

**The Biography
of
The Most Venerable
Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji
A Pāli Commentator**

By

**Venerable Tikkhācāra
Toun-dwin Bhikkhu**

(Agga-mahā-kammaṭṭhān'ācariya)

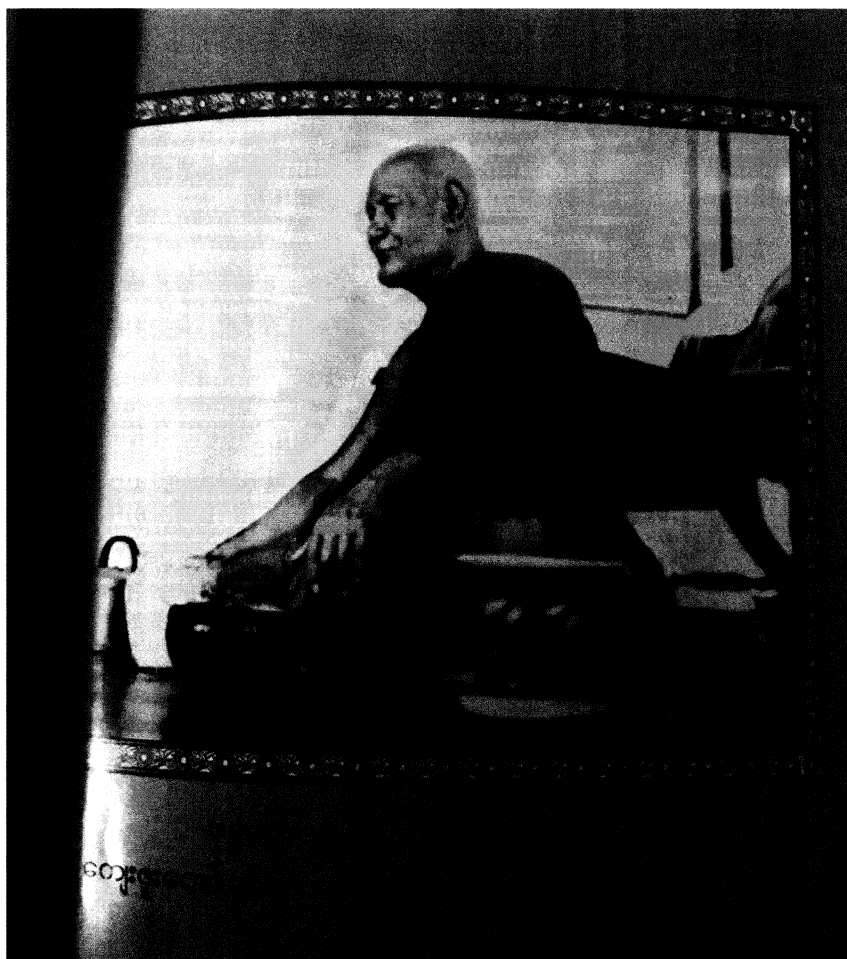
Translated by U Hla Myint

2019

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Venerable Min-gone
Jetavan Sayādawji**

**Namo tassa bhagavato arahato
sammā-samobuddhassa**

(Homage to the Exalted One, the Worthy One, the Self-enlightened One)



The Most Venerable Mūla-Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji
The Pāli Commentator
Buddhamataññū (One Who Knows What the Buddha Means)

Foreword

To most of us, things seem to have been there as always and we rarely find anyone to owe for them. Thus, we take countless things for granted. We may not even appreciate the country's independence for which our forefathers sacrificed their lives, let alone relatively trivial things like roads they had paved on the land, bridges they had built over the rivers, and trees they had planted on the roadsides. Likewise, to most of us, the method of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā*, the path to the *nibbāna*, seems to have been there in the book as always. We may find no one to owe for that. When I read this biography in order to translate it into English, I sincerely feel immensely grateful to Mingone Sayādawji for the pains and troubles he had endured and time and energy he had sacrificed in order to rediscover and reveal the correct method from both scriptural and practical perspectives.

Nowadays, this method has proved to be the authentic teaching of the Buddha and gained its worldwide repute. So, this biography is very interesting and insightful because it is not only about Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji, but also about the rediscovery and reappearance of the *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* over a century ago.

Translation Note: When I translated this book, I encountered difficulty in spelling the names of people and places in English because Burmese English speakers could not properly pronounce them. So, I tried my best to spell the names based on their spelling and pronunciation. For

example, I spelt Sayādawji instead of Sayādawgyi because *ji* is easier to pronounce than *gyi* and more commonly used as in the case of Gandhiji, Guruji, Munidraji and so on. And I spelt *Min-gone* instead of *Min-gun* because ‘gone’ is more accurate and easier to pronounce than ‘gun’. And also, I’m afraid ‘gun’ may be interpreted as a firearm. Regarding Pāli names, I follow International Pāli spelling system. For example, I spell ‘Venerable Kelāsa’ instead of U Kay-lar-tha, and Miñjūsā instead of Minzuthar, and so on.

Acknowledgments: I feel greatly honored to be assigned to translate this insightful biography. For such a great honor, I feel deeply grateful to Venerable Maṇḍala (the Abbot of Mūla Min-gone Jetavan Meditation Center), Venerable Dhammikābhivaṃsa (known as Tharmanay Kyaw by penname), Dr. Tint Soe Linn (the Chairman of the Buddha Sāsanānuggaha Organization, Mahāsi Center), and devotees in Yangon and Thaton. Last but not least, my special thanks will go to Mr. Luyen Pham (the Chairman of Tathāgata Meditation Center (TMC), San Jose, California, U.S.A) and Mr. Son Tu (the Executive Director of TMC) and all other members and devotees of TMC for their generous contribution to this translation.

With much metta and gratitude,

Hla Myint (Translator)
Tathagata Meditation Center, USA

Preface

Three years ago, the final psycho-physical cessation of the Most Venerable Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji was announced on radio, newspapers, journals and magazines all over the Union of Burma. The government and people of the country rushed to pay their final salute to the Sayādawji in honor of his countless qualities. Indeed, Sayādawji was the one who made history as a great *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* teacher in the Holy Order.

We cannot expect anyone to write a biography to illustrate or evaluate all his qualities and the holy path he had rediscovered and revealed. Although he was endowed with such vast qualities, no one has ever written his biography in chronological order. Therefore, as one of his latest dedicated disciples, I had often thought about writing his biography in chronological order. So, as a preliminary work for this project, on the 10th day after the full moon day of Thadinjut Month in 1319 (in Myanmar Era) or 1964 (in Western Calendar), I left Min-gone Jetavan Center, Tha-ton City for San-daw-dwin Meditation Center, Bago City, where I approached Venerable Kelāsa, one of his most dedicated and earliest disciples, for all the information available about Sayādawji. And then, I went to Rangoon where I met his two chief disciples, Rangoon Min-gone Sayādaw and Mahāsi Sayādaw, and inquired about Sayādawji. And then, I went up to the region of Min-gone, Zagine (Upper Burma) where he was born, grew up, and established centers and monasteries. There I met his

best friends, immediate relatives, and classmates and inquired about the life he spent there.

Moreover, I myself spent seven years under his guidance and took care of all his needs day and night. So, I learned a lot about his life. Based on the information I collected from Sayādawji himself and from his dedicated disciples, friends and relatives, I arranged this biography chronologically in honor of his immeasurable qualities.

Actually, I've got neither previous experience of writing nor familiarity with secular terms and writing style. So, I can by no means claim that my work is flawless. Therefore, I hereby humbly request your forgiveness for any defect you may find in it or for any mistake I may happen to make.

Venerable Tikkhācāra
(Taung-dwin Bhikkhu)
Min-gone Jetavan, Tha-ton City

Daboun Month, 1319 (1964)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

**The Biography of
The Most Venerable Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawgyi**

PART-I

Birthplace and Parents

Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji, the author of two Pāli commentaries (*Peṭakopadesa* and *Milinda-pañhā*), was born in Kanji-gon village in the west of Min-gone village about ten miles north of Zagine City. As a highly-respected Sayādaw-to-be, he was born noble as the second child but only son (among the four children) of Mrs. Pine and Mr. Nyo on Saturday, on the 5th day of Dabodwe month, 1230 in Burmese Era (1868 in Western Calendar), at the auspicious moment when the sun was in the *Karakat* astrological position and the moon in the *Kun* position along with *Māgha* Constellation¹ (a certain group of stars).

Here is something noteworthy: the birthplace of Sayādaw's father is Kyout-pa-nan village about one mile

¹ *Karakat*, *Kun* and *Māgha* are astrological terms. The first two refer to two certain segments of solar course, which is divided into twelve segments with two hours each. And the last one, *Māgha*, is the certain group of stars that could be seen as the constellation closest to the moon at the time Sayādaw was born.

from Kanji-gon, his mother's native place, where she gave birth to the Sayādaw-to-be. In this regard, the passages below are from his autobiography written in Pāli at the end of the commentary he authored. There he mentioned his parent's native places, his name and nicknames:

*Jeyya-purassa vāma-hatthe tato yaṭṭhipañca-sahassa dure
panasa-phalaṭṭhi-sadisa-sila-kharuka-vattatṭhane ṭhiti-
gamattā sila-panasa-gamo nāma pitu-gāmo.*

*Tato uttare pañca-sata-kulala-dhanu-parivattatṭhane
dvinnam heṭṭhupari-mahātalākānam samīpa-thala-ṭṭhita-
gāmattā mahaā-talāka-thala-gāmo nāma mātu-gamo.*

*Tato ubhato sujātena tasmimyeva Mahā-talāka-thala-
game vijāta-jātena sandhā-gare majjhe-rañña-
pacchima-vihāre vasanta-pubbattā Sandhāgāra-
bhikkhū'ti rulhī-nāmakena, Suvanṇabhūmi-sathula-
nagare vasanta-pubbattā Suvanṇa-bhikkhū'ti rulhī-
namakena, Suvanṇabhūmi-sathula-nagare uttaraya
anudisaya anto-diguṇa-pākārānam antare Jeta-vane
vasanta-pubbattā Jeta-vana-bhikkhū'ti rulhī-
namakena, dāni sandhāgare cūla-gūhā-kandare Jeta-
vane vasantena Nārada-nāmakena therena.*

Ten miles north of Zagine City there is my father's native village Kyout-pa-nan named after a rock that looks like a jackfruit in shape. One mile north of the Kyout-pa-nan village there is my mother's native village Kanji-gon named after the small hill that is located between two reservoirs.

The senior monk called Elder Nārada, who was born noble in that Kanji-gon village, dwelling currently in Jetavana, in

a small cave, near Min-gone. He is known as Min-gone Sayādaw because he once lived in the middle western forest monastery in the place called Min-gone. He was also known as Golden City (Myo-Hla) Sayādaw after a city he once lived in, and as Jetavana Sayādaw after the monastery located between two internal moats in the north-eastern region of Thaton City (an ancient royal city of Mon dynasty) in which he once lived.

Auspicious Region

His native place, Min-gone, has been known as an auspicious place for Burmese people throughout history, where many legendary saints spent their lives in solitude, and well-known for its celebrated centuries-old Min-gone Bell.

Saintly Generation

Sayādawgyi's parents named Mr. Nyo and Mrs. Pine descended from saintly ancestors. They were of high social status, rich in spiritual qualities such as faith, morality and so on, and influential in their community by playing a leading role in community services. They gave birth to four children: Ms. Tun Zan, Mr. Thar-byaw (the Sayādaw-to-be), Ms. Win, and Ms. Ma Gyi.

In Great Favor

Mr. Thar-byaw, as the only son in the family, was always in favor with his parents, siblings and relatives. Thus, he was very fortunate to receive great kindness and care from everyone of his family. It is probably because he

was the only son in the family, like something rare is always precious to the people in the world.

Enrolled in School

Thar-byaw grew very well with his parents' excellent care and gradually came of age for school. For their son not to have low status in social life, both parents unanimously entrusted him as a resident student² to the abbot of Saw-ke Monastery located between two villages, Kyout-pa-nan and Kanji-gon.

Burmese Buddhist Tradition

With the purpose of creating a bright future for their children, Burmese Buddhists in old days traditionally entrusted their beloved children to their respected monks who would educate them. The monks, to whom parents entrusted their children, took good care of the children and trained them well in moral conduct, Buddhist culture, and basic education. The abbot of Saw-ke monastery was a senior monk of kindness and dignity and a good teacher, who trained his students to become virtuous and well-rounded children on top of basic education. He also taught the children the Buddha's teachings as the foundation for their moral conduct.

Different from Many Others

Thar-byaw, the Sayādawji-to-be, along with many other students of different families studied under the guidance of

² In those days the monasteries were only places for everybody to study in Burma because there were no modern schools, which were later introduced by the British during their colonial days.

Saw-ke Sayādaw who was endowed with qualities of a good teacher, such as preventing his students from engaging in misconducts and encouraging them to undertake moral conducts, educating and admonishing them as needed. He taught his students the suitable lessons based on their levels. So, when he found Thar-byaw to be exceptionally smart and very hard working, he taught and trained him in a particular way to promise him a bright future. Four years later, Thar-byaw completed the entire course of compulsory subjects; he memorized the whole Pāli grammar of eight units including grammatical formulas, definitions and examples.

Note: The past curriculum of monastic education traditionally included such compulsory subjects as basic literacy, the discourse on thirty-eight kinds of blessing (*maṅgala-sutta*) both in Pāli and Burmese, Homage to the Buddha (*namakkāra*) both in Pāli and Burmese, the Buddha's Great Victories both in Pāli and Burmese, Protective Chanting (*paritta*), Principles in Daily Life (*loka-nīti*), Ten Great Rebirth-stories of the Buddha-to-be, and so on. When a student completed these basic subjects, he was supposed to learn higher subjects such as Pāli grammar, Compendium of Buddhist Philosophy (*Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha*), and so on. Thus, the curriculum of basic education covered moral ethics on a quite wider scale.

A Distinctive Student

Thar-byaw was a very smart boy even before his schooling age. He was shrewd and intelligent enough to understand other's emotions and motives. As a resident student at monastic school, he managed to meet the teacher's expectation by learning lessons attentively and

doing home works regularly and dutifully. So, the teacher acknowledged and praised him in particular as a good and shrewd student.

Saw-ke Sayādaw always acted in favor of Thar-byaw, but it should not be interpreted as favoritism in view of Arahants (fully enlightened monks) who took special care of two boys, Venerable Mahā-moggaliputtatissa-to-be and Venerable Nāgasena-to-be, who were born to accomplish the certain mission in the future of *sāsana*.

Testing His Talent

Still a boy, Thar-byaw learned by heart the entire Pāli grammar of eight sections, including grammatical formulas, definitions, examples, analytical study of words and formulas, forty metaphorical expressions, and grammatical principles. Then, Saw-ke Sayādaw—wanting to test his talent—let him attend to Abhidhamma night classes starting with *Mātikā* (The introduction to Abhidhamma, which includes Buddhist philosophical points to ponder), without teaching him the basic Abhidhamma in advance, (the Compendium of Buddhist Philosophy known as *Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha*). Mingone Sayādawji himself mentioned it to me that he had learned *Mātikā* and other Abhidhamma subjects successfully without prior study of basic Abhidhamma.

Novice-hood

Having been endowed with *pāramī* (wholesome potentials) accumulated in many previous lives and blessed with the good guardianship of parents and teachers

(in the current life), Thar-byaw grew well-rounded with strong basic education and graceful appearance at the age of 14. Then his parents honored him with novice ordination (*samaṇera-pabbajja*) held with a feast and generously provided him and all the invited monks with requisites such as robes, alms bowls and many more. Under the guidance of Saw-ke Sayādaw as his preceptor, he became a novice by the name of Novice Nārada.

Learning the *Dve-mātikā* ³

As a boy he had studied basic education day and night. Now, he became a novice and had to learn monastic codes of a novice which includes 10 major precepts (*liṅga*), 10 minor precepts (*daṇḍa*), 75 kinds of monastic etiquette (*sekhiya*), and 14 kinds of monastic duties. And he continued with studies of Dual Introductory Code (*Dve-mātikā*) laid down for fully ordained monks and nuns, which are known as *bhikkhu-pātimokkha* and *bhikkhunī-pātimokkha*, respectively. Before long, he accomplished the studies of them due to his great wholesome potentials (*pāramī*).

Five Volumes of Monastic Code

Novice Nārada always outperformed any other students on the ground of his wholesome potentials (*pāramī*), tremendous effort and great sense of duty to his teachers. So, the teacher—knowing his talent—continued to teach him complete set of monastic code of five volumes

³ “*Dve-mātikā*” (Dual Introductory Code) is the monastic code of conduct, which is so called since the Buddha laid it down for two monastic communities (monks and nuns).

after he became well-versed in Dual Introductory Code. Just four years after his novice-hood (at the age of eighteen), he completed the entire *vinaya* course.

His Father, Mr. Nyo

His teacher—satisfied with his effort and talent—continued teaching him one subject after another tirelessly to ensure his brighter future in the Holy Order. During that time, his father succumbed to death leaving all beloved ones behind. Death is indeed the unavoidable destiny for all living beings. So, his teacher consoled him by means of dhamma, explaining the nature of conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhāra-dhamma*). And then the teacher resumed the normal teaching schedule so that he would find a solace.

A Difficult Time

Under the guidance of his teacher, he continued his regular study while struggling with deep sorrow about his father's demise. And then again, he encountered another tragedy. His mother, Mrs. Pine, also succumbed to her unavoidable destiny. She passed away just seven months after his father's demise. Thus, he and his teacher shared a difficult time under such miserable circumstances.

Leaving the Monastery

Novice Nārada—full of hope for his bright future in *sāsana*—put great effort in his scriptural study under the guidance of his teacher. But his parents' demise left his sisters and himself as helpless orphans. This condition mainly forced him to decide to disrobe at the age of 17. His

teacher monk—seeing him overwhelmed with deep sorrow and unable to console him any more—had to allow him to leave the monastery in the end.

Conditioned by Past Kamma

All living beings have come into existence according to their past *kamma*. Nobody can possibly say that things will come out as they have planned. It is the natural law that never yields to anyone's will or wish. This fact is very evident like an elephant roaming in the open field. The mighty creator is nothing but our *kamma*. Sometimes things may turn out in our favor, but may not in other time. The *kamma* we have accumulated throughout the cycle of rebirths with un-seeable beginning mainly determines our lives anywhere and anytime depending on conditions.

That is why we should not be conceited when we become successful and prosperous at a favorable turning point in life, nor overly dismayed and disappointed when things turn out against our wish. Success and failure take their turns in nature. That is the way the world moves on.

Unexpected Condition

Under unexpected conditions, the ex-novice, Thar-byaw, had to engage in the worldly businesses in order to take care of his three sisters left as orphans by both parents. He had to make all-out effort to earn enough, although it was not really difficult to live a life from hand to mouth. With the purpose to do a business, he once approached his uncle who lived in a town called Con-jan-gon in lower Burma. During his stay with his uncle for a few weeks or

a month, something disagreeable happened unexpectedly, and he was so displeased with his uncle that he stopped speaking with his uncle and lied down on bed for two whole days without eating and drinking. It was an incident Sayādaw himself once recalled to me (the author).

(The Author's Note: During his stubborn protest, it is said, his uncle's wife was more stunned by his refusal to go to restroom than by his refusal to eat and drink.)

