that *Arahats* have appeared in a package or in lots. Also, no incident has ever occurred where a fake *Arahat* has relegated to the lowly position of a layman by abandoning the robes, which kind of incident, if really occurred, could be an ignominious act or a peculiar piece of news. The entire absence of such disgraceful incidents which would cause lack of confidence in connection with meditation practice tends to indicate the genuineness and truth of the method of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* taught by Mahāsī Sayādaw. As no such faulty and disgraceful events have ever happened, it has gained the implicit trust of the people in general, and has stood resolutely steadfast on a firm and sure foundation as it is evidently found today.

THE VENERABLE ‘THANKS-WORTHY’ MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAWPAYĀGYĪ

Sayādaw has been given the name of ‘Mahāsī Sayādaw’ because he had propagated *Vipassanā Sāsana* at Seikkhun Mahāsī Monastery during the World War II. He continued to be known as Mahāsī Sayādaw also after his arrival at Rangoon Sāsana Yeikthā. Thenceforward, those who have a deeper appreciation of the noble attributes of the Sayādaw and high respects for him, reveringly addressed him as Mahāsī Sayādaw. Thereafter, the word ‘*Kyayzushin*’ in Burmese, which literally means ‘Thanks-Worthy’ in English (we may call ‘Venerable’) has been prefixed to the name, and the people have become accustomed to call him ‘The Venerable Mahāsī Sayādawpayāgyī’ up till the present day. In using the word ‘Thanks-Worthy’, is it because of the common usage, an ordinary parlance? Or is it because of profound reverence for his noble virtues?

Kammaṭṭhāna-cariya Sayādaw Ashin Sujāta Thera, the Chief Disciple of Mahāsī Sayādaw came to know the real essence of the meaning of Pāli scriptures only after application of this practical knowledge to the theoretical side of the *Dhamma*, for which he owed a deep debt of gratitude to Mahāsī Sayādaw. If he had not practised *vipassanā* meditation under the patronage and guidance of the Venerable Sayādawpayāgyī, he would not have achieved this kind of insight wisdom. He once mentioned that the ‘thanks’ he owed to *Sayādawgyī* were boundless. During the month of Kason (May) 1335 M.E. (1973). Mahāsī Sayādaw had dropped in at Mandalay Sāsana Yeikthā on his way to Mogok. The author of this biography had been to the *Sayādaw* to pay homage. On his arrival at the Yeikthā, a senior monk (*upazin*) was found near the *Sayādaw*. While conversing with him at leisure, the said senior monk had mentioned that he had offered his life in donation to



The Venerable Thanks-Worthy Mahāsī Sayādawpayāgyī

Mahāsī Sayādaw. He spoke in earnest that he had done so in fulfillment of his part-performance in repayment of his immense gratitude owed to the *Sayādaw* because of his priceless achievement of the special knowledge of insight wisdom by practising meditation according to the method shown by Mahāsī Sayādaw, and that presenting his life in donation by way of sacrifice was many times better, more meaningful and profound than making offerings of property and money in donation. This *upazingyī* (senior monk) was no other than the Mill-Owner U Ba Thin of Ye-U Town, who had at one time introduced Mahāsī Sayādaw to the rich man Sir U Thwin.

Judging by the statements made by Sayādaw U Sujāta and *upazingyī* U Ba Thin, it is explicitly enough that Mahāsī Sayādaw is the real 'Thanks-Worthy' sage and Guru of the two monks. It is quite natural that one would really thank a person who offers a piece of property or a thing as a present which is lovely and of which he is in need. More than that, if a clear explanation is given by a person relating to a subject matter which one cannot properly grasp, that person would deserve thanks forever. Over and above that, when *vipassanā* insight knowledge occurs or is achieved, which one has never before realized, much as he is extremely jubilant, immeasurable thanks will go to the Blessed One who had taught and the meditation teacher who had given him the guidance and instructions on the method of meditation. There will be no end in paying homage. This kind of elated joy and extreme reverence will be experienced by every yogi when he sees the light of insight knowledge that distinguishes between matter and mind while practising meditation and by those who have reached any higher stage in the process of contemplation. Sayādaw U Sujāta and *upazingyī* U Ba Thin were not the only two who had attained the higher stages of insight knowledge. The number of such yogis has exceeded five-hundred thousand. Hence, Mahāsī Sayādaw is, in fact, the 'Thanks-Worthy' Sayādawgyī of the said five-hundred thousand yogis. Mahāsī Sayādaw has earned unparalleled respect for being able to give practical satisfaction in connection with this noble *Dhamma*. It can be known clearly that the kind of reverence and courtesy given by his yogis has sprung from their hearts and it is not just a pretentious display. Therefore, one could even very well

imagine that in the lifetime of Lord Buddha, the reverence for the Blessed One must be that kind of heartfelt reverence. To those people there will be no complete satisfaction in merely addressing Mahāsī Sayādaw as ‘Thanks-Worthy’, the Most Venerable. As such, the use of the expression ‘Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw’ or ‘Thanks-Worthy Mahāsī Sayādaw-payāgyī’ is not just an ordinary parlance, but a pleasant and joyful expression, sweet to the ear, which has overflowed from the innermost feelings that have arisen from the highly esteemed adoration. Moreover, Mahāsī Sayādaw really deserves to be called ‘Thanks-Worthy’ not only by the yogis, but

HONOURING MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW ON HIS BIRTHDAY



a) Mahāsī Sayādaw seen surrounded by members of Shwedagon Pagoda trustee and Buddha-Sāsana Nuggaha Committee (the administrative board) of Mahāsī Meditation Center, Yangon.



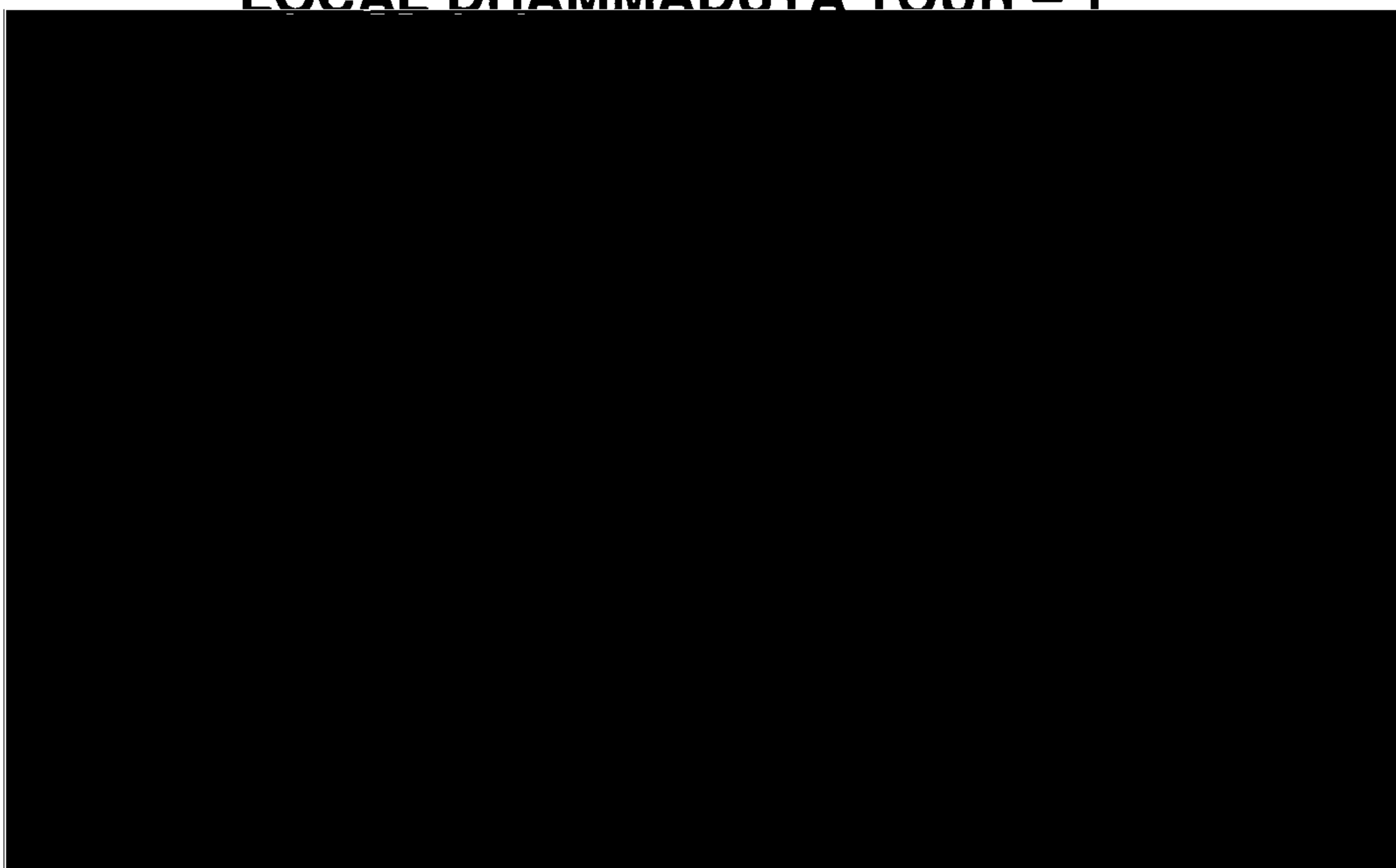
b) Offering cakes and fruits in the Shwedagon Pagoda



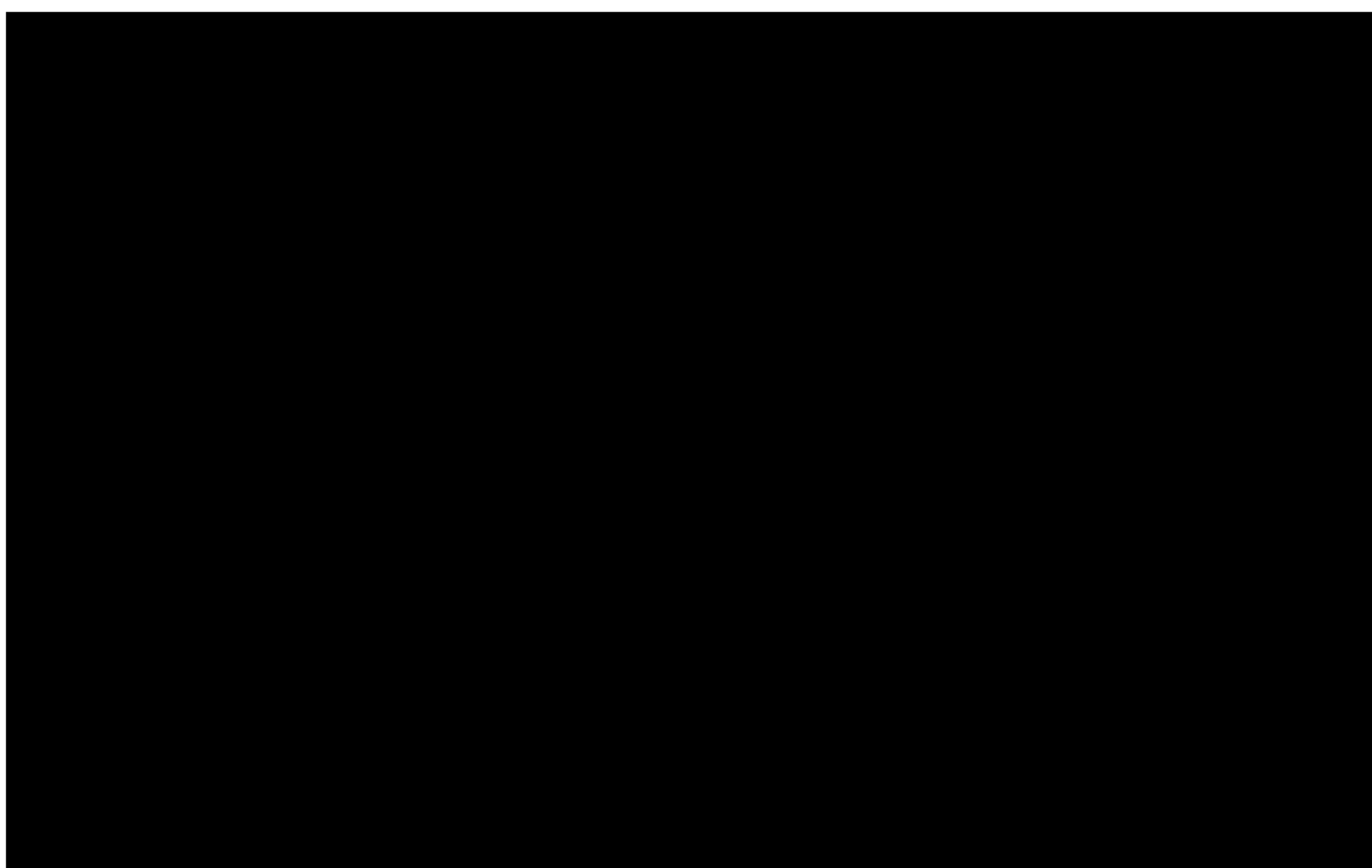
c) Light Offering in the Shwedagon Pagoda

also by all persons in the realm of *Sāsana* by virtue of his spiritual performances at the time of the Convention of the Sixth Buddhist Council, by his devotion to teaching with earnestness, and by writing the various texts of *Dhamma* in the interest of the Buddha *Sāsana*, of all Buddhists and of the entire nation insofar as it concerns the Buddha *Sāsana*.

**SNAPSHOTS FROM MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S
LOCAL DHAMMADUTA TOUR – 1**



a) Mahāsi Sayādaw performing the ground-breaking ceremony for the Dhamma Hall at Ingyin-Gon Village, Southern Shan State.



b) Mahāsi Sayādaw and the local Sayādaws at the site of the ground-breaking ceremony.

SNAPSHOTS FROM MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S LOCAL DHAMMADUTA TOUR - 2



**SNAPSHOTS FROM MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S
LOCAL DHAMMADUTA TOUR - 3**



**SNAPSHOTS FROM MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S
LOCAL DHAMMADUTA TOUR - 4**



MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW AND FOREIGN NATIONALS

It cannot be gainsaid that Mahāsī Sayādaw has already become world famous. Therefore, foreign visitors from various countries usually visit the Sayādaw to pay homage. They generally put to him questions on many points which they wished to know and discussed candidly with him. As the subject of discussion and the nature of queries were connected with religion; some of them were profound and found to be difficult, while a few others were such that they were not considered fit to be answered. These points and questions were thrashed out and answered by the *Sayādaw* to the satisfaction of the persons making the interrogations and discussions. (Please see the latter part of the ‘Personal Life History of Mahāsī Thera’ where amplification has been made.)



Interview of foreign yogi by Mahāsī Sayādaw



Ordination of western yogis at the Mahāsī Centre

Foreigners who have come to see Mahāsī Sayādaw include not only those who are bent upon discussing religious matters, but also many others desirous of practising *kammaṭṭhāna* meditation according to the instructions of the *Sayādaw*.

In the past, it was U Pe Thin, a veteran Mahāsī yogi, who had assisted the *Sayādaw* to obviate difficulties in discussing religious matters with the foreigners, and in imparting lessons on meditation. In the interests of the foreign yogis, U Pe Thin had translated the abridged version of the ‘Method of Vipassanā Meditation’ as contained in Chapter V of ‘The Method of Vipassanā Meditation Exercise’ written by Mahāsī Sayādaw, the smaller edition of the text of *Dhamma* on ‘The Purpose of Practising Kammaṭṭhāna Meditation’, and the ‘Lessons of Practical Basic

Exercise in Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā Meditation’ taught by the *Sayādaw*. These texts in English version were printed and published by the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization. When U Pe Thin grew old and decrepit, Myanaung U Tin, another veteran yogi continued to perform the role of an interpreter to assist the foreign yogis from 1961 onwards (up till about 1975).

It was because of these two gentlemen that Mahāsī Sayādaw found success in effectively teaching the foreigners and in discussing with them. These two yogis happened to be the right hand men of Mahāsī Sayādaw in so far as foreign dealings were concerned. Since they had emerged at an opportune moment in response to the need of the glorious virtues of *Vipassanā Sāsana* and the attributes of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw, opportunity had afforded them to assist in making the method of *Sayādaw’s vipassanā* meditation known throughout the length and breadth of the world. These two remarkable men were indeed deserving of our emulation.

Insomuch as there was a considerable number of foreigners who had come to Mahāsī Sayādaw and who had gathered practical experience in meditation, it is well-nigh impossible to mention about all of them. Such being the case, a brief account will be given relating to a few people who have contributed much to the welfare and promotion of the *Sāsana*.



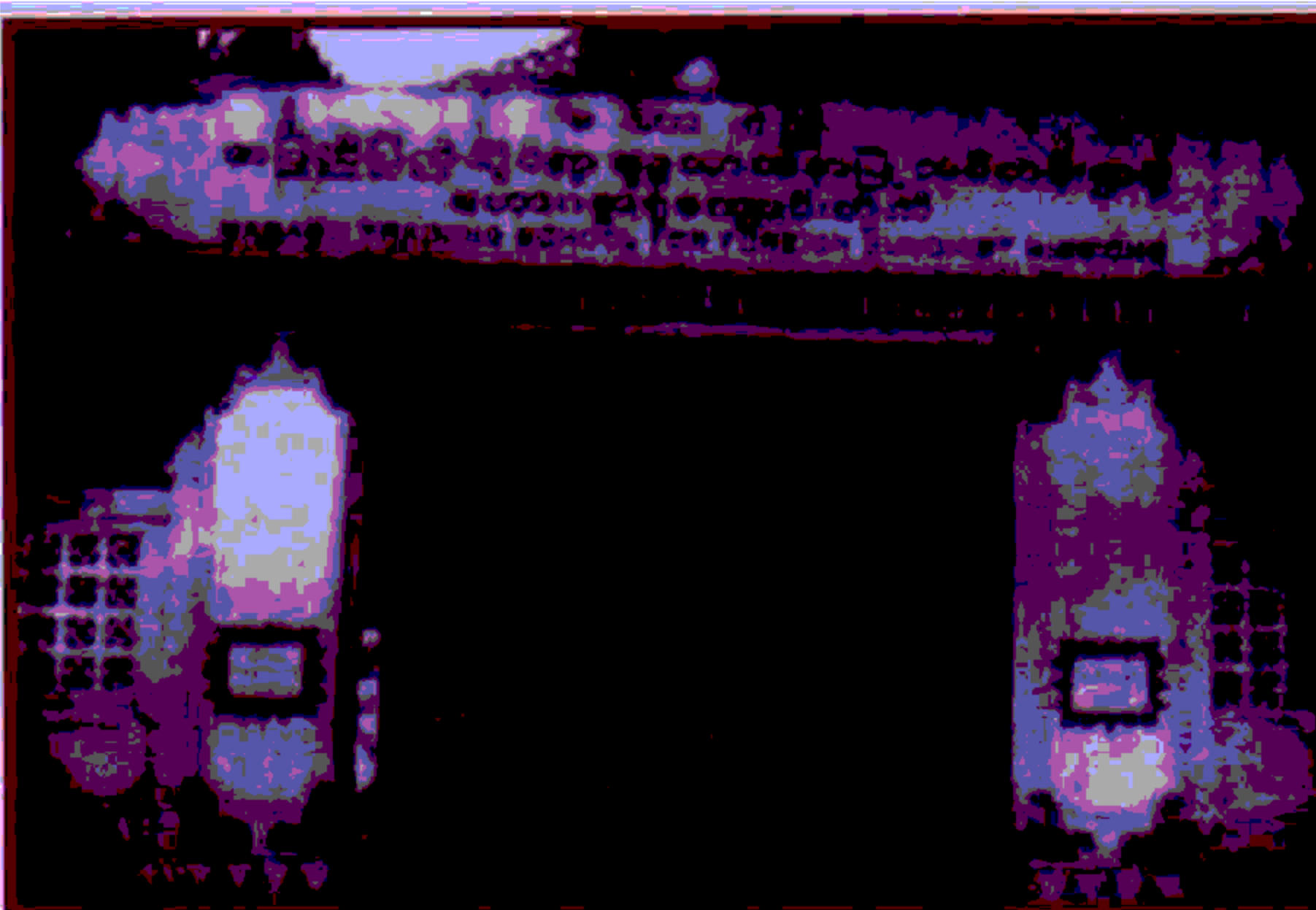
Ashin Nyanaponika
(1901 – 1994)

It has been described earlier under the heading ‘Promotion of Sāsana in Ceylon’ about the publication of a book written by Ashin Nyanaponika, a German monk, after he had practised meditation under the personal guidance of Mahāsī Sayādaw. In this connection also, mention has been made under the same caption about Dr. Graham Howe. Dr. Howe had visited the Mahāsī Meditation Centre at Rangoon and practised meditation in the year 1952. Thereafter, in 1958, Rear-Admiral E. H.

Shattock came to this Yeikthā from Singapore for the purpose of practising meditation. He had assiduously indulged himself in practical *vipassanā* meditation in accordance with the instructions of Mahāsī Sayādaw, even under the oppressive heat of the summer weather in Burma. On his arrival back to England after completing the course of practical meditational exercise, this Rear-Admiral had written and published a book of *Dhamma* entitled ‘An Experiment in Mindfulness’. In this book, the Admiral presented in detail all his personal experiences in meditation. In that book at one place he had written as stated below (not a direct quotation) in connection with the method (of meditation) prescribed by Mahāsī Sayādaw and also about the ‘Sāsana Yeikthā’ – the Mahāsī Meditation Centre.

“That method (Mahāsī’s method) is very, very easy and simple. As a matter of fact, as it is extremely easy, this easiness becomes one of the main difficulties. If it is to be stated in terms of the expression used in the West, Sāsana Yeikthā is not only a Teacher’s Training College for practising the exercise of the human mind but also a college where rigid and severe discipline is enforced to maintain orderly discipline since time schedule has been stipulated for exercising meditation practice.” (Reference the said book – page 18-24).

As per above statement, Admiral Shattock had expressed his views in brief on the method prescribed by Mahāsī Sayādaw and on the present condition of Sāsana Yeikthā. He had had his opportunity to observe with a correct opinion of the Sāsana Yeikthā where he himself had resided while practising meditation. That is why he had given his candid remarks on the strength of his observation stating that Sāsana Yeikthā was something like a Training College for practising mental exercise. Rigid rules of discipline and conduct relating to the mode of living at the Centre (Yeikthā) and of the procedural method of meditation involving lengthy hours extending to about twenty hours each day, having been specifically mentioned in his statement, it is quite evident that Sāsana Yeikthā is obviously not a place for those who intend to take up meditational practice in a perfunctory manner.



**The entrance gate of Mahāsī
Foreign Missionary Training
School**



**Meditation cottages for foreign
yogis**

Just like Admiral Shattock, the other person who looked upon Sāsana Yeikthā as an institution for mental training was Mr. Colin Wyatt. This person had visited Burma and practised meditation at Sāsana Yeikthā after attending the World Buddhist Conference held in Nepal in the year 1958. After his arrival back to England, he had contributed an article to a magazine called ‘The Middle Way’, wherein information about his experiences at Sāsana Yeikthā was given describing how he had practised Contemplation on Mindfulness under the instructions of Mahāsī Sayādaw. In that article, he wrote: “This Sāsana Yeikthā is similar to a school where practical psychology was taught, unlike in any other ordinary or traditional religious institution. The method adopted at Sāsana Yeikthā is abiding, pragmatic, thoughtful and straightforward, i.e., devoid of guile. There is absolutely nothing which tends to cause one to become highly emotional with hidden uncontrollable, violent temper.”

Similar to the persons mentioned above, a gentleman who had written a book on ‘Dhamma Concerning Vipassanā’ after taking a course of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation practice under Mahāsī Sayādaw, was Mr. Robert Duve, a Frenchman, living in California, U.S.A. He had visited this Centre about the year 1961 and had diligently meditated. After first taking up the meditation practice as a layman, he entered into monkhood and was ordained a *bhikkhu* by Mahāsī Sayādaw who had acted as his preceptor – a spiritual teacher (*upajjho*). Yogi U Tin was then his benefactor for the ordination. After completion of the course of meditation, he made his way back

to France, and compiled a text relating to *Vipassanā Kammaṭṭhāna* meditation. Before this book was sent to the printing press, the first draft was dispatched to Mahāsī Sayādaw for vetting. Mahāsī Sayādaw together with Sayādaw U Nyanuttara scrutinized and edited this draft text, and then, returned the same to the compiler.

The number of people who had likewise come over to this Centre and had meditated under the guidance of Mahāsī Sayādaw and then, who continued to propagate *Vipassanā Sāsana* after return to their respective native countries, were not few. Among such people, the following persons are included:

1. Ashin Jinarakkhita - the Indonesian monk (Please see his life story under the sub-heading 'Visit to Indonesia for Promotion of Sāsana' on page 175 of this biography).
2. Mr. and Mrs. Norman Weekes - a couple from Australia.
3. Ashin Wimala and Ashin Dhammika - the two brothers (German monks).
4. Ashin Mingala - an English *bhikkhu*.
5. Mrs. Eve Klingman - from San Bernardino, California, U.S.A.
6. Anagharika Sri Muninda from Bodhgāya, India.
7. Anagharika Sujāta - an American.
8. Dr. Heinz Ryborz - a German Professor.
9. Sister Amita Nissata - a Swedish nun.
10. A school teacher from Sweden - (Please see: *Sallekha Sutta Dhamma* - Second Part).

U Pe Thin and Myanaung U Tin, the veteran Mahāsī yogis had translated into English the important selected portions from a number of texts written by Mahāsī Sayādaw, with a view to giving the method and techniques of the *Sayādaw's satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* meditation a world-wide publicity, and these texts had been published and distributed by Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization. Printing and publishing of these texts had also been done by other religious organizations from foreign countries. (No copyright reserved.)

In Ceylon, 'Buddhist Publications Society' under the management of Ashin Nyanaponika Thera had published the English translated version of Mahāsī Sayādaw's written text 'The

Method of Vipassanā Meditation’ Chapter V, in the name of ‘Practical Insight Meditation, Basic and Progressive Stages’, and also translated into English and published ‘Visuddhi Ñāṇakathā’, written by the *Sayādaw* in Pāli, under the title of ‘The Progress of Insight’.

Also at San Francisco in California, U.S.A., Mr Stephen Levine and a group of his friends in *Dhamma*, had printed and published in 1971, after obtaining the permission from the *Sayādaw*, a book under the name of ‘The Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā Meditation: A Basic Buddhist Mindfulness Exercise’, which was the same text printed and circulated by Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization under the title ‘Discourse on the Basic Practice of the Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā’. With the permission of the Ceylon Buddhist Literature Publications Society, they had also printed and published in 1972, the book which was originally published by that Society, under a different name, bearing the title of ‘Practical Insight Meditation’.

The fine reputation of this method of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* meditation along with the celebrated name of Mahāsī Sayādaw and his talented wisdom and also the name of Sāsana Yeikthā, have spread all over the world. It is, in fact, due to the teachings and writings for the promotion of *Sāsana* by the aforesaid foreigners who had practised *vipassanā* meditation under Mahāsī’s directions.