Family Commitment

After a few months with his uncle in Con-jan-gon, he went back home in Upper Burma and took care of his sisters as always. There were times when he got in a depressing condition with so many problems in daily life. Sometimes he was even lost deep in the thought in solitude. Thus, he faced the growing dilemma over how to tackle such a challenging condition. He was simply confused between family commitment and desperate desire for renunciation.

***Pāramīs* Supportive of Renunciation**

Although certain conditions forced him to disrobe, his *pāramīs* (wholesome potentials accumulated throughout the cycle of rebirths) always pushed him to renounce the worldly life as soon as possible. His desire to re-ordain grew bigger at every moment like a high tide in the ocean. So, when he was almost 20, the minimum age required for full ordination, he asked his sisters to allow him to ordain. Then, his three sisters supported his good purpose whole-

heartedly and made all the arrangements for his full ordination.

Approaching to Sayādaw U Lakkhaṇa

Thar-byaw—having long been yearning for renunciation—approached Venerable Lakkhaṇa, his cousin and the abbot of Manjizu Forest Monastery in the southeast of Kan-ji-gon village and humbly requested Sayādaw for full ordination. So, Sayādaw first provided him the novice-ordination (as a prerequisite for full ordination).

Full Ordination

Later on, his cousin, Venerable Lakkhaṇa, enthusiastically made all the necessary arrangements for his full ordination in appreciation of his strong desire for renunciation. Thus, Novice Nārada was uplifted from the low state of novice-hood to the higher state of monkhood in the Burmese-era year of 1249 (1887), qualified by five factors of ordination⁴, led by Venerable Lakkhaṇa as his preceptor and many other members of the Saṃgha under the generous sponsorship of Mrs. Anza (his mother's cousin) and Mr. Paw-sa from Kyout-pa-nan village nearby.

The wise monk, Bhikkhu Nārada—endowed with *pāramīs* that were always supportive of his renunciation—found that his scriptural knowledge previously accumulated remained intact

⁴ Five factors of full ordination (*upasampada*): 1. Qualified candidate (*vatthu*) 2. Official announcement (*ñatti*) 3. Unanimous recognition of ordination (*kammavācā*) 4. Consecrated hall (*sīmā*) 5. Cooperative members of monks (*parisa*).

and revived without requiring him to make much effort. By putting just a little bit effort in the study, he could refresh his memory of all he had learned in the past as saying goes, “A hint is all needed to get the whole picture.” Thus, he successfully resumed his study with higher scriptures of Pāli canons along with commentaries and sub-commentaries, instead of resuming it from the basic level.

Towards the Goal with No Difficulty

Bhikkhu Nārada—having been transformed with new spirit—studied one subject after another tirelessly day and night with strong faith and heroic effort under the guidance of Venerable Lakkhaṇa. Having thus devoted all his time and energy to the study, he reached his academic goal in no time without much difficulty.

Moving to the Hilltop Monastery

Gifted with such superior spiritual qualities as strong faith, great aspiration, heroic effort, and profound wisdom, Bhikkhu Nārada became a legendary person who was talented enough to carry out a great mission for the sake of future *sāsana*, for his own well-being, and for everyone’s benefits. He studied Pāli texts seriously and, at the same time, he learned how commentaries and sub-commentaries adopted different approaches to the Pāli canons (to ensure the comprehensive understanding of the Buddha’s teachings). And then he moved to another monastery under Venerable Rājinda as the abbot of Hilltop Monastery and the guiding teacher of three monastic schools. Under the guidance of that Sayādaw, he devoted his time to the

further study of the Pāli texts along with commentaries and sub-commentaries.

Thorough Study

With Venerable Rājinda, he (Bhikkhu Nārada) studied the Pāli texts methodically by following the traditional curriculum based on the detailed analysis of different sentence structures of Pāli and by means of making discussions repeatedly and using examples and analogies until he understood them clearly and comprehensively. Thus, he became well-versed in the Pāli texts.

Handing over the Hilltop Monastery

In appreciation of Bhikkhu Nārada's intellect, aptitude and virtuous spirit, Venerable Rājinda, the abbot of Hilltop Monastery—with purpose to prolong the *sāsana*—handed over the entire monastery to Bhikkhu Nārada who was educated, energetic, and qualified in all aspects to teach all the students there.

To Mandalay in Pursuit of Higher Education

As expected by Venerable Rājinda, Bhikkhu Nārada—with his strong faith, great passion and heroic effort—fulfilled his teaching duty while enhancing his scriptural knowledge at the same time. Years later, he felt inspired for further study of Pāli texts in Mandalay (the last royal city of Burma famous for its learned monks). So, he obtained permission from Venerable Rājinda and left for Mandalay in pursue of even higher education. First, he stayed in Moe-Goun monastic institute and studied there

with highly learned teachers with or without titles (conferred on by the king) until he became really well versed in the entire Pāli text. He also helped with teaching there.

Moving to Different Institutes

Having spent years learning and teaching in Moe-goun Institute, he moved to another institute called Dakkhiṇa-van in Mandalay, the graceful royal city where so many highly learned monks dwelled that it was metaphorically defined as the University City. Again, he studied further with the great teachers there and also helped them teaching tirelessly day and night.

Moving again to Mya-doun

As the saying “There is always one verse peculiar to one monastery; one word peculiar to one village,” goes, it implies a certain style of teaching is unique to a certain teacher. That is why it has been a tradition in Burma that monastic students move from one monastery to another to study with different teachers. In Mandalay, the royal city known as a Piṭaka University, one teacher’s way of approach to the Pāli text would be different from another’s. Therefore, monastic students in Mandalay have been studying with one teacher after another. No wonder, Bhikkhu Nārada—moving from Dakkhiṇa-van Monastery to Mya-doun Monastery, and to San-joun Monastery—studied with many different scholars with or without title (conferred on by the King) until he became an expert of the entire Pāli text.

Going down to Lower Burma

Having studied with many great Pāli scholars until satisfactory stage, Bhikkhu Nārada travelled down to Lower Burma to gain general knowledge of different regions. After having travelled to many different regions in Lower Burma, he ended up at Shwe-down City, where there lived Venerable Veluvan Sayādawgyi who was very famous for his virtue and scriptural knowledge. So, Bhikkhu Nārada approached that Sayādawgyi and got permission to stay under his guidance.

Entrusted with Veluvan Monastery

Bhikkhu Nārada—staying as a visiting monk at Veluvan Monastery—saw Sayādawgyi at suitable time and made a humble request that he would like to learn from Sayādawgyi different approach to the Pāli texts. In appreciation of his humbleness and shrewdness, Sayādawgyi took his request into consideration and asked about his educational background. When he explained in detail how far he had learned the Pāli text with other teachers, Sayādawgyi was very happy and agreed to teach him. So, Bhikkhu Nārada got a great chance to learn with Sayādawgyi until he could clarify what need to be clarified in several ways. Veluvan Sayādawgyi was so impressed with Bhikkhu Nārada's aptitude and intelligence that Sayādawgyi later entrusted his entire monastery to Bhikkhu Nārada for the sake of future *sāsana*. This was an incident that Min-gone Sayādawji himself told me (the author) about.

Returning to Hilltop Monastery

As entrusted by Veluvan Sayādawgyi, Bhikkhu Nārada tried his best to take care of Veluvan Monastery by

engaging in teaching and administration so that it would thrive in all aspects. But unfortunately, Bhikkhu Nārada found the weather in Lower Burma not agreeable to his health and respectfully asked Veluvan Sayādawgyi's permission to return to the Hilltop Monastery in Min-gone, Upper Burma. Again, under the guidance of his former teacher Venerable Rājinda, the abbot of the Hilltop Monastery, he resumed his *sāsana* works as in old days.

Brave like a Lion

Bhikkhu Nārada—still young but having studied with great Pāli scholars in different regions of Burma—became an expert of Pāli scripture including Pāli cannon (*Pāli*), commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*), sub-commentaries (*ṭīkā*), sub-subcommentaries (*anuṭṭīkā*), glossary (*madhu*), and translations (*yojanā*). Then he found a Pāli text called *Peṭakopadesa* with no commentary on it. *Peṭakopadesa* is the text which includes the *dhamma* talks given by Venerable Mahā-kaccāyana who had attained four kinds of analytical knowledge (*paṭisambhidā*), six kinds of supernatural power (*abhiññā*), and eight kinds of meditative absorption (*samāpatti*), and been honored by the Buddha as the foremost among monks who could elaborate what the Buddha taught in brief. Venerable Buddha-ghosa, the greatest commentator in the Buddhist history, wrote many different commentaries on many Pāli texts but not on *Peṭakopadesa*. It seems to Bhikkhu Nārada that this text was left for the new generation to write a commentary on it.

Throughout Burmese history, during numerous dynasties such as Bagan, Pin-ya, Inwa, and Mandalay (*Kone-boun*), there lived many highly educated monks who were very

well-versed in Pāli text (*piṭaka*), but no Pāli-commentary-author had ever appeared. During Bagan Dynasty, there were sub-commentary-writers. For example, Toun-bilar Sayādaw wrote sub-commentaries on Vinaya (monastic code) during the King Thar-lon. Even Ledi Sayādaw—extremely famous for his literature in the most recent history—only wrote sub-commentaries by the name of Dīpanī. So, in Burmese history there was no scholar who had ever written any commentary in Pāli language⁵. Bhikkhu Nārada, a young monk who had just got six years of monkhood (*vassa*), boldly thought about writing Pāli commentary. He was as brave as a lion that holds absolute power over the wildlife in the entire three mountain ranges!

Returning to a Lay Life

Bhikkhu Nārada had thus spent his time teaching Pāli texts under the guidance of Venerable Rājinda, the abbot of Hilltop Monastery. Unfortunately, a thought of returning to a lay life occurred to him one day in an invincible manner, however. Anybody, even his teacher and siblings, could not persuade him to remain as a monk at the monastery. He just insisted that he would disrobe and kept asking his older sister to bring him lay dress. As always, his older sister was unable to resist his stubbornness and, therefore, brought him lay dress and let him disrobe in the end. He—having left the monastery—spent his time with his sisters.

⁵ Pāli language is literally known as *Māgadhi*, as it was spoken in Magadha Kingdom, which is nowadays in Bihar State India. The authentic teachings of the Buddha have been recorded in it during the First Buddhist Council held just three months after the Buddha's demise.

A Lay Life to Live as Any Others

As an ex-monk, Mr. Thar-byaw had to engage in social affairs as other people. On one occasion, he acted as a recipient of money contributed to novice ordination. Then his former fellow monks—seeing him in lay dress and lay behavior—made fun of him. They laughed at his awkward appearance and funny behaviors because he wore the clumsy surround and Burmese turban both red in color. This incident was recalled by one of his fellow monks who had then made fun of Mr. Thar-byaw.

Heroic Personality

As found in the rebirth stories of the Buddha-to-be and many other noble ones (*jātaka* and *apādāna*), the people of heroic spirit are very brave and courageous. They are never hesitant even to sacrifice their limbs and lives in order to accomplish their purposes. Mr. Thar-byaw's stubbornness and persistence would reflect such a heroic spirit.

Necessities of Life

As required by necessities of life, Mr. Thar-byaw, although not very familiar with secular business, worked hard together with his older sister to earn a living and support his younger sisters. Although it was not very difficult to live a life from hand to mouth, he had to do any business available, sometimes plantation and other times trading.

Lay dress never fits him

Thus, Mr. Thar-byaw was fully involved in a lay life that was always troublesome to him. On one occasion, he

engaged in a trade by shipping the products of Upper Burma to Lower Burma and sold them in Con-jan-gon, his uncle's small native town. So, his uncle had to help him sell his goods there. This is what I (the author) have learned from his relatives of Kan-ji-gon, Min-gone. Alternatively, I have also learned that he loaded his boat with goods of Upper Burma and sold them in towns and villages located all the way on the bank of River Ayar-wadi. One year after fully engaged in lay life, Mr. Thar-byaw, whose way of thinking and behaving still reflected his past monastic life, felt inspired to be re-ordained. He was encouraged by Venerable Mañjūsā, the abbot of Middle Forest Monastery, and undoubtedly motivated by the *pāramīs* he had accumulated in his previous lives. Again, he first became a novice and later a fully ordained monk under the guidance of Venerable Rājinda, the abbot of Hilltop Monastery.

Presumption

Although he disrobed, he had no affair with any woman. Given this fact, it is reasonable to assume that he disrobed presumably because of the commitment to his sisters. That is why he re-ordained as a monk when his youngest sister, Ma Ma Gyi, ordained as a nun in the end. Any human in nature would feel obliged for well-being of his or her younger siblings if both parents passed away.

There was an incident that proved this fact true. Before he disrobed, he once got a dream that he lost his lower teeth, (which was traditionally interpreted as a bad omen for oneself or one's family). Then, he felt so worried about his sisters that he rushed back home and enquired about

what was happening to them. This incident indicated that his concern about his sisters' well-being would be the reason why he disrobed. It is not easy for anybody to remain calm when they face vicissitudes of life, even though they may have ever claimed that their mind would be strong enough to endure any. In a way, these ups and downs of life actually made Bhikkhu Nārada's mind strong enough to calmly face them. Before our minds are well trained in *dhamma*, we can't be perfect in any life, secular or monastic.

Teaching in Leppadan.

It had been about a year since Bhikkhu Nārada regained the monkhood and gathered the sufficient momentum to resume his *sāsana* works by refreshing what he had learned before with Venerable Rājinda. As entrusted by Venerable Rājinda, the abbot of Hilltop Monastery, he carried out various duties tirelessly without any complaint such as supervising daily chores in the monastery and teaching the Pāli texts to the pupils, and so on. At that time, Venerable Gandhamā invited him to teach in his monastery in the town of Leppadan in the Lower Burma. So, after having obtained the permission from Venerable Rājinda, he went and taught there in Leppadan.

Bhikkhu Nārada's tireless effort and academic accomplishments had greatly impressed many prominent abbots of different monasteries. They competitively came forward to get his help in teaching at their monasteries. Till that time, Bhikkhu Nārada's future was still vague in his mind, but his glorious future was certainly gathering its own momentum to shine soon in the Holy Order, indeed.

Going back to Upper Burma

With the pure purpose of promoting *pariyatti-sāsana* (the teachings of the Buddha), he went to Leppadan and taught many students tirelessly at the monastery of Venerable Gandhamā. However, he found the weather in Lower Burma not agreeable to his health condition and returned to the Upper Burma and stayed under the guidance of Venerable Mañjūsā, the abbot of the Middle Forest Monastery in Min-gone.

Habit of Reading

Having returned from Leppadan, Bhikkhu Nārada had taken some time before he settled down and felt rejuvenated to resume all his responsibilities wholeheartedly as usual. He spent the rest of his time doing what he loved to do, that are studying and reading the Pāli texts tirelessly. In this regard, Sayādawji (Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji) once said to me (the author) thus, “My teacher, Hilltop Sayādaw, loved reading; you can see him reading all the time. He read everything available so that there was almost nothing left. Imitating my teacher, I’ve got the habit of reading.”

“Alive Charcoal Covered by Ash”

Bhikkhu Nārada was fully occupied days and nights by his academic career. Thanks to the *pāramis* he had accumulated in many past lives, however, he had long realized that scriptural knowledge was not the ultimate goal of monkhood. Although his *pāramīs* kept pushing him to put effort in the practice, he still forgot to do it like many

people as the saying “Alive charcoal covered by ash” goes. Forgetfulness is quite common to every worldly individual. Even the Buddha-to-be with full-fledged *pāramīs* spent days forgetfully after he had seen four great signs⁶, not to mention ordinary people. Thus, Bhikkhu Nārada had long failed to put his scriptural knowledge into practice because he was fully occupied by the tasks Venerable Mañjūsā entrusted to him.

In Face of Various Commitments

While carrying out his various duties such as teaching the monastics, managing daily chores in the monastery and so on, his aspiration for practice grew stronger day by day with a sense of urgency. He vividly realized that the academic work alone couldn't help him reach the goal of monkhood. Only with practice could one reach the ultimate goal, *nibbāna*. In pursuit of the correct method to reach the goal, therefore, he approached Venerable Mañjūsā with the humble request to teach him how to practice correctly for the realization of *nibbāna*. In response to his request, Venerable Mañjūsā said:

“No practice other than the development of mindfulness (*sati-paṭṭhāna*) can lead you to the attainment of *magga-phala-nibbāna* and can help you liberate from the torturous cycle of suffering.”

(The Author's Note: Venerable Min-gone Sayādawji himself once told me that the passage mentioned above

⁶ By ‘four great signs’ the author probably refer to an old man, sick man, dead man and monk, which Prince Siddhattha encountered each during his four visits to the royal park before he renounced worldly life.

was all he had learned from Venerable Mañjūsā who did not give him detail explanation.)

An Insightful Hint

Venerable Min-gone Sayādawji as a young monk had learned Pāli texts with two great teachers among others: the abbot of Middle Forest Monastery (Venerable Mañjūsā) and the abbot of Hilltop Monastery (Venerable Rājinda). They were two of five prominent disciples of Thee-lone Sayādawji who was best known for his attainment (allegedly the 3rd or 4th stage of enlightenment) in the monastic history of Burma. (Regarding Thee-lone Sayādawji, please refer to the Part-IV of this biography.)

One day, Venerable Mañjūsā, the abbot of Middle Forest Monastery—seeing Bhikkhu Nārada reading Pāli texts very attentively—asked for what purpose he had been putting such tireless effort in the study of Pāli texts. “For the attainment of *nibbāna*, sir,” he replied. Then, Venerable Mañjūsā gave him an insightful hint as follows:

“*Bhūtaṃ bhūtaṃ passati*⁷ alone can guide you to *nibbāna*.”

⁷This passage “*Bhūtaṃ bhūtaṃ passati*” can be found in Paṭisambhidāmagga (159) and Itivuttaka (225). Its literal meaning is, “*See what is present as it is.*” When we observe our bodily actions like walking, standing, bending, stretching, abdominal movement, and so on, we can become aware of present physical phenomena (such as hardness, softness, heat, cold, pressure, etc.) as they really are without identifying them as something permanent, pleasant, pretty or person. When we observe our mental phenomena (like thinking, planning, happy, unhappy and so on), we can become aware of mental phenomena as they really are without identifying them as someone everlasting, beautiful or ugly.

As Mahāsi Sayādaw explained it according to Pāli texts, different phenomena arise and vanish in us at every moment. When we see something or someone, for example, what newly arise at that moment are the visible

But Bhikkhu Nārada (the would-be Min-gone Sayādawji) could not get the point at that time. He kept devoting all his time and energy to the study of Pāli texts as usual.

Having been an expert at the entire Pāli text of five collections (*pañca-nikāya*) or three baskets (*ti-piṭaka*), he spent his time teaching some three hundred monks in the area of Zagine City (about ten miles from Min-gone). At that time, something happened to the unity of Saṅgha and he found it difficult to admonish monks. So, he decided to devote the rest of his life to the practice. With such decision, he spent five more years studying Pāli texts even more thoroughly and deeply, including Pāli cannon, commentaries, sub-commentaries and sub-sub-commentaries. Finally, he decisively found that all the Buddha's discourses—as to the guideline on how to practice vipassanā—could be summarized into *Bhūtaṃ bhūtaṃ passati*. Then, he felt immeasurable gratitude to the abbot of Middle Forest Monastery (Venerable Mañjūsā) for having pointed out this fact earlier.

Then, Bhikkhu Nārada (later known as Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji) started *vipassanā* practice by seeing things as they really are according to *Bhūtaṃ bhūtaṃ passati* based on *Sati-paṭṭhāna Sutta*. Around that time, he found that there was no commentary on the Pāli text called

object, our eye-sensitivity and cognitive process of seeing, which represent who we are at that moment. Whether beautiful or ugly, pleasant or unpleasant, who sees or who is seen are all simply illusions. The same is true with phenomena that would arise when hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking (analyzing, judging and so on). We can see such present phenomena beyond illusions by observing our bodily actions, feelings, thoughts, and sensory reactions according to *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

Peṭakopadesa, although there have been commentaries on all the remaining Pāli texts. So, it occurred to him that it must be a mission left for him to accomplish. So, he firmly decided to write the commentary in Pāli on *Peṭakopadesa*. Thus, Venerable Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji—for the well-being of generations to come—worked very hard physically, verbally and mentally by writing the Pāli commentary and by putting his knowledge into practice until he rediscovered the right path that guides us to *nibbāna*. (All the passages from ‘Insightful Hint’ to this passage have been attributed to Mr. Kon-tun from Shan State.)

Practicing in Solitude

At the age of 37, Bhikkhu Nārada—having been well trained under many great teachers until he became an expert at the entire Pāli text—was able to decode the hint (*Bhūtaṃ bhūtato passati*) given by the abbot of Middle Forest Monastery, as Burmese sayings go, “A quarter yard would be enough to see half yard,” and “A shadow would be enough to figure out who it is.” So, he firmly decided to practice in solitude according to *Bhūtaṃ bhūtato passati* based on *Sati-paṭṭhāna Sutta* and the commentaries and sub-commentaries on that discourse. With such firm decision, he obtained permission from his teacher to leave Middle Forest Monastery that was always busy with devotees and visitors. He moved to a small cottage, built for him from the sponsorship of Nun Daw Eat and her devotees, in a secluded place that has been nowadays known as Western Middle Forest Monastery, four furlongs away from the main Middle Forest Monastery. He practiced there very intensively without bothering about

whether his flesh and bloods would get dry out leaving his body with bone and sinews.

Moving to Tha-mone-chap Hermitage

He no longer engaged in scriptural tasks but devoted all his time and energy to the practice, instead. He ate food just enough for survival in a secluded place where there were very few people to be associated with. Later, however, he found some people around socializing and disturbing his practice. Therefore, he moved again to Tha-mone-chap, a hermitage so called after certain kind of tree nearby. It was located in a very secluded place in a ravine where he had a small cottage built. He stayed alone there practicing *vipassanā* intensively and tirelessly for three consecutive years. Thanks to his great effort, strong aspiration for the attainment of *dhamma*, and *pāramī* he had accumulated in many previous lives, he gained a breakthrough in the true nature (of mind and body) and successfully developed progressive stages of *vipassanā* insight till magga-phala enlightenment.

(The Author's Note: He had practiced *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* meditation intensively for three consecutive years from the age of 37 until he accomplished his purpose at the age of 40. In this regard, Sayādawji himself once said to me that he was satisfied with his spiritual achievement at the age of 40.)

A Son Born to One Mother in a Thousand

It is really inspiring for *sāsanā* that Min-gone Sayādawji studied the entire Pāli text energetically, tirelessly and

peerlessly for many years since he was a boy till he became a young monk. At the age of just 40, he accomplished his spiritual purpose by practicing *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* meditation intensively. His significant achievement was a celebrated event in the Burmese history as well as in *sāsana*, indeed! Before the middle of his life, he became a historic and legendary person, reflecting Burmese sayings, “A son born to one mother in a thousand,” and “An only son under the entire sky.”

(The Author’s Note: So far I’ve stated Sayādawji’s life based on all the sources available. But I can by no means claim that I have stated the complete story of his life. So, I’m simply looking forward to learning more about his life. I will highly appreciate if anyone kindly provides me with some more information about Sayādawji.)

PART-II

A Historic Figure

Historic figures throughout human history achieved what they wanted to accomplish by making great effort with heroic spirit. With invincible faith, Bhikkhu Nārada made extraordinary effort to first become a significant expert at Pāli texts, and then put his scriptural knowledge into practice according to the great method of four foundations of mindfulness, known as the only way to Nibbāna, until he accomplished his spiritual goal. He was known as an *arahant* to the entire country of Union of Burma. Then, Bhikkhu Nārada felt inspired to compassionately share what he had achieved with others. So, he started teaching the *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* meditation four times a month to devotees and disciples, whoever came. He taught how to develop four foundations of mindfulness by being mindful of going when going, of sitting when sitting, of reclining when reclining, and so on.

(The Author's Note: Following “Put oneself first in the suitable position,” (*Attānameva paṭhamṃ paṭirūpe nivesaye*) as the Buddha said, Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji first made sure that he himself understood the method comprehensively by studying the entire Pāli texts, especially the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and its commentary and sub-commentary, the *Patisambhidā-magga* and its commentary and sub-commentary, and the *Visuddhi-*

magga and its sub-commentary (*Mahā-ṭīkā*). Only after he himself achieved the goal and was able to confirm this was the right path, did he start teaching others.)

Having Fulfilled His Purpose

Having fulfilled his purpose, Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji left his intensive retreat (of three executive years) and started to teach devotees boldly and confidently the method to develop mindfulness both from scriptural and experiential perspectives that would lead to the attainment of *magga-phala*. It was at Middle Forest Monastery that he started teaching at the age of 40, still youthful and dynamic in age. He had thus carried out the duty of *patipatti-sāsana*⁸ by helping people seize the opportune moment for liberation from the torturous cycle of suffering (*vimuttia-yuga*).

Emergence and Submergence

Out of compassion to all living beings who have been emerging and submerging in the ocean of suffering, Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji—like a king lion bravely coming out of a golden cave—confidently taught devotees and disciples days and nights how to develop mindfulness. This is ‘the only way’ (*ekāyano*) for beings to be purified from mental defilements according to *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. However much trouble he took to rediscover and then revealed the correct method, his teachings initially attracted more critics than followers. There were many

⁸ “The duty of *patipatti-sāsana*” is to practice *vipassanā* by oneself and share it with others out of compassion.

people who made fun of his teachings in many unreasonable ways.

(The Author's Note: Even his close disciples initially made unkind and unwise criticism about his teachings because he explained how to develop mindfulness by using simple local language instead of scriptural or technical terms. Later, it is said, they became dedicated to his teaching.)

Regret and Remorse

The above event may remind you of the group of five ascetics (*pañca-vaggiya*) who were very critical about the Buddha's claim to have attained enlightenment even though they had been very dedicated to the would-be-Buddha earlier. The reason was that they were not enlightened yet and also there were many hypocrites who made a false claim about the attainment of omniscience, confusing many people of those days. Later, the five ascetics were regretful and remorseful, however. They apologized the Buddha for their mistake when they gained the right view and became irreversibly dedicated disciples of the Buddha. In the same way, it is said that the disciples of Sayādawji were initially critical about his teachings, but later felt regretful about it when they realized the *dhamma* he had taught.

Born with Persistence

Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji was born with great propensity to be persistent. Now, it had been a year or so since he started to teach the *dhamma* persistently with the hope that people would understand it one day. But, so far he found nobody who followed his teachings. Many people still looked

down upon his teachings and ridiculed the way he taught. In any case, Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji continued his teachings persistently. He strongly believed that there would come a time when people would understand the *dhamma* and follow the correct method.

Thought of Teaching to His Relatives

Having found no one followed his teachings, he thought of going back to his native place where his relatives would understand the *dhamma* and follow his teachings as he expected. With that purpose in mind, he decided to go back to his native place. Around that time, Venerable Lakkhaṇa, his dhamma-teacher and brother, dreamt that a white elephant bowed down to his feet.⁹ It is what Venerable Lakkhaṇa once mentioned to his close disciples.

In His Native Place

When he was back to his native place, he had a cottage built for meditation somewhere near Kyout-pyute-gon Village, right east of his native village, Kan-ji-gon. He practiced in solitude there besides the time he set aside to teach the *dhamma* to his relatives. He explained in detail and in daily language the benefit of the development of mindfulness and how to develop it.

Making Fun of Him

However much effort he put in teaching the *dhamma*, the way he taught was very foreign and unsatisfying to his

⁹ If someone dreams of seeing a white elephant, it would be traditionally interpreted as a good omen that he or she would soon meet a holy person.

relatives (probably because he did not use scriptural terms). So, they even made fun of his teaching by mimicking him thus, “Note, ‘going, going,’ when going; ‘eating, eating,’ when eating; ‘swallowing, swallowing,’ when swallowing; ‘choking, choking,’ when choking; ‘patting, patting,’ when patting; ‘pinching, pinching,’ when pinching.”

They even made further criticism of his teaching thus, “This monk always does something peculiar. He teaches the *dhamma* nobody else has ever taught; he shows the path nobody else has ever shown; he gives the instruction nobody else has ever given; he practices the *dhamma* nobody else has ever practiced.” Thus, his teachings became known as something most weird in the entire region of Min-gone.

Actually, the *Dhamma* he taught was really authentic teaching of the Buddha, but seemed to be very new and very foreign to the people. Facing such challenges, he relentlessly kept teaching the four foundations of mindfulness in an authentic style (that sounded weird).

Direct Response

A close disciple of his informed him directly of the criticism his relatives had made about his teaching, “Sir, people have been complaining about your teaching such as ‘This monk always does something peculiar; he teaches the *dhamma* nobody else has ever taught; he shows the path nobody else has ever shown; he gives the instruction nobody else has ever given; he practices the *dhamma* nobody else has ever practiced.’” Then, he smiled and

replied calmly thus, “They are right but only when a teacher teaches the *dhamma* nobody else has ever taught, can a listener get a chance to listen to the new *dhamma*; only when a teacher gives *dhamma* instruction nobody else has ever given, can a recipient attain the *dhamma* nobody else has ever attained; only when one practices the *dhamma* that nobody else has ever practiced, can one see the *dhamma* nobody else has ever seen.” What an insightful response it was!

Withdrawal without Success

Staying in the monastery in Kyout-pyute-gon Village in his native place, Bhikkhu Nārada taught his relatives compassionately how to develop four foundations of mindfulness with the purpose to help them to be liberated from the torturous cycle of suffering. But not any single person did appreciate his teaching; nobody was convinced to practice under his guidance. Thus, he had to withdraw from his *dhamma* career in his native place without any success and went back to Goo-ga-lay Hermitage, the western part of Middle Forest Monastery, where he used to teach *dhamma* before.

Teaching Tirelessly

There are five kinds of opportune periods of Holy Order.¹⁰ The current period is still opportune for the attainment of *magga-phala* enlightenment, the liberation

¹⁰ There are five kinds of opportune period (*yuga*): a period opportune for magga-phala (*vimutti*), for jhānic concentration (*samādhi*), for virtue (*sīla*), for scriptural knowledge (*suta*), and for act of generosity (*dāna*). (The commentary on *thera-gāthā*-2, 369)

from the torturous cycle of suffering (*vimutti-yuga*). But there were still very few people who were interested in *vipassanā* practice because many of them could not appreciate it yet. “Those who don’t know pass it by; those who know unearth and enjoy it,” as the saying goes. The ultimate truth is accessible only to worthy ones. So, he did believe that one day there would come worthy people who would appreciate the *dhamma* that he had been teaching. With such strong faith, he kept walking persistently on the right path although he kept moving from one place to another according to conditions. Having withdrawn from his native place, he now lived in Middle Forest Monastery and kept encouraging devotees to develop mindfulness.

Bhikkhu Nārada, a monk of heroic personality, kept teaching mindfulness persistently with the hope “Let any worthy one achieve it,” although it had been long unpopular among the devotees. But, his persistence made his teaching known to people in every corner of Min-gone region, his native place. Although it was still the opportune period for liberation (*vimutti-yuga*) and more and more people would later become interested in *vipassanā*, the development of mindfulness was still foreign to the people of those days. Nobody recognized it as the Buddha’s authentic teaching that could lead to the liberation from the torturous cycle of suffering. They still made fun of it because they had never learned how to develop mindfulness according to *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

Throughout Burmese History

Min-gone is a unique place that has signified the glorious history of Burma throughout successive dynasties. And, in

most recent history, it was known as a place where lived Venerable Vicittasāra, the first legendary *ti-piṭaka* holder¹¹ (in the 20th century) of Union of Burma. Thus, the region of Zagine and Min-gone—located (about ten miles) west of Mandalay¹² and surrounded by ever-green jungles and hills and circled by River Ayawadi—is such a unique place which has been always busy with virtuous people from all over Burma throughout history. People would go there with purpose to enjoy their peaceful time by undertaking a long retreat with eight-precept virtue (*uposatha-sīla*) or by living a temporary monastic life with meditation practice in solitude, or by studying Buddha’s teachings intensively, and so on.

Some of them were very interested in the meditation. So, one day, a couple from Mandalay—Mr. Thit and Mrs. Kyawt who were merchants—came to Min-gone and took a long retreat by observing eight-precept virtue. The couple visited Bhikkhu Nārada in Goo-ga-lay Hermitage, Middle Forest Monastery. They learned how to develop mindfulness through *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* from him. They really appreciated his teaching and decided to put it into practice. So, they made a humble request for an intensive retreat under his guidance. At their request, Bhikkhu Nārada explained the benefit of the development of mindfulness and how to develop it in detail mainly based on two sections of *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*: the mindfulness of bodily positions (*iriyāpatha-pabba*) and the mindfulness of bodily actions to be done with clear comprehension (*sampajañña-pabba*).

¹¹ *Ti-piṭaka* literally means ‘three baskets,’ referring to the three branches of Buddha’s teaching: Monastic rules and regulations (*vinaya*), dhamma discourses or guidelines (*sutta*), and detailed teachings (*abhidhamma*). This Sayādaw was the first one in Burmese history, who learned ‘Three Baskets’ by heart along with commentaries and sub-commentaries.

¹² Mandalay is the last royal city of Burma.

(**The Author's Note:** Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji usually let a yogi first practice the contemplation of the body (*rūpa-kammaṭṭhāna*) rather than that of the mind (*nāma-kammaṭṭhāna*). In this way, he let the yogi be aware of the mind spontaneously while focusing on the body. This method is in line with Visuddhi-magga, which explicitly said thus, “Just contemplate the physical body (*rūpameva punappunam sammsitabbam*), mental phenomena—taking physical objects—will manifest themselves (*tadārammaṇā arūpa-dhammā sayameva pākaṭā honti*).¹³)

Pāramī Fulfilled Together

It might be that they have fulfilled *pāramis* together with Sayādawji in the past lives, the couple deeply appreciated his teachings and closely followed his instruction given in daily language thus, “Note ‘stepping, stepping,’ at the moment of stepping and every time you step; in the same way note ‘standing, standing,’ when standing; note ‘sitting, sitting,’ when sitting; note ‘reclining, reclining,’ when reclining, and so on.” Sayādawji carefully watched progress in their mental faculties (such as faith, energy, etc.,) and bodily behaviors, interviewed them from time to time, and gave suitable instructions according to their progress.

¹³ Here the author refers to Visuddhi-magga-2, 225. Its full passage is translated as follows: “Having discerned materiality in one of these ways, he may try to discern the mentality without success because of its subtlety. Then, instead of giving up, he should make a constant effort to comprehend, contemplate, discern, and define materiality only. Then, as much as the materiality becomes clear, disentangled and evident to him, the mental states—taking the materiality as their object—will become obvious by themselves, too.”

Not to Deviate from the Right Path

Bhikkhu Nārada—closely watching yogis’ progress and giving suitable advice based on the Pāli texts—laid down clear guideline as follows:

“Don’t make any phenomenon appear or disappear. But make sure you see them appearing and disappearing. Wanting them to appear means craving; wanting them to disappear means aversion, and not knowing their appearance and disappearance means ignorance.”

He found yogis’ progress fluctuating, sometimes significant and remarkable, but sometimes dull and boring. According to situation, he gave instructions both from practical and theoretical perspectives so that they won’t deviate from the right path.

First Disciples

Inspired by their strong faith and understanding based on their *pāramī*, Mr. Thit and Mrs. Kyawt put great effort in the practice of mindfulness (by noting one object after another continuously), and developed progressive stages of *vipassanā* insight to a satisfactory level. No wonder, they expressed their endless gratitude to Bhikkhu Nārada for his precise and accurate guidance, and delightfully testified from their own experience that the method he had been teaching was really the authentic teaching of the Buddha. So the two yogis, Mr. Thit and Mrs. Kyawt—from Thaye-Bazaar Quarter, Northern Mandalay—should

be considered to be the first two disciples (*dvi-vaggi*) in comparison with the group of five ascetics (*pañca-vaggi*) who were the first disciples of the Buddha.

(The Author's Note: Although many people made fun of his teachings because they got wrong impression of his instruction to develop mindfulness by noting (present phenomena constantly), Mr. Thit and Mrs. Kyawt became his first dedicated disciples who had practiced with unshakable faith under his guidance.)

When They Were Back Home

Thus, Bhikkhu Nārada gained Mr. Thit and Mrs. Kyawt as his first disciples after he had spent years teaching with great confidence and tireless effort. Thus, the two became his life-long dedicated disciples, *upāsakā* and *upāsika*. Although Min-gone was a remote place, this couple from Mandalay Royal City came and practiced under his guidance and delightfully expressed their appreciation of his teaching as the true *dhamma* for direct experience (*sandiṭṭhika*) before they went back home. One of the quality of the *Dhamma* is to be worth recommending people to 'come and see' (*ehi-passika*), Mr. Thit and Mrs. Kyawt went back home and encouraged people to go and practice under Mind-gone Jetavan Sayādawji by recalling their *dhamma* experience in praise of his teaching. As recommended by them, Mr. Nyunt went and practiced under the guidance of Mind-gone Jetavan Sayādawji. He practiced mindfulness constantly and tirelessly days and nights (*sammappadhāna-vīriya*) by closely following the instruction given by Sayadawji. Thus, Mr. Nyunt developed progressive stages of *vipassanā* insight and became one of his earliest dedicated disciples.

One Pearl Beat after Another

He thus kept teaching tirelessly the mindfulness called spiritual vigilance (*appamāda*). One day, a female devotee—born in Shwe-jin and lived in Phew Township doing business there—came to Min-gone with purpose of ensuring her spiritual future. She took a retreat observing the virtue of eight precepts and undertaking meditation. But she could not make any significant progress in the practice even after weeks and months. Having learned from her fellow meditators about Jetavan Sayādaw (Bhikkhu Nārada), she one day went to him and listened to his *dhamma* talk on the four foundations of mindfulness, which the Buddha described as the only way leading to the realization of *magga*, *phala* and *nibbāna*. She really appreciated his teaching and made a humble request for a retreat under his guidance. Then, Jetavan Sayādaw taught her how to develop mindfulness in a simple language according to *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in the same way as he had done to Mr. Thit and Mrs. Kyawt.

Well Established in Dhamma

She practiced four foundations of mindfulness constantly and tirelessly for a longer period. During her retreat, Sayādawji sometimes interviewed her and explained the progress of practice in a very simple language with the intention to help her attain what he had attained. As a result, the female devotee—putting great effort in the practice as instructed by Sayādawji—attained progressive stages of *vipassanā* insights. So, she was very satisfied with her practice and ordained as a nun renouncing her worldly life at the age

of 40. Since then, she as a nun carried out her commitments to *sāsana* until she was 84 (when she died).