In the present day, it seems that there is hardly any person among those interested in developing the mental faculty, who has not heard of, or read or practised Mahāsī’s method on *Vipassanā* Mindfulness. This is the reason why an abbreviated account of Mahāsī Sayādaw’s personal history was found in the World Directory called ‘Who’s who in the World’ wherein biographical sketches of world-famous personalities were mentioned. As the names of the persons whose popularity is inconspicuous cannot be expected to get a place in that big book of directory, mere inclusion of the name in that ‘Book’ clearly reveals Mahāsī Sayādaw’s pre-eminent position in the dazzling list of great individuals who have received world’s recognition.

It is because *Sayādaw*’s fame has become world-wide, he is, up till the present moment, receiving a number of correspondences

FOREIGN BHIKKHUS ORDAINED AT THE MAHĀSĪ MEDITATION CENTRE



First - L - R.

1. Dr. Than Naung (U Sunanda) (Interpreter - Myanmar), 2. U Sakkinda (Myanmar), 3. U Osadha (Myanmar), 4. U Sandara (Korea), 5. U Silavanta (Switzerland), 6. U Dhammadhara (Czeh), 7. U Indacara (Myanmar), 8. Kammathanacariya Bhaddanta Vasava, 9. U Vijjibhasa (Myanmar Interpreter), 10. U Pabhakara (Thailand), 11. U Vidhura (Thailand), 12. U Suddhacitta (Thailand), 13. U Uttama (Switzerland), 14. U Nagasena (Korea).

Second - L - R.

1. U Kusala (Korea), 2. U Indavara (Laos), 3. U Pavita (Laos), 4. U Pandita (Laos), 5. U Sundara (Laos), 6. U Vayama (Laos), 7. U Uttama (Laos), 8. U Vimala (Laos), 9. U Chanthasara (Laos), 10. Nanasamvara (Thailand), 11. U Punna (Korea), 12. U Sumana (Laos), 13. U Pannananda (Korea), 14. U Nanaloka (Korea).

from foreigners, wherein queries were made relating to *Dhamma* and permission was sought for admission to the Centre to be able to practise meditation. As Mahāsī Sayādaw is well-versed in both the fields of *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti*, he is capable of tackling all questions and of solving the problems raised relating to scriptural knowledge and religious practices, i.e., the practical aspects of meditation. Hence, in the present era, much as Mahāsī Sayādaw happens to be an outstanding figure on whom most reliance is to be made by Buddha *Sāsana*, he occupies a position standing firm in the forefront as a saviour of all Buddhists in Burma, and accordingly, his place as one of the leading *Sayādaws* of eminence who could hardly be substituted.

MAHĀSĪ TODAY



Mahāsī Sayādaw
(1904 – 1982)

Not many years after his arrival at Sāsana Yeikthā, Mahāsī Sayādaw being preoccupied with multifarious duties in connection with the affairs of the Sixth Buddhist Council, was unable to attend to the work of examining and assessing the knowledge the meditating yogis acquired from the daily exercise of practical meditation. He had to delegate this responsibility to Sayādaw Ashin Sujāta, Ashin Vamita, Ashin Paṇḍita, Ashin Javana, etc. These *Sayādaws* had performed their respective duties which they had shared among themselves. It was because of their compliance in the performance of

the duties so assigned with efficiency and with great sense of responsibility that this Meditation Centre (Sāsana Yeikthā) has seen progress up till now.

When Mahāsī Sayādaw came to reside at Sāsana Yeikthā, the plot of land on which it was situated, measured only 5.488 acres. Now, its area has extended to over twenty acres. At the time of *Sayādaw's* first arrival at Sāsana Yeikthā, only a few buildings were



MEDITATION TEACHERS AT SĀSANA YEIKTHĀ

(L to R) Sayādaw U Pandita, Sayādaw U Nandavamsa, Sayādaw U Vamita, Mahāsī Sayādaw, Sayādaw U Sujāta, Sayādaw U Shwe-Oo-Min, Sayādaw U Jāvana.

(Photo taken not many years after Mahāsī Sayādaw's arrival at the centre.)

scattered on the site. In fact, there were only six. Since then, within a space of a few years, the number of buildings at Sāsana Yeikthā had gone up to a total of forty-seven. (It is now over seventy, some of which are three-storeyed buildings). Except the six buildings which were originally constructed, the rest have sprung up after Mahāsī Sayādaw's arrival, and these include substantial buildings, a good many of them being worth many *lakhs* of *kyats* in Burmese currency. Except the 'Sima', Piṭaka Library building, and Assembly Halls (Dhammayon) and Dining Halls, the rest are meant for yogis, both monks and laymen, to reside for meditation purposes. All these buildings were the donated gifts bestowed on the Order of Sanghas but were entrusted to the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization for care and management. Of course, all are meant for the fraternity of *Sanghas*.

On Mahāsī Sayādaw's first arrival at Sāsana Yeikthā, there was no building on the site where the present *Thein* (*Sima*) now stands. Only a big *basha* type of bamboo structure was there temporarily, properly consecrated as a *Thein*. However, at this *Thein*, ordination ceremonies were held for the monks beginning from the Fifth Waning day of the month of First Tagu (April) in the year 1311 M.E. (1949). A register has been maintained since before the arrival of Mahāsī Sayādaw, for registering and recording of the particulars about the monks ordained at the *Thein*, describing the name of the person concerned, the title of the monk, the date on

which ordination has taken place, etc., etc. The entries found in that register indicated that the first ordination was made commencing from the fifth Waning day of the First Tagu (April), 1311 M.E. (1949). The Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw had mentioned that his method of proper registration and of maintaining the records were first introduced and put into practice by Sayādaw U Kondanna of the Payagyi Kyaung (monastery), Rangoon.

SIR U THWIN SAN KYAUNG



Sir U Thwin was the wealthy philanthropist who donated the original land for the Mahāsī Meditation Centre. He had built this traditional monastery for the Sayādaw's residence. It was renovated for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Mahāsī Organization in 1998, shortly before this photograph was taken.

In 1979, it was the residence of the meditation teacher, Sayādaw U Jāvana – by then a two-storey residence had been built for the Mahāsī Sayādaw to accommodate the large number of meditators coming for instructions daily. The ground floor of that new building still serve as a meditation hall.

Sir U Thwin's building is still used as a residence by one of the meditation instructors.

For a period of nearly twenty years from the date of his arrival at this Sāsana Yeikthā, the *Sayādaw* had resided in a wooden monastery, a modern type single-storeyed building donated by Sir U Thwin. Sir U Thwin, the rich wished to see the *Sayādaw* taking

up his residence only at the monastery he had offered in donation. *Sayādaw* also resided in that monastery in consideration of the donor's faith and generosity. During these years, his benefactors, both male and female, who desired to build a monastery to be offered in donation to the *Sayādaw* had had no opportunity to do so. As years rolled on, in the year 1329 M.E. (1967) such benefactors were permitted to build monasteries within the precincts of Sāsana Yeikthā. When permission was sought by *Sayādaw*'s disciple yogis, both old and new, for the construction of a monastery, which is the one where Mahāsī Sayādaw presently resides, it was granted readily. Sir U Thwin himself contributed ten thousand *kyats* towards that building fund.

After inscribing the words 'Mahāsī Vihāra' on the name plate, the libation ceremony in respect of the donated monastery by bestowing it on the community of *Sanghas* led by Mahāsī Sayādaw, was held with pomp and splendour amidst great rejoicings on the fourth Waxing day of the month of Pyatho (January) in 1330 M.E. (1968). Although it was originally anticipated that the building would cost about one *lakh kyats*, its expenditure had gone up to two hundred thousand *kyats* (two *lakhs*) when the final balance sheet was drawn up, owing to the ever-increasing generosity of those liberal benefactors. In the document presented at the libation ceremony written in plain Burmese, it was described as: "A lovely and exquisitely beautiful monastery in the name of 'Mahāsī Vihāra' worth two hundred thousand *kyats*, stately in appearance, delightful and pleasing to the eye..."

This spacious monastery is a double-storeyed building with a dignified chamber where the image of Buddha is placed on a decorated throne in a glass shielded niche, and a cozy room for Mahāsī Sayādaw to reside at peace – all in the upper storey, while on the ground floor, there is a big hall for the congregation apart from two rooms meant for the use of two *sanghas*. When the libation ceremony was held, Mahāsī Sayādaw formally accepted the gift by bestowing the *kyaung* on the fraternity of monks, as is customarily the case with all donated buildings in Sāsana Yeikthā. The ceremonial rites were performed in two parts – the upper storey being dedicated to the Lord Buddha and the *Sanghas*, while the

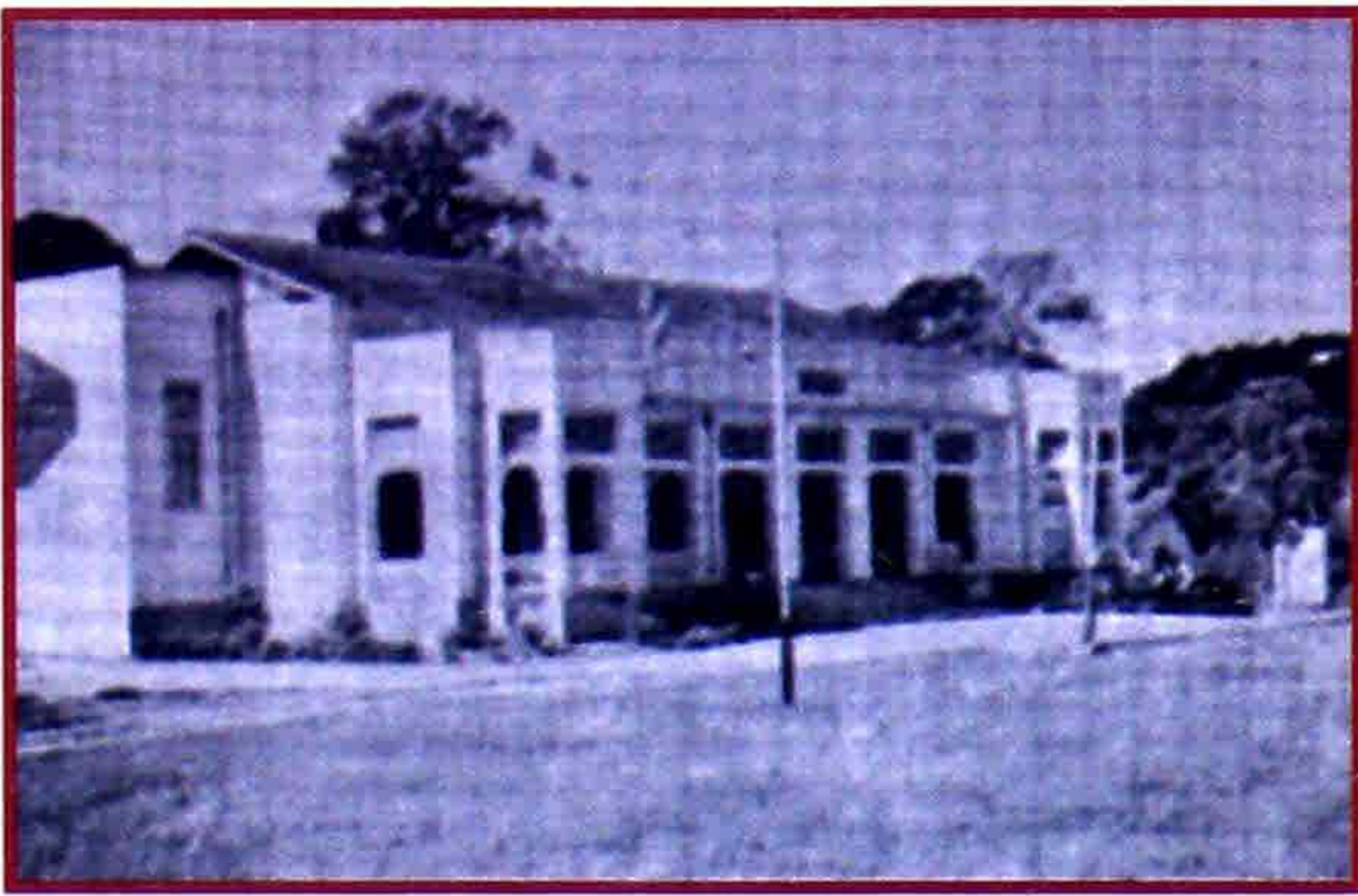
BUILDINGS AT MAHĀSĪ MEDITATION CENTRE



a) An entrance to the centre



b) Head office of Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Committee



c) The Great Fan-Yin Meditation Hall



d) Sāsanamala Visodhani Ordination Hall



e) Thadoe Siri Sudhamma Sir U Thwin's house located within the compounds



f) One of the Residence Halls for Meditation Monks



g) One of the Dormitories for Yogis



h) The Great Sima Hall – Sāsana Sobhini

lower storey was offered in charity to all monks, yogis and laymen who are devotedly promoting the *Dhamma* by their fulfillment of the requirements of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation under the patronage of Mahāsī Sayādaw. Since then, *Sayādaw* has been residing in that 'Mahāsī Vihāra'.

Every year in the month of Natdaw (December), a *Puja* ceremony is held at Sāsana Yeikthā for making offerings (of all kinds of essential monks' requisites) to the *Sayādaw* in reverence. It is usual for all *Kammaṭṭhāna-cariya Sayādaws* and yogis from all meditation centres operating in various parts of Burma in accordance with the instructions of the *Sayādaw* relating to the method of meditation, to attend this *Puja*. The writer of this biography had the chance of listening to the exhortations given by Mahāsī Sayādaw on the occasion of the twenty-third anniversary of the *Puja* ceremony held during the month of Natdaw (December) in 1334 M.E. (1972). *Sayādaw* then gave due admonition to the presiding monks of all meditation centres and all other *Kammaṭṭhāna-cariya Sayādaws* in regard to the matter of paying heed to the Rules of *Vinaya*, to the *Dhamma*, and particularly to give priority to the prolongation and perpetuation of *Vipassanā Sāsana*, to the progress and development of meditation centres and the strict and proper observance of religious principles, etc., etc. It was found that the manner of admonishing his disciple monks was not in the form of giving orders from above, but in the shape of tendering advice and making request. Mahāsī Sayādaw even asked for better suggestions, if they have any, to amend or add to his instructions so given. This kind of admonition or directions has a far-reaching effect as it is conducive to the other party's mind to become gentle, pliant, and accommodating, and to bring about ready compliance and sound suggestions. Mahāsī Sayādaw has, therefore, carried out in the manner stated above so that *Vipassanā Sāsana* which he has germinated and enlivened shall become firmly established, improved and perpetuated.

As the *Sayādaw* has become well advanced in age, in health, general debility has crept in. About four or five years back, his left eye became cataractous necessitating him to undergo an eye operation, which was done at Maymyo in the year 1311 M.E. (1949).



Mahāsī Sayādaw
(1904 – 1982)

The removal of the cataract by surgical operation yielded good results. However, since his normal vision had not been gained, he could not study as much as he had done in the past. Though *Sayādaw* could remain without worry, if he wished, he was not inclined to do so. Neither did he want to relax himself in studying the scriptures and in composing the texts. The condition of his eye with a moderate degree of shortsightedness was such that it would be necessary for him to reduce the hours of his studies and compilation work. Under such circumstances, he hit upon a method which would not require him to lessen the hours of reading the scriptural texts. This method is refraining himself from reading the daily newspapers and other journals, etc.

Sayādaw having passed 69 years in age, might be regarded as reaching the age of seventy. (At the time of writing this translation, *Sayādaw* has entered his 78th year). In the month of Second Waso, 1336 M.E. (1974) he attained the age of seventy. Although the general condition of his health was not as good as before, as he was neither bed-ridden nor greatly impaired in his health, he could still teach as before. His ability to read and write and study had not lessened much. Since he could teach and is still teaching his discourses as in the past, the new texts of *Dhamma* would still continue to be written and published. His noble teachings on *Dhamma* and the texts have proved to be a boon to those who listen to the discourses and read the texts. The important *suttas* and discourses not within their reach or competence to appreciate have now been clearly understood with full significance. If they are



Mahāsī Sayādaw
Reading scriptural texts

complied with and truthfully practised as have been properly understood, the fruits of benefit would have been reaped in the present life existence and in *samsāra*, the rounds of future existences. Those who have the opportunity of realizing the profound *Dhamma* of the *Sāsana*, and of reading the texts of *Dhamma* and also of listening to the discourses as taught and preached by the *Sayādaw*, would pray for getting a chance to listen again and again to the *Dhamma* for many more years to come. In the same way, those yogis who have meditated before under the instructions of the *Sayādaw*, and also other Buddhists will, no doubt, be praying for the longevity of the *Sayādaw* extending to more than the ordinary life span of a century to be able to promote the *Sāsana* in the interests of the Buddha *Sāsana* and of all Buddhists.

With this brief account, the task of writing this biography of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw has come to an end. Those who have been to the shores of the ocean used to say, “We have seen the ocean.” However, the ocean they have seen is only a very minute part of an immense ocean. The statement that the task of writing this biography has ended is of the same nature as the above simile.

Furthermore, many of the biographies are concluded with the words ‘The End’. Be it as it may, the biography of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw cannot be put to an end with such an expression. For so long as Mahāsī Sayādaw is living, material information and facts for writing, and for putting on record in connection with his life’s career, will, of course, continue to be in abundance. All members of Buddha’s *Sāsana* will surely be praying: “May the *Sayādaw*’s life career go on endlessly.” As such, the biography of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw which has now been written cannot possibly be said to have been completed and fully embraced.

Hence, not being able to end up *Sayādaw*’s life history with the presentation of this brief biography, the matter of writing up the *Sayādaw*’s biography will have to be brought to a conclusion on this fifth Waning day of Wagaung (August), 1335 M.E. (1973), with the following passage.

‘Biography of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw’ has not yet

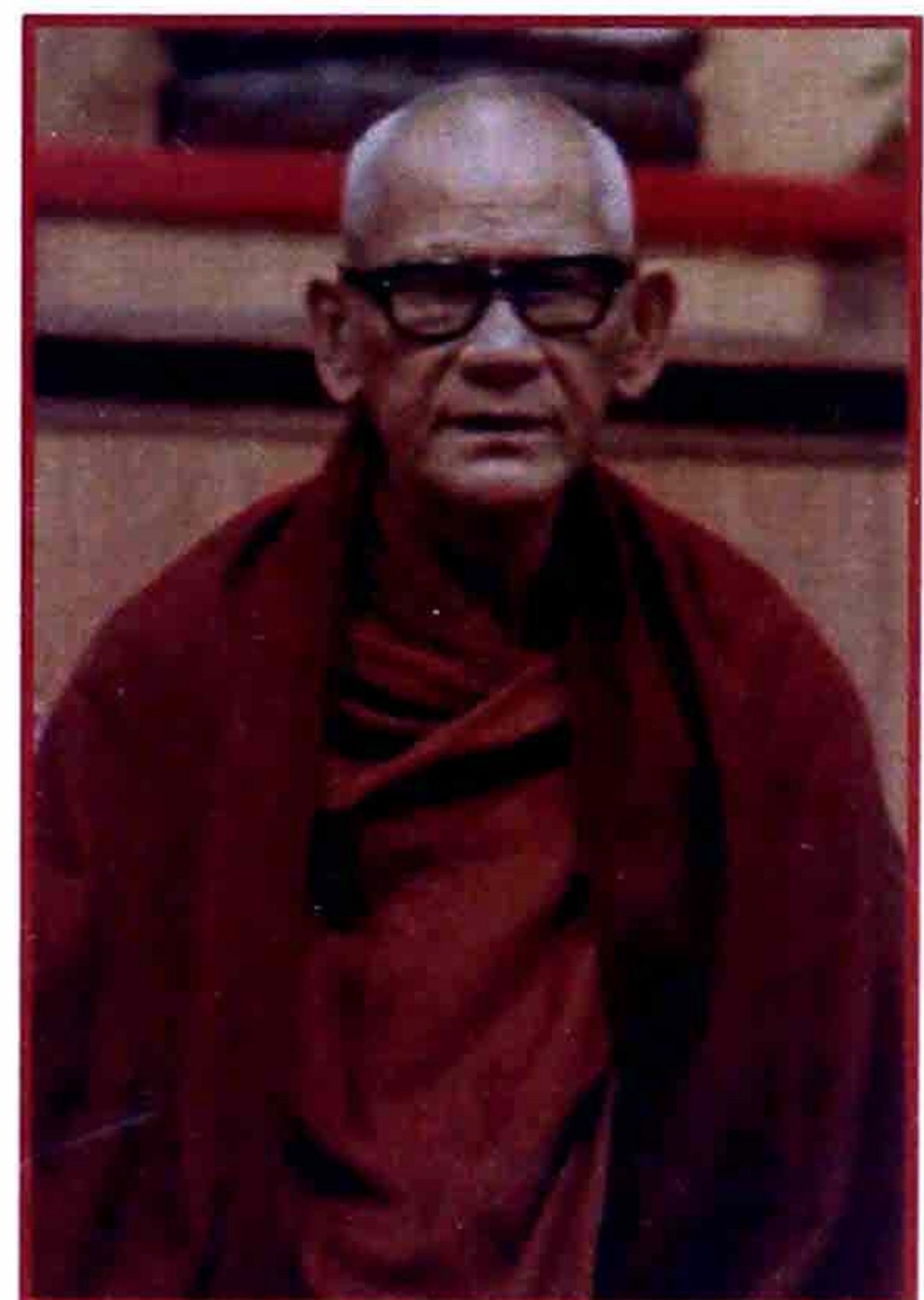
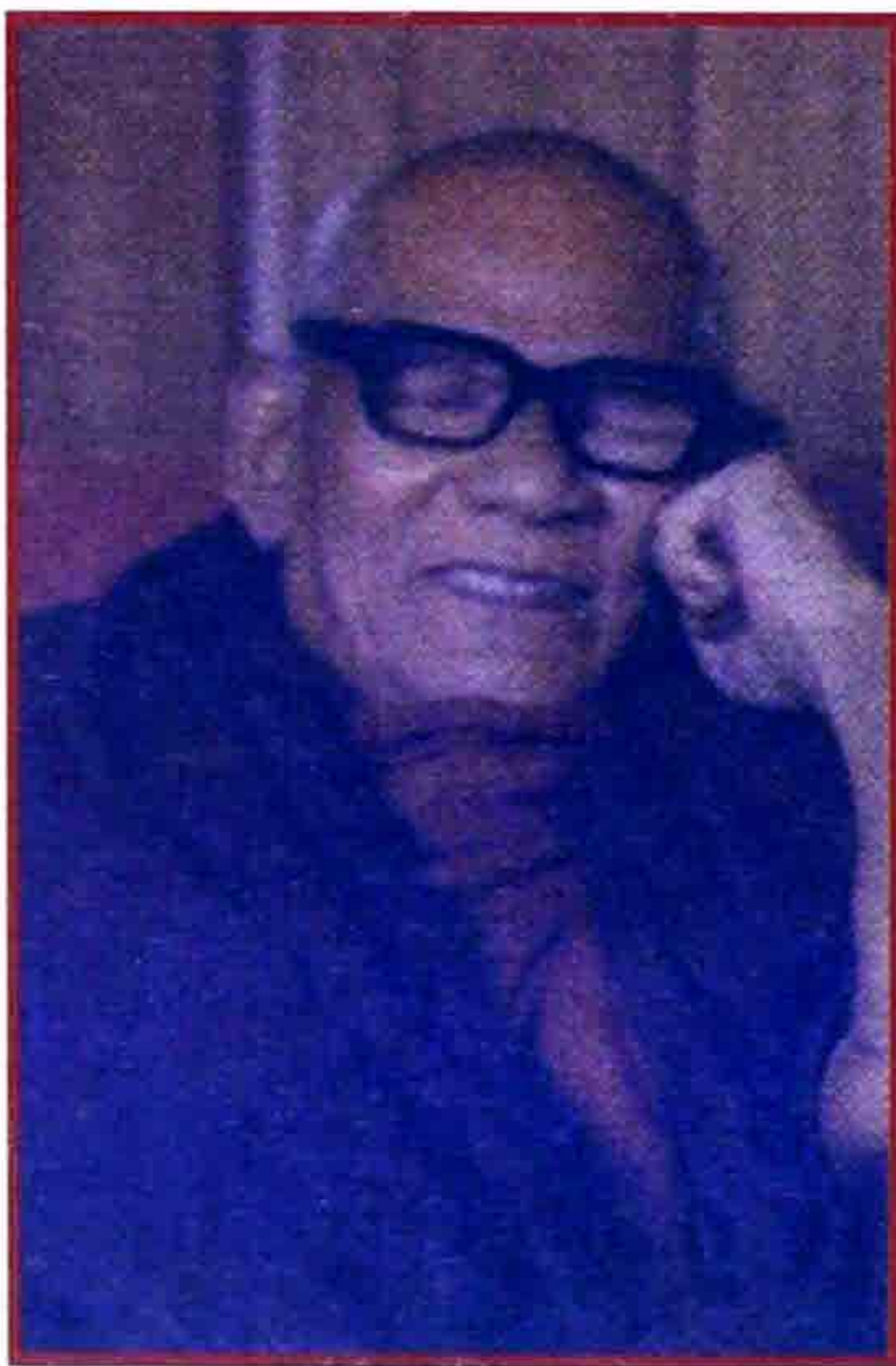
come to an End.

*Mahāsīthera pādam tam, Mahāsī vumsa pubbagam.
Sataṃ samampi passemu, sukhittattam anāmayam.*



MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW FLANKED BY TĪPIṬAKA SAYĀDAWS

Photo taken in Nyaung-shwe town, Shwe-bo kyaung monastery; Tipiṭaka Sayādaw U Vicittasārābhivaṃsa on left, Tipiṭaka Sayādaw U Nemeinda on right.