(The Author's Note: This laywoman practiced with Sayādawji until she made significant progress in the practice of mindfulness. Later she became a prominent nun by the name of Venerable Kusala in Maw-la-myine City (Mon State). Mr. Myat-kyaw proudly wrote further detail about her life in his book.)

Mr. Khin (Ka-nyut-kwin Township)

Mr. Khin, a devotee from Ka-nyut-kwin Township, was very dedicated to the *dhamma* with do-or-die mindset and kept moving from one place to another in pursuit of *dhamma*. One day, he came to Zagine Hill and visited one hermitage after another in search of a suitable meditation place. And then he came to Min-gone and spent some time investigating where he could get the correct instruction for his tentative retreat. Then he heard people in Min-gone region making criticism about Jetavan Sayādaw's instruction on how to develop four foundations of mindfulness by noting bodily and mental behaviors (present phenomena). It was new to Mr. Khin who came from Lower Burma in search of *dhamma*. Probably out of curiosity, however, he managed to see Sayādaw in the end.

Mr. Khin, as a guest there, introduced himself to Sayādawji and said thus, "Venerable sir, I've already learned about you; so, I humbly request you to teach me in brief how to practice." Then, Sayādawji—always excited to teach as the saying goes, "A betel-lover is sent to

Taungoo”¹⁴—taught without hesitation in daily language how to develop four foundations of mindfulness by constantly noting (one object after another). Mr. Khin was very satisfied with Sayādawji’s instruction and made further request thus, “Venerable sir, out of compassion please allow me to practice under your guidance.” Then Sayādawji expounded the method of pure *vipassanā* practice (*suddha-vipassanā-yānika*) in further detail according to *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in the same way he had done for previous yogis.

To Monkhood

About three months later, Mr. Khin—due to his great effort under the guidance of Sayādaw and thanks to his *pāramīs* accumulated in his previous lives—successfully developed progressive stages of *vipssanā* insight up to satisfactory level. Then, he said that he had practiced for years without success. Now, he felt, his purpose was fulfilled and his life was well lived. Then he made up his mind to ordain as a monk.

To Practice Mindfulness (*Appamāda*)

Mr. Khin delightfully reported to Sayādawji about his achievement of a breakthrough in the ultimate truth (psycho-physical phenomena and their impermanence, etc.), and then asked Sayādawji to allow him to go back home. On his way back home, he stopped by Myo-Hla city

¹⁴ “Taungoo” is a city in middle Burma, which is known for its product of betel. Many people in Burma habitually chew betel, like chewing gum. A betel-lover would be very happy if he is sent to Taungoo.

where he saw his close friend Mr. San-dun. As they once promised, he reported his friend of all the *dhamma* experience he had got during the practice with Sayādawji and encouraged his friend to go and practice right away with such a great teacher. It may remind you of Venerable Sariputta-to-be and Moggalāna-to-be (known by lay name as Upatissa and Kolita, respectively).¹⁵ Mr. San-dun was then so inspired to practice under Sayādawji and got from Mr. Khin all the information of how to go, where to stay, and where to eat on the way. Afterward, Mr. Khin continued his journey back home, Ka-nyut-kwin, and again shared his *dhamma* experiences with relatives and friends there. Finally, as he had planned, he ordained as a monk by the name of Venerable Medhāvī and spent the rest of his life teaching mindfulness meditation.

Mr. San-dun's Arrival at Min-gone

Mr. San-dun—endowed with *pāramīs*—became very inspired, like rising tide, to go and practice with Min-gone Sayādawji since he had learned from Mr. Khin about Sayādawji. So, he soon managed to convince his children of his spiritual plan and took a journey to Mandalay and then to Sayādawji's place, Googalay Hermitage, Middle Forest Monastery, Min-gone. When he met Sayādawji, he introduced himself to Sayādawji explaining how he had

¹⁵ Upatissa and Kolita were very close friends; both belonged to noble families of Brahmin caste. One day, the two joined thousands of people to enjoy Hilltop Carnival (*Giri-samajja*) at night. After some time, they both—looking at the people—happened to think of how ignorant people were. They simply enjoyed the night ignoring the fact that they all would die within one hundred years. Thus motivated by sense of urgency, the two decided to search for deathless state, and promised each other that whoever discovering it first must share it with the other. (Dhamma-pada Commentary-1, 56)

learned from Mr. Khin about Sayādawji. And then, he humbly requested Sayādawji to give him instruction on how to practice *vipassanā*.

How to Develop Mindfulness

Sayādawji allowed Mr. San-dun to take a rest for a few days, and then taught him the practice of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) in daily language. *Vipassanā* is the practice that directly leads to the realization of path (*magga*), fruition (*phala*) and *nibbāna*, the liberation from the torturous cycle of suffering. It is all about continuous mindfulness of psycho-physical phenomena that are manifested moment by moment. It is to be constantly mindful by noting ‘going, going’ when going; ‘standing, standing’ when standing; ‘sitting, sitting’ when sitting; ‘reclining, reclining’ when reclining based on the two sections of *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. They are the mindfulness of four bodily positions (*iriyāpatha-pabba*) and the mindfulness of all bodily actions to be done with clear comprehension. Mr. San-dun—with strong resolution to follow the instruction given by Sayādawji—made all the arrangements for his food and lodging and practiced *vipassanā* intensively under the close guidance of Sayādawji.

If Sayādawji found something not quite right with the way Mr. San-dun practiced, then he corrected him as required. When he found the yogi weak in effort, he inspired the yogi; when too energetic or too excited, he helped the yogi to relax with well-balanced energy. Thus, he always kept his eye on the yogis’ progress in the practice in order to give suitable instruction. He always

made sure that the yogi was mindful at all time. In this way, Sayādawji helped Mr. San-dun make faster progress in the practice day by day.

Irreversible Stage

Mr. San-dun—practicing strenuously and tirelessly with strong faith in the *dhamma* even not caring for his life and limbs—made progress in *vipassanā* practice to some extent by managing to keep the balance between faith and knowledge and between effort and concentration. However, he did not yet reach the irreversible stage. Sayādawji always watched closely his progress and gave instructions in all aspects day by day. The yogi also continued his retreat perseveringly for longer period of time. Thus, it had been almost eight months since the yogi started the retreat. One day, Sayādawji noticed that the yogi developed mature insight with strong concentration, stable effort, and continuous mindfulness. Then, Sayādawji saw it as an opportune moment for the yogi to attain *dhamma*. So, Sayādawji—realizing that a change in meditative object would help the yogi's faculties grow well-balanced leading to the faster attainment—asked the yogi to stir *catu-madhu*¹⁶ under the sun and gave him the instruction to note it, 'stirring, stirring', by focusing on the action of stirring. While noting as instructed the yogi managed to balance mental faculties, and subsequently developed higher stages of progressive *vipassanā* insight

¹⁶ *Catu-madhu* literally means 'four-sweet,' referring to the mixture of four ingredients: ghee, sugar, cooking oil, and honey. This mixture is normally cooked in the sun and requires to be stirred constantly to get the best quality. It is very nutritious, literally called 'medicine' (*bhesajja*) allowable to monks and nuns during the time between 12 noon to the dawn when no other solid food is allowable.

until he became a dedicated devotee (*upāsaka*) with irreversible faith¹⁷ in Triple Gem, teacher and the practice, that is, the certain kind of faith that belong to enlighteners.

Propagating Dhamma

Having practiced about nine months and reached the irreversible stage, Mr. San-dun was ceaselessly happy with what he had achieved by means of tireless effort in the development of mindfulness. So, he happily reported to Sayādawji of his significant achievement of *vipassanā* insight, and then got the permission to go back home to Myo-Hla where he lived with his children. There, he seized any chance available to share his empirical experience of *dhamma* with people around including his children, relatives and friends. Thus, he spent his time propagating *dhamma* among the people, and persuading them to practice *dhamma*.

(**The Author's Note:** Mr. San-dun —having practiced about nine months—was later known as a virtuous person of penetrative *vipassanā* insight.)

Propagation of Mindfulness

Mr. San-dun—back from the retreat under the guidance of Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji—spent all his time encouraging people to practice the four foundations of mindfulness. As a result, the news (about the practice of mindfulness) spread out far and wide. Some gave a try to the practice, but others—referring to Pāli texts—argued

¹⁷ “Irreversible faith in triple gem” means that he became a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*).

against the method. Some of them were monastics and scripturally knowledgeable. Of course, there were some Pāli scholars who firmly stood up for Sayādawji and his teachings. Meanwhile, there were many questions posed about the way Sayādawji taught *vipassanā*, to which Mr. San-dun gave accurate and precise answers based on his own experience of *dhamma* although he did not have as much scriptural knowledge as Pāli scholars. Facing all these challenges, Mr. San-dun managed to convince people of this true teaching and led them to establish a meditation center. With great patience and perseverance, he thus persuaded people to work with him for the propagation of Mindfulness Meditation.

Method of Practice

Mr. San-dun—putting great effort in propagating the four foundations of mindfulness—encouraged more and more people to practice this method. At the same time, he also organized people to work with him to establish a meditation center and to support meditators as much as possible. Some of the people, including Mr. Byar, Mr. Khin, Mrs. Air, and so on, went to Min-gone and practiced the four foundations of mindfulness under the guidance of Sayādawji.

Vipassanā in a Blaze of Glory

Bhikkhu Nārada (Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji-to-be)—wanting people to live a worthy life during the Buddha's dispensation—encouraged people tirelessly to practice the four foundations of mindfulness, promising them special benefits. As a result, the increasing number of devotees came

from here and there to Min-gone and practiced under the guidance of Bhikkhu Nārada. Thus, he became well known by several names, such as a monk who taught meditation at Min-gone Center, the abbot of Jetavan monastery, a monk who taught mindfulness with the method of 'noting.' As a *vipassanā* meditation teacher, he rediscovered and revealed the correct method of developing mindfulness in a very simple way. So, more and more devotees came and practiced with him. He taught them the mindfulness meditation in a very simple but accurate way from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Appreciating his teachings and following his instructions, more and more people started walking on the right path available only during the opportune period for liberation (*vimutti-yuga*). Thus, the dawn of *vipassanā* broke in a blaze of glory.

Ceaseless Cycle

There cannot be always many people who develop progressive stages of *vipassanā* insights and *magga-phala* enlightenments that lead to the *nibbāna*, the liberation from the torturous cycle of psychophysical process (*samsāra*). Our Buddha's Holy Order, which is believed to last for five millenniums, is supposed to witness five opportune eras with one thousand years each: opportune for liberation (*vimutti-yuga*), opportune for concentration (*samādhi-yuga*), opportune for virtuous conducts (*sīla-yuga*), opportune for scriptural knowledge (*suta-yuga*), and opportune for the act of generosity (*dāna-yuga*). *Vipassanā* practice is normally very popular during the first opportune era (*vimutti-yuga*), but gradually less and less popular during the remaining four eras, even though not fading away totally. Now, the opportune era for *vipassanā* can be considered to dawn again. So, more and

more people became interested in *vipassanā* practice. The holy teachings based on what the Buddha himself discovered and revealed (*sāmuikkamsika-desanā*) are still available. In this case, one should be very careful not to make wild accusation for which one has to pay heavy price.

Unkind Critics

The number of people who came and practiced with Sayādawji and enjoyed their experience of *dhamma* increased. But, in Min-gone, there were still many local people who, like a spoon in the dish that never experience the taste of it, unkindly criticized as follows:

“Bhikkhu Nārada has created a new method of mindfulness in a very weird way. He instructed people to note, ‘going, going,’ when going; ‘standing, standing,’ when standing; ‘sitting, sitting,’ when sitting; ‘reclining, reclining,’ when reclining, and so on. How weird teaching it is! When going, how come one would not know he is going; when standing, how come one would not know he is standing... This kind of mindfulness is common to everyone, even to an animal like a dog and pig.”

Some criticized that his method might help a meditator to see the appearance but not disappearance of psycho-physical phenomena. Others wildly said that people who practiced this method would be reborn as those who would suffer severe starvation. If he were someone coward and too weak to resist such unkind critics, he would have been “washed away by the saliva spit by many others.”

Strong Faith Through Own Experience

During the Buddha's lifetime, the development of the four foundations of mindfulness was the only way all the disciples of the Buddha followed until they realized the ultimate peacefulness of *nibbāna*. So did all the disciples after the Buddha's demise. Also in modern days, whoever want to realize *nibbāna*, the four foundations of mindfulness is the only way for them. And the same will be true in the future. No other way can lead to *nibbāna*. Therefore, if one develops mindfulness with strong faith, one can benefit from it in this very life and in the lives to come as all the noble people did during the Buddha's time. Those who walk on the correct path as guided by the qualified teachers will certainly witness the great benefit of mindfulness. When one has got empirical experience of *dhamma*, one will definitely gain unshakable faith in what the Buddha taught instead of what common people say.

Invitation from Myo-Hla

At the age of 40 in the Burmese year of 1270 (1908), Bhikkhu Nārada had practiced *vipassanā* successfully and, out of compassion, started teaching it to the people from all walks of life. Thus, he created an opportunity for people to practice mindfulness successfully up to the attainment of *magga-phala*. Around that time, in the town of Min-Hla of Middle Burma, people led by Mr. San-dun—a devotee who had practiced mindfulness meditation until the satisfactory stage under the guidance of Min-gone Jetavan Sayādaw—managed to successfully establish a meditation center. That was what Mr. San-dun had long dreamt of. Then, devotees led by Mr. San-dun unanimously decided to invite Sayādawji

first as a guiding teacher at their newly established center. So, they went to Min-gone and humbly requested Sayādawji to spend some of his rain retreats (*vassa*) in their newly established center. He kindly accepted their request by reflecting the *sāsana* tradition in which even the Buddha accepted people's request for their well-being.

Going to Myo-Hla

Having accepted the request made by devotees and *dhamma*-lovers from Myo-Hla, he went to Bo-de-gon Meditation Center in Myo-Hla in 1273 (1911) (or 1275 (1913) according to some other sources) by the time when the rains-retreat was due. First he gave a suitable *dhamma* talk to the audience there. Then he made a statement that the meditation center was newly established for the practice of spiritual vigilance (*appamāda*) or continuous mindfulness. All the people wishing to attain *nibbāna* would be warmly welcome to the center to practice *vipassanā*. (This was the first time for Sayādawji to come to the Lower Burma with sole purpose to help people with mindfulness practice.)

Tireless Effort

Mr. San-dun—having established a meditation center with tireless effort and managed to get Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji as a guiding teacher there—should be regarded as the first to succeed in propagating and proliferating the mindfulness practice (as taught by Sayadayji), which would bring great benefit to all people. He devoted all his time and energy to organizing and persuading people to support the center and take the retreat there. They included

his friends and relatives from Myo-Hla, who had already got basic knowledge of the practice, and his *dhamma* friend Mr. Khin (as a monk later known as Venerable Medhāvī) from the town of Ka-nyut-kwin who had first practiced with Sayādawji and encouraged him to follow the same method. Mr. San-dun also worked very hard to get along with local Saṃgha community. Thus, Mr. San-dun had to make tireless effort in unifying people for *sāsana* proliferation.

Beating the Vipassanā Drum

Although Bhikkhu Nārada devoted his time and energy to teaching *vipassanā* in the region of Zagaine and Min-gone, his teaching had not been very popular among devotees there since not many people were interested in his teaching. “You can’t be a honorable one, unless you move to another village,” as a Burmese saying goes. In Myo-Hla, “another village”, an increasing number of people practiced under his guidance and he became popular and well known as Min-gone Sayādaw, Min-gone monk, and so on. He thus became a great teacher surrounded by disciples from all walks of life and was fully occupied with teaching in many cities and towns throughout Lower Burma. Devotees who had practiced in the meditation center in Myo-Hla also created chances for him to beat the *vipassanā* drum in many other towns and cities including Yaedar-she, Thar-ga-ra, Swar, Phew, Dike-u, Taungoo, Nyaung-lay-bin, Shwe-jin, Pe-nwe-gon, Ka-nyut-kwin, Ba-go, Ma-u-bin, Nut-ta-lin, Joe-bin-gout, Shwe-daung, Pyee, Hin-tha-da, Yay-nee, Ella, Pyin-ma-nar, Pyaw-bwe, and so on.

Venerable Paññājota in Lebadan

One of the places where Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji taught *vipssanā* was Lebadan. He stayed there in Venerable Paññājota's monastery and gave *dhamma* talks on how to develop mindfulness according to *Satipattāna Sutta*. Many people were greatly gratified with his teaching. At their request, therefore, he led a meditation retreat there in the monastery of Venerable Paññājota who also took retreat under his guidance. After the retreat, Sayādaw appointed Venerable Paññājota as the meditation teacher to continue teaching *vipassanā* in his monastery. Thus, a new meditation center appeared in that region.

With Great Patience

Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji spent two consecutive years teaching *vipassanā* in Bo-de-gon Meditation Center in Myo-Hla. With great patience and persistence, he taught *vipassanā* to meditators coming from many different places. He gave instructions on how to develop mindfulness in a very simple language so that they would discern the ultimate phenomena (psychophysical phenomena) according to *Satipattāna Sutta* and many other Pāli discourses, commentaries and sub-commentaries.

In the Face of Wrong View

Min-gone Sayādawji pointed out the wrong view to be blamed for all living beings to have been going round and round in the torturous cycle of births and deaths, and encountering ups and downs of life in a miserable manner. He clearly stated that whoever aspired for liberation from such

tortuous cycle, the mindfulness practice would help them to achieve it. With the sole purpose to show the way out, Mingone Jetavan Sayādawji—going to many different towns and cities at the request of his devotees and disciples—taught how to develop mindfulness in a very simple way and simple language. From time to time, however, he countered people who would find fault with his teachings and instructions. Then he would patiently explain the method of mindfulness until they became satisfied.

Naturally, there are so many different people with so many different doctrines that even the Buddha could not help them. On one occasion, during a missionary tour to the town of Shwe-jin at the request of one of his disciples called Mrs. Khin, a group of people came and argued against his teachings so strongly that he could not even satisfy them. So, the group—very unhappy with his teachings—came and threw stones and empty bottles at the monastery where he was staying even before he could start teaching. Actually, from the very outset Sayādawji had already encountered many challenges against his teaching of mindfulness. Facing people of wrong view, he kept teaching the true *dhamma* with great patience and persistence for the propagation and proliferation of the Buddha's holy teachings (*sāsana*).

Going to Thatone

Sayādawji spent about two years at Bo-de-gon Meditation Center in Myo-Hla, teaching *vipassanā* meditation according to *Satipatṭāna Sutta* to an increasing number of devotees. One day, as invited by devotees from the city of Mawlamyine, Sayādawji—accompanied by Mr. San-dun as his lay attendant

(*kappiya*)—left Myo-Hla by train. When his train stopped at the railway station in the town of Thaton (on the way to Mawlamyine), he met Venerable Kelāsa, the abbot of Meghavan Lower Monastery, who was there to see his teachers off at the same station to Mawlamyine. When they met, Venerable Kelāsa started greeting with questions:

“Venerable sir, where are you from?”

“From Myo-Hla,” Sayādawji replied.

“You know Min-gone Sayādawji there, don’t you?”