Mahāsī Sayādaw
(1904-1982)

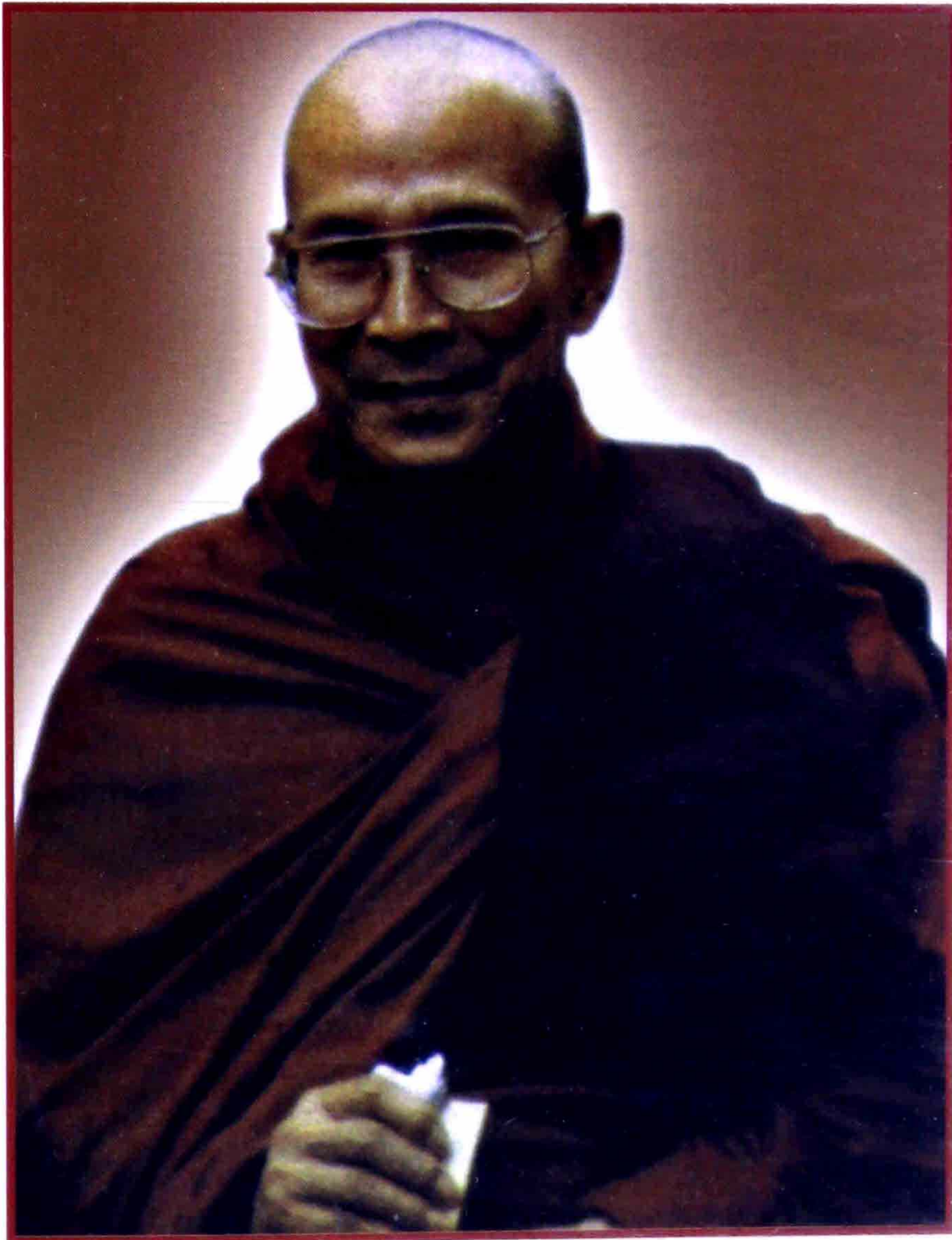
“If this biography was written by me personally, it may not be as comprehensive and particular as it is.”

Mahāsī Sayādaw

BIOGRAPHY
of
THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

By Ashin Sīlānandabhivamsa

Concise and thorough up-to-year 1974, this interesting life-history
has not yet reached its finale.



SAYADĀW U SĪLĀNANDA BHIVAMSA

(1927 – 2005)

Aggāmahapaṇḍita Aggamahā Saddhammajotikhadhaja

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato
Sammāsambuddhasa*



Veneration to the Exalted One,
The Homage-Worthy,
The Perfectly Self-Enlightened

BIOGRAPHY
of
THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw's World Mission

(Translated by U Kyin)

(First published in the Mahāsī Golden Jubilee Magazine, 1997)



THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

Going through the book 'Mahāsī Abroad'

(See BOOK REF. 8 on page 277)

RECORD OF MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S MISSIONARY WORK ABROAD

The first two of *Sayādaw's* tours were in preparation of the Sixth Buddhist Council and were likewise used for teaching the Buddha-Dhamma..

- Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam in 1952
- India and Sri Lanka in 1953 and 1959
- Japan in 1957
- Indonesia in 1959
- Thailand and Japan in 1979
- America, Hawaii, England, Continental Europe in 1979 (ref.: book 'Mahāsī Abroad – 1979 & 1981')
- England, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand in 1980
- Nepal and India in 1981



a) Mahāsī Sayādaw & Sayādaw U Sīlānanda

On board the bullet train in Japan, 1979 (prior to the Dhamma Duta Mission to USA).



b) Mahāsī Sayādaw and Venerable Monks

Seated (L to R): Sayādaw U Kelasa, Sayādaw U Janaka, Sayādaw U Sīlānanda, Mahāsī Sayādaw

Standing (L to R): Japanese monk, Venerable Gunaratana (Washington), Sayādaw Aggadhamma, Sayādaw Dr, Rewata Dhamma (England.)

VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S WORLD MISSION

The Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw's first major contact with the world outside of Myanmar was in 1952, three years after he came to Yangon as the *Ovadacariya* of the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization at Mahāsī Sāsana Yeikthā.

The government of the newly independent Union of Burma (now Myanmar), in preparation for forthcoming Sixth Buddhist Council, delegated two religious missions: to Thailand and Cambodia, and to Sri Lanka and India, to seek the cooperation of the Theravāda Sangha of those countries. Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw accompanied Nyaungyan Sayādaw on the mission to Thailand and Cambodia for meetings with the chief *Sanghayanakas*. While there, Mahāsī Sayādaw also took a trip to Vietnam.

In 1956, the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council deputed a religious mission to Japan. The mission comprised five eminent *Sayādaws*, namely, Weluwun Sayādaw, Aggamahāpaṇḍita Anisakhan Sayādaw, Aggamahāpaṇḍita Mahāsī Sayādaw, Aggamahāpaṇḍita Vijja Lankara Sayādaw Visuddhabhivaṃsa, Myingyan Kosaung Taik Sayādaw Venerable Sobhita, and Japanese missionary Sayādaw Kheminda. The venerable monks consecrated the site for the erection of the World Peace Pagoda in the town of Moji, and established an ordination *sima*. The mission fulfilled its purpose of enhancing the profile of Theravāda Buddhism in Japan.

As well as participating in government-sponsored missions abroad, Mahāsī Sayādaw did a great deal personally to promote the Buddha Sāsana and the practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditation.

In making the teachings available to everyone, he selflessly performed his duty following the famous exhortation of the Buddha to “Go forth, O *Bhikkhus* for the good of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, benefit and happiness of gods and men. Let not two go by one way. Teach O *Bhikkhus*, the *Dhamma*, excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent in the end, both in the spirit and the letter. Proclaim the Holy Life, altogether perfect and pure.”

In 1953, the Sangharāja of Thailand, Venerable Vimaladhamma, requested the Mahāsī Sayādaw to send a meditation teacher (*kammaṭṭhāna-cariya*) to teach the Mahāsī method. In response, the *Sayādaw* sent his disciple, Sayādaw U Asabha, to Thailand together with Sayādaw U Indavaṃsa as his assistant. Sayādaw U Asabha is now famous as Dr. Asabha of Wat Vivekasom in Chonburi, about fifty miles from Bangkok. Due to the untiring efforts of Dr. Asabha, the practice of the Mahāsī meditation method has now spread throughout Thailand.

Twenty-five foreign missions have been sponsored by the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization between 1952 and 1966. However, Mahāsī Sayādaw devoted the years between 1960 and 1978 to writing his famous works, *Visuddhi Magga Nissaya*, *Visuddhi Magga Arthakathā* translation from Pāli and other works and discourses for the dissemination of the Buddha *Sāsana*.

PROMOTING THE PRACTICE IN SRI LANKA

(Refer to pages 127-137 and 154-175)

The government of Sri Lanka requested the Prime Minister of Myanmar to send one meditation teacher to Sri Lanka for the promotion of the Theravāda *Sāsana*. The Prime Minister respectfully entreated Mahāsī Sayādaw to disseminate the *Vipassanā Sāsana* in Sri Lanka. As the Sixth Buddhist Council was in progress, Mahāsī Sayādaw was unable to leave the country, so he deputed three of his senior disciples: Venerable Sujāta, Venerable Uttamavaṃsa and Venerable Javana to carry out those duties. Although the three disciples only stayed in Sri Lanka for just over a year, their work of propagating *vipassanā* there was a tremendous success. During their stay in Sri Lanka the *Sayādaws* were accommodated in a building donated by a devout Buddhist, Mrs. Nissanka. This building served as a meditation centre, but the building was unsuitable for the purpose, so Mahāsī Sayādaw hinted about this to the Lanka Vipassanā Propagation Society. Due to their untiring efforts, some buildings were constructed for the meditation centre.

As soon as the construction of the building was completed, the Lanka Vipassanā Propagation Society extended an invitation to

Mahāsī Sayādaw and Venerable Sujāta to pay a visit to Sri Lanka. Mahāsī Sayādaw and a party comprising his senior *bhikkhus* and lay disciples therefore made a trip to Sri Lanka *via* India, where Mahāsī Sayādaw had a chance to visit the sacred places of pilgrimage extensively. In the course of visiting those pilgrim sites, the *Sayādaw* delivered sermons and had *Dhamma* discussions for the promotion of the Sāsana.

The *Sayādaw* also visited New Delhi where he met the Prime Minister, Shri Nehru. During his talks with the Prime Minister, Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw mentioned that greed, hatred and delusion were at the root of all quarrels and conflicts. He urged the Prime Minister to give his encouragement to the affairs of the Buddha Sāsana. Finally, the *Sayādaw* expressed his wish for Shri Nehru's personal happiness and well-being, and for the prosperity of

SNSP SHOTS FROM MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S DHAMMADUTA MISSION IN INDIA (1959)



a) Sayādaw Sujāta, Mahāsī Sayādaw & Prime Minister Sri Nehru



b) Dhamma discussions with the Prime Minister Shri Nehru (18.1.59)



c) Mahāsī Sayādaw at 'Meroli' – site offered by the Indian Government as Religious Land.



d) Mahāsī Sayādaw at a Bengali Temple offering flowers before a meal.

the country in general.

From India, Mahāsī Sayādaw proceeded to Sri Lanka. On his arrival, the opening ceremony of the McCarthy Meditation Centre was held with due formalities. Many speeches were made at the ceremony closing with brief talks in



Farewell dhamma talk at the Myanmar Embassy, India

Pāli by Mahāsī Sayādaw and Venerable Sujāta. After the ceremony, Mahāsī Sayādaw visited a number of places of pilgrimage and some cities. He delivered sermons at various meditation centres on his travels. Returning to the McCarthy Meditation Centre, he began giving sermons and guidance on *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation to three or four hundred meditators daily. After about one month, the *Sayādaw* left for Myanmar, assigning three meditation instructors — Venerable Sujāta, Venerable Aloka and Venerable Paṇḍita — to remain to propagate *Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā* in Sri Lanka.

A VISIT TO INDONESIA

(Refer to pages 175-185)

Just before the convocation of the Sixth Buddhist Council, an Indonesian by the name of Mr. Boon Aun came to Mahāsī Sāsana Yeikthā to practise *Vipassanā* meditation. He worked really hard, strictly according to the Mahāsī Sayādaw's instructions and received the *Sayādaw's* elucidation of the progress of insight knowledge after a little more than a month. He also took higher ordination with Mahāsī Sayādaw as his preceptor. His benefactors were Sir U Thwin and Lady Thwin. He was given the monk's name Venerable Jinarakkhita.

Venerable Jinarakkhita returned to Indonesia as a *bhikkhu*. Though he had to face many hardships in Indonesia, he finally surmounted them in his efforts to promote the Buddha *Sāsana* as a monk in Indonesia. The Indonesian Buddhist Organisations led by Venerable Jinarakkhita made arrangements to invite a number of missionaries from the five Theravāda countries, namely, Sri Lanka.

Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia for the uplift of Buddhism in their country.

Mahāsī Sayādaw accepted the invitation and proceeded to Indonesia in 1959. So, fourteen Theravāda monks, including Mahāsī Sayādaw, gathered at Djakarta, the capital of Indonesia. It was a momentous event as there had not been so many Theravāda monks gathered on the island for a thousand years. The venerable monks visited many cities and villages too, to propagate the *Sāsana*. They also worshiped at the world famous shrine of Borobodour.

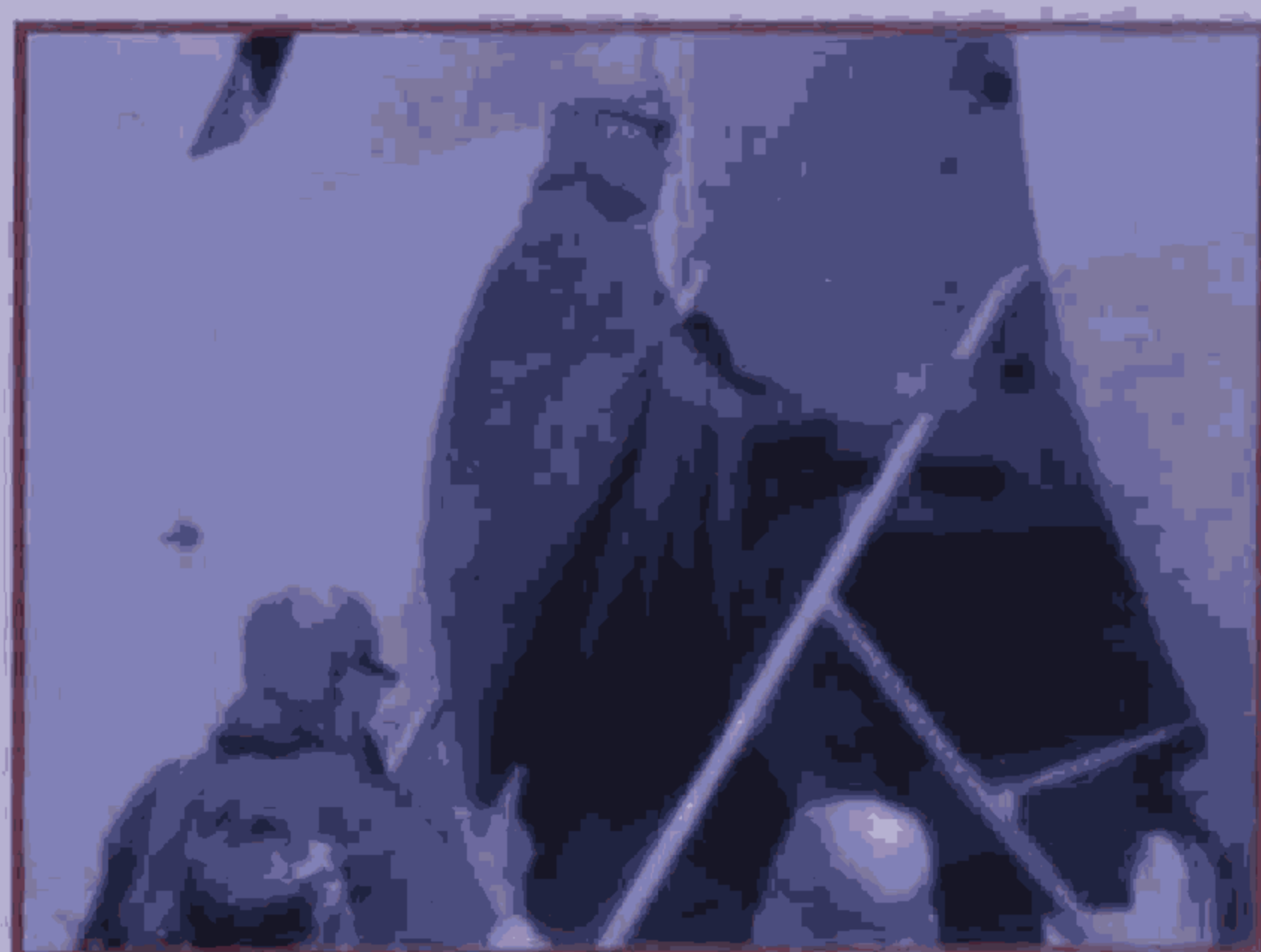
A most significant contribution made by these *Sayādaws* was the consecration of a *sima* and the holding of Novitiation (*pabbajja*) and Higher Ordination Ceremonies (*upasampada*) for admission into the *Sangha*.

FIRST MISSION TO WESTERN COUNTRIES



Group photo of Mahāsī Sayādaw with monk-disciples and devotees

Going on overseas missionary tours

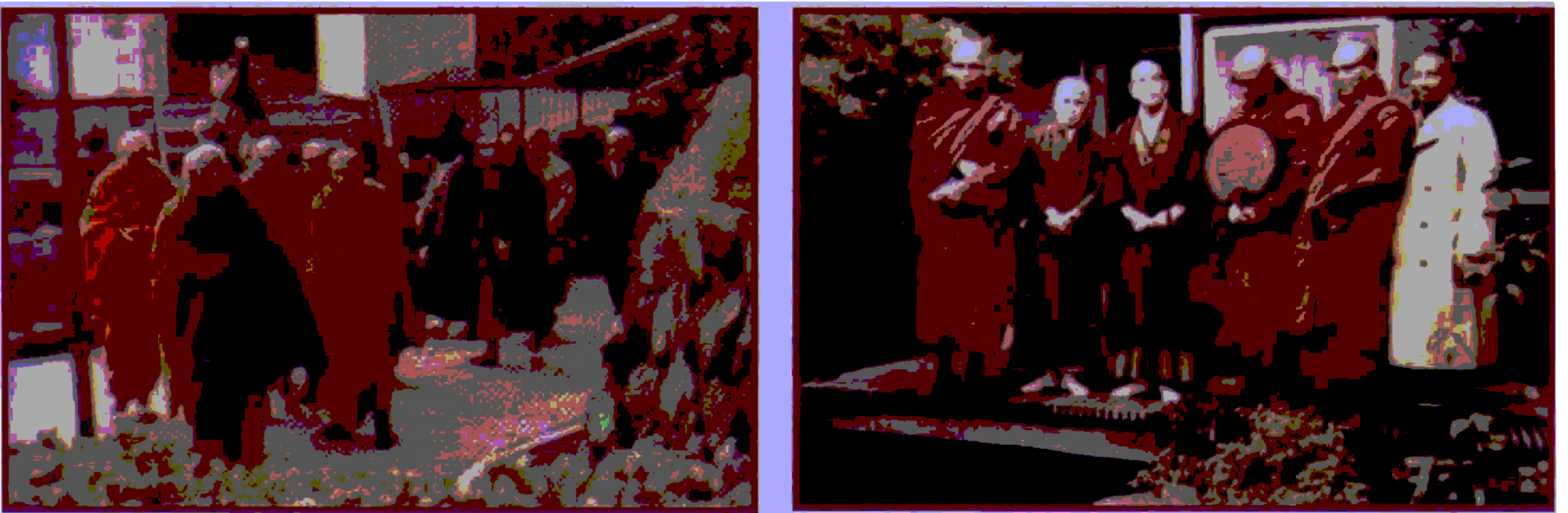


Mahāsī Sayādaw leaving for overseas missionary tours

In 1979, despite his advanced age of seventy five, Mahāsī Sayādaw travelled abroad extensively and faced inclement weather conditions for the sake of propagating Buddhism in the West. His trip to America and Europe in 1979 took one hundred and eighteen days in all. After repeated requests from Venerable Dr. Rewata Dhamma in England and from Joseph Goldstein in America, the *Sayādaw* finally agreed to visit those countries. The Buddha *Sāsana* Nuggaha Organization made meticulous arrangements with their friends in foreign countries to ensure a smooth and trouble-free journey for the Venerable *Sayādaw*. Venerable Dr. Rewata Dhamma personally organised and managed the trip.

On 1st April 1979, after delivering a discourse on ‘Appamādena Sampādeṭha’ to an assembly of the *Sangha* and lay devotees at Sāsana Yeikthā, the Mahāsī Sayādaw and his entourage left for Thailand. On his arrival in Bangkok, hordes of the *Sayādaw’s* disciples were at Don Muang Airport to greet him, and to pay their respects.

The next day, the *Sayādaw* and his party proceeded to Japan via Hong Kong and Taiwan. The *Sayādaw* visited and worshipped at the World Peace Pagoda in Moji town, and the Kamakura Buddha image in Daihatsu. The party then flew to Honolulu, stopping there for a few days at the request of lay disciples. The *Sayādaw* delivered sermons on *vipassanā* meditation ensuring that his stopover in Honolulu was very profitable for the devotees.



MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW AND ENTOURAGE IN JAPAN (1979)

From Honolulu, Mahāsī Sayādaw proceeded first to Los Angeles and then to San Francisco, giving lectures on *satipaṭṭhāna* in both cities. One memorable event was the gathering of Theravāda Buddhists in the vicinity of San Francisco on the full-moon of Waso (July) to recite the Dhammacakka Sutta in Pāli. Two *Sayādaws* accompanying the party, Venerable U Sīlānanda and Venerable U Kelasa, were asked to remain in San Francisco to propagate the Theravāda *Sāsana*.

Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw flew to Washington D.C after twelve days in California. The President of the Washington Buddhist Society and some Myanmar nationals respectfully welcomed the *Sayādaw*. The United States Information Service and the Voice of America announced the news of the *Sayādaw’s* arrival in America, giving it good publicity. For six days, the *Sayādaw*

tirelessly performed the duties of preaching, teaching and examining the American meditators, working until late in the evenings. The *Sayādaw* also consecrated an ordination *sima* at the Buddha Vihāra in Washington for the ordination of prospective *bhikkhus*.

The *Sayādaw* then flew on to Boston in Massachusetts, to teach at the Insight Meditation Society in Barre. This society was founded in 1975 by a group of Americans led by Mr. Joseph Goldstein. It is a well-equipped meditation centre having all the amenities of a Myanmar Yeikthā. The convenient location, pleasant environment and peaceful atmosphere were ideal for serious meditation. The leaders of the Barre Meditation Centre had previously travelled not only to Yangon, but also up country to Seikkhun Village, where the Mahāsī Sayādaw lived before he moved to Mahāsī Sāsana Yeikthā in Yangon. They also successfully practised the discourse in *Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā* under the guidance of Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw.



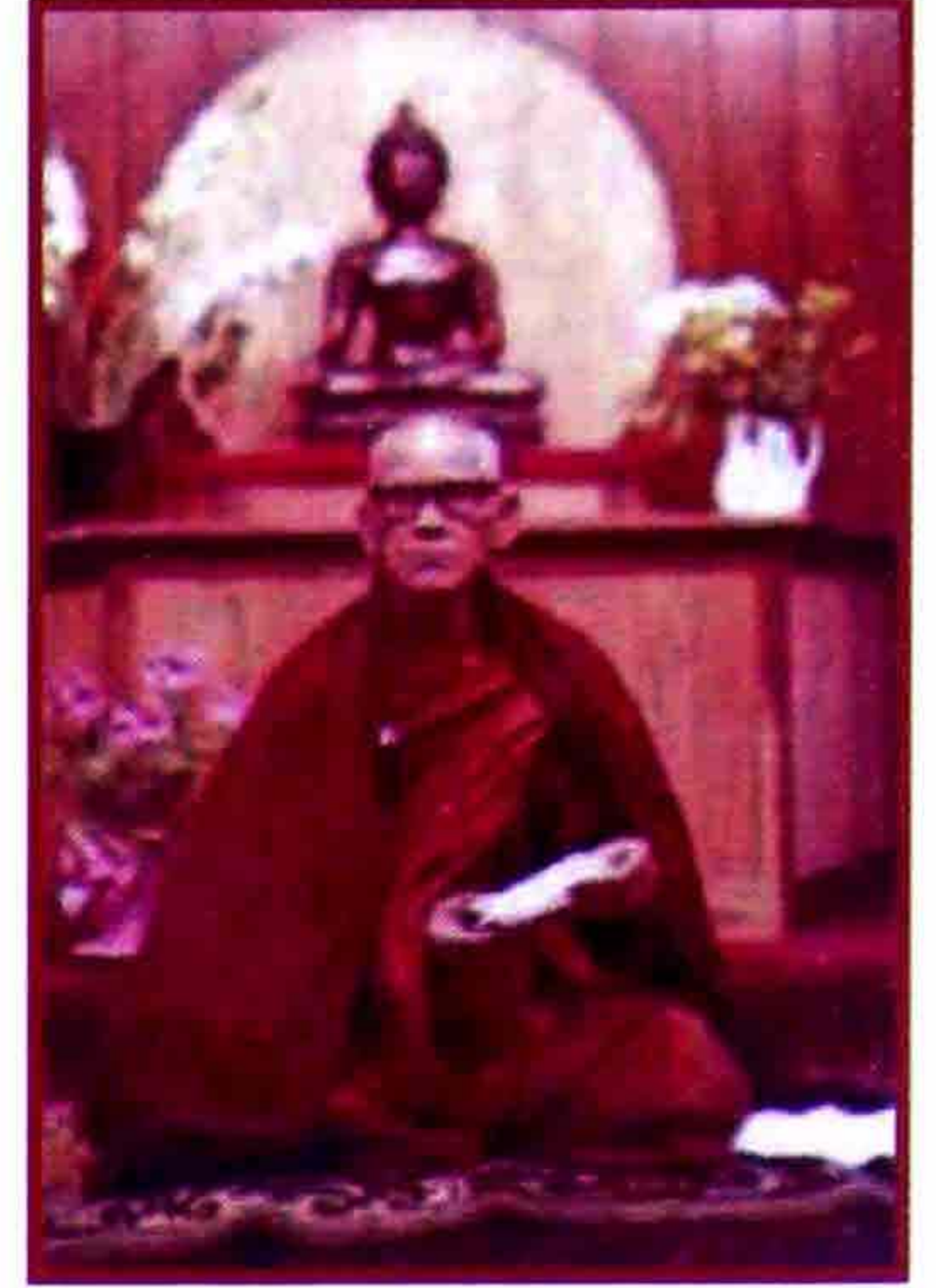
The Insight Meditation Centre at Barre, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

At the Barre Centre, Mahāsī Sayādaw taught a fourteen-day retreat for a group of American meditators. The *Sayādaw* taught his method of *vipassanā* meditation and gave regular discourses for their encouragement. He also delivered a discourse based on the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta at the Common Hall of the Harvard Centre for the Study of World Religions. Before leaving Barre, the *Sayādaw* admonished the meditation teachers and instructors on the special virtues required of them. Then Joseph Goldstein and one of his associates were officially recognised as meditation teachers. When the *Sayādaw* left Boston for New York City, he had been in the U.S.A. for about 45 days, but according to his itinerary more than seventy days still remained. If the *Sayādaw* felt weary, he did not show it, but forged on with his mission with forbearance and energy.

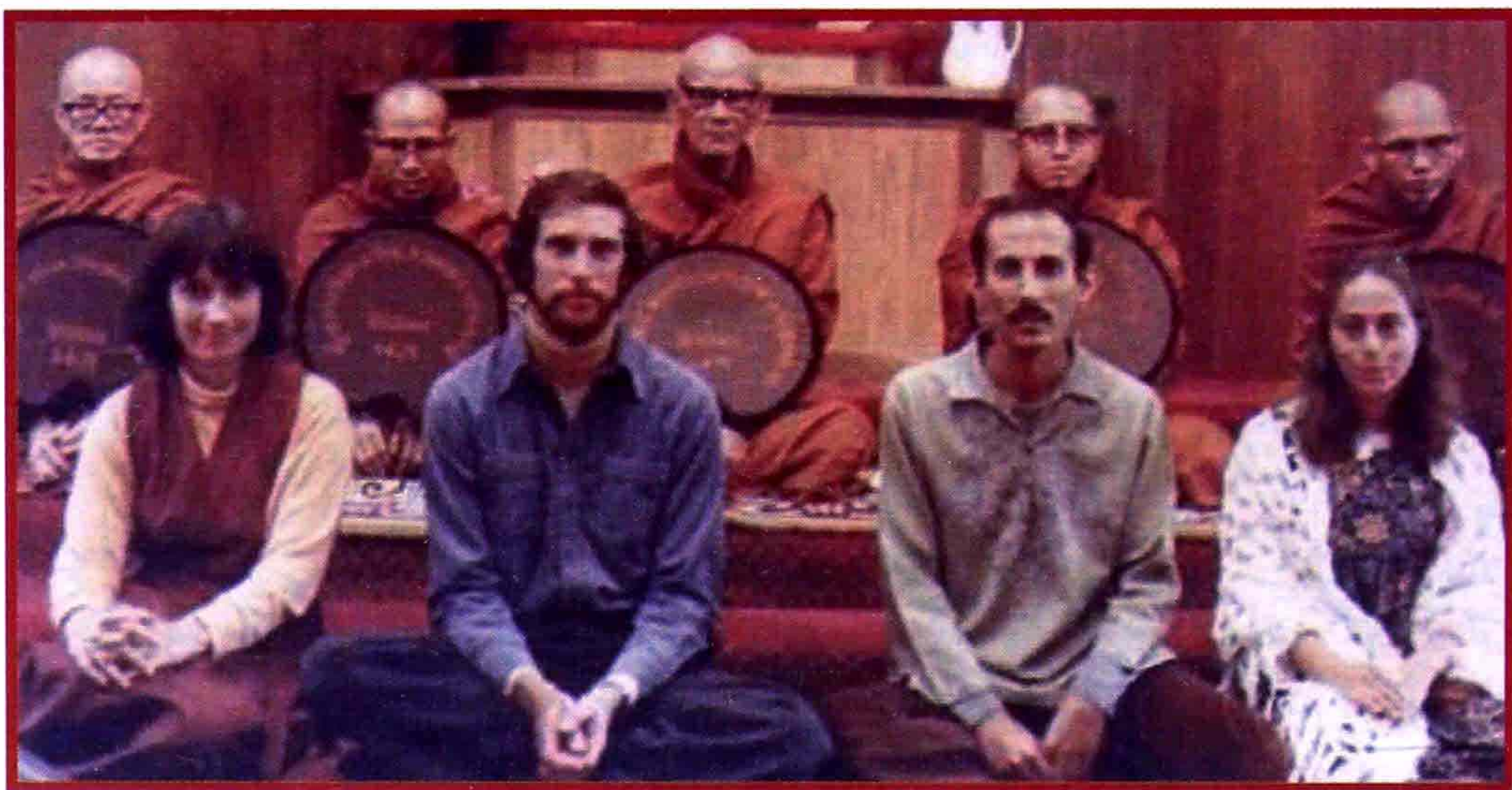
AT THE INSIGHT MEDITATION SOCIETY, BARRE, U.S.A.



a) Mahāsi Sayādaw and other senior meditation teachers



b) Mahāsi Sayādaw giving a Dhamma talk



c) At Teaching Authorization Ceremony, Barre, U.S.A.
Mahāsi Sayādaw (centre) and other Dhamma Teachers with Foreign Disciples:
(L to R) Sharon Salzberg, Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield &
Jacqueline Mandell Schwarz



d) Mahāsi Sayādaw going through Dhamma book

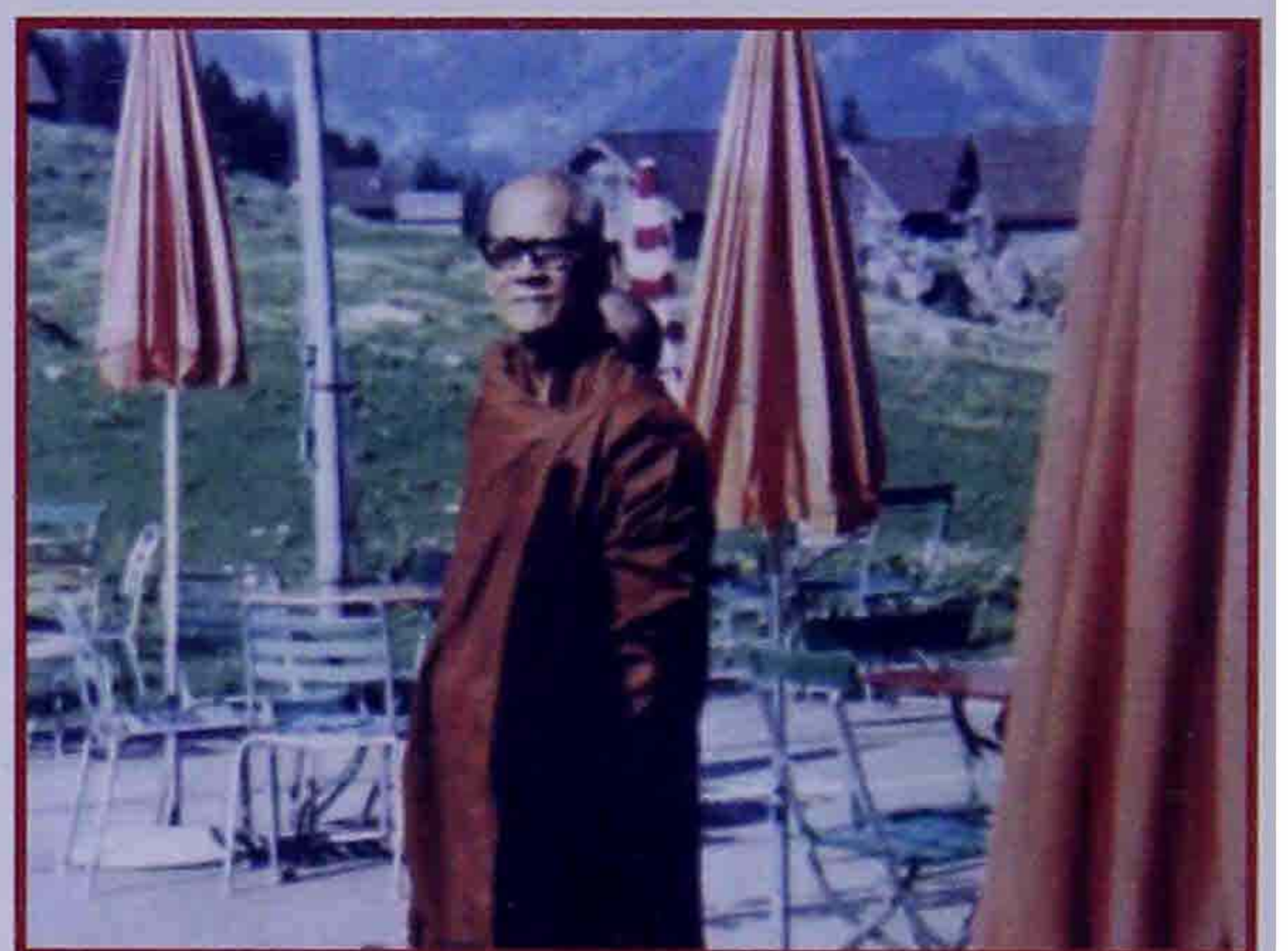
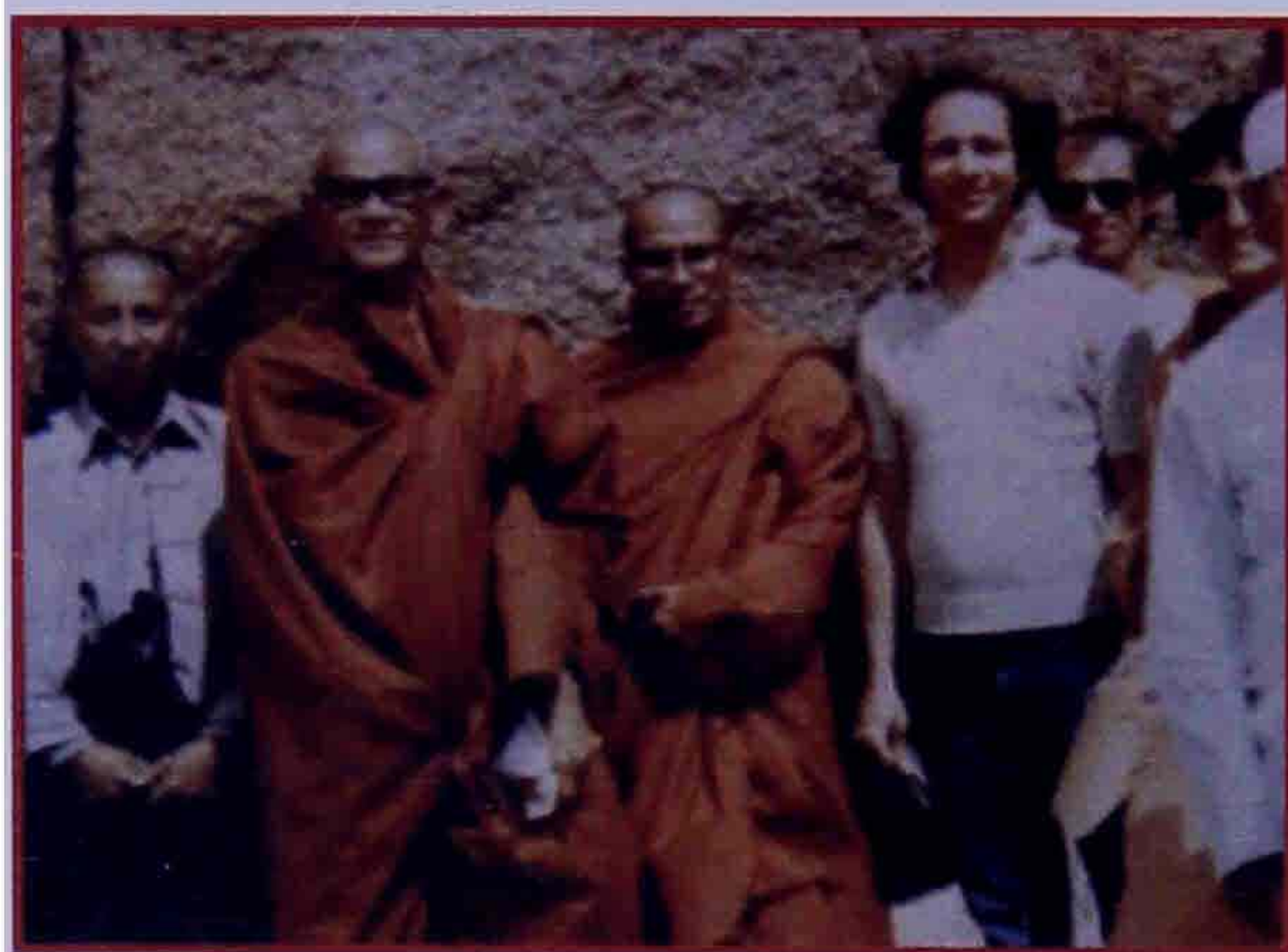


e) Walking meditation in progress

SNAPSHOTS FROM MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S DHAMMADUTA TOUR IN AMERICA – 1



SNAPSHOTS FROM MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S DHAMMADUTA TOUR IN AMERICA – 2





Members of the Asian community paying respects to Mahāsī Sayādaw

During his five-day stopover in New York, the *Sayādaw* gave several lectures on *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* at four venues: the Asian Society, the International Zen Centre, St. Paul's Cathedral at Columbia University and the Temple of Enlightenment, which was a Chinese *bhikkhuni's* centre. With this, the *Sayādaw*

concluded his tour of the United States.

THE UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE

When Mahāsī Sayādaw arrived at London's Heathrow Airport, a welcoming party comprising Ven. Dr. Rewata Dhamma, Second Secretary of the Embassy U Tin Maung Oo and U Sein Tun Aung (U.N.) led the *Sayādaw* to stay at the Thai monastery in Wimbledon, Wat Buddhapadipa. The *Sayādaw* stayed there for three days giving brief discourses and instructions on *vipassanā* meditation to different audiences. Then he left for Scotland, about four hundred miles to the north of London. There, he conducted a six-day meditation course at the Tibetan, Samye Ling Retreat Centre where the meditators took refuge in the Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*, and observed the eight precepts. The Mahāsī Sayādaw ordained three Myanmar devotees into the *Sangha*. One lady also became a Buddhist nun (Thilashin).

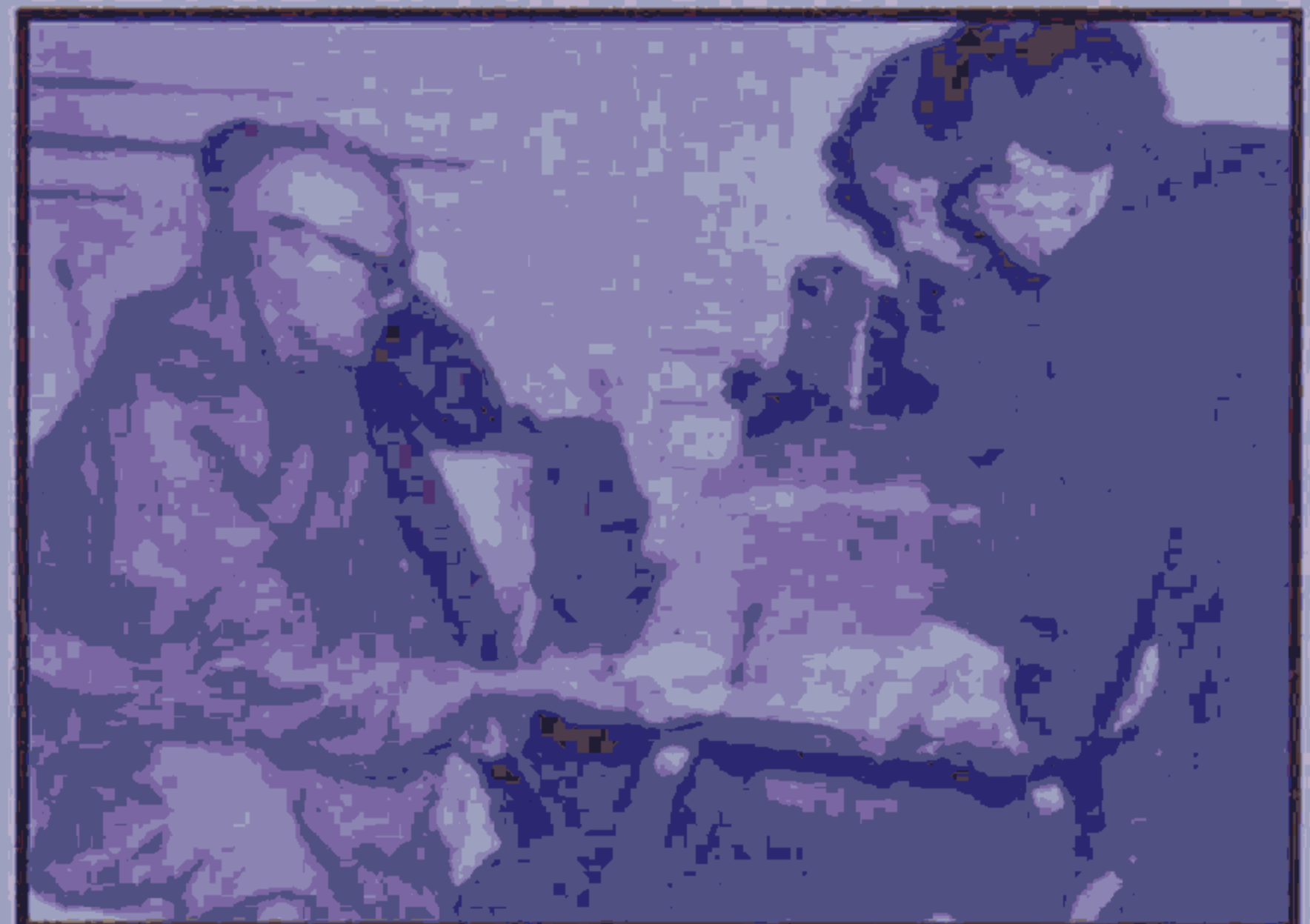
At the end of the six day retreat, the *Sayādaw* concluded with a discourse encouraging the meditators to continue their practice of *vipassanā*. The title of the *Sayādaw's* final lecture in the evening was 'The Way to Happiness', which is of course the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*.

The *Sayādaw* then travelled three hundred miles back south to Birmingham where the Venerable Dr. Rewata Dhamma has his permanent residence at the West Midlands Buddhist Centre. There the *Sayādaw* rested for three days, delivering only a brief discourse

on *vipassanā* at the Town Hall. By the 31st May, the *Sayādaw* was back in London again.



Mahāsī Sayādaw in England, 1979



Mahāsī Sayādaw in France, 1979

After that, the *Sayādaw* toured Europe for about two weeks. First, he crossed to France by air and then continued to Switzerland and then Italy by car and train. Although he spent just fifteen days in those three countries, the *Sayādaw* achieved a great deal in promoting the Buddha *Sāsana* at every place he visited. In France, the devotees were mostly from Laos and Vietnam, who are traditional Theravāda Buddhists. However, on inaugurating a ten-day meditation course in Switzerland, the *Sayādaw* admitted thirty

European meditators who had firm faith in the Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*. From Switzerland, the *Sayādaw* journeyed on to Italy



Mahāsī Sayādaw in Switzerland

(Seen with Burmese consul U
Thein Aung)



**Mahāsī Sayādaw at Mt. Sonei
Meditation Retreat, Switzerland**

where he lectured on *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* to a mixed audience of Italian, French and Myanmar people. He also took a sight-seeing tour of Rome, including the Vatican.

The *Sayādaw's* work in England was not yet finished. His schedule required him to conduct a meditation course at the Oakenholt Buddhist Centre, Oxford, so he flew back from Italy to London on 16th June. He gave discourses on *vipassanā* meditation to Myanmar devotees in the London area, and taught the Buddha *Dhamma* to an audience of Sri Lankan and English devotees at the British Mahābodhi Society in Chiswick.

The meticulously planned ten-day retreat at the Oakenholt Buddhist Centre was a great success. Nine Myanmar nationals and four Englishmen took practical *vipassanā* meditation courses as monks. On completion, Mahāsī Sayādaw gave them a talk on the Progress of Insight. Then he duly recognised Oakenholt Buddhist Centre as affiliated to the Mahāsī Sāsana Yeikthā.

After returning to London, the *Sayādaw* again went to Europe, to visit Amsterdam in the Netherlands and Bonn in Germany, where the devotees arranged to receive the *Sayādaw* and to listen to his discourses. The *Sayādaw* stayed three days in Amsterdam and a week in Bonn, fulfilling his duties of propagating the *Dhamma*. The *Sayādaw* then returned to London again, via Paris, and left London the next day (16th July) for Thailand.

MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S MISSIONARY WORK ABROAD TO OAKENHOLT, U.K. in 1979



a) Flag Raising Ceremony

The owner of Oakenholt, U Myat Saw (in white) raising the Buddhasāsana flag to inaugurate the opening ceremony for the vipassanā meditation retreat conducted by Mahāsī Sayādaw.

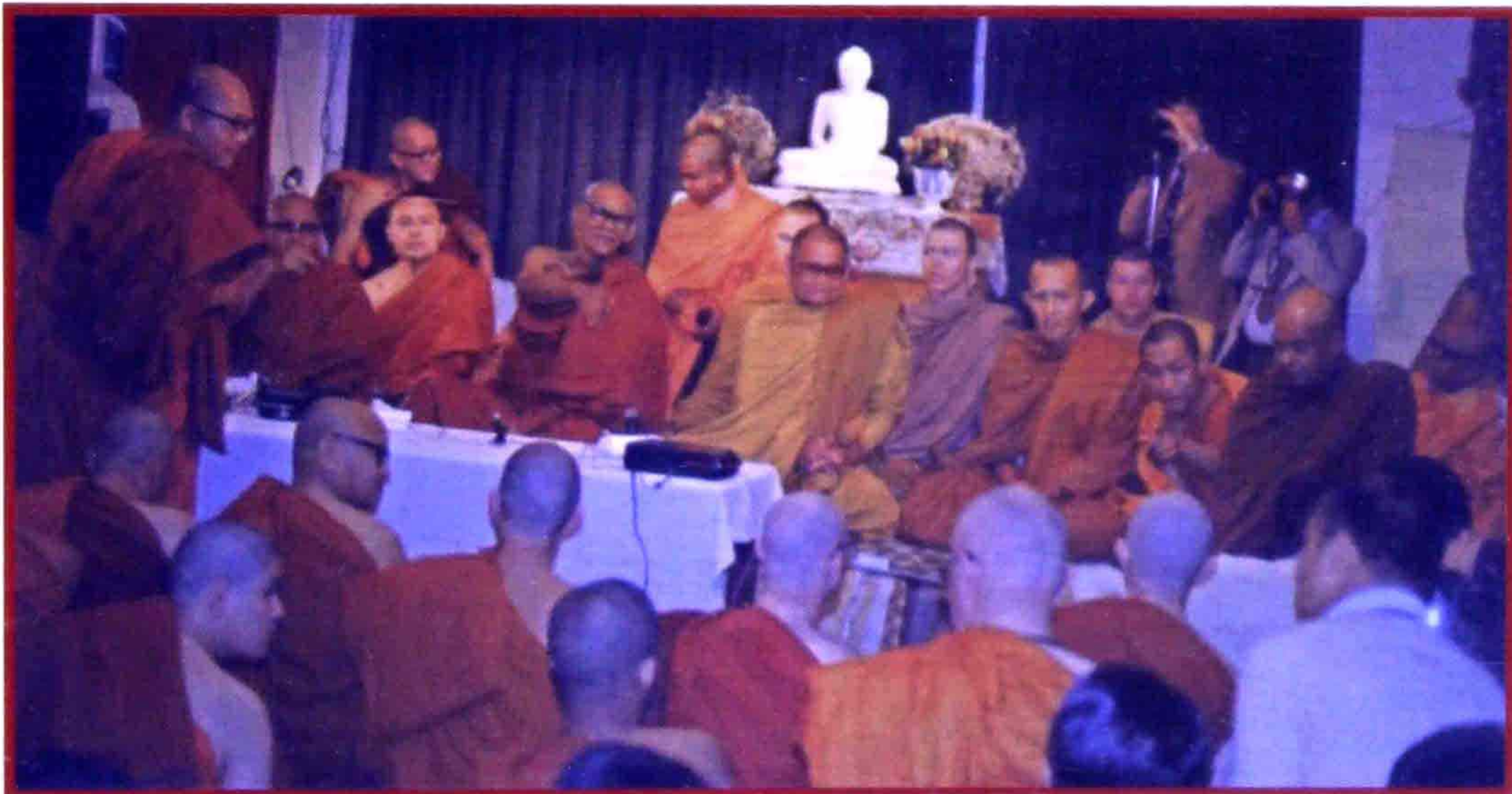


b) Group Photo – Monks at Oakenholt (1979)

Front Row from left to right: Ven Nyānaponika (Nepal), Ven K Piyatissa (Sri Lanka), Ven Rewata Dhamma (Burma, Birmingham Sayādaw), Ven Mahāsī Sayādaw (seated), Chanmyay Sayādaw U Jānaka, Ven U Aggadhamma (Burma, attendant to Mahāsī Sayādaw), U Myat Saw (owner of Oakenholt, temporary monk), two temporary monks.



c) Mahāsī Sayādaw leads the procession of monks in Oakenholt



d) Novice Ordination at Oakenholt (1979)

The novice ordinations were held in a temporary sima, created for that purpose inside one of the many buildings at Oakenholt. In the morning of June 24th 1979, many famous monks were gathered. To the left of Mahāsī Sayādaw is the Ven Ajahn Chah, behind Ven Ajahn Chah's left is Ajahn Sucitto (current abbot of Chithurst Forest Monastery). In the front row of senior monks is Ven Nanadharo (Laos), and Ven Hammalawa Saddhatissa (Sri Lanka). The candidates are already in robes, awaiting the going-forth (pabbaja).



e) Group Photo – Oakenholt 1979

When Mahāsī Sayādaw came to the UK in 1979, he spent about one month teaching vipassanā at Oakenholt Buddhist Centre, at Famoor near Oxford. Many devout Buddhists ordained temporarily to practise meditation under the Sayādaw’s expert guidance.

Sitting to the venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw’s left is Chanmyay Sayādaw U Jānaka, who served as his interpreter during his foreign mission. Seated just in front of U Jānaka is Mrs Ruth Dennison, a well-known teacher of vipassanā in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin.

Bhikkhu Pesala is seated at the extreme right of the photograph. The tall slim young man in blue-check shirt behind Sayādaw U Jānaka is now known as Ajahn Karuniko, a senior monk in the English Forest Sangha.



**f) Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw
at Oakenholt**

The Sayādaw takes exercise in the grounds of Oakenholt while he has a brief rest from teaching.



**The Most Venerable
Mahāsī Sayādaw
(1904 - 1982)**

Right up until 27th July, the *Sayādaw* had a very tight programme, delivering practical discourses on a *vipassanā* wherever he went. At Wat Mahādhātu in Bangkok, audiences of five hundred heard his two discourses. Seeing a gathering of so many pious devotees was wonderful.

SNAPSHOTS FROM MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S DHAMMADUTA MISSION IN THAILAND (1979)



Among the other places that the *Sayādaw* visited in Thailand, were Dr. Asabha's meditation centre at Wat Vivekasom in Chonburi, Wat Mong Mong in Chiangmai, U Dhammananda's Wat Tamao in Lampang and R Pannavamsa's Wat Si Chun, also in Lampang.

Mahāsī Sayādaw finally arrived back in Yangon on 27th July 1979, after a total of one hundred and eighteen days propagating the *Dhamma* abroad, with hardly any respite.

SECOND TRIP TO THE UNITED KINGDOM

Barely ten months after Mahāsī Sayādaw returned from his first tour of Western countries, U Myat Saw of the Qakenholt Buddhist Centre invited the *Sayādaw* and three others to visit England again. So the *Sayādaw* set out on a second trip to England in May 1980 accompanied by Chanmyay Sayādaw U Janakabhivaṃsa, Sayādaw U Eindavaṃsa, U Aggadhamma and *Kappiya* U Mya Thein.

On arrival at Oakenholt, U Myat Saw asked the *Sayādaw* to recognize his house as an affiliated meditation centre for the benefit of local meditators, and the *Sayādaw*, accepted his proposal. A Buddhist Association based on practical *vipassanā* was also formed in the presence of Mahāsī Sayādaw with Venerable Dr. Rewata Dhamma as its principal. The house that U Myat Saw donated was a spacious building, big enough for twenty-six monks and up to eight meditators to live and practise meditation. It also served as Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw's residence during his stay at Oakenholt. The *Sayādaw* preached and taught *vipassanā* to a number of Myanmar people at Oakenholt.

The *Sayādaw* left England in the last week of July, travelling through the Netherlands, Germany and France, stopping for a few days in each country. He then flew back to Myanmar via Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. The entire trip had lasted fifty-six days.

(Note: Mahāsī Sayādaw's visit to Singapore is mentioned only in passing in this article 'Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw's World Mission' translated by U Kyin. Many photographs of his visit to Singapore are found on the CD's from BSNO and some are reproduced on pages 267-268.