“That is me,” replied Sayādawji after a moment.

(The Author’s note: It is said, Venerable Kelāsa—having learned from one of his student monks about Min-gone Sayādaw and his *vipassanā* teaching—had already felt respectful to him.)

“Where are you now going, sir?” Venerable Kelāsa asked.

“We are on the way to Mawlamyine,” replied Sayādawji.

“For what purpose are you going there, sir,?”

“At the request of some of my devotees I will give a try to residing there if the weather suits me.”

Then, Venerable Kelāsa said thus:

“Sir, there is no place I’ve never been all the way from Thaton to Mawlamyine. I find no place better than Thaton in terms of good weather.”

Venerable Kelāsa boasted his place simply because he was very eager to invite Min-gone Sayādwji to his place. And then, he enthusiastically made request that Sayādawji should give a try to dwelling in Thaton.

Then, Sayādawji took the prospect of *sāsana* into consideration thus: “Thaton was a town that witnessed the dawn of *sāsana* in Burmese history. It is an ancient town well-known throughout the history; it is a town blessed with good weather and prosperous in a worldly sense; it is a town where there lives the densest Buddhist population of strong faith and generosity from generation to generation throughout history. This town, Thaton, may be a place for the Buddha’s holy teaching (*sāsana*) to thrive again.” With such observation, Min-gone Sayādawji accepted Venerable Kelāsa’s request. Then, Venerable Kelāsa and his attendant Mr. Naw (a government officer) were so happy that they managed right away to take Sayādawji and his attendant (Mr. San-dun) out of the train to his monastery, Meghavan.

Stubborn Kelāsa!

Venerable Kelāsa’s teachers—having learned that he took Min-gone Sayādaw out of the train to his monastery—made a complaint thus, “What a stubborn Bhikkhu Kelāsa is! He did what he thought good without thinking further.” This was an event Venerable Kelāsa himself said to me (the author) directly. Venerable Kelāsa’s Meghavan Monastery—located about three furlongs northeast of Thaton downtown—actually belonged to a senior monk of Dvāra-school (with different style of teaching). Its decent facilities included a building with a 90ft-long veranda and a *sīmā* (a consecrated hall for religious rites and rituals). So, he let Sayādawji stay in the 90ft-veranda building.

The Way They Met Was a Miracle

It seems a miracle that Venerable Kelāsa—having learned from one of his students about Min-gone Sayādawji—had already admired Min-gone Sayādawji for his qualities even before he met him in person. As soon as he met Sayādawji in person (at the railway station), Venerable Kelāsa really respected Sayādawji and managed to take him directly to his monastery and took great care of all Sayādawji’s needs such as suitable lodging, food and so on. And he also organized his disciples and devotees to come and listen to Sayādawji’s *dhamma* talk. On that very day of arrival, he requested Sayādawji to give a sermon that night. Sayādawji—not caring about his journey-associated tiredness—taught Venerable Kelāsa and his devotees the discourse on *Mahā-Salāyatanika Sutta*, starting with the passage, “*cakkhum, bhikkhave, a-jānaṃ, a-passaṃ yathā-bhūtaṃ,*” and so on¹⁸. Venerable Kelāsa was so gratified with his explanation of the *sutta* that he learned further details about it with Burmese translation from Sayādawji.

Personality of Venerable Kelāsa

Venerable Kelāsa was naturally straightforward, open-minded and open-hearted. He was in nature inclined to the

¹⁸ Uparipañña Pāli, 335: the translation of the whole passage is as follows: “Monks, not knowing the eye (what the eye really is) and not seeing it as it is; not knowing visible forms and not seeing them as they are; not knowing the eye-consciousness and not seeing it as it is; not knowing the eye-related sensory experience and not seeing it as it is; not knowing feeling—pleasant, unpleasant or neutral—generated by eye-related sensory experience and not seeing it as it is; one gets attached to eyes, to visible forms, to eye-consciousness, to eye-related sensory experience, and to feeling generated by that sensory experience.”

practice. Long even before he met Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji, he had been in search of good teachers who would teach him the correct method of *vipassanā*. He was always the first to go where he was told there was a good *vipassanā* teacher. That was why, as soon as he met Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji for the first time at the railway station, he treated Sayadawji so respectfully as if Sayadawji had long been his close teacher. He made all the arrangements for Sayādawji's convenience without thinking about anything other than well-being of people and propagation and proliferation of *sāsana*.

Knowing Nothing About Sayādawji

For inviting Min-gone Sayādawji from the railway station to his monastery with great respect based on hearsay but not knowing anything about Sayādawji, Venerable Kelāsa got blamed by his teachers. However, Venerable Kelāsa—having realized that people in nature liked to talk bad about someone before they knew all about him—took good care of Min-gone Sayādawji's needs day and night. As for Min-gone Sayādawji, he would be happy as long as he got a chance to teach (how to develop mindfulness). Ignoring unkind criticism, he was fully committed to teaching with the faith that there would be people fortunate enough to understand the *dhamma*. Thanks to Venerable Kelāsa's propagation, Min-gone Sayādawji's reputation went far and wide within a few days attracting many people from different places to the monastery. They discussed the method with Min-gone Sayādawji who explained it in detail with concrete reference to Pāli texts. Many of them became satisfied and promised to practice with Sayādawji.

(**The author's note:** Venerable Kelāsa once told me in person that he could still recite the whole discourse on *Mahā-salāyatanika Sutta* both in Pāli and Burmese, which he had learned from Min-gone Sayādawji during his *dhamma* talk given the night Sayādawji first arrived at his monastery. It had been then 40 years since he first learned it by heart.)

Moving to Sāsana-pajjotika

Min-gone Sayādawji—left Myo-Hla for Mawlamyine to give a try to residing there, but ended up in Meghavan Monastery of Venerable Kelāsa—taught the path of vigilance, i.e., four foundations of mindfulness, in detail to any people who approached him with different purposes. Some people came over just out of curiosity and others sincerely wanted to listen to his *dhamma* talks. Thus, the number of people who came to the monastery gradually increased and the 90ft-veranda building where Sayādawji was staying was no longer big enough for the audience. Then, Venerable Kelāsa had to look for a suitable place for the increasing number of people and found an old monastery called Sāsana-pajjotika just one furlong northwest of Meghavan monastery. In old days, that monastery used to be busy with devotees, but now there were only some caretakers there. Its facilities included a monastery and a building for guests, both empty. So, Venerable Kelāsa approached the caretakers with request for a temporary use of those two buildings. They granted his request wholeheartedly. And soon afterward, all the arrangements were made for Sayādawji to move and teach

mindfulness meditation to the yogis who came and took retreat under his guidance there.

Min-gone Sayādawji—having now got more and more disciples—had to move from Meghavan to Sāsana-pajjotika and continued his teaching of *vipassanā* according to *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. The number of meditators kept increasing and some of them had to stay in the temporary cottages newly built for them. Still the number of meditators was increasing gradually day by day and, therefore, some of them had to practice under the trees in secluded places in the monastery. Thus, *vipassanā* practice started to become popular among the devotees.

To Establish a New Meditation Center

With the increase of popularity of *vipassanā* practice, the number of meditators was rising up day by day. Some of them gained a penetrative insight into the ultimate reality (psycho-physical phenomena) and developed unshakable faith in the *dhamma* on the grounds of their experiential knowledge (*sanditṭhika*). They encouraged their kins and close friends to practice and at the same time they contributed to the meditators' needs such as food, lodging, etc., as much as they could. That was why Venerable Kelāsa had to think about establishing a new meditation center and started to discuss with his disciples and devotees.

Discussion About Establishing a New Center

Discussions about establishing a new center were held because the number of yogis kept increasing day by day in the

Sāsana-pajjotika monastery. Main participants in the discussions were Ms. Kon (from Dike-u township), Mr. Boe-han and Mrs. Mhum (from Pae-nwe-gon), Ms. Khin (Shwe-jin), Ms. Chone (Thaton), and Nun Kusala (Mawlamyine) who practiced as a laywoman and ordained as a nun afterward. Having discussed with devotees from different regions, the group led by Venerable Kelāsa unanimously went to inspect a place that he had already found and regarded as a place only virtuous ones would deserve. (That was the place on which the historical monastery that would be known as Jetavan was established. At that time, however, that place—belonging to government—was inaccessible to public because it was a thick jungle full of huge bushes and giant trees, however.)

With the Help of Commissioner U Bo Sa

The place Venerable Kelāsa and devotees went and inspected was a secluded place with no resident nearby and surrounded by the ancient city-wall in three directions: south, east and north. So, it was very remote and accessible to very few people. That was why all the inspectors were very satisfied with the place and unanimously gave their consent to its suitability. And then, they requested Min-gone Sayādawji to inspect whether the place was suitable. As soon as they got Sayādawji's consent, they tried their best to get five acres of land granted for religious purposes by the government¹⁹ with the help of Mr. Bo Sa, the then commissioner of the Thaton division. In this regard, four devotees took legal responsibility for 1.25 acre each. They included Ms. Chone (Thaton), Ms. Khin (Shwe-jin), Mr. Boe-han and Mrs. Mhum (Pae-nwe-gon), and Ms. Kon (Dike-u).

¹⁹ It refers to British government because it was during colonial days in Burma.

A Cottage Sponsored by Various Devotees

Venerable Kelāsa first set up the boundary of the monastery in four directions and then started cleaning the ground urgently and tirelessly with the help of many volunteers. And then he got a cottage built under a big mahogany tree and supervised all the construction works on that ground like the *vissa-kamma*²⁰ deity. Forty days later, he got a cottage of one hundred square feet, veranda-attached, sponsored by various devotees. At that time, a British deputy commissioner stopped by and exchanged conversation with Venerable Kelāsa as follows:

“Monk, what are you doing here?”

“I’m supervising the construction of a monastery.”

“Who granted you permission?”

“No, I’ve not been granted yet.”

“Is it lawful to do construction without permission?”

Fortunately, Ven. Kelāsa had already learned that Queen Victoria had granted the permission for a plot of land to be used for religious purpose. Referring to that, Venerable Kelāsa replied resourcefully as follows:

“Yes, this religious construction is legal because it has been 40 days since the application was submitted to Her Majesty Queen Victoria to grant it.”

“Alright, alright,” contentedly replied the British commissioner.

²⁰ *Vissa-kamma* is the celestial architect, a deity of the Cātumahārājika heaven. In the many jāataka stories, there were many episodes in which King of Deva (*Sakka*) assigned him to the construction for holy ones like the would-be Buddha.

(The author's note: This incident was what Ven. Kelāsa told me in person.)

Named as Jetavan

Venerable Kelāsa—working very hard to provide meditators with lodging sooner rather than later with purpose for proliferation of *vipassanā*—carefully planned to get buildings built on suitable locations for monks and lay meditators to live separately in the newly established center. Thus, he got two buildings built for Sayādawji and monks in the eastern part and four buildings for lay meditators in the western part including water-wells dug in suitable locations. Then, he humbly requested Sayādawji to move from Sāsana-pajjotika monastery to the newly established center, which was named “Jetavan” after Sayādawji’s original place.

(The author's note: According to Venerable Kelāsa, Sayādawji arrived at Thaton in 1277 (1915), spent one *vassa* in the Sāsana-pajjotika monastery, moved to the newly established center “Jetavan” and spent his first *vassa* there in 1278 (1916). According to what Sayādawji himself once said and what U Myat Kyaw has written in his book, the years were 1275 (1913) and 1276 (1914), respectively. In this case, the exact dates would not be that important. You may take what you want.)

King Manūhā

The newly established center known as Thaton Jetavan where Min-gone Sayādawji had dwelled for years was located between the inner city-wall and middle city-wall in

the northeast direction out of three city walls of Mon Kingdom established by King Manūhā. Even today we can see its landscape with hills and slopes that signify city-walls and moats of the ancient kingdom. From the time the *vipassanā* meditation center was established by the name of Jetavan till today, the center has been busy with meditators who come from many different regions of Burma and take meditation retreats as long as they wish.

A Mission Accomplished

Venerable Kelāsa—like a Vissakamma-deva—had put great effort in establishing the Thaton Min-gon Jetavan Meditation Center all the way from the beginning to the end. That Sayādaw is now seventy-seven years old, currently residing in his own monastery called San-daw-dwin just one furlong south of Shwe-maw-daw Pagoda, Pago City. He has been known as San-daw-dwin Sayādaw after his monastery and acting as one of the executive members of board of directors of Shew-jin School (*Shwe-jin-nikāya Mahā-nāyaka*). So, we all, the new generations, do owe a lot to Venerable Kelāsa for the historic mission he had accomplished by establishing such a great center with the purpose of helping people to gain right view and to put right effort in the right practice with full faith until they experience the taste of *magga*, *phala* and *nibbāna*. (Venerable Kelāsa is the one who deserve all the credit for Min-gone Jetavan Sayādaw's settlement in Thaton and the complete establishment of Min-gone Jetavan Center, indeed.)

Venerable Kelāsa's Reluctant Departure

It had been two years since Venerable Kelāsa worked tirelessly and wholeheartedly to have Jetavan Center well

established. He practiced the mindfulness meditation by himself and then persuaded his disciples and devotees to practice. Then, Min-gone Sayādawji settled down and became familiar with every thing there like weather, local people and so on, whereas Venerable Kelāsa's health condition was deteriorating. So, he reluctantly left Min-gone Jetavan Meditation Center for his native place in Bago city (about 100 miles north of Thaton). Venerable Kelāsa—wherever he is—keeps teaching his disciples and devotees *vipassanā* (mindfulness or vigilance (*appamāda*)), in which he has attained unshakable faith. In addition, he has even written some books on *vipassanā* meditation. (One of his books, “The Dhamma Taste,” will be published soon.)

Mahāsi Sayādaw

In 1293 (1931), a monk called Venerable Sobhana—with eight *vassa* (8 years of monkhood) and a degree of Dhamma-teacher (*Dhammācariya*)—resided in the Taung-wai-ga-lay monastery teaching Pāli texts as an assistant to its abbot. Nowadays, he has been known as Mahāsi Sayādaw of worldwide repute, the guiding teacher of Mahāsi Meditation Center, Hermitage Road, Rangoon. One day, Venerable Sobhana—with resolution to put his scriptural knowledge into practice—left Mawlamyain accompanied by Venerable Tejavanta, one of his fellow monks, taking only an alms-bowl and three robes along with him in search of proper guidance on how to practice *vipassanā* from empirical perspectives.

Meeting with Sayādawji

In search of practical advice on how to practice *vipassanā*, Venerable Sobhana first visited some places

such as Mt. Zinjite, Mt. Kelāsa and Mt. Swhe-yon-pya where there were U Own-Khain centers. And later, he learned that Thaton Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji had been teaching how to practice *vipassanā* from practical perspectives based on *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Then, he considered thus, “I’ve been well-versed in *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, its commentary and sub-commentary. However, Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji is not someone ordinary but an expert at the entire Pāli text, commentaries and sub-commentaries. On top of that, he is the one who put his scriptural knowledge into practice and has been giving practical guidance on *vipassanā* to thousands of devotees and disciples. I should practice *vipassanā* under the guidance of such a great teacher as Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji.” Then, he left Mt. Shwe-youn-pya for Thaton on foot. Thus the trip took him two days.

Venerable Sobhana arrived at Min-gone Jetavan on the 5th day of Daboun in 1293 (1931). On that very day, he requested Sayādawji to give a practical guidance on how to practice *vipassanā*. Around 7 o’clock in the evening that day, Sayādawji taught him how to practice *vipassanā* in detail from empirical perspective with reference to *Nettipakaraṇa Pāli* by explaining the following passage in detail:

Sato bhikkhu paribbaje’ti tena diṭṭha-dhamma-sukhavihāratthaṃ abhikkante paṭikkante ālokite, vilokite, samiñjite, pasārite, saṅghāṭi-patta-cīvara-dhāraṇe, asite, pīte, khāyite, sāyite, uccāra-passāva-kamme, gate, ṭhite, nisinne, suttee, jāgarite, bhāsīte, tuṅhī-bhāve, satena sampajānena vihātabbaṃ. (Netti-pakaraṇa Pāli, 19)

*“A monk, being mindful, should live a monastic life.”*²¹

This sentence means: “A monk—wishing to live a blissful life in this very life—should dwell with mindfulness and clear comprehension when going forward or backward, looking straight or aside, bending or stretching, carrying the double robe, alms bowl, upper and lower robes, eating, drinking, chewing, licking, defecating, urinating, going, standing, sitting, sleeping, awakening, speaking, or being quiet.”

Own Experience

Min-gone Sayādawji took about an hour explaining the above passage phrase by phrase in detail. Much to his delight and gratification, Venerable Sobhana—having listened to Sayādawji’s teaching—firmly realized that what Sayādawji had taught was totally based on his own experience of *dhamma* rather than scriptural knowledge.

Vipassanā is all about Mindfulness

Respectfully following the advice given by Sayādawji, Venerable Sobhana started his retreat from that very night. During the first few days, he thought the instruction given to note ‘going, standing, sitting, reclining, bending, stretching...’ would be the basic and further and higher instructions would be given later when he made remarkable progress in the practice. However, when his practice improved to some extent, he realized thus:

²¹ The phrase “*should live a monastic life*” is a translation for the verb “*paribbaje*,” (*pari+vaja*), which literally means ‘to wander about as a religious mendicant.’ In daily language, it means ‘to live a monastic life’.

“The mindfulness developed by noting one’s bodily and mental behaviors (such as going, standing, thinking, and so on) is not just the beginning of *vipassanā* practice, but the middle and the end of it too because by noting so one can see mind and matter as they really are. So, no further instruction would be needed.”

Even Divine Beings

Venerable Sobhana reported his contemplation to Sayādawji, who agreed with him and said that even divine beings like deities and superior beings (*brahma*) would not be able to see psycho-physical phenomena as they really are unless they learned the correct method from the Buddha. Only when they learn the correct method and practice accordingly, can they see psycho-physical phenomena as they really are and attain *maggā*, *phala* and *nibbāna*.

Healing Power of Enlightenment Factors

It had been exactly four months (from the 5th day of Daboun in 1293 (1931) to the 6th day of Warzo in 1294 (1932)) since Venerable Sobhana practiced tirelessly day and night under the guidance of Sayādawji. During that time, he fully focused on the practice without speaking even a single word except for something important or necessary. There were nights he spent practicing without sleep, and days spent practicing in walking meditation nonstop. It was a kind of miracle that he practiced that intensively for the whole four months without any health problem at all, even minor sickness like cold, headache,

and so on. When he informed Sayādawji of his excellent health condition, Sayādawji attributed it to the enlightenment-factors (*bojjhaṅga*). He explained that when enlightenment-factors arose in a yogi, they would in nature heal even the sickness a yogi had got before the retreat. So, for sure, they would protect a yogi from sickness that would otherwise afflict him or her during the retreat.

Own Interpretation May Deviate from the Path

During the four months of his intensive retreat, Venerable Sobhana got a chance to listen to Sayādawji's *Dhamma* talks just four or five times. Mostly, Sayādawji's talks included just a passage from Pāli cannon and the literal translation and very few explanations of it. He would say in conclusion thus, "This much would be enough for you; one's own interpretation may deviate from the real meaning." However, the listeners, experienced meditators, would understand Sayādawji's talks quite well. As required, he also explained the progressive stages of *vipassanā* insight and often concluded his talk that it was yogi who himself or herself would justify his or her own stage after having listened to this talk.

A Question Posed by Venerable Sobhana

On one occasion, Venerable Sobhana asked a scriptural question as follows:

"Venerable Sir, it is said in the Pāli text that one overcomes the ignorance of previous lives by means of the supernatural power of seeing one's previous lives

(*pubbenivāsānussatiñāna*). This statement seems to imply that a *sukka-vipassaka arahant*²² still has got the ignorance of previous lives because he does not obtain such supernatural power. In this regard, what would be your explanation?"

Below is Sayādawji's answer:

"By means of such supernatural power, one can keep away the ignorance of previous lives for long (*vikkhambhana-pahāna*), but not once and for all. Only by means of Noble Path (*arahatta-magga*) can one uproot ignorance once and for all (*samuccheda-pahāna*). By means of *arahatta-magga*, therefore, an arahant has totally eradicated ignorance even though he may not attain any supernatural power."

Venerable Sobhana initially planned to spend one year with Sayādawji, but the news that the abbot of the Taung-wai-ga-lay monastery in Maw-la-myain was seriously ill forced him to go back to Maw-la-myain on the 7th of the month of Warso in 1294 (1932).

A Member of Shwe-jin Order

Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji—having established a great meditation center by the name of Jetavan in Thaton—had been carrying out *sāsana* duty by tirelessly teaching devotees and disciples the *vipassanā* practice, the path of

²² '*Sukka-vipassaka arahanta*' means a person who is fully enlightened only by practicing pure *vipassanā* without developing high-level concentration (*samatha*) up to the attainment of supernatural power.

vigilance (*appamāda*) according to *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and become quite well known as a great meditation teacher.

At that time, Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji was a member of Shwe-jin²³ Order. Among its members, the unanimous agreement had been made that each and every member of the Shwe-jin had to help in whatever way possible at any time when there is work in the Shwe-jin Order. The members have lived up to the agreement. But Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji was somehow different from other members because he spent all his time carrying out his commitment to *vipassanā* (*vipassanā-dhura*) and also encouraged his disciples not to waste their time. He did not even teach Pāli text to young monks and novices (as other senior Sayādaws of Shwe-jin Order did). Instead, he fully dedicated his center only to *vipassanā*. Thus, the way he did was different from the way the other members did.

Difficult Situation

Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji—having spent his time practicing and teaching *vipassanā*—humbly requested the senior monks of the order to exempt him as a yogi from attending to the annual ceremony of *vinaya*²⁴ recitation in Thaton, which has been held every year as required by

²³ Shwejin Nikāya (also spelt Shwegyin Shwekyin Nikāya) is the name of the second largest monastic order of monks next to Sudhamma Order in Burma. Approximately five percent (fifty thousand) of Burma's monks belong to this order. It is one of nine legally sanctioned monastic orders in the country under the 1990 Law Concerning Saṃgha Organizations. Schwejin Order is a more orthodox order than Sudhamma Order, with respect to adherence to the Vinaya, and its leadership is more centralized and hierarchical.

²⁴ *Vinaya* means monastic rules and regulations.

Shwe-jin Order. His request was turned down, and he was given an ultimatum to do *vinaya* recitation without fail. Having no choice Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji recited the entire *dve-mātikā*²⁵ very smoothly without any mistake (in front of the examiners) because he had long memorized it very well and always kept in touch with it.

During that very *vinaya* recitation ceremony, it was a norm that a monk assigned by the senior monks had to sit on a throne and give *dhamma* talk to whomever was there. Jetavan Sayādaw was one of those assigned to give a talk. Unfortunately, however, he was replaced with another monk who was a bold, dynamic, and shamelessly outspoken preacher. As soon as that preacher was on the lecture throne, he started acting as if he were a great scholar, spoke whatever he thought right, and made sarcastic comments non-stop like shooting with a machine-gun. Below is a passage from his talk:

“I’ve been told that many *dhamma*-seekers here in Thaton have even attained *magga-phala* enlightenments, one stage after another consecutively (by noting such physical actions as bending or stretching and so on). Everybody, even a animal, knows bending and stretching; a dog knows it; a pig knows it; this is the knowledge all dogs and pigs have got in common.”

Min-gone Sayādawji—as if he were deaf—just listened with calmness and equanimity to such a harsh speech.

²⁵ *Dve-mātikā* means two sets of monastic codes: one belongs to monks and another to nuns.

Again, Problem with *Sīmā* and *Kathina*

Moreover, a plan to consecrate a *sīmā* hall in Jetavan Monastery was rejected (by the Shwejin Order) by denouncing it as an improper act. And also there arose an intense dispute about *kathina* ceremony celebrated by Venerable Paññāsāmi, the abbot of a forest monastery called Abhaya-giri. Thus, Mingone Jetavan Sayādawji—as a member of Shwe-jin Order—had to deal with the issues that had nothing to do with the practice.

To Be Excluded from Shwe-jin Order

In the end, these conditions forced him to quit Shwe-jin Order and live an independent life in solitude. So, Mingone Jetavan Sayādawji spent the rest of his life enjoying independent and easy-going lifestyle (*appa-kicca, sallahuka*) most suitable to a monk. He devoted all his time and energy to the practice without engaging in any particular religious order and without bothering about anything but practice. (How admirable and imitable Sayādawji was!)

Even Fisherwomen Mimicking

When Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji had established a meditation center and taught *vipassanā* in a very simple way according to *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the number of his followers grew into a big association while there were many opponents and critics. Following the hearsay some senior monks stood up for the wrong party, and others carefully looked for the proof in the Pāli texts in order to argue (against or for the method taught by Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji). Not to

surprise, only a few people can realize that empirical knowledge gained by practicing *vipassanā* (*bhāvanāmaya-ñāṇa*) is different from intellectual knowledge gained by learning scriptures (*sutamaya-ñāṇa*). These two are never the same although both are knowledge. However well-versed a monk may be in the Pāli texts, he may not realize the psycho-physical phenomena from the practical perspective. One's experiential knowledge of the characteristics of mind and matter is always accurate even though one may not be able to explain them in scriptural terms.

Suppose, for example, a monk—having learned the Pāli text very well—understands what the four noble truths are. But such scriptural understanding would be totally different from the empirical realization that would arise when one attains *magga-phala*. One will empirically realize the four noble truths and become a noble person by developing continuous mindfulness and progressive stages of *vipassanā* insight until *magga-phala* enlightenment. He may not be able to explain the four noble truths in scriptural terms, however. Some pāli scholars young and old—analyzing and judging Min-gone Sayādawji's empirical knowledge from scriptural point of view—stood up for those who made a mockery of his method with such heavy sarcasm as follows:

“*Dhamma* is all about noting.”

“*Dhamma* is to note bending and stretching.”

“Noting is the *dhamma* that leads to *magga, phala* and *nibbāna*.”

“*Vipassanā* is just to note.”

It is said that even some women—selling fish in the bazaar—made fun of this method by mimicking, “lifting,

lifting; beating, beating; killing, killing” when they lifted a weight and beat the fish to death with it.

Following the Steps of Noble Disciples

It is quite usual that people who have not yet realized the truth are most likely to make wrong comments. It is a norm in life that one has to encounter opponents and critics inevitably. Even the Buddha himself in his earlier days had to struggle dealing with opponents and critics and their wrong views and false doctrines by standing up for the truths firmly. So did the noble disciples of the Buddha. Having fully understood this norm, Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji—following the steps of those noble disciples—ignored unkind comments and kept helping people to gain right view.

Like the Buddha and King Kosala

Having thus followed the footsteps of the Buddha and his noble disciples, Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji kept teaching in daily language how to develop the progressive stages of *vipassanā* insight by developing the four foundations of mindfulness. He taught in many different places, first at Goo-ga-lay Hermitage in the Middle Forest Western Monastery, and then in his native place Kan-ji-gon village, where he spent just one *vassa* and came back to the first place. And then, he moved to the town of Myo-Hla where he spent two *vassas* teaching *vipassanā* there and also in many other towns and cities around. And then he ended up setting up a big meditation center where he spent ten years teaching *vipassanā* to an increasing number of meditators, both lay and monastic, until many of them reached the satisfactory

stage. Thus, his center was always busy with *dhamma*-seekers from all over Burma.

Thus, the opportune moment for liberation (*vimitti-yuga*) kept gathering momentum. So, those who would like to be liberated from the torturous cycle of suffering increased in number. But there were still many people who worked hard without success in search of liberation, as they could not find a right teacher and right method. Indeed, very few methods can be found to be right, but many others to be wrong. There are also some hypocritical monastic individuals who keep persuading people to follow the wrong path that they teach with sole purpose of personal gain and fame. Some people—convinced by the wrong teachers—got confused between the wrong path and the right, and made offensive comments on Sayādawji.

This incident may remind you of the early years of the Buddha's dispensation, when there were many ascetics who founded their own religious sects. They each hypocritically claimed that they had attained omniscience (Buddhahood) and created the doctrines based on their own idea and persuaded people to follow them. Thus, many people got confused between genuine and bogus. During such a messy period, King Kosala met the Buddha for the first time. Then, no wonder, the king asked, "Are you one of those who claim to have attained omniscience?" Given this question, King Kosala for sure found it very hard to decide who would be the real Buddha.

So, King Kosala seemed to be quite hesitant to agree with the Buddha who rightly and directly claimed that he was the Buddha. That is why the king treated the Buddha

not very respectfully when he met the Buddha for the first time. In the same way, when there were many different teachers teaching many different doctrines, most people got confused between genuine and bogus. No wonder that they found it hard to agree with Min-gone Sayādawji who taught *vipassanā* based on *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* even though he rightly claimed, “This is the only way.” So, those who could appreciate and practiced mindfulness were far outnumbered by those who were not interested in Sayādawji’s teaching and made negative comments on it.

Min-gone Sayādawji’s Sāsana Principle

For a good monk, there are two duties to carry out: the duty of learning Pāli scripture (*gantha-dhura*) and duty of practicing *vipassanā* correctly for the liberation from the torturous cycle of suffering (*vipassanā-dhura*). Following the footsteps of the noble disciples, Min-gone Sayādawji carried out both *Sāsana* duties correctly and wholeheartedly and kept walking on the right path unhesitatingly and irreversibly. And he clearly showed his devotees and disciples the path he had walked on devotedly and tirelessly.

If we all monks follow the Sayādawji’s footstep by carrying out two noble duties in Holy Order, by learning the Buddha’s teachings and by practicing *vipassanā* as long as we live as monks, I (the author) do believe, the Buddha’s Holy Order will definitely outshine any other religions. So, it is high time for us to understand that we, as the Buddha’s sons, are fully responsible for the Buddha’s Holy Order to thrive well. We should carry out

sāsana duties effectively and tirelessly in the same way the Buddha's noble disciples did in old days.

Return to Min-gone

Thus, Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji shined out during seemingly waning period of *sāsana*'s glory. He himself walked straight on the right path by following the footsteps of the noble disciples and showed the right path to his disciples and devotees all over Burma. Sayādawji compassionately created the great chance for people to experience *magga*, *phala* and *nibbāna* while the Buddha's Holy Order was still shining. In the end, he settled down here in Thaton and established a great meditation center and continued teaching his disciples and devotees from all walks of life. He was endowed with such qualities of a good monk such as practicing correctly (*suppatipanna*), practicing honestly (*ujuppatipanna*), practicing to attain enlightenment (*ñāyappatipanna*), and practicing to be worthy of respects (*sāmici-ppatipanna*). It had been ten years since he started teaching *vipassanā* from both scriptural and empirical perspectives. He got many followers both lay and monastic who took refuge in his center by practicing *vipassanā* under his guidance.

Now, Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji felt satisfied that he had laid down the guideline on *vipassanā* practice that would help *dhamma*-seekers to walk straight on the right path. Subsequently, it occurred to him that it would be right time for him to write the commentary on *Petaḥkopadesa* in *Pāli*, which had been his dream since he was a young monk of eight vassas (28 years of age). Hence, he decided to go back to Goo-ga-lay Hermitage in the Middle Forest

Western Monastery, Min-gone, Upper Burma. With such a lofty aim, he as a good monk took nothing but one alms-bowl and three robes with him and left alone for the railway station where he would take a train to Upper Burma. He did not inform of his journey lest it delayed his plan. At that time, Mr. Boe Sa, the Thaton Commissioner—having learned somehow Sayādawji was at the railway station—rushed to the station and humbly requested him not to leave Thaton. But Sayādawji decisively replied that he would leave anyway. Then, Mr. Boe Sa himself made all the arrangements for Sayādawji's journey and got attendants who would take care of his needs on his way back to Upper Burma.

Further Contribution to the Pāli Scripture

In the early years of his monastic career, he had undertaken the first *sāsana*'s duty of learning and teaching the Pāli scripture (*gantha-dhura*) successfully in a very exceptional manner. Regarding the duty of practice, he dwelled in a secluded place and put great effort in the intensive retreat for years until he gained the stages of penetrative insight. And then, he devoted his time to teaching *vipassanā* to others from both scriptural and empirical perspectives out of great compassion (*vipassanā-dhura*). He went to many different places and gave *dhamma* talks on *vipassanā*. Finally, he ended up having established a meditation center where he continued teaching the *vipassanā* to many devotees and disciples from all over Burma. So, he fulfilled these two *sāsana* duties by devoting all his time and energy.

However, when he got back to Min-gone, he dwelled in solitude at a monastery in Goo-ga-lay Hermitage, which was built with the generous sponsorship from his two closed disciples Mr. Thit and Mrs. Kyawt from Mandalay, he postponed his teaching *vipassanā* and started his further contribution to the Pāli texts by writing the Pāli commentary on *Peṭakopadesa Paḷi*.

Now, I (the author) would like to conclude this Part-II by wishing sincerely: “May all new generations walk straight on the right path by following the footsteps of Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawgyi.”

PART-III

The Commentary on *Peṭakopadesa Pāli*

Now, Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawgyi—having spent almost eight years in Thaton teaching the four foundations of mindfulness—approached the 50 years of age with dignity. With the purpose of writing the commentary on *Peṭakopadesa Pāli*, he left Thaton for Min-gone, his native place. Back to the Goo-ga-lay hermitage in Min-gone, he lived in solitude in a small cottage 10ft by 10ft with a 20ft-long veranda attached in a remote place away from residential area, donated by Mr. Thit and Mrs. Kyawt of Tha-ye Bazaar, Mandalay.

(**The author's note:** I (the author) visited that very cottage where Sayādawgyi had dwelled writing the Pāli commentary. I found it to be located somewhere between Jetavan Hermitage far west of Min-gone and Lake Mezali on the foot of Mt. Shwe-myin-din. I saw the signboards that read “Jetavan Monastery” and “Thi-ta-lone Hermitage.”)

Memorize *Peṭakopadesa Canon*

Having thus dwelled in solitude in a remote place with the purpose of writing the Pāli commentary on *Peṭakopadesa Canon*, Sayādawji first memorized the entire *Peṭakopadesa* text. And then, he went through the whole three Baskets or

five collections of Buddha's teachings and their commentaries, sub-commentaries, sub-subcommentaries, translations, glossaries and explanations of difficult words and phrases. Only after having thus read Pāli scriptures in further detail, did he start working on writing the Pāli commentary on *Peṭakopadesa*. The passage below was from his preface of that book:

“I, a senior monk by the name of Nārada, will methodically write the Pāli Commentary on *Peṭakopadesa* that consists of the *dhamma* talks given by Venerable Mahā-Kaccāyana who had been honored by the Buddha as the foremost among the monks who could elaborate the Buddha's teachings and endowed with six kinds of Super-knowledge (*chalabhiñña*) and four kinds of Analytical Knowledge (*paṭisambhidā-magga*).

Writing a commentary is the domain accessible only to great people of penetrative knowledge and profound wisdom. So, it is a very challenging task for me to write a commentary, indeed. However, the Buddha's Holy Teachings and the commentaries on three sections of Holy Teaching²⁶ including Scriptural Judgment (*Vinicchaya*), Great Criteria (*Mahāpades*)²⁷, and Directions or Definitions (*Upadesa*) are still available. In addition, the reference called Way of Interpreting (*Naya, Nissaya*) laid down by the three consecutive Buddhist councils are still available, too. Depending on these great sources, I will try

²⁶ Three Sections of Holy Teaching: teaching on how to gain the scriptural knowledge (*pariyatti*), on how to put that knowledge into practice (*paṭipatti*), and on how to attain a breakthrough into the truth (*paṭivedha*).

²⁷ For assessing the authenticity of teachings, there are four criteria (*Mahāpadesa*) the Buddha laid down. Please refer to Mahā-padesa Sutta (Anguttara, Volume-1, Pāli page-487)

my best to write the Pāli commentary on *Peṭakopadesa* according to the five collections of the Buddha's teachings (*pañca-nikāya*) applying the Netti-methods. The writing will sustain the authenticity of the text without impure doctrines but in line with the pure doctrine of the scholars of Mahā-vihāra school.”

(The Author's Note: Regarding how he managed to write this commentary, Venerable Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji once told me that he first memorized the entire Pāli canon of *Peṭakopadesa* and then mentally wrote the commentary on it by making definitions of difficult words and clarification of unclear points. Only when all these definitions and clarifications were satisfying to him, did he write them down on the paper. Thus, he had to take four years to accomplish this mission. Endowed with such incomparable effort and profound wisdom, Sayādawji was a really admirable person, indeed! He finished this commentary in 1286 (1924) and got it published in 1288 (1926). So, there were two years in between. Given these data, he must have been 52 years of age at that time. Moreover, a Pāli scholar called Mr. Boe Kha helped get a copy of this Pāli canon inscribed on the historic marble slabs of the 5th Buddhist council sponsored by King Min-don.)

The Commentary on *Peṭakopadesa* Canon Published

By virtue of his relentless effort, Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji successfully completed the commentary on *Peṭakopadesa* and his dream came true. He accomplished his mission that ordinary people can't even imagine. In honor of his accomplishment, his dedicated merchant disciples, Mr. Boehan and Mrs. Mhon from Pe-nwe-gon township, humbly

requested the permission to print it so that it would last as long as the Buddha's Holy Order does. Thus, with Sayādawji's consent and generous sponsorship from Mr. Boe-han and Mrs. Mhon and their two children, Mr. Saw and Miss. Nu, the printing press called Ratana-siddhi in Mandalay printed the commentary. Then it was distributed all over Burma and some neighboring countries alike.

***Peṭakopadesa* Inscribed on Marble Slabs**

It took Sayādawji four years to write, review, and refine the Commentary on *Peṭakopadesa* consisting of 417 pages until he became totally satisfied with it. He then allowed it to be printed and distributed all over Burma. Many scholars—having read it thoroughly—were amazed by its great quality and gave positive response to it. So, Hermit U Khantī²⁸ who dwelled on the foot of Mt. Mandalay humbly requested Sayādawji to allow him to honor Sayādawji by having such a historic and significant accomplishment by a Burma-born monk inscribed on the marble slabs so that it would remain intact as long as sāsana would last hypothetically 5000 years. When Sayādawji gave his consent to the request, Hermit U Khantī delightfully got the commentary of *Peṭakopadesa* inscribed on 28 marble slabs donated by generous supporters and then erected them in Canda-muni Pagoda built by King Thee-baw.