Furthermore, an article of the Sayādaw's visit to Malaysia in 1980 reported in 'The Voice of Buddhism' a Malaysian journal is inserted on page 269.)

SNAPSHOTS FROM MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S DHAMMADUTA MISSION IN SINGAPORE 1980 – 1



**SNAPSHOTS FROM MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S
DHAMMADUTA MISSION IN SINGAPORE 1980 – 2**



MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S VISIT TO MALAYSIA (1980)

(Extracted from *Voice of Buddhism*, Vol.17, No.2, Dec. 1980, page 11)

The visit of Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw, one of Burma's foremost meditation masters, to Kuala Lumpur (KL) in mid-July 1980 had given great inspiration to a number of aspiring Buddhist meditators in the country.

The Venerable is also a leading Buddhist scholar in Burma. He was honoured during the 6th World Buddhist Council in 1954 -1956 (2500th Buddha's Anniversary) to assume the same role as the Venerable Mahā Kassapa did during the 1st Council held three months after the Buddha attained Mahāparinibbāna.

During his 3-day stay at the Brickfields Buddhist Temple, a large number of devotees turned up to pay respects to the Venerable. Welcoming him at the Subang International Airport



a) Ven. Mahāsī Sayādaw & Sayādaw U Aggadhamma at the Brickfields Buddhist Temple, KL.



b) Dhamma session at the International Buddhist Pagoda, Brickfields, K.L.

Seated to the right of the Ven. Mahāsī Sayādaw is the Chief Reverend of Malaysia, Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda Nāyaka Thera.

were the Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda Nāyaka Thera and other resident monks of the Buddhist temple including the Burmese Ambassador, and other officials of the Burmese Embassy in KL. Prof. Thin Ohn and his wife, Daw Khin Saw Aye were the chief dayākas during the Venerable's stay in the capital.

PILGRIMAGE TO NEPAL AND INDIA

(Refer to pages 137-154 for India)

As the Mahāsī Sayādaw's teaching had won worldwide acclaim, it found a lot of new followers in Nepal. After practising *vipassanā* meditation at Mahāsī Sāsana Yeikthā for one month in February 1980, thirty-five ladies headed by Thilashin Daw Sudhammavati, and Bhikkhu Asagosa invited Mahāsī Sayādaw to Nepal to promote the Buddha *Sāsana*. The President of the Lumhini



Mahāsī Sayādaw's Mission to Nepal (1981)

L to R : Daw Gunavati (Myanmar), Daw Suddhamavati (Nepal), UPA (Mahāsī's kappiya), Mangala U Aung Myint, Sayādaw U Samvara, Sayādaw Jnanapurnik, Mahāsī Sayādaw, Sayādaw U Sobhita and Mahāsī devotee

project, while visiting Yangon, paid homage to the Mahāsī Sayādaw and requested him to visit Nepal. The *Sayādaw* accepted the invitation for the good of the *Sāsana* and detailed arrangements were made by the Buddha *Sāsana* Nuggaha Organization.

Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw's mission to Nepal and India started on 24th February 1981. With the *Sayādaw* were *Kammatthana-cariya* U Samvara, Mya Thein Tan Sayādaw U Sobhana, the Nepalese Sayādaw U Jnanapurnik, Vice-President U Ba Galay, Mangala U Aung Myint and *Kappiya* U Mya Thein. Photography and video recording throughout the trip was done by U Tun Yee and U Sann Maung. Coinciding with the *Sayādaw's* trip, seventy Mahāsī yogis in two groups made a pilgrimage, following the *Sayādaw's* party as closely as possible. They were fortunate

enough to be able to worship together with the *Sayādaw* at the sacred places like Lumbini and Bodhgāyā.

Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw stopped in Kathmandu for three days to promote the Buddha *Sāsana* at several nearby places. The *Sayādaw* was greeted and worshipped by many devotees. In a field, in Patama township, fifteen thousand people gathered to hear Mahāsī Sayādaw's discourses. Many more people were listening from the nearby buildings. Though the weather was chilly



Thousands of devotees gathered in the field to listen to Mahāsī Sayādaw's discourses

Sayādaw U Sobhana and Sayādaw U Jnanapurnik, for a group of one hundred and nine Nepalese yogis, headed by the wife of Lumbini Project's president.

The two groups of Myanmar pilgrims came together at Lumbini. In a Higher Ordination Ceremony, Mandalay U Sein Win, U Nyo Maung, U Nyunt Maung and U Sein Han were ordained into the monkhood at the Lumbini *Sima*. Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw then went on to Kusinara, Sāvatti and Varanasi. The *Sayādaw* and his disciples recited the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta at the

that evening, the *Sayādaw* delivered three consecutive discourses, undaunted by the weather. After giving practical instructions on *vipassanā* meditation, he let the assembly meditate for five minutes. Sayādaw U Jnanapurnik interpreted for the *Sayādaw* to the Nepalese audience who listened with reverence, which was highly commendable.

Mahāsī Sayādaw left Kathmandu for Lumbini, about four hundred miles away, the next day. The pre-arranged nine-day retreat was opened under the direction of Sayādaw U Samvara, Mya Thein Tan

Migadavana deer sanctuary, and recited the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta at the Dhammek Stupa in reverential homage to the Exalted One.

**SNAPSHOTS FROM MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S
DHAMMADUTA MISSION IN NEPAL 1981 – 1**



**SNAPSHOTS FROM MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S
DHAMMADUTA MISSION IN NEPAL 1981 – 2**



The *Sayādaw* continued the journey to Bodhgāyā and Rājagaha where he went around worshipping at the Mahābodhi Stupa, the Seven Sacred Shrines (*Satta Thana*), etc. In the evening

SNAPSHOTS FROM MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S DHAMMADUTA MISSION IN INDIA 1981 – 1



the *Sayādaw* visited the International Meditation Centre in Gāyā and gave a *Dhamma* talk. In Rājagaha, the *Sayādaw* had a tight schedule, visiting all the places of historical interest such as Veluvana Vihara, Vebhara Hill, Kassapa Cave and Gijjhagutta Hill. The *Sayādaw* did not miss the opportunity to visit the famous Nalanda University or the place of Venerable Sāriputta's birth and *parinibbāna*.

Mahāsī Sayādaw then left Rājagaha for Calcutta on the way back to Myanmar. In Calcutta, the *Sayādaw* stopped for two days and delivered a discourse at the Mahābodhi Society to an audience

SNAPSHOTS FROM MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S DHAMMADUTA MISSION IN INDIA 1981 – 2



of one thousand pious Buddhists. Sayādaw U Jnanapurnik interpreted the *Sayādaw's* words in both English and Hindi. The *Sayādaw* and his party finally arrived back in Yangon on 19th March 1981, after a rewarding twenty-four days away from the Sāsana Yeikthā. Sadly, it was the *Sayādaw's* final mission abroad.



**Mahāsī Sayādaw returning
from his overseas missionary
tours**

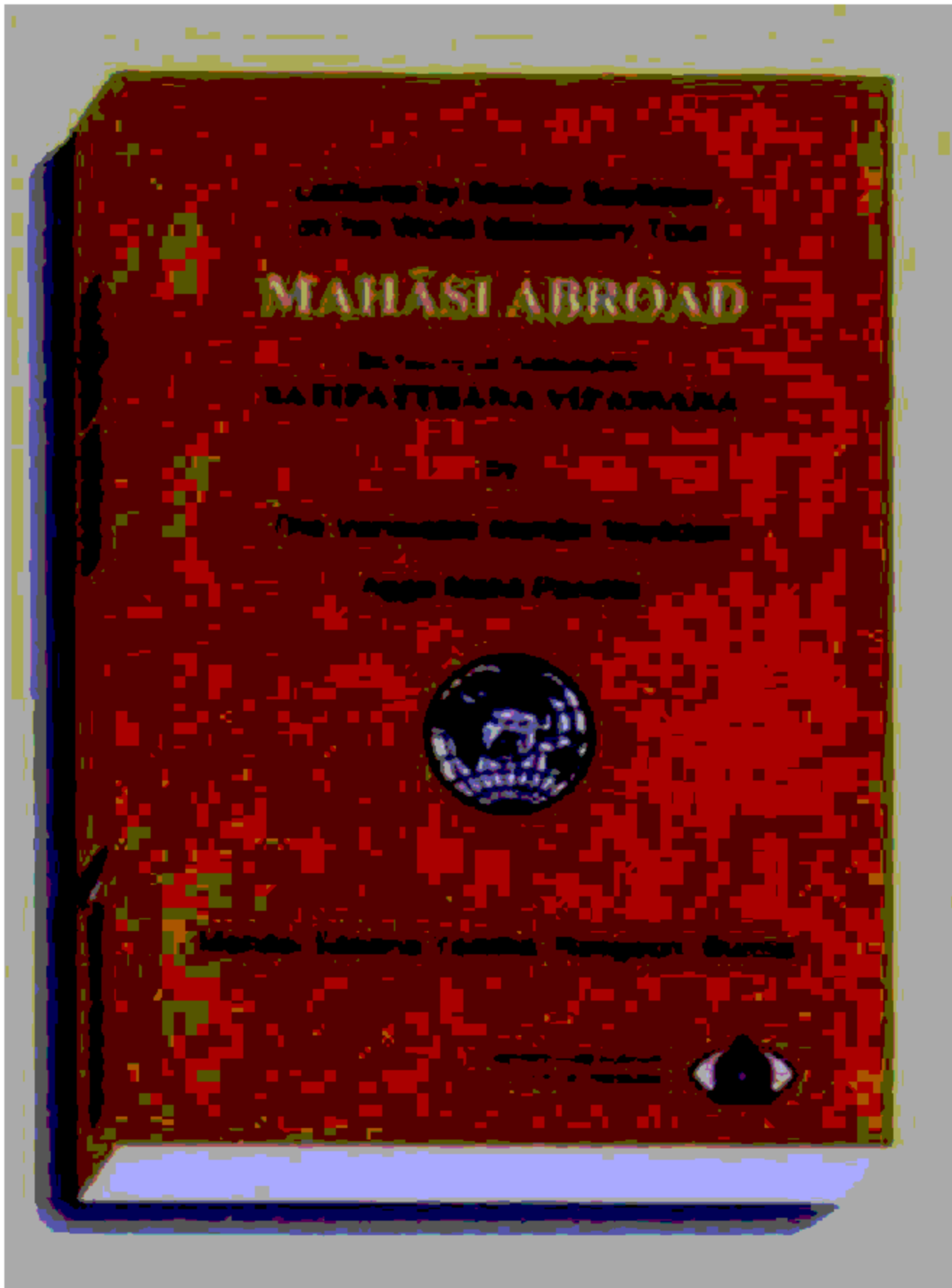


**Thousands of devotees
welcoming Mahāsī Sayādaw
on his return from overseas**

After the *Sayādaw's* demise on 14th August 1982 at the Mahāsī Sāsana Yeikthā, the promotion abroad of the Buddha *Sāsana* and the practice of *vipassanā* meditation slowed down a little. This is partly due to the *Sayādaw's* demise and also due to the important business of the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization. So there were no more foreign missions for a couple of years. However, the missions resumed in 1984, and since then a number of missions have been sent to different parts of the world. The seed of the *Dhamma* that Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw sowed in foreign countries has been flourishing like a robust plant cared for by an expert gardener. The Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization has been trying its utmost to promote the Buddha Sāsana and *Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā* meditation abroad. Thanks to the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw's outstanding *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization trusts that the *Sayādaw's* practical *vipassanā* will continue to spread throughout the world.

Note: *For the translated texts in English on the Lectures by Mahāsī Sayādaw on his world missionary tour, see BOOK REF. 8 on page 277.*

**BOOK REF. 8 : MAHĀSĪ ABROAD Inclusive of Addendum
on Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā
by Mahāsi Sayādaw**



At the invitation of Dr. U. Rewata Dhamma (London), Mr. Joseph Goldstein and Mr. Jack Kornfield (America) and others; the Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw and some disciples left Burma on a world missionary tour. He spent altogether 118 days abroad, visiting nine countries.

The Mahāsi Sayādaw prepared 5 talks for foreigners before he went abroad. There are English translations of these talks. The Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw read them in English in all the countries he visited.

The Nepalese *bhikkhus* and lay devotees have often come to Burma on pilgrimage and practised vipassanā at Sāsana Yeikthā. The largest group was led by the nun Daw Suddhammavati and including a *bhikkhu*. They invited the Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw to Nepal in summer. Moreover the President of the Lumbini Development requested Mahāsi Sayādaw for the favour of Mahāsi Sayādaw to visit Nepal on the occasion of the foundation-stone laying at Lumbini.

The Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw had kindly accepted the invitation of the Nepalese Buddhists and prepared 3 talks for the people of Nepal. These talks will be translated into Nepalese and published in Nepal by the Nepalese *bhikkhu* Jnanapurnik who is doing missionary work in England.

(Extracted from the Introduction of the Second Series of talks.

This Introduction was written by Mangala Aung Myint of the Buddha Sāsana Association, Rangoon).

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato
Sammāsambuddhasa*



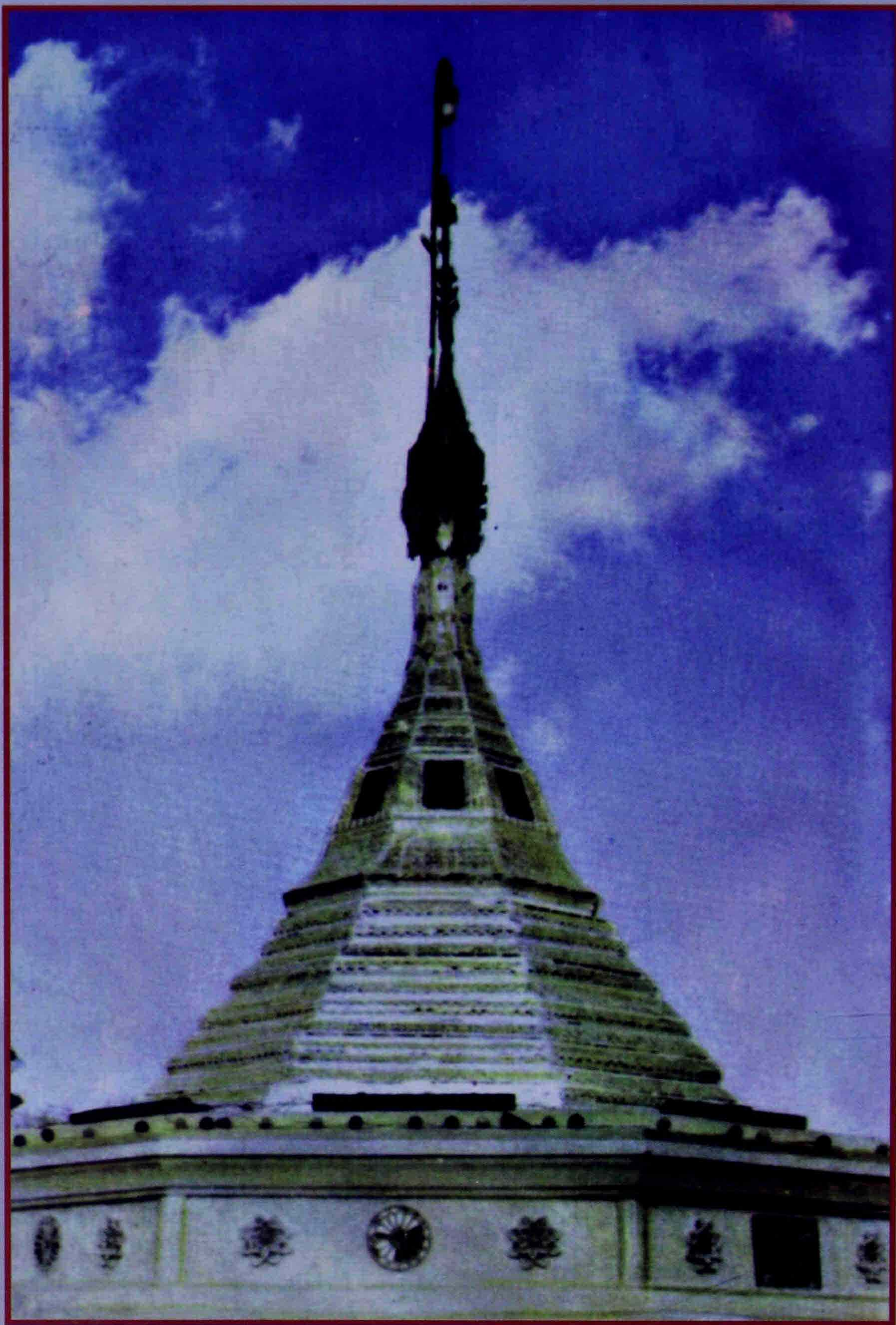
Veneration to the Exalted One,
The Homage-Worthy,
The Perfectly Self-Enlightened

BIOGRAPHY
of
THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW
THE PASSING AWAY
Of



THE MOST VENERABLE
MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

By
BEKKHU U. ANGAPĀNA



**THE PAGODA AT SEIKKHUN VILLAGE WHERE
MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S REMAINS ARE KEPT**

(See pages 10 and 11)

THE PASSING AWAY OF THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

At approximately 7.30 p.m. in the evening of Friday, August 13th, 1982, I went up to speak with my teacher Sayādaw U Paṇḍita, at his residence located within the compound of the Mahāsī Thathāna Yeikthā here in Rangoon, Burma. Immediately on the arrival U Paṇḍita's attendant, Maung Khin Hlaing, and the Malaysian *bhikkhu*, U Aggacitta, informed me that U Paṇḍita had been urgently summoned to Mahāsī Sayādaw's Lodge just a few moments before by Mahāsī Sayādaw's personal *bhikkhu* attendant, U Sobhana. They explained that the only reason given for the sudden request was that Mahāsī Sayādaw was feeling a very unusual type of physical pain in the head, accompanied with a sense of giddiness. (We later found out that Mahāsī Sayādaw had been seated in the chair behind his desk, engaged in a conversation with his attendant when, all of a sudden, the Ven. *Sayādaw* reached out for and began rubbing the top and back areas of the head. When the attendant asked him what was happening, the Ven. *Sayādaw* told him that he was experiencing very severe head pains. When the attendant asked him what he wished him to do, he remained silent and did not answer, while still holding his head; yet at this point not moving any bodily part. The Ven. *Sayādaw* was then helped to his bed, and while another lay attendant remained at his bedside, U Sobhana rushed over to inform Sayādaw U Paṇḍita. Someone then informed U Thein Han, the Yeikthā's treasurer living in our building a few hundred yards away, to call and request Mahāsī's doctors to come to his residence immediately). Soon after my arrival at U Paṇḍita's cottage, his lay attendant left us and went over to the Mahāsī Lodge to investigate the situation. At 9 p.m., Sayādaw U Paṇḍita's attendant returned and explained that Mahāsī Sayādaw was lying motionless on his bed, in what appeared to be an unconscious state and that all of the monastery's 15 or so resident monks were gathered in silence around his bedside. He said that several doctors and nurses were attending to the *Sayādaw*. He continued by saying that the initial diagnosis was that the Ven. *Sayādaw* had undergone a stroke. At one point, the *Sayādaw's*

blood pressure reached approximately 260 over 160, and an injection had immediately been administered, bringing it down to a near normal level. Shortly afterwards the doctors performed a few simple response / reflex / sensitivity tests. The *Sayādaw* showed a very subtle response on his right side only. Then they lifted up each of Mahāsī's eyelids and, with a rolled piece of tissue paper, gently touch each of his eyes. Neither of the eyes showed any signs of response.

At 9.30 a.m., U Aggacitta and myself walked over to the Mahāsī Lodge, observing the steadily growing number of cars and people who were gathered outside his building and on the downstairs floor of his residence. We walked over to the ambulance which was parked by the side entrance. The air was perfectly still and most of everyone I could see sat quietly awaiting the Ven. *Sayādaw*'s departure to the Rangoon General Hospital. I sensed the critical nature of the situation and the same was reflected in the faces of so many familiar people that I knew. Upstairs in Mahāsī's room, we began to hear people talking, and a few minutes later, at around 10 p.m., a group of monks and laymen came slowly down the stairs, carrying on a stretcher the Ven. *Sayādaw* who was lying



Sayādaw U Paṇḍita

motionless on his left side. He was carefully put into the ambulance, and along with a number of monastery attendants and resident monks, he was taken to the intensive care unit of the hospital 15 minutes away. We then accompanied Sayādaw U Paṇḍita back to his residence, and he explained to us some of the events that took place while he was with the Mahāsī Sayādaw in his room, as well as offering his own personal interpretation of the Mahāsī Sayādaw's condition. Sayādaw

U Paṇḍita expressed his optimism and felt that the Ven. *Sayādaw* would recover in due time. But I sensed that we all know the criticalness of the Venerable *Sayādaw*'s condition.

The next morning at 9 o'clock Sayādaw U Paṇḍita, accompanied by a couple of his close lay disciples, and along with

U Aggacitta and myself, went to the hospital to check on the Mahāsī Sayādaw's condition. From an early morning report by one of the attendants who stayed by him throughout the night, it was said that the Ven. *Sayādaw's* condition was stable but that he was still in an unconscious state. Upon our arrival at the hospital, many resident monks and close lay disciples were gathered, awaiting news of the Ven. *Sayādaw's* condition. We were immediately ushered into a small glass viewing receptacle that looked in upon the intensive care unit where Mahāsī Sayādaw was lying motionless. Doctors, nurses and attendants were busily administering care to the *Sayādaw* in what appeared to be an urgently critical manner. A variety of very sophisticated machines were hooked up to him; one showing the rhythm of his heartbeat and another that appeared to be an artificial breathing mechanism. Oxygen was being given along with a bottle of intravenous liquid. We were told that Rangoon's foremost neurosurgeon had earlier that morning given a preliminary diagnosis of Mahāsī Sayādaw's condition, stating that he had undergone a massive cerebral stroke and that there was at least a 75% likelihood of extensive cerebral hemorrhaging. While we were there the neurosurgeon again entered the intensive care unit, and we were informed that he was going to do a spinal inspection to determine more accurately the Ven. *Sayādaw's* condition, thus enabling him to determine more precisely the options available: basically, either to enter the skull through surgery, locate and tie the ruptured artery while removing the clot, or to simply allow a possible natural bodily recovery. Everyone felt that surgery was far too risky, and in the light of that natural recovery was almost impossible. Sayādaw U Paṇḍita remarked that the situation may appear hopeless from the medical viewpoint, but he still remained optimistic, reminding everyone that Mahāsī Sayādaw was a man of extraordinarily powerful *kammic* virtues and that this may be a far more potent force than everything else; stressing that however obvious or logical



Venerable U Aggacitta
(Malaysian Thera)

the outcome of a situation might appear to be, it didn't necessarily mean that it would happen in that way.

All of us went directly back to the monastery, placing the decision-making process with the senior attending doctor who was caring for the Ven. *Sayādaw*. Shortly after our return, several of us were gathered at U Paṇḍita's residence, and at 11.30 a.m., the President of the Organization that manages the monastery, U Pwint Gaung, and several senior members of that committee, along with approximately 30 others, including resident monks, nuns and close lay disciples, came into the cottage and after paying their respects, announced to Sayādaw U Paṇḍita that the Ven. Mahāsī Sayādaw was only being kept alive by the use of machines. For the next few minutes everyone in the room remained still and quiet. There were no signs of sorrow or anguish, as a very obvious composure permeated the air. The President then proceeded to announce the urgent need to discuss the necessary arrangements that would have to be immediately agreed upon and made, should the Ven. *Sayādaw* pass away – which seemed a certainty at this point – to ensure the smooth functioning of the monastery and to accommodate the thousands of Mahāsī Sayādaw's devotees who would begin pouring into the monastery upon hearing of his death. (Up till this point the second most senior monk of the monastery, the Ven. Sayādaw U Sujāta, had been kept purposely uninformed of what had happened the night before to Mahāsī Sayādaw because of the possible exacerbation of his own intensive heart condition. The same information was also being withheld from another senior *Nāyaka Sayādaw* at the monastery, the Ven. U Jāvana, who is also dealing with a similar intensive ailment. It was agreed that they both be carefully informed of the situation in a very skillful manner). Sayādaw U Paṇḍita suggested that an urgent meeting be held at 12.30 p.m. in the downstairs area of the Mahāsī Lodge with all *Nāyaka Sayādaws*, resident monks, nuns and representative members of the various government bodies that maintain the monastery present. Both U Aggacitta and myself attended the gathering, and it was translated to me that the President said that due to Mahāsī Sayādaw's present condition, he felt that it was necessary to systematically outline and discuss all of the immediate

relevant details involved in preparing for the Ven. Mahāsī Sayādaw's funeral arrangements. The hundred over people present agreed to the suggestion. Sayādaw U Pandita then addressed the assembly, explaining that over the many years of his association with the Ven. Mahāsī Sayādaw, it was very obvious that the Ven. *Sayādaw's* continual *Dhamma* instruction and presentation were always delivered in a very clear, straight and non-frivolous way – making the point that his funeral ceremony should also be conducted in the same manner: in essence, conducting the entire occasion with all of its accompanying details in a straight-to-the-point, concise and simple manner, completely free of pageantry and the extraneous. Nearly everyone present consented in complete agreement. Mahāsī Sayādaw's long-time friend and disciple, Mingala U Aung Myint, recalled to everyone an experience he once shared with the Ven. *Sayādaw*, which occurred while they were both attending a funeral and cremation ceremony of a monk who had passed away. He explained that Mahāsī had told him that a true *Kammaṭṭhāna-cariya* (Meditation Teacher) should only have his body lie in state for a maximum of seven days, and that all aspects of a meditation teacher's funeral ceremony and cremation should be very simple and short. He continued by stressing how the Ven. *Sayādaw* had explained how unnecessary and unbecoming it was for the teacher's students and devotees to make expensive ceremonial or decorative offerings, but should rather use the money to feed the *Sangha* and the meditating yogis. Everyone thus agreed that they should follow Mahāsī Sayādaw's personal preference, allowing his body to lie in state for a seven-day period, and that the consequent funeral and cremation ceremony should be very low-key, short and simple.