²⁸ U Khanti performed vast renovation projects throughout Burma during his lifetime, with a focus on remote hills and forest areas. One of his historical projects was to build a brick house each for 1772 marble slabs in which the Pāli texts (*ti-pīṭaka*) were inscribed under the sponsorship of King Mindon. They include 395 slabs for Vinaya Piṭaka, 1,207 Sutta Piṭaka, and 170 for Abhidhamma Piṭaka. They were all erected in M.E. 1275 (C.E. 1913) at the compound of Sandamuni Pagoda.

Request for Translation of the Commentary

U Khantī—a great and graceful hermit whose acts of loving-kindness greatly impressed people of those days—became extremely happy when he accomplished the project of inscribing the commentary on 28 marble slabs. Subsequently, his faith in Sayādawji immensely increased; therefore, he requested Sayādawji to translate his commentary into Burmese himself. The same request was also made by some senior Sayādawjis such as Pon-doun-koo Sayādaw, Chan-thar-ji Sayādaw, and so on. They said that the translation made by the author himself would be the best and the most accurate available. For some reasons, however, Min-gone Sayādawji waited for a suitable time to do that.

Some More Books

(A Booklet Titled *Sajjetāvidhi Vissajjanā*)

Around that time, a devotee called Saya Kye from Pyin-ma-nar City²⁹ posed eight questions first to Ledi Sayādawji who did not reply to him for some reasons. During that time, Min-gone Sayādawji was quite well known all over Burma. So, Saya Kye—with the help of his close friend, Mr. Kyaw Doon (a Burmese scholar and the then Deputy Commissioner of Thaton)—got access to Min-gone Sayādawji and asked him the eight questions. Initially, Min-gone Sayādawji, like Ledi Sayādawji, ignored him, but later at the humble request of Mr. Kyaw Doon (the deputy

²⁹ Nowadays, Pyin-ma-nar is the city where the new capital of Myanmar by the name of Nay-pyi-daw has been established.

commissioner), he gave answers that were later compiled into a booklet titled *Sajjetāvidhi Vissajjanā*.

From *Paṭisambhidā-magga* Pāli Text
(A Booklet Titled *Ārambhāvidhi Vissajjanā*)

Although Mr. Kyaw Doon's eight questions were well answered by Sayādawji, many people still found the answers hard to understand clearly because the questions were profound but answered in brief. At their request, Sayādawji—referring to the passage from *Paṭisambhidā-magga, ñāṇa-kathā* and its Burmese translation and some other relevant Pāli texts—clarified the procedure and method of practice, and progressive *vipassanā* insight in detail. These clarifications of the eight questions were also compiled into a booklet titled, *Ārambhāvidhi Vissajjanā*.

“Forty Perspectives”

At the request of Maung Byot, one of his devotees from the Ye-dar-she township, Sayādawji wrote “Forty Perspectives” that include the perspective of impermanence, the perspective of suffering, and so on. From these perspectives, a *vipassanā* meditator can understand the conditioned phenomena (mind and matter) well. With reference to *Paṭisambhidā-magga* and other relevant texts, he wrote in detail how a meditator would gain a breakthrough in *magga* enlightenment by means of the insight into impermanence, by means of the insight into suffering, and by means of the insight into non-self. Thus, out of compassion he worked hard to help people.

Approaching to a Secluded Place

Sayādawji—as a shining example of what a good yogi should be like—always loved to dwell in a secluded place in the forest (for an intensive retreat). One day, it occurred to Sayādawji that Thaton was a city blessed with the good weather suitable for him to spend the rest of his life (perhaps, that was what he had originally planned). However, Min-gone was not only his native place but also the place where he became fully ordained and studied the entire Pāli texts until he became an expert in them. Moreover, in this very Min-gone he rediscovered the correct method of *vipassanā* and practiced it until he accomplished his ultimate goal. For these reasons, Min-gone was a place, he thought, he should not abandon. When he mentioned this thought, his dedicated devotees realized that they needed to establish a new decent center for Sayādawji's convenience. So, the construction of a monastery was started with contributions from his dedicated devotees including those led by Nun Kusala from Mawlamyain, donors led by Ms. Kyaw Tee, Ms. Khanti, the commissioner Mr. Boe Sa from Thaton, devotees led by Ms. Kon from Dike-oo, Mr. Boe Han and Mrs. Mhon from Penwegon. Thus, the construction of a monastery by the name of Jetavan Hermitage was started in 1288 (1926).

In the construction of a new monastery or hermitage, Venerable Pāmokkha, the current abbot of that very hermitage, fully engaged. One day during the rain retreat, a group of bad people came and robbed the monastery attendants, which bothered Sayādawji so much that he went back to Thaton at the end of the *vassa* entrusting all

the monastic obligations to Ven. Pāmokkha. When he was back to Thaton, Sayādawji wrote a letter to his devotees and disciples of different towns and cities directing them to select suitable monks who would teach *vipassanā* at the centers in their respective regions and then to send those monks to his newly established Min-gone Hermitage in order to get training under his guidance.

When Sayādawji was back to Min-gone, monks came to Sayādawji's newly established place in Min-gone as directed in his letter. They included Venerable Paññājota from Lepadon Township, Venerable Visuddha from Dikeoo Township, Venerable Paññāvamsa from Mawlamyint City, Venerable Tajavanta from Shwe-Taung Township, and so on. Sayādawji let them stay in the newly built monastery while he himself stayed alone in a cottage. Then, he taught them the Path of Purification (*Visuddhi-magga*), all the stages of purification starting from the purification of view (*ditṭhi-visuddhi*) up to the purification of knowledge and view (that represents the *magga*-enlightenment). Thus, he trained them to be qualified teachers in four months. His translation of *Visuddhi-magga* during that time was later printed with the title "The New Translation of *Visuddhi-magga*," which has been serving as a reliable scriptural source for meditation teachers.

Back to Thaton Again

In appreciation of his devotees' generous contribution to the establishment of new hermitage, Sayādawji stayed with his monks in the newly established hermitage and conducted the training course for teachers based on the

‘Path of Purification.’ So his devotees were very gratified with his *sāsana* works in the new center they had contributed to. After the four-month teacher training finished, all the monks left for their own places and Sayādawji himself —accompanied Venerable Visuddha from Dike-oo Township—also left for Thaton, as the rain retreat (*vassa*) for 1289 (1927) was approaching.

Three Volumes of Translation

In the month of Nayon (the 3rd month in Burmese calendar), Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji was back to Thaton again after having conducted the training course for teachers in Min-gone, Upper Burma. Then he started translating his commentary on *Peṭakopadesa*, as requested previously by Poun-toun-koo Sayādaw, Chan-thar-ji Sayādaw and Hermit U Khantī. He finished the first volume of the translation at 9:00 o’ clock in the morning on the 9th day of Taw-tha-lin (the 6th month in Burmese calendar), in 1290 (1928). And then, being occupied with something else, he could only finish the 2nd volume at 1:00 p.m., on the 8th day of Wasoe Month (the 4th month of the year) in 1297 (1935), and the 3rd and last volume at 4:00 p.m., on the 6th day of Dagoon month (the 1st month of the year) in 1298 (1936). Thus, he completed the three volumes of Burmese translation of his commentary on *Peṭakopadesa* in Pāli.

“Guide to Nibbāna”

In early days of the Jetavan Meditation Center, Mr. Boe Sa (the then commissioner of Thaton) and his employees often volunteered to clean bushes and wild plants off the

center. In appreciation of their volunteer works, Sayādawji wrote a booklet titled ‘Guide to *Nibbāna*’ in a very clear Burmese language so that his disciples or yogis can understand it easily. The booklet is based on the following *Dhammapada* Verse (No. 283):

*Vanam chindatha mā rukkham, vanato jāyate bhayam
Chetvā vanam vanathañca, nibbānā hotha bhikkhavo.*

*Cut down the forest, but not trees; dangers arise from
the forest.*

*Having cut down both the forest and underbrush,
Monks, be tranquil.³⁰*

(**The Author’s Note:** “Guide to *Nibbāna*” is a unique and remarkable booklet, written in a very clear Burmese language.)

Compilation of *Vinicchaya*

There are monastic rules and regulations (*vinaya*), which have been laid down by the Buddha out of great compassion to his disciples. According the *vinaya*, certain kinds of foods and drinks are allowable during the certain period of time. Confusingly enough, food and drink are classified into four kinds³¹ according to time (*kālīka*). So,

³⁰ According to the commentary, “forest” here means forest of craving, not real forest.

³¹ According to *vinaya*, food and drink are classified into four kinds:

1. *Yāva-kālīka* is food and drink (like rice and milk) that a monk is allowed to accept and consume during the time from dawn to noon. So, rice and milk, for instance, offered this morning is only allowable this morning, but not afternoon or in the next morning.

he wrote a booklet titled *Vinicchaya-samūha* (Scriptural Judgment) to help overcome the confusion between allowable and not allowable food and drink at the certain time with solid references to Pāli canon, commentaries and sub-commentaries. This book satisfied the *vinaya* scholars, indeed.

The Commentary on *Milinda-Pañhā*

There was no commentary on *Milinda-Pañhā* (King Milinda's Questions). So, Moe-ñhin Sayādawji, renowned like the sun and moon in Burma, came down to Thaton and met Min-gone Sayādawji in person and made a humble request to him to write the commentary on *Milinda-Pañhā*. At his request, Min-gone Sayādawji started writing the commentary on *Milinda-Pañhā* in the year of 1300 (1938) when he was then exactly 70 years old, and finished this commentary of 505 pages in 1303 (1941). How amazing his accomplishment was! Unfortunately, however, he could not get it printed soon afterward because the WWII broke out at home and abroad around that time. Only after the WWII, in 1310 (1948), could this book be printed and distributed all over Burma by Pariyatti-sāsana-nuggaha Organization (Rangoon) under the guidance of Insein Min-gon Sayādaw.

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2. *Yāma-kālīka* is certain kinds of drinks allowed to accept and consume during the time from dawn to the last part of the night, like lime juice, etc. So, it will not be allowable when dawn breaks on the next day.
 3. *Sattāha-kālīka* is certain kind of food allowable for seven days counted from the day it is offered; they include butter, ghee, honey, and so on.
 4. *Yāva-jīvika* is medicine and medicinal leaves, roots, etc., allowable for the whole life after being offered one time.

When this commentary was released, some Pāli scholars found disputable points there especially about Bhikkhunī Order and Kathina. That is why Sayādawji translated the Kathina-section from that very commentary and Kathina-sections from the 3rd and 5th volumes of *Vinaya* Pāli canon (*Mahāvagga* and *Parivāra*). And then, he put them together into a booklet by the name of “Translation of Kathina” and distributed them all over Burma.

“Progressive Vipassanā Insight”

Min-gone Sayādawji walked himself on the Path of Vigilance by developing mindfulness according to *Satipatthāna Sutta* until he reached the satisfactory stage. Since 1270 (1908) after he had taken his successful retreat, he kept teaching *vipassanā* practice in practical aspect with the intention to share his experience of *dhamma* taste with his devotees and disciples. Now, he felt inspired to write a book with the purpose to leave his legacy that would firmly stand up for his teaching of true method and serve as reliable guideline for the new generations after he passed away.

With that purpose, he wrote an amazing book on “Progressive Stages of *Vipassanā* Insight,” from both scriptural and experiential perspectives, based on relevant Pāli discourses and in line with the Path of Purification and its Great Sub-commentary (*mahā-ṭīkā*). It has detailed explanations of how to observe phenomena from the *vipassanā* perspective, how to discern mind and matter, how to reduce and uproot mental defilements, and how to

accomplish one's spiritual cultivation (*bhāvanā*). Thus, he clearly stated the progressive stages of *vipassanā* insight starting from the insight into mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*) up to the *magga-phala* enlightenment and the subsequent knowledge characterized by reflection on enlightenment (*paccavekkhaṇā-ñāṇa*). He finished this great book at 4:00 p.m., on the 14th day after the full-moon day of Daboun Month, in 1304 (1942), and published it in 1310 (1948). Since then, this book has firmly served as a reliable source of *vipassanā* for yogis and teachers alike.

An Article on Phala Absorption

Regarding how to get absorbed in *Phala* enlightenment, people from many different towns and cities came and asked Sayādawji questions about it. That was why Sayādawji wrote an article on "Phala Absorption" with reference to *Paṭisambhidā-magga* and many other Pāli texts. He gave detail explanations of the way *sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmī*, *anāgāmī* and *arahant* get absorbed in *phala* in both general and specific aspects (*sāmañña* and *visesa*). By the year 1314 (1952) when he finished this booklet titled "An Article on Phala Absorption," he had already been 84 years of age. After this, he wrote no more books. So, this book turned out to be the last among the great books he had written. I (the author) was the one who had to write this article as dictated by Sayādawji. Later on, he grew physically weaker and weaker and had to devote all his time and energy to his own interest (of liberation) in solitude.

I (the author) as his permanent caretaker found that Sayādawji had practiced *vipassanā* day and night until his

last breath. No doubt, he had long realized the five aggregates as a heavy burden of solid suffering as the Buddha said in the following verse:

*Bhārā have pañcakkhandhā; bhārahāro ca puggalo
Bhār'ādānaṃ dukhaṃ loke; Bhāra-nikkhepanaṃ
sukhaṃ*³²

Burden, indeed, is the five aggregates; a person is a burden-carrier.

Carrying the burden is woe on earth; dropping it down is a bliss.

So, I was there to witness Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji's heroic effort in accomplishing his spiritual purpose in time, by enduring the heavy burden of his body, by ignoring all worldly things, by spending all his time with *vipassanā* day and night without caring for sleep, and by taking just enough food for his survival especially during his last two years from the age of 85 (1953) to 86 (1954).

On one occasion when he went up the upstairs of his monastery, he fell down from an upper step to the floor. I found that he stood up by himself without complaining about pain. On another occasion, he—walking back and forth as he did routinely—became feeble and fell down to the ground. People nearby rushed and tried to help him stand up, but he rejected their help and stood by himself. Although there was a caretaker around him day and night, he took care of himself and rarely allowed others to help

³² Bhāra Sutta, Khandha-salāyatana Pāli Page-22

him. He ate the moderate amount of suitable food without any complaint. When people asked whether he liked the food they offered, he never said that he liked it or not; instead, he just replied, "I eat as needed." When people asked frivolous or social questions, he just kept totally silent without giving any response. One day, Mr. Kywe, a physician from Rangoon, recommended some kinds of medicine and diet, Sayādawji replied, "We don't take any medicine." When caretakers offer to do something for him, he always rejected them. So, they had to figure out what should be done for him.

For sure, Sayādawji felt increasingly fed up with the heavy burden of the body. Later, he stopped eating rice and drank milk only. Around that time, he often said to his devotees, "I'm approaching death." One day in the month of Thadinjut, 1316 (1954), Nun Kusala from Mawlamyain, one of his dedicated devotees, visited him. He told her assertively, "I won't go beyond this year." Having understood what he meant, the nun went back to her place and managed to get a casket for Sayādawji, and came back to Sayādaw's place and stayed there taking care of Sayādawji's needs for the last two months of the year (Dabodwe and Daboun in Burmese). Just three or four months after his words, "*I won't go beyond this year,*" he took his final peacefulness in the month of Daboun, the last month of the year. It may remind you of the Buddha who had predicted his final peacefulness three months ahead.

People from Everywhere Came to See Him

Having spent two years in solitude ignoring all the worldly things, Sayādawji's appearance was found to be

totally calm and tranquil. And his remarkably peaceful facial expression simply witnessed his victory over the vicissitudes of life, signifying his attainment of arahantship. By such significant changes in his personality, peoples became convinced that he had become an *arahant*. With such faith, many people from everywhere came along with several kinds of things to offer to him and paid their final homage to him. Thus the entire monastery became crowded (during his final days). Among others were some foreigners such as Venerable Loka-nātha, an Italian monk who came and gave his final salute to Sayādawji with strong faith in Sayādawji as an *Arahant* and offered one alms-bowl and three robes, and a female devotee from Bangkok, Thailand who came and offered Sayādawji one set of Bangkok silk robe.

And Sayādawji was visited and given final salute by many other honorable guests such as Mr. Nu (the then prime minister of Union of Burma) accompanied by Mr. Bha Swe (the then minister for religious affairs), Mr. Own Khin (the owner of Burmese Time News Paper), and many Burmese physicians such as Mr. Ba, Mr. Tun, Mr. Ba Maung and so on. They spent three days there and asked some religious questions. Their questions and Sayādawji's answers were recorded in modern devices. Below are some of their questions and answers:

Q: What Dhamma do we have to practice?

A: Observe *anicca, dukkha and anatta*.

Q: What are *anicca, dukkha and anatta*, sir?

A: *Anicca* is constituted of *a + nicca*, meaning "not-permanent"; *dukkha* is the combination of *du + kha*,

meaning, “distressing”; *anatta* consists of *na* + *atta*, meaning “not yours; not in your control.” This is all you can learn from Three Piṭakas.

Q: What does *Piṭaka* mean?

A: It is a basket (three baskets of holy teachings).

Q: What is *sotāpanna*?

A: It is of two words, *sota* and *āpanna*. Here, *sota* means *magga* enlightenment and *āpanna* means someone who gets into it.

Q: What do we have to practice to become a *sotāpanna*?

A: It is said, “*eka-ñāṇena yuttam*,” meaning single knowledge is sufficient. There is no other way. All you need to know is *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*.

Q: What do you mean by “single knowledge (*eka-ñāṇena*)”?

A: That is *Arahatta-phala* knowledge. That is all, nothing else.

Q: Is the body of an *Arahant* decomposed?

A: Yes, it is.

Q: It is said that some are not decomposed, what is your explanation of that?

A: It is all about their will. Their bodies won’t be decomposed if they’ve willed so.

When answers were given, the devotees considerately left him alone.

Moreover, devotees including Mr. Aung Myint (Thaton), Mr. Kan Lhain (minister), Mr. Own Phe, and so on came to Sayādawji and raised questions as how Bhikkhunī Order would possibly revive and how the *kathina* would be celebrated in harmony with the monastic code. These were arguable points Sayadawji had made in his commentary on *Milinda-pañhā*.

Then, Sayādawji confidently gave his answers as follows:

We don't write without reference to Pāli text; Here is what is exactly said in *Cūla-vagga*³³:

“Monks I allow *bhikkhus* to ordain *bhikkhunī*.”
(*Anujānāmi, Bhikkhave, bhikkhūhi bhikkhunīyo upasampādetuṃ.*)

And Sayādawji explained further with reference to the following Pāli passage from the commentary:

“*Anujānāmi, Bhikkhave, bhikkhūhi bhikkhunīyo upasampādetu*”nti ***imāya anupaññattiyā*** *bhikkhū pañca-sata-bhikkhuniyo Mahā-pajāpatiyā saddhiṃ vihāriniyo hutvā upasampādetuṃ. Iti tā sabbāpi ekato upasampannā nāma ahesuṃ.*

By the phrase “*by this supplementary rule*” (*imāya anupaññattiyā*) the commentary explicitly describes these words of the Buddha “*Anujānāmi, Bhikkhave, bhikkhūhi bhikkhunīyo upasampādetuṃ*” (“*Monks I allow bhikkhus to ordain bhikkhunī*”) as a supplementary rule. The

³³ It refers to the 4th volume of monastic code (page 447)

supplementary rule laid down by the Buddha should be unbreakable for 5,000 years of the Buddha's dispensation altogether. Referring to this Pāli text and commentary, I've written that bhikkhus can ordain bhikkhunī. The important point is whether this supplementary rule is valid or invalid. If it is invalid, bhikkhus can't ordain bhikkhunī; if it is still valid, bhikkhus can ordain bhikkhunī. Remember this point.