At this point someone came in and made it known that the Ven. Mahāsī Sayādaw had stopped breathing and that his bodily processes were only being kept active by the use of a machine. It was then decided to have his body immediately transferred to the monastery. The Hospital was notified and while the Ven. *Sayādaw* was being brought by ambulance to the monastery, several lay attendants brought a bed from the guest room downstairs and assembled it in the far corner of the ground floor meditation

hall where we were all gathered. In a few minutes, at approximately 1.15 p.m., the ambulance arrived, and with it the crowd hastily made way for the Ven. *Sayādaw* as he was being carried on a stretcher and carefully placed on the bed. A soft whispering could be heard throughout the crowd of over 200 people who were now gathered around his bedside. A few people could be seen softly crying and a few others with facial expressions of disbelief and sorrow. However, most of the disciples assembled seemed to be in an expressionless state of composed stillness, observing the doctors, nurses and attendants trying as best as they could to keep the Ven. *Sayādaw* alive for as long as possible. The room gradually settled and became silent and still, anticipating that which seemed to be the final moments of the Ven. *Sayādaw's* life. A doctor then began to check his blood pressure and pulse while the room took on an even greater sense of stillness. During the next few seconds, while the doctor stood leaning over the Ven. *Sayādaw's* body, the world seem to stop and the scene became like a timeless tableau of stillness, as everyone present must have known that the Ven. *Sayādaw's* existence had come to an end. The doctor removed the stethoscope from his ears and motioned to the other medical assistants who were attending to the *Sayādaw* to stop what they were doing. The Ven. *Sayādaw* was declared to have passed away at 1.36 p.m. on Saturday, August 14th, 1982 at the age of 78 years old, having just celebrated his birthday a week ago and begun his 59th *vassa* as a member of the Sangha. Mingala U Aung Myint, with hands clapped in salutation, announced to the assembly of *Sangha* members and lay disciples that the Ven. *Sayādaw* had just died. He prefaced that by reminding everyone that the Ven. *Sayādaw* continually spoke about the way that would take one beyond sorrow, grief and anguish. And through one's own personal effort one could come to know directly that all conditioned phenomena in this universe are impermanent, thereby developing a mind that abided by that fact, living in a balanced and composed way. He concluded by saying that if we really considered ourselves true disciples of Mahāsi Sayādaw and his teachings, we will remember this universal law of transformation and restrain ourselves through this wisdom, which will be a profound example for all who come to pay their final

respects to the Ven. *Sayādaw*, as a visible demonstration of the profundity of the *Dhamma*. He then asked Ven. *Sayādaw U Paṇḍita* to lead the group in chanting a final tribute to the Ven. *Sayādaw*. We ended the session with recitation of *Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!* and for the next few minutes, everyone in the room remained quiet, acknowledging in silent homage the passing of the Great *Dhamma* Master.



The Body of Mahāsī Sayādaw lying in state under the canopy of white umbrellas

One of the *Nākaya Sayādaws* of the monastery then asked everyone to leave except for the resident *Sangha* and the members of the monastery's governing body, and while everyone was departing a group of us carried the Ven. *Sayādaw's* body into a small adjacent room. A couple of laymen disciples washed the Ven. *Sayādaw's* body and a new set of robes was brought and placed on him. Later that evening the Ven. *Sayādaw* was brought back to the large hall where he now lies in state. A double robe covers his body leaving just his face and head visible.

News of the Ven. Mahāsī Sayādaw's demise rapidly spread throughout the country, as witnessed by the increasing number of devotees that began streaming into the monastery to offer their final gestures of respect. From early morning till late into the night; huge crowds gathered in and around the monastery, often swelling into the thousands, patiently waiting under the nearly constant torrential monsoon rains, each one eventually filing past the Ven. *Sayādaw's* body in an awesome display of devotion. The large hall where the Ven. *Sayādaw's* body was placed for viewing was usually filled with people. Many of them sat silently with eyes closed, others



Sayādaw U Paṇḍita (2nd from left), paying respects to the Mahāsi Sayādaw's Body



Tipiṭakadhara Sayādaw U Vicittasārābhivaṃsa paying respects to the Mahāsi Sayādaw's Body



Members of the Sangha paying their last respects to the Mahāsi Sayādaw's Body



Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha committee members paying their last respects to the Mahāsī Sayādaw's Body



Women yogis paying their last respects to the Mahāsī Sayādaw's Body



Devotees paying their last respects to the Mahāsī Sayādaw's Body

chanted softly in a pose of salutation, while the throngs of other devotees continued flowing past the bedside to gain their final glimpse of the late Ven. *Sayadaw*.

Encircling the area where the Ven. *Sayādaw's* body was lying were a large variety of flower arrangements donated by various disciples, groups and organizations. The entire scene

had a pristine quality to it while retaining an obvious air of solemnity, austerity and simplicity. All duly in accord with how the late Ven. *Sayādaw* had said such a ceremony should be, some time before his passing away.

Along with the masses of lay disciples who had passed through the monastery this week, so too with members of the *Sangha*. Almost always large and small groups of *bhikkhus*, *sāmaṇeras* and nuns could be seen walking slowly around the Ven. *Sayādaw's* body, showing signs of great reverence and honour. In addition, nearly all of the senior *bhikkhu* disciples who head the numerous Mahāsī branch monasteries throughout the country, an estimated 400 monks in all, travelled to Rangoon to show their respects and to participate in the ceremony. At times during the week when all the *Sangha* members were gathered, various senior



Funeral committee members and Yangon Division local authorities discussing plans for the funeral ceremony of Mahāsī Sayādaw.

members of the Order would exhort them to be very conscientious of their behaviour out of reverence and respect for the reason they were gathered; explaining that whenever they spoke and moved, to try to do so in a composed and tranquil manner; concluding that all of us should continually reflect on the transiency of conditioned existence and to develop an increasing sense of meditative

urgency, using this opportunity of the death of the Ven. Mahāsī Sayādaw as a motivating impetus.



Gently lowering the Body of Mahāsī Sayādaw into a glass casket.

At 3 p.m. on Friday, August 20th, the funeral procession left the monastery grounds en route to the indoor crematorium of the Kyandaw Cemetery, approximately four miles away, for the performance of the Ven. *Sayādaw's* last rites. The motorcade consisted of numerous cars and buses filled with several thousands of the Ven. *Sayādaw's* *Sangha* and lay disciples. Mahāsī Sayādaw's body was placed in a glass casket surrounded by arrangements of

THE FUNERAL PROCESSION OF THE LATE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW



a) Mahāsī Sayādaw's body in glass casket



b) Loading the glass casket onto the procession vehicle



c) The funeral cortege leaving the Mahāsī Centre, Yangon



d) The funeral procession of Mahāsī Sayādaw attended by thousands of devotees



e) Scene on route where the funeral cortege will pass lined with thousands of devotees



f) Thousands of devotees on the road and in cars at the funeral procession



g) Thousands of devotees on the road and members of the Sangha in buses at the funeral procession

red and white Anthuriums and covered above by a canopy of white cloth, while in each corner was elected a large, traditional Burmese fringed white linen umbrella. As the procession slowly moved along the scheduled route to the cemetery under the suddenly cleared skies, tens of thousands of people (a top official from the monastery's governing body gave an estimate of 300 thousand) amassed along the streets, in windows, on balconies and on rooftops, most of them reverently saluting in final respect to the Ven. *Sayādaw* as his body passed by. Nearly two hours later, at 5 p.m., the procession reached the cemetery grounds where a massive sea of people had gathered, engulfing graves and tombstones and the otherwise luxuriant green foliage. The vehicle carrying the Ven. *Sayādaw*'s body halted in front of the platform where the hundreds of *bhikkhus* were seated. The air was extremely tense as the many thousands of devoted onlookers were tightly packed, surrounding the raised platform where the Ven. *Sayādaw*'s body was lying. Everyone's attention appeared to be unified on that one central point. Then in a culminating group acknowledgement of final homage to the late Ven. *Sayādaw*, the Ven. *Sayādaw U Paṇḍita*, with the aid of the microphone system, led the massive assembly in a short Pāli chant:

*“Anicca vata sankhara upada vaya dhammino;
Upajjitva nirujjhanti - tesam vupasamo sukho.”*

All conditioned phenomena are impermanent;
they have the nature to arise and pass away.

Having arisen, they cease – their stilling is (indeed) happiness.

This was chanted three times and immediately afterwards a group of laymen disciples removed the coffin from the platform and at once it was carried in through the doors of the crematorium a few yards away. The Ven. Mahāsī Sayādaw's body was then cremated, and later the ashes and bones were collected, to be distributed and enshrined at the end of the rain retreat in November.



At the crematorium ground



Picking through the ashes of Mahāsī Sayādaw

Thus the conclusion of a most solemn and awe-inspiring week left the memory of the late Ven. Mahāsī Sayādaw embedded in our minds as one of the greatest masters of the Buddha *Dhamma* to have lived in modern times. A man who, nearly all of his life, impressed upon those who came to listen the magnitude and nobility of living fully and completely a life that is in accord with the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path that leads to the overcoming of all suffering.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

May all beings live with (in) compassion and wisdom !

Bhikkhu U Aggacara
Mahāsī Thathāna Yeikthā
Rangoon, Burma
August 22nd, 1982

MAHĀSĪ – THE TRUE DHAMMA DISCIPLE

Following the footsteps of the Buddha to make available to all men the Universal principles of Truth and to offer to all the knowledge of the Path, the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw has diligently performed his noble task according to the famous exhortation of the Exalted One, which says:-

“Go forth, *☉ Bhikkhus* for the good of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, benefit and happiness of gods and men. Let not two go by one way. Preach, *☉ Bhikkhus*, the Dhamma, excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent in the end, both in the spirit and in the letter. Proclaim the Holy Life, altogether perfect and pure.”



**THE BUDDHA TAUGHT HIS FIRST DISCOURSE TO HIS
FIRST FIVE DISCIPLES.**

*The Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw
Bhadanta Saddhama Mahāthera Aggamahāpaṇḍita*

တရားစာတိုက်
မဟာဝိညာဉ်ဆရာတော်ဘုရားကြီး



တရားစာတိုက်
မဟာဝိညာဉ်ဆရာတော်ဘုရားကြီး
ဦးစော

This is the last photograph taken on the 13th August 1982 of Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw who passed away at 1.30 p.m. on Saturday, August 14th 1982 at the age of 78.

STATUE OF MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW AT THE MAHĀSĪ MUSEUM



The inexorable Law of Anicca (Impermanence) terminated, with tragic suddenness Mahāsi Sayādaw's selfless and dedicated life on the 14th day of August 1982. Like a true son of the Buddha, he lived valiantly, spreading the word of the Master throughout the world and helped many thousands onto the Path of Enlightenment and Deliverance.



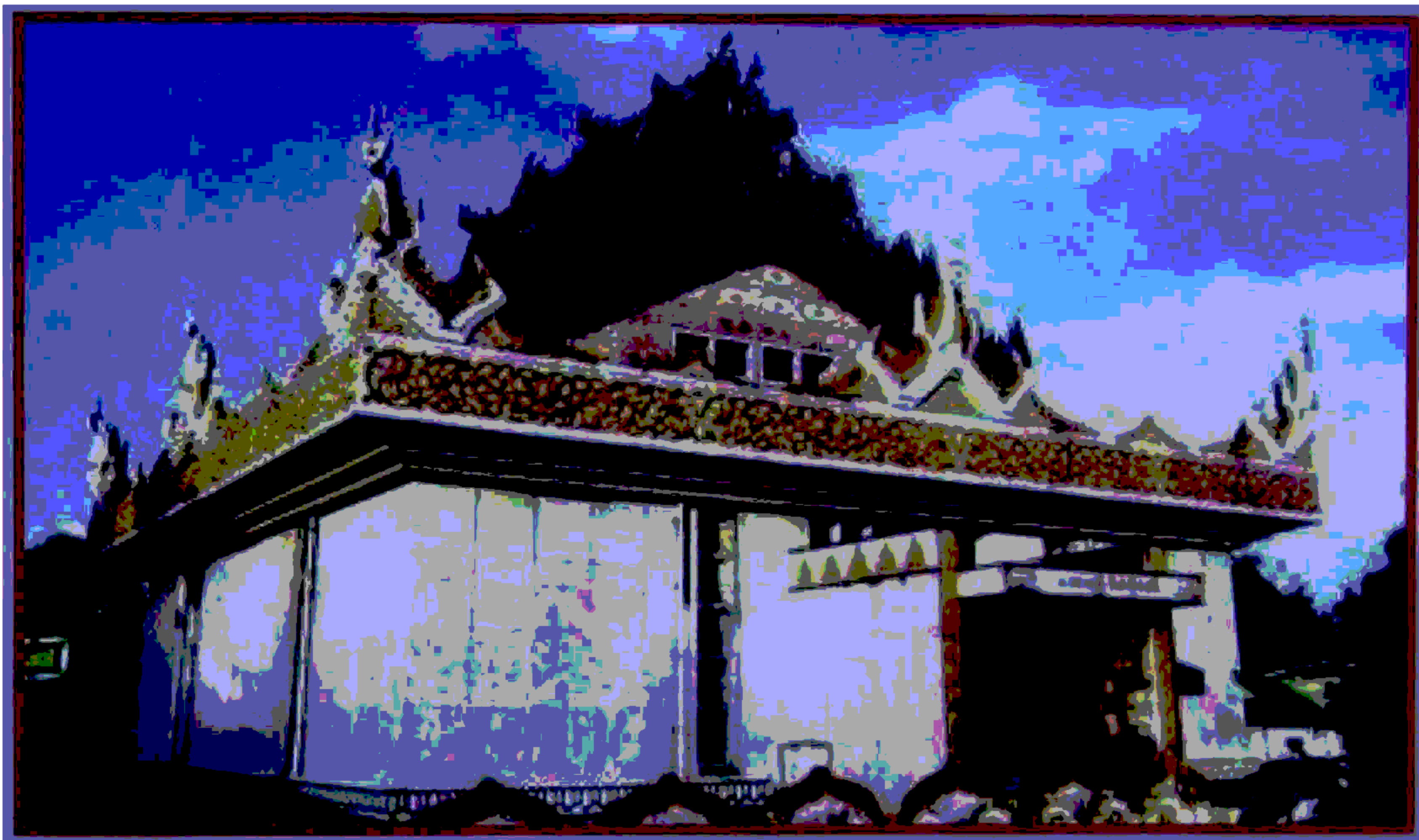
Dhamma session in hall where Mahāsi Sayādaw's statue and photographs are placed



Meditation session at the Mahāsi Sāsana Yeikthā



**THE BED AND WRITING DESK OF MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW
IN THE MAHĀSĪ MUSEUM**



THE MAHĀSĪ MAUSOLEUM

This building was consecrated in one corner of Mahāsī Yeiktha in Rangoon to serve as a lasting memorial to the tireless work of the Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw in propagating the practice of satipaṭṭhana meditation. Inside the marble mausoleum is a life-like statue of the late Mahāsī Sayādaw, some photographs of his foreign missions, and on the walls, inscribed in marble slabs, one can read (in Burmese) his great work on Vipassanā Meditation – Vipassanā Shunee Kyan.

In the centre of the building is a raised wooden platform on which one may practise meditation in the calm and cool interior of the mausoleum. “He who reveres me the most practices my teachings most” – the Buddha.

AFTERWORD

And as if such a heavy blow to the Mahāsī Empire was not enough, death claimed another victim on Sunday night, 22nd August, 1982, just two days after the majestic funeral procession of the Grand Master. Only about 3 hours following the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Organization's (BSNO) appointment of the joint-



Sayādaw U Sujāta
(1909 – 1982)

Passed away on 22-8-82
on the day of
appointment



**Sayādaw U
Paṇḍita**

Chief Nāyaka
Sayādaw from
22-8-82 to 1-9-90

successors to the throne at MTY, Rangoon, 73-year-old Sayādaw U Sujāta, with 53 *vassa*, was seized by heart failure at about 8.45 p.m.. Frantic attempts at resuscitation proved futile, and by 9 p.m., no signs of life could be detected. The body lay in state for 3 nights, after which funeral rites

- simple yet dignified - were performed before cremation took place on 24th August, 1982. News of this latest death was deliberately kept from the ailing Ven. Sayādaw U Jāvana, who is also afflicted with this treacherous disease of the heart.



Sayādaw U Jāvana

On 23rd August, 1982, the BSNO exco-members invited the *Sangha* at MTY for a meeting to formally announce the appointment of 2 Spiritual Advisers over the Rangoon Yeikthā. With the untimely demise of Sayādaw U Sujāta, the full burden of MTY's *Ovadacariyaship* falls upon the firm shoulders of Sayādaw U Paṇḍitabhivaṃsa, who ironically, had just celebrated his 61st birthday on Friday, 13th August, 1982.

Bhikkhu Aggacara
Mahāsī Thathāna Yeikthā
Rangoon, Burma.
27th August, 1982

THE BLESSED ONE'S FINAL EXHORTATION



The Blessed One Spoke to the Venerable Ānanda:

“It may be that to some among you the thought will come: Ended is the word of the Master; we have a Master no longer.

But it should not be so considered. For that while I have proclaimed and made known as the Dhamma and the Discipline, that shall be your Master when I am gone.”



**THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW
(1904 – 1982)**

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato
Sammāsambuddhasa*



Veneration to the Exalted One,
The Homage-Worthy,
The Perfectly Self-Enlightened

BIOGRAPHY
of
THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

**As retold by Venerable Sayādaw U Sīlānandabhivaṃsa,
and presented by The Editorial Board.**

*Translated into English on 30th August 2009
by Sayādaw U Thitzana, U.S.A.*



The Venerable Sayādaw U Sīlānandabhivaṃsa
(1927 – 2005)

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato
Sammāsambuddhasa*



Veneration to the Exalted One,
The Homage-Worthy,
The Perfectly Self-Enlightened

MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

As retold by Venerable Sayādaw U Sīlānandabhivaṃsa,
and presented by The Editorial Board.

The following is a question and answer record made by the Mahāsī Centennial Committee of Mahāsī Meditation Center, Yangon, Myanmar. The questions were those asked by editorial board to Sayādaw U Sīlānanda and answered by Sayādaw U Sīlānanda.

Q: We are very glad that you gave us time for this. We know that you knew Mahāsī Sayādaw since your early years and have a long relationship with the *Sayādaw*. We request you to share anything associated with Mahāsī Sayādaw and his life.

A: I first met the Mahāsī Sayādaw in 1951, at a time when plans were still underway for organizing the great historic Sixth Buddhist Synod which actually started in 1954.

The editing and scrutinizing work of all Buddhist canonical texts along with Commentaries and Sub-commentaries had already been started since 1951/52. I was still young then, only more than twenty years old. Therefore, my responsibility is only as an assistant, not as chief editor.

At that time, there was not much accommodation in Mahāsī Yeikthā. Some buildings were still under construction. Even Kabā-Aye, where the great event was planned to be held, was in the process of on-going construction and preparations. So, we had to stay at the Mahāsī Sāsana Yeikthā, in the library building. We had to carry out editing work of Buddhist texts staying in library.

The editing work generally was divided into three phases. They are: *Mūla Visodhaka* (original primary editor), *Paṭi Visodhaka* (re-examiner and editor of the primarily edited texts), *Osāna-visodhaka* (the final editor who finalize and approve the all edited texts).

The first Mūla Visodhaka personnel were those learned monks living in various monasteries at districts and towns in the country. They sent out the edited texts to Yangon so that those primarily

edited texts are to be re-examined and re-edited for the second time by the assigned *Paṭi Visodhaka Sayādaws* in Yangon. This procedure was to ensure that all edited work is perfect and error-free.

Finally, proof-reading and finalizing was to be done by *Osāna-sodheya-patta-pāhtaka* (final edited text readers) *Sayādaws* which comprises five *Sayādaws*. Mahāsi Sayādaw was one of them.

The others were Vija-Lakara Sayādaw (Mandalay), Bar-ka-rar Sayādaw, Pha-yā-gyi Sayādaw (Yangon) and Nyaung-Oo Sayādaw. For the most part, the Nyaung-Oo Sayādaw did all necessary work being coordinated by a Sri Lankan *Sayādaw*.

My role was as a helper; finding and looking for any word or text they might need to check. Usually, final decision and approval as the error-free edited work was made by all *Osāna-sodheya-patta-pāhtaka Sayādaws*. There was nothing to do any more once the final approval was made by this procedure.

Most edited scriptural texts are added with a heading or a title for the sake of easy reference and understanding although ancient texts lack in this feature. The headings are usually added, for example as Dhamma-chakka-pavattana Sutta, instead of using prepositional case-endings such as Dhammachakka-pavattana Suttaṃ or Suttanto etc., etc. This is done because it is intended to let the future generations know that adding of the title and headings without case-ending are the later addition of text-editors. If those titles are added with case-endings, later generations will assume it as original texts. In order to avoid such notion, no case-ending is used in edited texts. Most people today seldom know about the purpose of this modern improvement added to Buddhist texts.

My friendship with Mahāsi Sayādaw begins in this service of editing Buddhist texts.

The Mahāsi Sayādaw told me that there are two kinds of texts, one is the Tipiṭaka texts comprising twenty volumes, the other being four Nikāyas. The venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw is indeed well-versed in all the Tipiṭaka and Nikāyas. Whenever we have a certain verse or text to edit, he used to instruct us to refer to other texts with the same texts. Following his instructions, we had to present the text

he has referred. This clearly shows that the *Sayādaw* is indeed well-read and well versed in all the texts.

As regards his strict adherence to monastic *Vinaya* laws, I can recall an experience that happened on his trip to U.S.A. On that trip, the *Sayādaw* and group had to make a one-night stop at Bangkok. At the airport, the chief abbot of Wat Mahā That temple, the largest in Bangkok, came to welcome the *Sayādaw* at the airport. Mahāsī Sayādaw was much senior to Wat Mahā That Sayādaw.

As a Thai-custom of great respect, they had brought scented-water to pour on and clean the hand of *Sayādaw* in the act of greeting. The Mahāsī Sayādaw was very reluctant to let his hand being sprinkled and washed with the scented water. Only when the Thai *Sayādaw* insisted, explaining it as the custom of the country to respected guests, the Mahāsī Sayādaw accommodated out of courtesy.

As there was a three hours delay in departure, the plane was unable to reach Japan in time where the landing hours were limited. So, the plane had to stop in Taiwan. Everyone had to stay at a hotel. The person who came to pick up the group asked the *Sayādaw* to walk a bit briskly. Never losing a peaceful manner of his walk, the *Sayādaw* continued his unhurried walk as if he didn't understand the requests of that person. When all were at the hotel, the *Sayādaw* sat on the chair for the whole night instead of lying on the bed. The reason could be that the hotel has common entrance and access for all occupants which might be against the *Vinaya* law to sleep at such a dwelling.

Once the *Sayādaw* had arrived at San Francisco, there was a public *Dhamma* talk. One Burmese woman-devotee approached the *Sayādaw* asking him to bless her rosary.

“We don't do this. Only the worldly monks (monks working for worldly gains and power) will do this. I have no power of any kind,” was the *Sayādaw*'s gentle reply.

One thing I can remember is that when accompanying the Mahāsī Sayādaw, we used to chat during our meals. At first, the *Sayādaw*, being patient with our talking, kept quiet for a few days patiently awaiting the right moment to teach us.

“**Eat with mindfulness.**” – These are brief but profound words that politely came out from the Mahāsī Sayādaw after a few more days later. We all fell silent knowing that this is a very good scolding for our unmindful act. This is one way the *Sayādaw* taught us without using any harshness in the language.

How Mahāsī Sayādaw came to be known as Chaṭṭha-Saṅgīti-Pucchaka

Let me continue talking on Chaṭṭha-Saṅgāyana, the Sixth Buddhist Synod. The term ‘*Saṅgāyana*’ means reciting together. In the process of *Saṅgāyana* recitation, two persons, one Questioner and one being the Answerer are involved. The Questioner usually asks questions such as where the named *sutta* (discourse) was taught, regarding whom, etc. In the First *Saṅgāyana*, the most Venerable Mahā Kassapa served as Questioner, while Venerables Ānandā and Upāli acted as Answerers.

In the Chaṭṭha-Saṅgāyana, Sixth Synod, Nyaungyan Sayādaw acted as presiding senior patron Sayādaw. Mahāsī Sayādaw acted as the Questioner. The Tipiṭakadhara Mingun Sayādaw U Vicittasārābhivaṃsa acted as Answerer. The questioning and answering process has to be performed with earlier planning and preparation between both the Questioner and Answerer *Sayādaws*.

As a result, the process went smoothly without a slightest glitch before the audience on the first day of *Saṅgāyana*. Later on, some individuals were a bit dissatisfied over giving the role of Questioner to Mahāsī Sayādaw thinking that the *Sayādaw* was only a not-so-senior *Kammaṭṭhāna-cariya*, meditation teacher. They think there were some more senior individuals suitable that post. So, they told Vijja-Lakara Sayādaw about this matter. The Vijja-Lakara Sayādaw had to do as they insisted by replacing another *Sayādaw* as Questioner. So, during the question and answer session held the next day, the Questioner *Sayādaw*, without necessary rehearsal and preparation, conducted formal questioning procedure and the questions being answered by Tipiṭaka Sayādaw U Vicittasārābhivaṃsa. The session went on with some glitch. As a result, the session had to be prematurely ended within about five minutes after the arrival of the Prime Minister. So, the morning

Saṅgāyana session came to an end, causing anger, dissatisfaction and embarrassment to the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister then asked the senior *Sayādaws* of the *Saṅgāyana* assembly not to let such thing happen again. Since the third day onwards, Mahāsī Sayādaw re-assumed the role of Questioner.

Everything went on smoothly throughout the whole process of *Saṅgāyana*. Actually, with necessary preparation, other *Sayādaws* also could have performed the role of Questioner.

Since then, the name Mahāsī Sayādaw, become synonymous with Chaṭṭha-Saṅgāyana and widely known among public as an individual who played one of leading roles in the whole *Saṅgāyana* process. Thus, Pāli-Saṅgāyana of reciting edited and corrected main Buddhist texts had been completed.

Next, comes another session known as ‘Arthakathā-Saṅgāyana’ which means analysis of Buddhist commentary texts. For Pāli-Saṅgāyana, the ancient procedure of question and answer as a formal standard was recorded in texts. As such, the recent *Saṅgāyana* of Pāli-texts has to be conducted in accordance with that standard practice.

There was no such recorded traditional practice for Arthakathā-Saṅgāyana. It was Mahāsī Sayādaw who first introduced and initiated ‘the analysis of Buddhist Commentaries’ as the standard mode of Arthakathā-Saṅgāyana. This process was carried out by Mahāsī Sayādaw alone. Some books were published on this Aṭṭhakatha-Saṅgāyana for records. Later on, due to Mahāsī Sayādaw’s health conditions, Ani-sa-khan Sayādaw of Sagaing Hills had to continue all the *Saṅgāyana* work of Arthakathā (Commentaries) and Tikā (Sub-commentaries).

Mahāsī Sayādaw was a member of *Osāna-sodheya-pattapāthaka* (Readers and examiners of the final edited texts) Committee from the start to finish. They have to re-examine for final approval a whopping number of 117 texts.

Visuddhi Magga and Mahāsī Sayādaw

Here comes one special thing regarding the analysis of well-known Buddhist text ‘Visuddhi Magga Arthakathā’ (the Path of Purification). The most venerable Vijja-Lakara Sayādaw firmly trusted in the capacity of Mahāsī Sayādaw. So, he entrusted the necessary editing and examining *Saṅgāyana* work of that ‘Visuddhi Magga Arthakathā’ text to Mahāsī Sayādaw alone. That work too was finished successfully. This is a well-known fact.

A situation ensued to write a necessary preface to ‘Visuddhi Magga Arthakathā’ as I came across some negative writings in the preface of English-language ‘Visuddhi Magga Arthakathā’. An Indian wrote in that preface casting negative light on the Mahā Buddhaghosa, the respected author of ‘Visuddhi Magga Arthakathā’. I told about this to Vijja-Lakara Sayādaw. He instructed me to translate it and to distribute the translated copies to each responsible *Sayādaw* for the purpose of carrying out further necessary response to that matter.

So, I translated it. A copy of translated work of that writing was distributed among each responsible *Sayādaw*. Everyone agreed that a response was indeed required to clear this matter.

Four *Sayādaws* comprising Ani-sa-khan Sayādaw, Mahāsī Sayādaw, Tipiṭakadhara Sayādaw U Vicittasārābhivaṃsa and myself were chosen to fulfill this responsibility.

As a matter of fact, no one can successfully perform this duty except Mahāsī Sayādaw as we all have our own commitments. So despite the selection these four *Sayādaws*, Mahāsī Sayādaw practically did this superb work of writing a preface in Pāli language with all necessary detailed information of ‘Visuddhi Magga Arthakathā’. Mahāsī Sayādaw, after completing his preface, came to responsible member *Sayādaws* for evaluation and necessary feedback. Everyone unanimously accepted the script as the perfect one which was later added at the beginning pages of the first volume of Myanmar translation of ‘Visuddhi Magga Arthakathā’. The preface written by Mahāsī Sayādaw later received acclaim of even Indian scholars.

Here is one thing to add on this preface matter. Mahāsī Sayādaw sent that preface written in Pāḷi language to the Tha-bye-kan Sayādaw, a very famous and highly-respected Pāḷi scholar for the purpose of editing and necessary correction of his preface.

Tha-bye-kan Sayādaw found it to be a perfect piece of writing which needs no further correction. So, Tha-bye-kan Sayādaw wrote about eighty 'Anigīti' verses of Pāḷi and sent these back to Mahāsī Sayādaw. Those verses were composed in twelve-word phrases which were normally difficult for an ordinary Pāḷi scholar.

For the benefit of posterity, Mahāsī Sayādaw requested Tha-bye-kan Sayādaw to translate those verses into Burmese which were later included in the third volume of Myanmar translation of 'Visuddhi Magga Arthakathā'.

Mahāsī Books



DHAMMA BOOKS WRITTEN AND COMPILED BY MAHĀSĪ SAYADĀW

(In Burmese)

There are two kinds of Mahāsī books. One kind is found to be the books on his *Dhamma*-talks such as Dhammacakka and Anattalakkhaṇa Discourse. These are basically only his *Dhamma* talks in the book-form. These are only books, not texts. However, due to readability and understandability of these various books, the name Mahāsī Sayādaw received more popularity among a wider audience. The second kind of Mahāsī books is real texts that deserve a classic category standard. They are books written by Mahāsī Sayādaw himself such as Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta Nissaya, The Vipassanā

Meditation Method (two volumes), Burmese translation of Visuddhi Magga, Visuddhi Magga Tikā Nissaya, etc.

Of the books Mahāsī Sayādaw wrote, Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta Nissaya contains skillful treatment of original texts which clearly shows the erudition of Mahāsī Sayādaw; although there was an old Nissaya of Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta written by very famous Sayādaw U Buk many years ago.

Vipassanā Meditation Method, another well-known Mahāsī book is also a clear testament to his erudition and profound learning. That book is a culmination of practical experience and scriptural theory on meditation. Now, this book has been already translated into Pāḷi by Ba-mo Sayādaw U Kumāra, a well-known Pāḷi scholar of Mandalay. This Pāḷi translation will benefit those who understand only Pāḷi. I was entrusted with translating into English of this book; so far not materialized yet.

The other Mahāsī book, Burmese translation of Visuddhi Magga, totaling four volumes, is also a great book. There was indeed a Burmese translation of Visuddhi Magga written by Pha-yā-thone-zu (Three pagoda) Sayādaw. That book was not understandable for the general lay-men even for the monks. The Myanmar translation of Visuddhi Magga is an excellent book translated by the Mahāsī Sayādaw. The book is complemented with footnotes and explanations which further enhance readability and understanding.

The other great Mahāsī Book, Visuddhi Magga Tikā Nissaya, is also a special masterpiece of writing done by Mahāsī Sayādaw. The original Pāḷi text of Visuddhi Magga Tikā, written by Dhammapāla many centuries ago was indeed very difficult to translate as it contains *Parasamaya* (the philosophy and ideas from ancient Hinduism). It is also a wider text with some irregular Pāḷi writings. The scholars, expert in such *Parasamaya* ideas are also rare these days. No one dares to try writing a Nissaya book of this Visuddhi Magga Tikā. It is Mahāsī Sayādaw who took the challenge of translating this book into Nissaya. He wrote this Nissaya while teaching this Visuddhi Magga Tikā to the monks at Mahāsī center. During this time, he wrote a small book published under the title

‘Samayantra-ganthi Nissaya’ explaining knotty points in ancient Hinduism.

Another difficult point he skillfully explained is regarding *Sāvatti Gāthā* verses. There was no clear explanation in Arthakathā (Commentaries) regarding what *Sāvatti Gāthā* is and how it is used in ancient Vedic tradition. Even the author of Visuddhi Magga Tikā, did not explained necessary details of *Sāvatti*. The author merely gave only three word explanation for that.

It was Mahāsī Sayādaw who had deciphered and gave necessary explanation of this word.

I was then studying Sanskrit language so I understand what The Mahāsī Sayādaw explained.

The *Sayādaw* found out that *Sāvatti* verse is something one has to chant initially at the beginning of recitation of Vedic texts.

Another point worth mentioning is regarding the term ‘*Niggaha-thāna*’ described in Kathā-Vatthu Anutikā. The term ‘*Niggaha-thāna*’ means the point of defeat in a logical debate process.

There are twenty-six *Niggaha-thānas* . The *Sayādaw* asked me to do some research and write something regarding those twenty-six points. I wrote a treatise entitled Wakyāwayawa-wannanā, explaining those points and five parts of *wakya* (sentence).

It is obvious that Mahāsī Sayādaw was very much skilled in *Parasamaya*, Sanskrit and English in addition to Pāḷi. That is why he was able to explore and accomplish such challenging tasks.

THESE ARE IN FACT THE MOST OUTSTANDING POINTS IN THE LIFE OF THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW THAT WE HAVE ALL COME TO KNOW.

Q: Do you have any problem or difficulty in starting a Mahāsī branch in San Francisco?

A: Well, everything is quite different there. Starting a temple among people of other faith is surely a challenging task. It is a time-consuming process to start a place. In Myanmar, a single donor

could have donated a temple or a place quite easily. Here in U.S.A., devotees have to collect a few hundred donations from each generous devotee. There were not many Burmese people then. Even though there may be some, they do not know each other. As there was not a temple, there was no chance to meet other Burmese. Nowadays, there are a lot of people who migrated from Myanmar to the U.S. When we purchased the building, we could not pay cash-down like the way we can do in Myanmar. It was bought on a thirty-year mortgage loan. Fortunately it was paid off within twenty years. The purchase price was almost one hundred thousand then. Now, it will cost much higher, about six hundred thousand. The property values are very high now.

Q: Do you have any difficulty in teaching *Dhamma*?

A: When Mahāsī Sayādaw returned to Myanmar from his U.S. trip, I remained there. There was not much problem in teaching meditation as most of them had practised meditation before. By then, majority of them were Americans and Vietnamese.

Nowadays, there are more Burmese coming to the center.

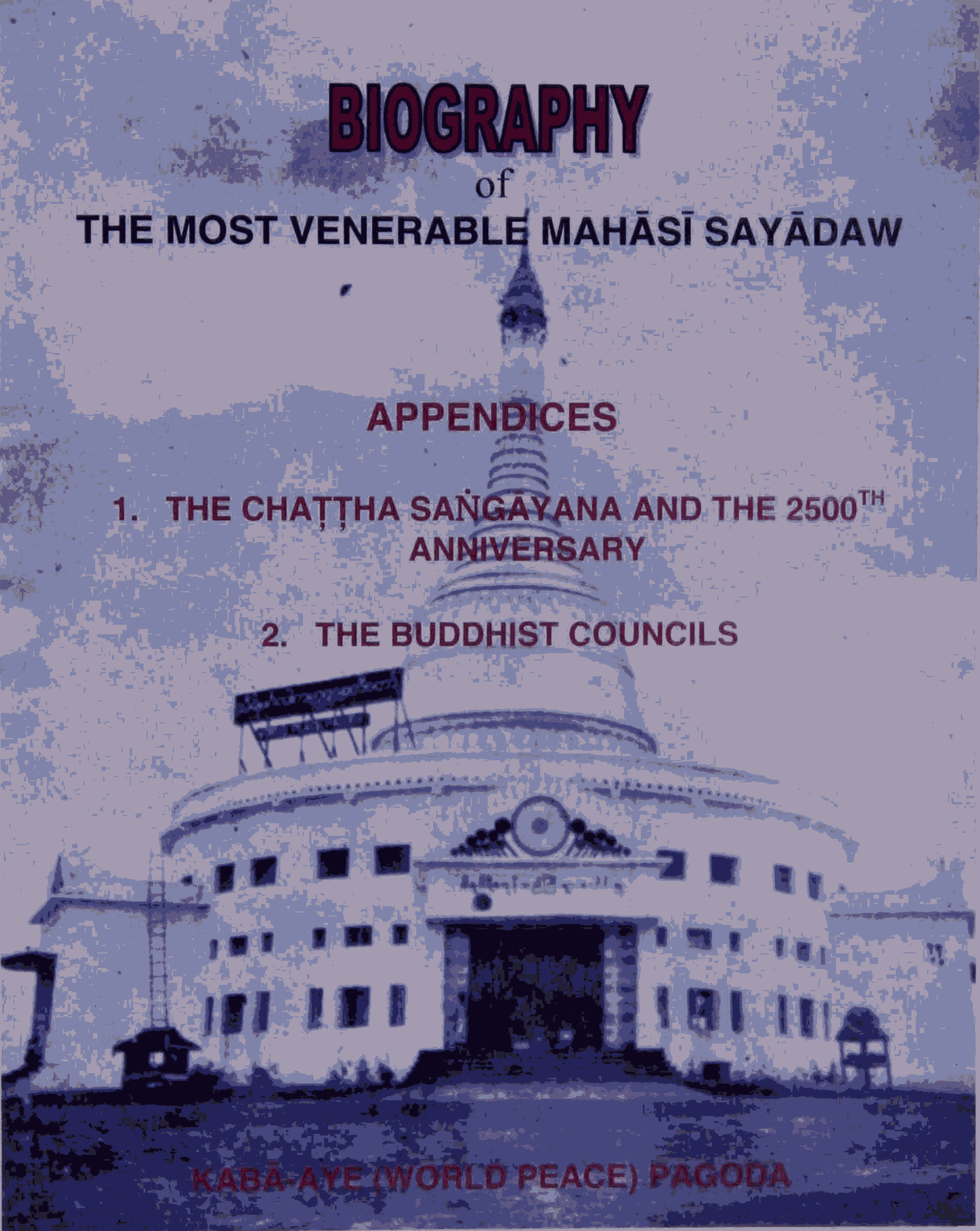
Q: Can you share some experience when you start writing the biography of Mahāsī Sayādaw?

A: Not much. Most biographic data has to be asked from the Mahāsī Sayādaw first when I meet him in person. These bio-data are all described in the initial chapters. Later on, all other facts associated directly with his life are written by myself. However, I have to talk with the *Sayādaw* if there is anything I need to clarify.

Q: What is the response of Mahāsī Sayādaw when you showed what you have written all along?

A: “It is perfectly complete. If this biography was written by me personally, it may not be as comprehensive and particular as it is”

This is the response the Mahāsī Sayādaw had to say. He seems quite satisfied with all the work.



BIOGRAPHY
of
THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

APPENDICES

1. **THE CHAṬṬHA SAṄGAYANA AND THE 2500TH ANNIVERSARY**

2. **THE BUDDHIST COUNCILS**

KABA-AYE (WORLD PEACE) PAGODA

*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato
Sammāsambuddhasa*



Veneration to the Exalted One,
The Homage-Worthy,
The Perfectly Self-Enlightened

APPENDIX 1

THE CHAṬṬHA SAṄGĀYANA AND THE 2500TH ANNIVERSARY
(by U Ohn Ghine)

All religions perceive some part of Truth, though sometimes that part is small and distorted, but only an Omniscient Buddha discovers Truth in its entirety and is able to present it to mankind and to the Gods in its full purity and free from distortions. The Sammasambuddha is so rare a thing, Supreme *Buddhahood* being so difficult an accomplishment, that, though many aspire, very few attain, so that aeons must pass before another Buddha arises in this world.

Since neither Faith nor Good Works alone can free man from the ceaseless rounds of rebirth, and since though by those he may reach even to the state of that Being who by delusion thinks he is permanent and ‘The Creator of all that are and all that are to be, the Almighty ...’, he must again fall from that state perhaps even to enter a hell state once more; since only the following in its completeness, of the Noble Eightfold Path taught by the Omniscient Buddha can free us from *samsāra*; to preserve the full Truth taught by the Buddha, to preserve it in its pristine purity, in its entirety, free from omissions, free from vain imaginings, is a field of unbounded Merit, towards which, in the past twenty-five centuries, the Noble Disciplines have bent every effort. We of these latter days can do no better mundane thing than to endeavour in so far as we are able, to follow them in this.

And in this particular period there is an added necessity and an especial incentive to exert every effort to preserve the *Sāsana*. For more now is the 2500th Anniversary of the *Mahāparinibbāna* of the Buddha; an old tradition tells that this will mark a critical time in the world and in the *Sāsana*. This we can see since there is now so much more speed, so many more distractions in the world today. The end of the first 2,500 years of the *Sāsana* will, if we bring all

Note: Appendices 1 and 2 are for further reading by readers who are interested to know a little more about the Great Buddhist Councils especially the Sixth Buddhist Council.

our forces to bear, ensure that the Teaching will endure in the world for a further 2,500 years.

There were *bhikkhus* who, in the days when the Buddha taught, undertook to learn by heart and to recite the Great Teaching and at the First Buddhist Council, held shortly after the Buddha's Passing Away, this Teaching was codified and canonized and groups of *Bhāṇakas* or Reciting Monks took each their portion of the Teaching to recite. After this was done the Elders, the mighty *Arahats* who held the First Great Buddhist Council, said that now the Teaching would last for 2,500 years and that there was possibility of it lasting the full 5,000 years.

Successive Great Councils have been held up to the present age and a few years ago it was decided to hold another, the Sixth Great Buddhist Council.

This is a joint effort of the predominantly Buddhist countries, and its labours, a collaboration and cooperation between Thailand, Laos, Ceylon, Cambodia and Burma, are now ending this month of Visākha, 2,500 Buddhist Era, this month of May 1956 C.E.

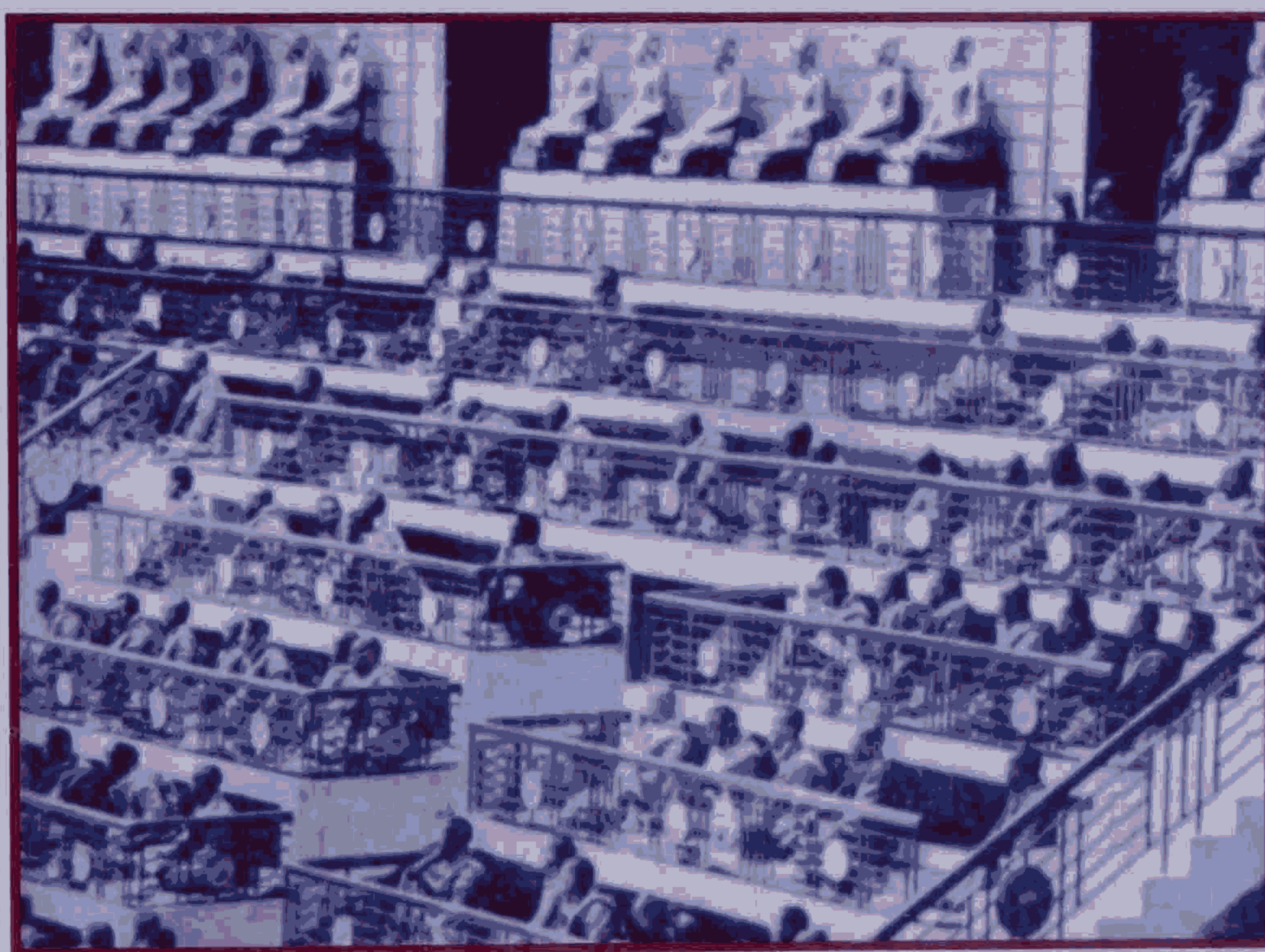
How has this Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana been held and what has happened?

All Great Buddhist Councils from the very first were held when there was some special need to preserve the pristine Teaching against materialist threats from within or without. The First Great Council, led by *Arahats* who had been taught directly by the Omniscient Buddha, canonized the actual Words of the Buddha and the Teaching is known as Theravāda, 'The Way of the Elders'. It is to preserve THIS Teaching that the successive 'Great Councils' have been held by the Theravādins or followers of the Word of the Buddha.

Realization of the need of a Sixth Great Council was not confined to one country alone; it was felt in all the Buddhist countries. Burma, fortunately placed financially, and geographically 'at the centre', was most happy to act as host country. The actual preliminaries had been settled by Buddhist Missions between the five countries and the Parliament of the Union of Burma had, on 1st October 1951, unanimously passed a resolution to the effect that

Parliament declared its firm belief that it was necessary to devise and undertake measures for the spiritual and moral well-being of man to remove those problems that material advancement only partially solved and to 'help man to overcome Greed (*Lobha*), Hatred (*Dosa*) and Delusion (*Moha*) which are at the root of all the violence destruction and conflagration consuming the world'.

The Government then announced the provision of a central fund of ten million *kyats* (about £750,000 sterling) for the purpose of making necessary preparations including the preparation of Texts and the erection of buildings, for the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana. It is customary in Burma, and in all Buddhist countries, when building programmes for a charitable and religious nature are started, for the people to come forward to make cash donations large or small.

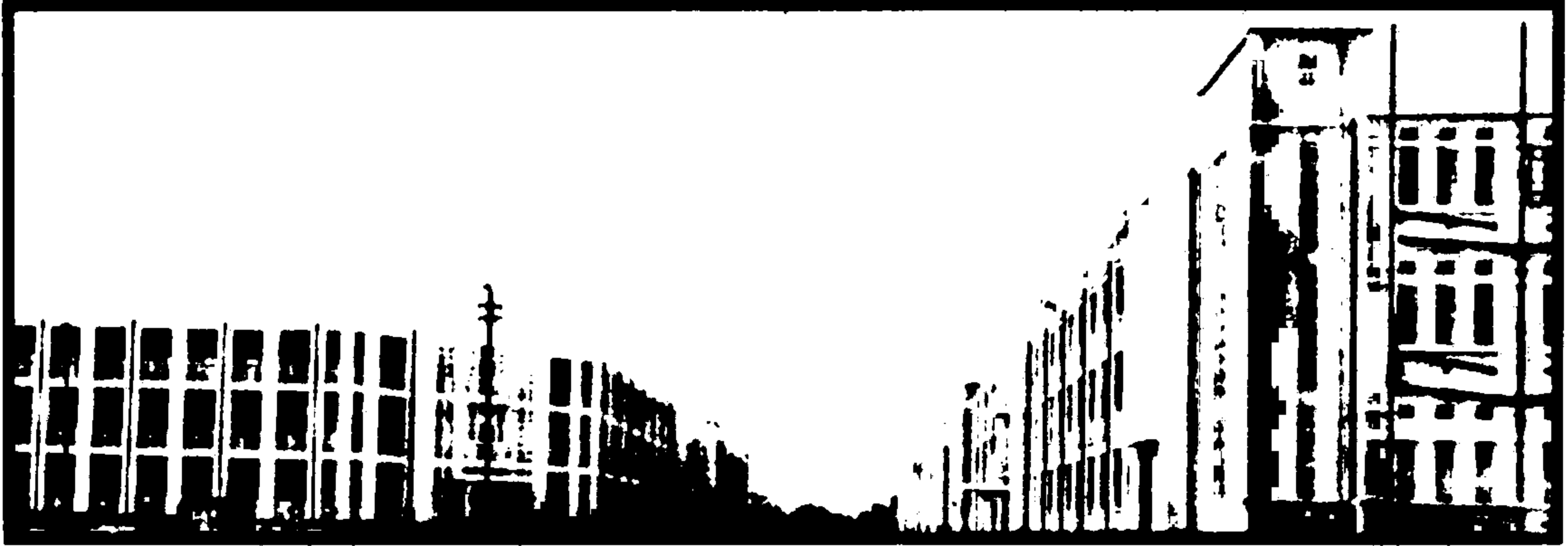


**SAṄGĪTI-KARAKA BHIKKHUS SEATED FOR A SESSION
OF THE CHAṬṬHA SAṄGĀYANA.**

Photograph shows a small section of the tiers ranged round the whole of the Great Sacred Cave

This was the case with the funds for the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana and donations from nearby countries and especially from the people of Burma, poured in, ranging in value from pence to thousands of pounds and totaling quite an enormous amount.

Huge buildings were erected and furnished and arrangements made to provide food, accommodations and the other allowable things to the *Bhikkhus* taking part.



A STREET OF MONASTIC HOSTELS

Accommodation for the Saṅgīti-kāraka *Bhikkhus*.

In 1950 the government of the Union of Burma constituted by a Special act of Parliament, the Union's Buddha Sāsana Council and transferred to that body the entire responsibility for the successful preparation and holding of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana and this body has been responsible for all the organizational work among other things. Before going on to tell the actual work of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana itself, it might be well to mention something of the general work of the Buddha Sāsana Council. It handles all the general work of organization, the collecting and disbursement of funds, the erection and maintenance of buildings, the supply food and the accommodation for *Bhikkhus* taking part in the Saṅgāyana and arrangements for lay scholars and visitors and all the thousand and one details of organization entailed in such huge organization. In addition the Council publishes periodicals and other literature in Burmese and English. It conducts regular written examinations in schools throughout the Union of Burma in Abidhamma Piṭaka and undertakes a great deal of useful work in bringing to the prisoners in all jails a knowledge of the Teachings of the Omniscient Buddha. A great many of the prisoners in all jails sit for the examinations in *Dhamma*, passing of which entitles them to remission of sentences. Regular prison visits by *bhikkhus*, and text books for the examinations have been arranged by the Council. Another noteworthy undertaking of the Buddha Sāsana Council has been the subsidizing of deserving meditation centres all over the country in

order to preserve the previously established meditation centres, to open new centres and to arrange competent *Kamaṭṭhāna* teachers. The Council subsidizes the Burma Hill Tracts Buddhist Mission in order to facilitate the work of this body, which sends missionaries to all the hill tracts including head-hunter territory.

We have mentioned visitors, among them learned lay scholars from different countries as well as Buddhist Missions composed of leading *Mahātheras* from other countries, and their visits have been organized in so far as arrangements at the Burma end, by the Buddha Sāsana Council.

It is these Buddhist Missions that have done a great deal of the preliminary work for the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana, by discussions and by the exchange of ideas on the manner of working. In return Burma has sent Missions to other countries to learn from them and to exchange ideas.

This was followed by the establishment in every country of Editing Groups and all the while, whether there has been a session of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana doing the actual reciting or not, these groups have been hard at work, collating the various Texts and arriving at agreement. Indeed the Editing Groups have preceded the actual chanting, for the latter has been of the generally approved texts after agreement has been reached.

As soon as that has been finished, section by section, the printing presses have begun to work (the Buddha Sāsana Council has a fine press with modern machinery in a separate building) and the press is now completing the printing of the Tipiṭaka in Pāli into Burmese script. Translation work is expected to follow.

CHAṬṬHA SAṄGĀYANA PROCEEDINGS

First Session

The Opening Ceremony of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana commenced at the Great Sacred Cave near Rangoon on the Full Moon of Visākha 2498 M.E. (17.05.54) and terminated on 19.05.54. The *Bhikkhus* rested on the 20th May and, commencing on the 21st, the *Saṅgīti-kāraka Theras* and *Mahātheras* recited the

Vinaya Piṭaka. The recitation continued for 41 days till the 7th July excepting the Buddhist Fast Days.

The 2,500 *Saṅgīti-kāraka Bhikkhus* from all Theravādin countries elected the late Venerable Revata Nyaungyan Sayādaw, as the Presiding *Mahāthera* of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana.

During the First Session the *Saṅgīti-kāraka Bhikkhus* recited the whole of the Five Books of Vinaya comprising of 2,260 pages.

Second Session

The Second Session of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana commenced on the 15th November 1954 and terminated on the 29th January 1955. Excepting the Buddhist Fast Days and important national holidays, the recitation continued for 65 days. The three books of Dīgha-nikāya containing 779 pages, and three books of Majjhīma-nikāya containing 1,206 pages, and the three books of the Saṃyutta-nikāya containing 1,454 pages were recited.

During the Session, the Venerable Abhi Dhaja Mahā Raṭṭha Guru Nyaungyan Sayādaw by common consent presided over the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Proceedings and over 500 *Saṅgīti-kāraka Bhikkhus* from all Theravādin countries which participated.

Third Session

The Third Session of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana commenced on the 28th April 1955. The *Saṅgīti-kāraka Bhikkhus* recited the Aṅguttara Nikāya for 27 days excepting the Buddhist Fast Days and concluded the recitation on the 28th May. The Aṅguttara Nikāya comprises 1,651 *Suttas* in 9,557 pages.

Although the Nikāya was recited by the *Saṅgīti-kāraka Mahātheras* as in 120 recitation-sessions during the First Great Buddhist Council, this age being a *pathaka* (text reading and reciting) age, the *Bhāraṇaṭṭhāraka Sangha* decided to raise the number of recitation-session to 210. Then from the 30th of May to the 2nd of July they recited the first six books of the Abidhamma Piṭaka consisting of 2,302 pages. Therefore in this Session they recited 11,859 pages.

For this Session the *Saṅgīti-kāra*ka Bhikkhus unanimously elected His Holiness Samdach Preah Mahā Sumedhādhipati C.N. Jotaññāno, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita, Sangharāja of Cambodia, and His Holiness Samdach Phrabuddhajinos, Saklamahāsangha Pāmokkha, the Sangharāja of Laos as the Presiding *Mahātheras* of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana.

Fourth Session – Thai Session (Siyamā Sannipāta)



OPENING OF THE SIYAMĀ SANNIPĀTA

Honourable U Nu, Prime Minister of the Union of Burma, lights candles at the Opening of the Siyāma Sannipāta (Thai Session) the Fourth Session of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana.

The Fourth Session – *Siyamā Sannipāta* of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana commenced on the 16th December 1955. The *Saṅgīti-kāra*ka Bhikkhus recited the *Paṭṭhāna* (Book of Originations) of the Abidhamma, for 54 days excepting Buddhist Fast Days and the Independence Day, and concluded on the 16th February 1956.

Over 600 *Saṅgīti-kāra*ka Bhikkhus were present and elected His Holiness Samdej Phra Vanarat Kittisobhana, Sangha Nāyaka of Thailand, as the Chaṭṭha Saṅgīti Mahā Nāyaka (Chairman).

During the *Siyāma* Session, the Five Books of the *Paṭṭhāna* of the Abidhamma Piṭaka consisting of 2,686 pages, and 15 treatises in 6 books comprising *Khuddaka-pāṭha*, *Dhammapada*,

Itivutakka, Vimāna-vatthu, Peta-vatthu, Thera-Gāthā, Therī-Gāthā, Thera-Apadan, Therī-Apadan, Buddhavaṃsa, Cariya Piṭaka, Mahāniddeśa and Cūla-niddeśa consisting of 2,299 pages; altogether 11 books of 4,985 pages were recited.

Fifth Session

The Fifth and Final Session of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana which commenced just as we went to press, is known as the Sri Lanka Sannipāta (The Ceylon Session). This Session commenced on the 23rd April 1956 and terminated on May 24th, Visākha Day.

The *Saṅgīti-kāraka Bhikkhus* are reciting the following books: Pāthā, Milinda-pañhā, Netti and Petakopadesa, and Paṭisambhidā-magga.

For this important Closing Session the Most Venerable Weliwita Dharmakirti Asarana Sarana Sri Saranankara, Mahānāyaka Thero of Malwatte Chapter of the Siyam Mahā Nikāya, Kandy, was elected the Presiding Mahāthera

Meanwhile although the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana is concluding, the united efforts will not cease; the huge *bhikkhus* hostels and Refectory and the Great Sacred Cave and Administrative offices, etc., are to form, with the huge library building now being completed, as International Buddhist University at the service of Asia and of all the world.

All have been done in harmony; the various countries have met together and risen from the discussions in harmony, in the Buddhist spirit.

Here is something, the spirit in all this, that unites all the Theravādin countries and more than this, unites all Asia and, we hope will unite the entire world.

(Extracted from 'THE LIGHT OF THE DHAMMA' Vol. III No. 3, May 1956, page 29-31)

REPORT ON THE CHAṬṬHA SAṄGĀYANA

The Sixth Great Buddhist Council, the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana has now completed half its labours and the Third of the Five Sessions has opened.

Industriously have the *Sangha* of the five Buddhist countries collaborating in this Great Council performed their work, meeting in harmony, working together in harmony and dispersing in harmony; and the work has indeed gone smoothly and successfully. There is only one sad event to record, the passing away of the Sangha Nāyaka of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana, the Venerable Abhi Dhaja Mahā Raṭṭha Guru Nyaungyan Sayādaw, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita. This great *Mahāthera* was one of those who had conceived the idea of convening the Sixth Great Buddhist Council and had been unanimously elected to head the Meetings.



VENERABLE NYAUNGYAN SAYĀDAW

(1874 – 1955)

The late Abhi Dhaja Mahā Raṭṭha Guru Bhadanta Revata, Nyaungyan Sayādaw, presided over the First and Second Sessions of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana.

In 1955, the Venerable Nyaungyan Sayādaw was 81 years old.

He had the title ‘Teacher of the Country’.

As one of the ‘Great Teachers’ of the Union of Burma, his loss is keenly felt. The Venerable U Revata (Revata being his *Bhikkhu* name) was of great learning and utter simplicity of life. ‘*Anicca vata sankhāra*’ – ‘All compounded things are, indeed impermanent’. We have only the consolation that his works and projects remain in lasting benefits.

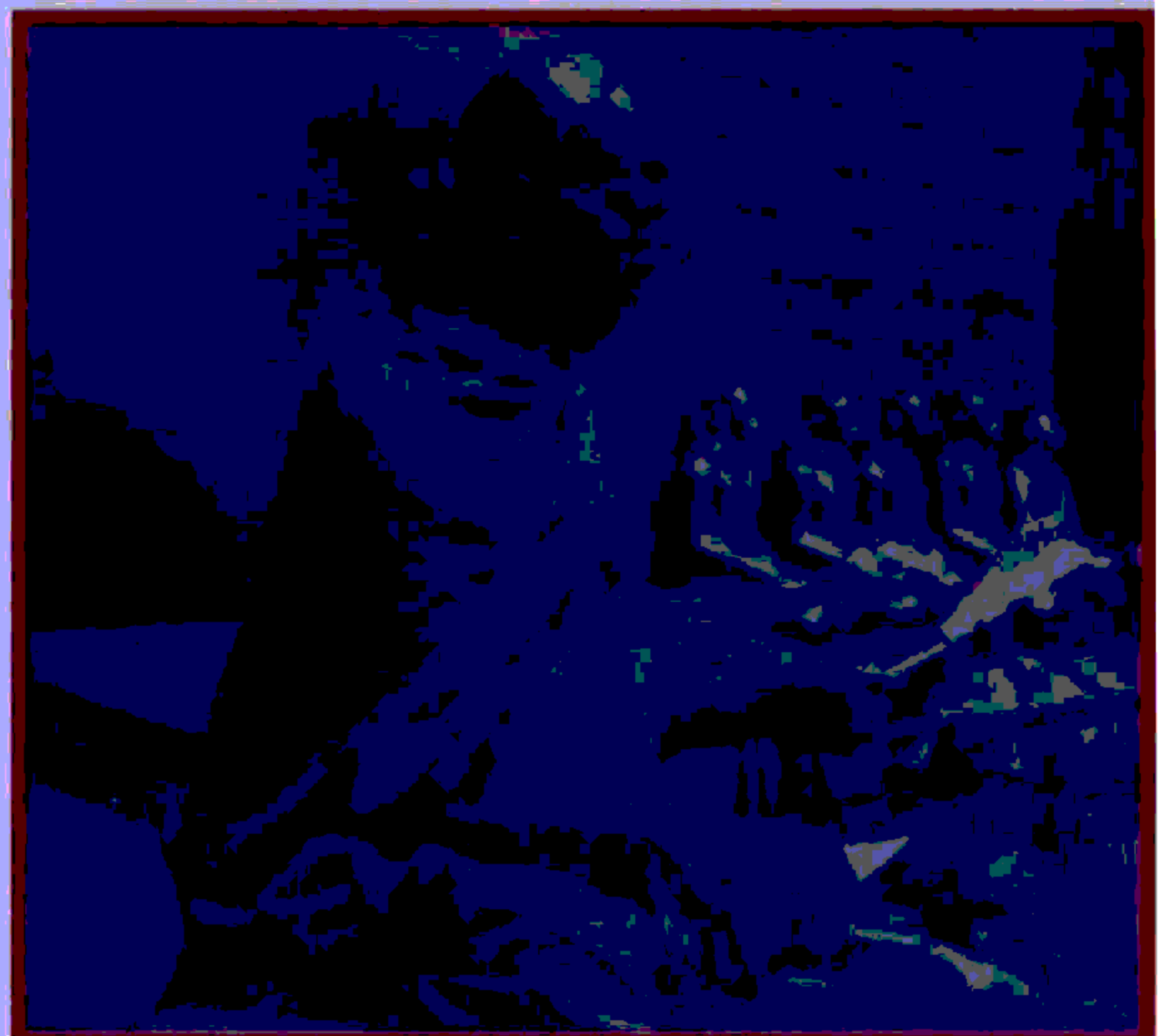
For the Third Session it was unanimously decided that the learned and saintly *Sangharājas* of Cambodia and Laos should

preside and accordingly on the 28th April, His Holiness Samdach Preah Mahā Sumehādhipati Chuoun-Nath Jotaññāno, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita, Sangharāja of Cambodia and His Holiness Samdach Phrabuddhajinoros Sakala-Mahāsaṅgha Pāmokkha, *Sangharāja* of Laos successively took the Presidential Dais.



SANGHARĀJA OF CAMBODIA

His Holiness Samdach Preah Mahā Sumehādhipati Chuoun-Nath Jotaññāno, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita.



SANGHARĀJA OF LAOS

His Holiness Samdach Phrabuddhajinoros Sakala-Mahāsaṅgha Pāmokkha

The Session was opened with an address by the *Sangha Mahānāyaka* and other *Mahātheras* followed by a speech by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Laos in the name of His Majesty the King of Laos and of the Laotian people. His Excellency Dr. Ba U, President of the Union of Burma then delivered an address of veneration, as did the Prime Minister of Cambodia, and other dignitaries.

The Third Session is now proceeding and is scheduled to end on the 9th July.

There will be two more Sessions and then the Closing Ceremonies are to be held on the Full Moon day of May next year and are expected to draw many visitors to Burma as they will mark the completion of an important work and coincide with the 2500th Anniversary of the Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment and *Mahāparinibbāna*.

(Extracted from the 'LIGHT OF THE DHAMMA' Vol. III No. 1, June 1955, page 60)

APPENDIX 2

THE BUDDHIST COUNCILS

(Extracted from 'The Fundamentals of Buddhism' by Sayādaw U Sīlānanda, pages 282-286)

Before we talk about Buddhist Councils, we should understand that besides the Tipiṭaka there are the Commentaries and Sub-commentaries in Theravāda Buddhist Literature. Commentaries are those that explain the Texts. That is, sometimes the Texts themselves may not be quite understandable. We are far removed from the time of the Buddha and so we need the help of a teacher or an explanation like that. So there came to be Commentaries. Then as time went on even these Commentaries became difficult to understand. So Sub-commentaries had to be written on these Commentaries. There are three levels of Buddhist books, **the Texts** or the Teachings or the Buddha, **the Commentaries** (the explanations of the Teachings), and then **the Sub-commentaries** (the explanation of the Commentaries).

Many explanations contained in the Commentaries actually go back to the time of the Buddha. The Buddha must have explained or must have given explanations when monks did not readily understand his teachings. Those explanations were preserved by individual monks. They were not collected at the First Buddhist Council, but they were handed down from the teacher to pupil. Later on they were compiled into books.

So there are three levels of books in Buddhist literature, especially Theravāda Buddhist literature. They are the Texts (Teachings of the Buddha), the Commentaries explaining the Texts, and the Sub-commentaries explaining the Commentaries.

Until now there have been six Buddhist Councils. **The First Buddhist Council was held at Rājagaha**, just three months after the death of the Buddha. You already know about that council.

The Second Buddhist Council was held at the city of Vesāli, one hundred years after the death of the Buddha. **The Third Buddhist Council was held at Pātaliputta**, a city in India, 234

years after the death of the Buddha during the time of King Asoka. King Asoka was a supporter of that council.

These three councils were held in India during the time when there was not yet division of Buddhism into Theravāda and Mahāyana. After that the division came into being. Then Theravāda Buddhists held their own councils and Mahāyana Buddhists also held their own Mahāyana councils.

Since we are talking about Theravāda principles here, I will tell you about Theravāda councils only. **The Fourth Buddhist Council was held at Aluvihāra.** This is in Sri Lanka 450 years after the death of the Buddha. From the First Buddhist Council until about 450 years after the death of the Buddha the Tipiṭaka was handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. So it was not yet written in books or on palm leaves. About 450 years after the death of the Buddha in Sri Lanka the elders at that time thought that the future generations might not be able to keep the Tipiṭaka intact. So they decided to write the Tipiṭaka down on palm leaves. That was done at a place called Aluvihāra near modern Kandy in Sri Lanka. So at the **Fourth Buddhist Council the Tipiṭaka was written down on palm leaves.** It was not the time of paper books yet.

In the late 19th century during the time of King Mindon in Burma the Fifth Buddhist Council was held. Kings want to excel the previous kings. So King Mindon thought: “If the former kings or previous kings had the Tipiṭaka written on palm leaves, I will have the Tipiṭaka written on marble slabs, which can last much, much longer than the palm leaves. The white ants can eat palm leaves very easily.” So **the Fifth Buddhist Council was held in Mandalay in 1871.** It took a number of years. At that council the Tipiṭaka was first written down on palm leaves. And then it was written down on copper plates. Last it was written down on marble slabs. These marble slabs were put in a house, each one in a brick house. They were placed in the facings of a Pagoda called Kutadogou (Kuthadaw) in Mandalay at the foot of Mandalay hill. So if you visit Burma and if you visit Mandalay, you can go and see these marble slabs. They are all intact. It was very lucky that not a single bomb (during World War II) was dropped on that place. So

they are still intact. These marble slabs are big slabs, about 6 feet tall, 3 feet across and about 5 or 6 inches thick. One Burmese author called it the world's biggest book. There altogether 729 slabs of those marble slabs. Each has two pages or two faces. So it is about 1,458 pages of marble slabs. On them are written or inscribed the whole of the Tipiṭaka.



MARBLE STONE SLABS, KUTHADAW PAGODA

Inscribed with texts of the Tipiṭaka

King Mindon was succeeded by his son King Thibo. During his time Burma fell to the British and became a British colony. Then after the Second World War, Burma gained independence. So the government of Burma decided to hold another council. In **1954 the Sixth Buddhist Council was held in Rangoon, Burma.**

In the meantime books came into being and Tipiṭaka books were printed in Burma. So there are book versions and marble slabs version of the Tipiṭaka. The government of Burma wanted there to be **one re-edited version of Tipiṭaka** in order to become the standard version for all Theravāda Buddhists. So to that Sixth Buddhist Council the Elders from the other Theravāda countries were invited to edit the Tipiṭaka again. So learned Elders from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos were invited to Burma. They

sat together with the Burmese monks and they re-edited the texts, comparing with the different versions. An edition of Tipiṭaka books was carried out at the Sixth Buddhist Council. Not only the texts but also the Commentaries and Sub-commentaries were edited, and recited and printed, and published. So there are altogether 118 volumes printed and published by the Sixth Buddhist Council.

So King Mindon created the biggest book in the world. That was the time of scribes who had to do all with their hands. Later came the printing age. Now it is the computer age. So now we are trying to produce the smallest Tipiṭaka in the world, Tipiṭaka on CD-ROM. Now all 118 volumes are entered into the computer. Now I think they are correcting the typographical errors. Pretty soon, maybe end of this year or next year I think we will be able to produce that smallest Tipiṭaka book on CD-ROM.

This is the account of the Teachings of the Buddha. May the Tipiṭaka endure in the world as long as the world lasts and form the basis for correct understanding of the Teachings, thus enabling beings to reach the final destination of the extinction of all Suffering!

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

Note: (Text below is an extract from *BOOK REF. 4* on page 99)

Myanmar Buddhist orthodox monks recognized none other but the Saṅgītis of Rājagaha, Vesāli, Paṭaliputta in India, and that of Sri Lanka, held in Mātale City, at which the Piṭakas were written down on palm leaves during the time of King Vaṭṭagāmini. Thus they considered their Saṅgīti to be the fifth. The Mandalay Saṅgīti was attended by 2,400 learned Myanmar Theravāda monks. Jāgara Thera, the Bhayagyi Sayādaw, presided over the council. The Saṅgīti was concluded with the inscribing of the entire Tipiṭaka on marble slabs, 729 marble slabs six feet long, three feet wide and six inches thick were used for the inscription. These marble inscriptions were enshrined in the compound of Kuthadaw Pagoda in Mandalay. Since then they have stood magnificently there as the biggest library in the world. These marble inscriptions last longer than a record on fragile palm leaf or on a computer CD. Myanmar people are proud of having this historical heritage.

BIOGRAPHY
of
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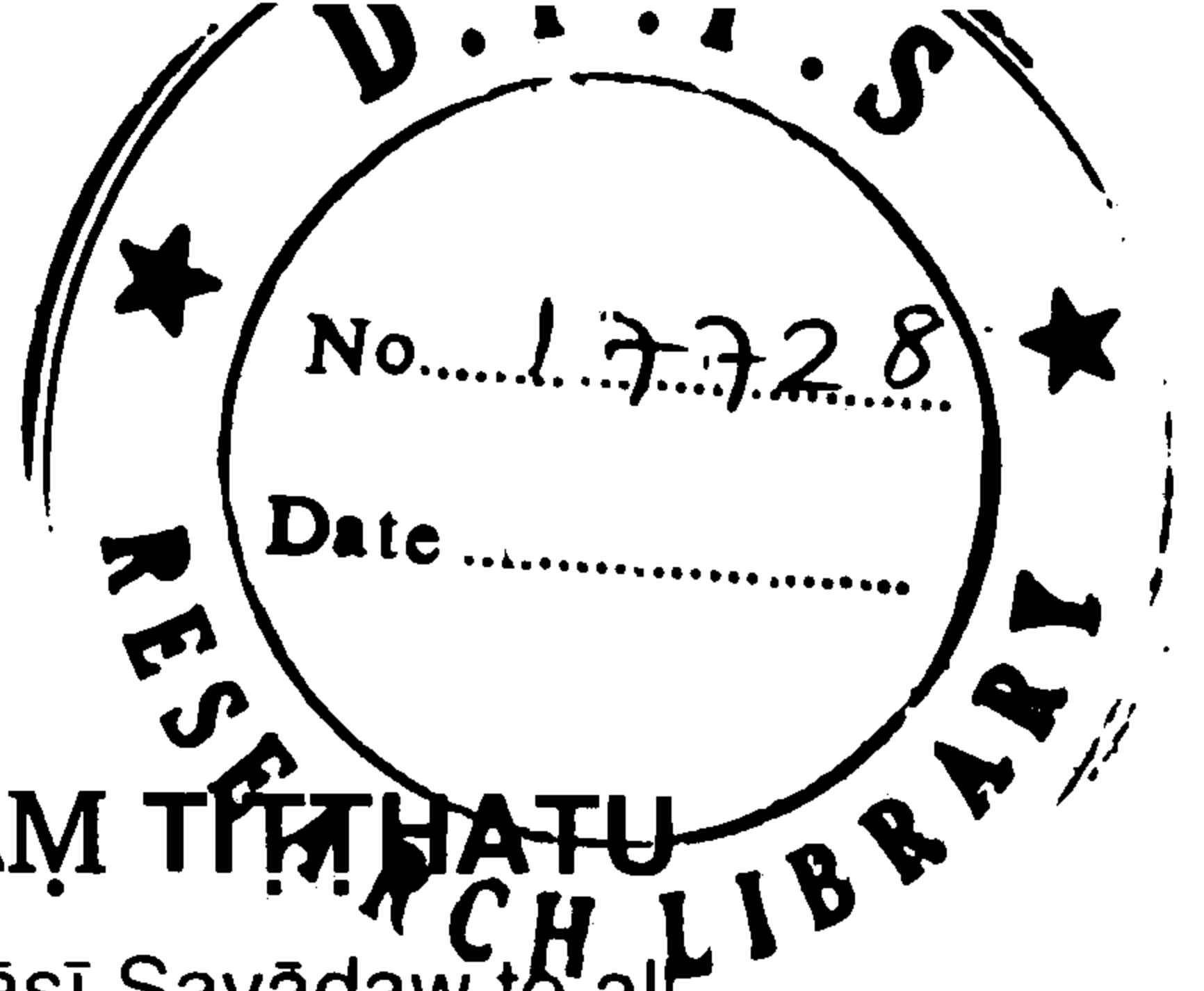
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*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato
Sammāsambuddhasa*



Veneration to the Exalted One,
The Homage-Worthy,
The Perfectly Self-Enlightened



BUDDHA SĀSANAM CIRAṀ TĪṀHATU

Advice by the Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw to all
Organizations

1. May all members be aware of their meritorious deeds and be joyous.
2. After such joyousness, may each be able to continue and pursue ardently for further progress and development.
3. While doing so, may you not be disappointed or discouraged in your endeavours when encountered by difficulties, and may you not be arrogant when successful and strive with a strong and stable mind.
4. When shortcomings are found, do not put the blame on any one person and bear in mind that these shortcomings are attributable to all including your own self, and strive with mindfulness so that shortcomings do not occur again.
5. Be especially mindful that situations do not arise among members in whom the others have to tolerate you with forbearance, but be always in a position that you tolerate the others with forbearance.
6. In such a manner, may you all be able to strive in unity for the continuous progress of the organization.
7. May you be able to give patronage to the propagation of the Buddha's Patipatti Sāsana in manifold ways.

(This kind of advice should be accepted and practised by any
religious organizations.)

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- i) To promote and encourage the practice of Vipassanā meditation (in accordance with the Theravāda tradition).
- ii) To propagate the Sublime Teachings of the Buddha.
- iii) To arrange religious lectures, discussions, talks and any other activities incidental to the effect.
- iv) To promote amongst the Buddhists, strict observance and practice of the Teachings of the Buddha.
- v) To perform humanitarian services.
- vi) To print Buddhist literature.
- vii) To work towards the building of a Meditation Centre(s).

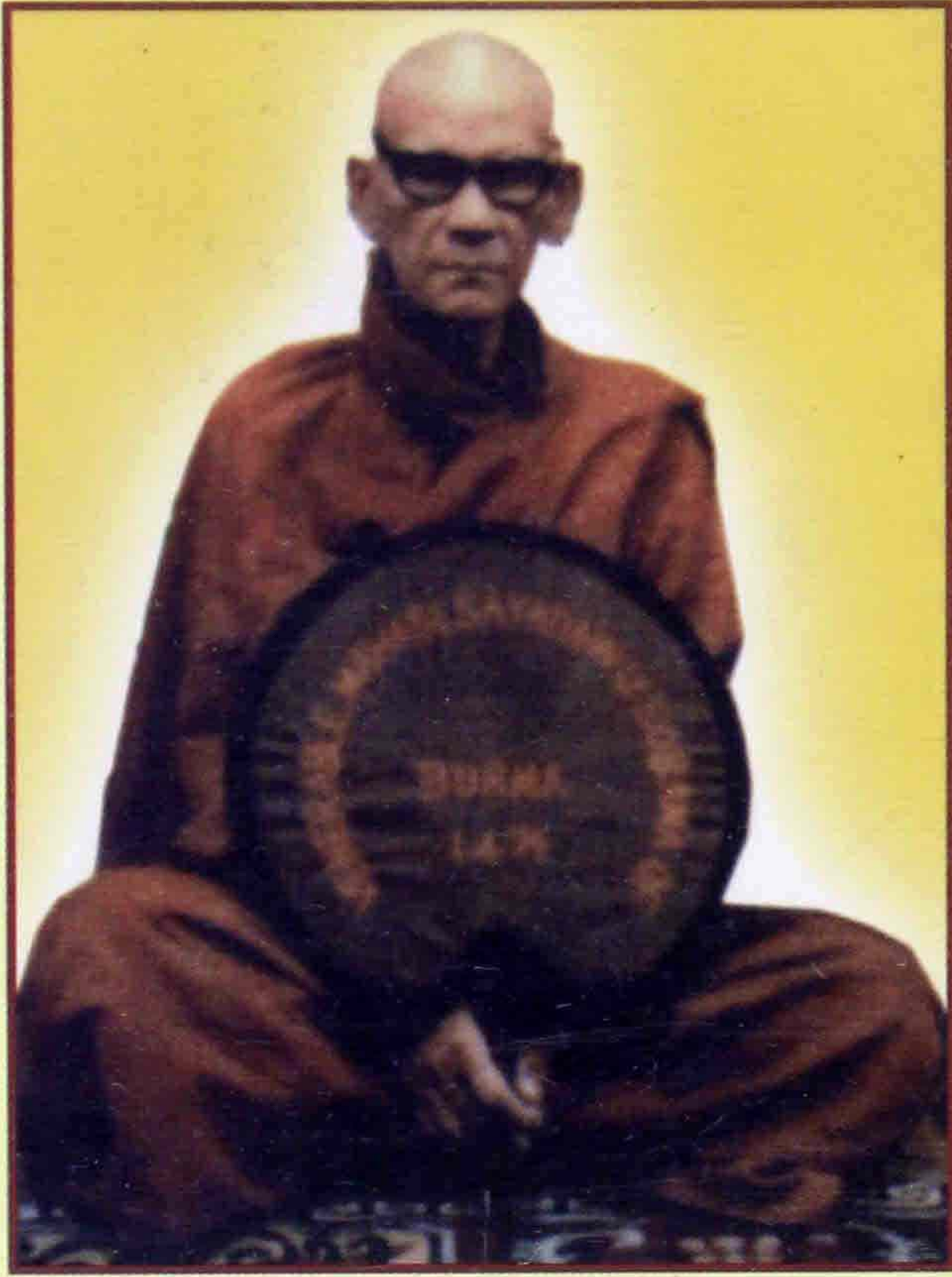


**S.B.V.M.S.
MOTTO**

"SEEK WITHIN"

THE MOST VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

The Late Mahāsī Sayādaw, is one of the most eminent meditation masters of our time and a leader in the revival of Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā Meditation. Under his guidance thousands of people have been successfully trained at the Sāsana Yeikthā Meditation Centre, Yangon. Many others have benefited from his clear-cut approach to meditation practice through his writings, and later through the dedicated efforts of his disciples. His



*The Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw
1904 - 1982*

untiring efforts have seen vipassanā meditation being propagated worldwide, resulting in hundreds of branches of the Sāsana Yeikthā being established not only in Myanmar but also in Western countries.

Mahāsī Sayādaw had authored more than 70 books mostly in Burmese and a few in the Pāli language. Of great importance is his Burmese translation of the commentary to the Visuddhi Magga, which presents many difficulties, linguistically and in its contents. In 1957 Mahāsī Sayādaw was awarded the title of Aggamahāpandita. In spite of his busy schedule and extensive travelling abroad to propagate the Buddha-Dhamma, he never

neglected his own meditative life which had enabled him to give wise guidance to those instructed by him. His vigour of body and mind and his deep dedication to the Dhamma sustained him through a life of 78 years.

On 14th August 1982 Mahāsī Sayādaw succumbed to a sudden and severe heart attack which he had suffered the night before. Yet on the evening of the 13th, he had given introductory explanation to a group of new meditators. Mahāsī Sayādaw was one of the very rare personalities in whom there was a balanced and high development of both profound erudition linked with a keen intellect and deep and advanced meditative experience. He taught effectively both Buddhist thoughts and Buddhist practice. He is ranked among the great figures of contemporary Buddhism.

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