Points Made Regarding Bhikkhunī

In favor of the possibility of the Bhikkhuni Order's revival, Venerable Sayādawji wrote in Pāli in his commentary on *Milinda-pañhā* as follows:

*Bhagavato sabbaṃ kaya-kammaṃ ñāṇa-pubbaṅgamaṃ
ñāṇā-nuprivattaṃ. Sabbaṃ vacī-kammaṃ ñāṇa-
pubbaṅgamaṃ ñāṇā-nuprivattaṃ. Sabbaṃ mano-
kammaṃ ñāṇa-pubbaṅgamaṃ ñāṇā-nuprivattaṃ.*

*Atītaṃse apaṭihata-ñāṇa-dassanaṃ, Anāgataṃse
apaṭihata-ñāṇa-dassanaṃ, Paccuppannaṃse apaṭihata-
ñāṇa-dassanaṃ 'ti vattabbaṃ arahato, evaṃ kho
panetaṃ,*

*"Anujānāmi, Bhikkhave, bhikkhūhi bhikkhunīyo
upasampādetu"nti bhagavto vacanaṃ atītaṃsepi
bhikkhunī-saṃghassa a-bhāva-paricchedaṃ,
anāgataṃsepi bhikkhunī-saṃghassa a-bhāva-
paricchedaṃ, paccuppannaṃsepi bhikkhunī-
saṃghassa a-bhāva-paricchedaṃ apaṭihata-ñāṇa-
dassanaṃ sabbāññuta-ñāṇena passitvā 'va
anujānitabbaṃ taṃ anujānituṃ tabbo bhikkhu-*

saṃgho atītamsepi bhikkhunī-saṃghassa a-bhāva-paricchedeneva icchitabbo, anāgataṃsepi bhikkhunī-saṃghassa a-bhāva-paricchedeneva icchitabbo, paccuppannamsepi bhikkhunī-saṃghassa a-bhāva-paricchedeneva icchitabbo. Tato eva paccuppanne ca etarahi vā pana bhikkhunī-saṃghassa a-bhāva-paricchedeneva bhikkhu-saṃghena mātugāmo upsampādetabbo.

I (the author) don't think it is necessary for me to translate this passage; I humbly like to leave it to you readers to interpret it the way you want. In this regard, all I want to say is that this was what Venerable Sayādawji—the author of the commentary on *Milinda-pañhā*—replied to those who made negative comment on what he had written in favor of possibility of Bhikkhunī Order's revival.

Explanation of *Kathina*³⁴

1. *Kāla-cīvara*: the robe offered during valid time³⁵ is called *kāla-cīvara*; it is eligible for *Kathina*.
2. *A-kāla-cīvara*: the robe offered during invalid time is *a-kāla-cīvara*; it is ineligible for *Kathina*.

³⁴ “*Kathina*” is a monastic term that refers to a monastic ritual of making a robe. Its procedure traditionally includes seven steps: washing the cloth (offered by a devotee or collected from channel ground, etc.), examining, cutting, combining, sewing, dyeing, and making a dot on the robe when finished. (Vi-5, 308)

³⁵ A robe is valid for five months (starting from the end of *vassa*) if it is consecrated in *kathina*, whereas it is just one month (Vi-2, 376). A robe offered during the valid time is called ‘a valid robe’ (*kāla-cīvara*); a monk can use it without certain *vinaya* obligations.

Atthate kathine pañca-māsā: A consecrated *kathina* robe will be valid for five months; otherwise, just for one month.

Seven preparatory works for making a *kathina* robe: washing (*dhovana*), examining (*vicāraṇa*), cutting (*chedana*), combination (*bandhana*), sewing (*sibbana*), dyeing (*rajana*) and making a dot on the robe (*kappa-bindhu*).

Below is the Pāli passage that defines “Valid Robe”

*Karaṇaṃ kāro; kāro nāma kālo; kālo nāma karaṇaṃ;
kālo nāma kriyā; kālo cīvaro kāla-cīvaro.*

Five Kinds of Cloth for Seven Preparatory Works³⁶

There are five kinds of cloth that are obtained by *saṃgha* but not from any donor, and eligible to make a *kathina* robe by means of seven preparatory works.

1. Kathina can be celebrated with new cloth (*ahatena*).
2. Kathina can be celebrated with seemingly new cloth (*ahatakappena*).
3. Kathina can be celebrated with used cloth (*pilotikāya*).
4. Kathina can be celebrated with *paṃsukūla* cloth³⁷ (*paṃsukūlena*).
5. Kathina can be celebrated with cloth collected from a bazaar (*pāpaṇikena*).

³⁶ *Vinaya Mahā-vagga* (the 3rd volume of monastic code), Pāli page-353.

³⁷ *Paṃsukūla* means dusty cloth, which is collected from channel ground, a heap of trash, and so on.

Three Kinds of Cloth Eligible for Kathina

Below are three kinds of cloth that are offered by a devotee and do not require seven preparatory works and are eligible for Kathina:

1. Kathina can be celebrated with cloth obtained without making a hint (*A-nimitta-katena*).
2. Kathina can be celebrated with cloth obtained without making a suggestion (*A-parikathā-katena*).
3. Kathina can be celebrated with used cloth not borrowed from anyone (*A-kukku-katena*).

Three Kinds of Cloth Ineligible for Kathina

Below are three kinds of cloth that are offered by a devotee but not eligible for Kathina:

1. Kathina cannot be celebrated with cloth obtained by making a hint (*a-nimitta-katena*).
2. Kathina cannot be celebrated with cloth obtained by making a suggestion (*a-parikathā-katena*).
3. Kathina cannot be celebrated with cloth borrowed from someone (*a-kukku-katena*).

Why Ineligible

A robe is ineligible because it is obtained by making hint as follows:

Nimitta-kammaṃ jānitabbanti nimittaṃ karoti 'iminā dussena kathinaṃ attharissāmi

“By making a hint” means saying like, “I will make kathina with this cloth.” (Parivāra Pāḷi).

Parikathā jānitabbā'ti parikatham karoti 'Imāya parikathāya kathina-dussam nibbatessāmī'ti.

“Making a suggestion” means a suggestion is made to someone (thinking thus), “By suggestion, I will obtain a *kathina* cloth.”

Why Eligible

The robe that does not require seven preparatory works is eligible for kathina because a devotee offers it as follows:

Cīvaram demti, “Iminā kathinaṃ attharathā”ti.

(A devotee) gives, “Please celebrate *kathina* with this robe.”

“Kathina-cīvaram dema”

We offer *kathina* robe.

How Many Phenomena Come Along With Kathina?

Saha kathinassa attharā kati dhammā jāyanti?

Saha kathinassa attharā pannarasa dhammā jāyanti.

Aṭṭha mātikā, dve palibodhā; pañcānisamsā saha kathinassa attharā pannarasa dhammā jāyanti.

How Many Phenomena Come Along With *Kathina*?

Fifteen phenomena come along with *Kathina*, namely, eight *mātikas*, two *palibodhas*, and five benefits. Thus, fifteen things come along with *Kathina*.

(**The Author's Note:** For further detail, please refer to *Vinaya Pāli* canon, in which Venerable UPāli³⁸ documented *Kathina* procedure. These were what Sayādawji said on that very spot in response to the questions raised. The points made by Sayādawji can be found in the Pāli canon and commentaries, indeed.)

Further Questions Regarding Bhikkhunī Order

On one occasion, four Sayādaws—the abbot from Insein Mingone, the abbot from Wall Township, the abbot from Dedaye Township, and the abbot from Ma-u-bin—came to Sayādawji and raised questions regarding the possibility of Bhikkhunī ordination mentioned in his commentary on *Milinda-pañhā*. Then, he referred to that commentary page-231, translated as follows:

“Ānanda, if Mahāpajāpati Gotamī³⁹ gives her consent to these eight heavy commitments (*garu-dhamma*), that itself would be her ordination.” The Buddha laid down these eight heavy commitments as preliminary rules (*mūla-paññatti*) before any bhikkhunī emerged during his dispensation. They include the rule that requires a bhikkhunī candidate to seek the full ordination in two Saṃgha Order only after having completed two-year

³⁸ “Venerable Upāli” was the monk who was honored by the Buddha as an expert in monastic code (*vinaya*). He was the one who took care of the entire document of *vinaya* during the 1st Buddhist Council.

³⁹ Mahāpajāpati Gotamī was the younger sister of the Buddha’s mother. She was the one who took great care of Prince Siddhattha, the would-be-Buddha, when his mother passed away a week after she gave birth to him. She was the one who—with the help of Venerable Ānanda—successfully persuaded the Buddha to allow women to ordain as Bhikkhunī.

training. This is a preliminary rule laid down before the Bhikkhunī Order appeared yet.

When Mahāpajāpati Gotamī became a bhikkhunī by giving her consent to the eight heavy commitments, she asked the Buddha, “Venerable Sir, what should I do for these Sakya ladies?”⁴⁰ Then, the Buddha pondered “How come?” (*kinnu kho*). Subsequently, it occurred to the Buddha, “Right now, the Bhikkhunī Order has not been present yet; neither will it be in the Future.” So, in view of the fact that Bhikkhunī Order had not been present yet at that time and neither would it be in the future, the Buddha realized that it was high time to allow the Bhikkhu Order to ordain Bhikkhunī. So, the Buddha laid down the supplementary rule (*anupaññatti*) thus, “Monks, I allow the Bhikkhus to ordain Bhikkhunī.” Thus, the Buddha laid down the rule allowing the Bhikkhu Order to ordain a woman.

This supplementary rule has nothing to do with *either the rule laid down earlier or the rule laid down later*. It does not act for or against either one.”

A Commentary Passage Translated

Referring to the above passage, Sayādawji wrote to the Abbot from Day-da-ye in response to his question as follows:

I found Day-da-ye Sayādaw not satisfied with my answer because he thought that I’ve written to confuse the not-yet-laid-down rule (*anuppanna-paññatti*) with the preliminary

⁴⁰ Refer to Cūla-vagga Pāli, Page-447

rule (*mūla-paññatti*). I saw his face not happy. That is why below is my further clarification in order to distinguish between not-yet-laid-down rule and preliminary rule. (Jetavan Sayādaw)

“*With either the rule laid down earlier or the rule laid down later,*” I’ve written this phrase referring to the order of three kinds of rule as described in Parivāra Pāli:⁴¹ preliminary rule (*mūla-paññatti*), supplementary rule (*anu-paññatti*), and not-yet-laid-down rule (*anuppanna-paññatti*). So, according to this order, I’ve interpreted the above passage that the supplementary rule has nothing to do with either the preliminary rule (*mūla-paññatti*) or the not-yet-laid-down rule (*anuppanna-paññatti*). It does not act for or against either one”

(**The Author’s Note:** Actually, Sayādawji gave answers to many different questions raised by many people from everywhere. But it would be too much if I were to put them all here.)

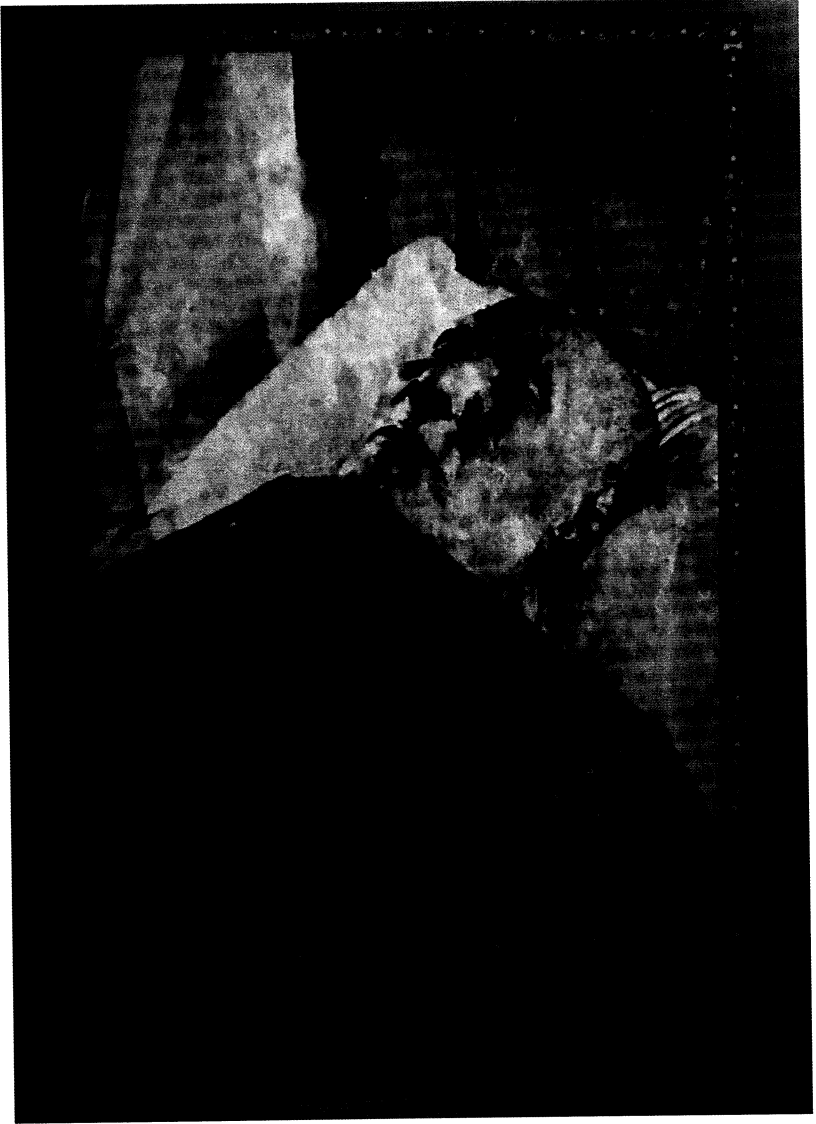
On His Last Days

All living beings in 31 realms—carrying this heavy burden of the aggregates—can’t run away from the suffering. They all encounter several kinds of suffering, one after another incessantly, such as birth-related suffering, disease-related suffering, and death-related suffering and many more. Among them, we human beings—having been constituted of full five aggregates—have to experience suffering fully without missing any part. Time keeps passing by progressively from days to

⁴¹ Parivāra is the 5th volume of monastic code (*vinaya*).

months, months to years, nonstop and all living beings keep running around the torturous cycle of rebirths. Mingone Jetavan Sayādawji, like any one of us, had to suffer the heavy burden of aggregates. For sure, he saw eating as carrying one of the heavy burdens of the body. So, he ate just enough for survival. About six months after he had thus spent his time, his physical appearance became remarkably clear and shining bright like a full moon at a cloudless night. Having freed from all kinds of mental defilements, he looked so graceful that people could not even help watching him. So, people even took pictures of him at 10 a.m., on the 3rd day of Daboun month, in 1316 (1954) (three weeks before his demise), for new generations to get a chance to see his image.

He had been dramatically and irreversibly approaching the ultimate peacefulness of *nibbāna*, especially since the day the photos of his remarkably graceful appearance were taken. I (the author) was always with him taking care of all his needs day and night, such as helping him stand up, dressing him in both upper and lower robes, supporting him from behind when he was seated feebly, and caring his personal hygiene in the restroom, and so on. Thus, in the morning on the 6th day after the full moon day of Daboun (four days before his demise), I found he waked up so weak that he totally depended on my assistance. He stood up with his head bent down and held on tightly to my both shoulders. That was why I informed his devotees of his condition and asked them to bring a doctor along.



The body of Venerable Min-gone Jetavan Sayadawji
which was neither bloated nor foul.

His devotees soon came along with doctors. Having checked him the doctors found his temperature reached 100 degree and diagnosed it as typhoid. The two doctors gave him a medical treatment, but his fever was the same in degree on the 7th, and improved a little bit on the 8th, but rose up to 102 degree on the 9th. Then they stopped feeding him in tube. Thus, Sayādawji—inspired to abandon the heavy burden of the body—was dramatically approaching his ultimate move from the *nibbāna* with the remainder (*sa-upādisesa*) to the *nibbāna* without the remainder (*anupādisesa*).⁴² Apparently, he had been concentrating on a certain object calmly without saying any single word of complaint even though he must have been in severe pain. His face was shining with a subtle smile and apparently blissful. On the 9th, his fever remained the same till afternoon, not falling down from 102 degree. Miraculously, however, at 10:30 p.m. (13 hours before his demise), we found his temperature got back to normal and he looked really fresh and sat up without anybody's help.

At that time, I was there together with a lay devotee called Mr. Own Phay and Venerable Vilāsa from Toungu Township. So, Mr. Own Phay—seeing Sayādawji with a smiling face—delightfully said that Sayādawji recovered from illness and would live for a hundred years. Half an hour after he sat up by himself, however, we requested him to lie down and take a nap from which, as found later, he was never awakened. Starting from 3 o'clock next morning till 9, we heard him breathing heavily and struggling with congestion of phlegm in his lung.

⁴² 'The *nibbāna* with remainder' is the *nibbāna* experienced by an arahant before his or her demise. Here, 'remainder' refers to the psychophysical process that remains as a result of attachment and kamma an arahant had accumulated before his full enlightenment. 'The *nibbāna* without remainder' is the *nibbāna* without that psychophysical process.

People who came to paid respect to him became very worried about his condition and thought about what to do to cure it as soon as possible. The entire monastery became crowded with devotees including the Abbot of Rangoon Min-gone who had been there along with his devotees about an hour earlier. Sayādawji kept struggling with congestion of phlegm. But from time to time he opened his eyes that we found to be crystal clear.

Having found Sayādawji's mouth dried up, I was dripping water drop by drop into his mouth gently. With the sense of urgency, I happened to contemplate on the unavoidable destiny for all of us who have been burdened by the five aggregates. The increasing number of devotees kept coming from all over. It was exactly at noon on Friday on the 10th day after the full moon of Daboun in 1316 (1954), when there came the historic moment of Min-gone Lineage. That was the time when Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji—having defeated all kinds of kilesa enemies through the 37 enlightenment-factors—passed away into the ultimate peacefulness of *nibbāna*.

A Miracle of His Body

The day after his ultimate realization of the *nibbāna*, the physical body of the Most Venerable Min-gone Jatavan Sayādawji showed an amazingly fresh complexion as if it were to wear makeup. It remained graceful in the same way even after three, four or five days. On the 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th days afterward, it still remained graceful just as a sleeping body decorated with colors without being bloated at all. Thus, it lasted days with fresh complexion as seen in the picture. All people, lay or monastic, could witness the miracle.

(**The author's note:** No arrangement was made to preserve the body of Venerable Min-gone Jatavan Sayādawji such as injection, removal of viscera, putting mercury, and so on. I boldly bear witness to this miracle because his body was kept under my close supervision.)

Although his body remained with fresh complexion, those who were in charge of the funeral put the body into the casket, filled with ash of paddy-husk⁴³ and sealed with nuts and bolts. I found nothing but his past *kamma* that acted upon his body. As a result, people who came late missed the chance to give their final salute to Sayādawji. Many people complained that the body was put into the casket without public consent. Five days afterward, a big delegation led by Mr. Win (the then minister of religious affair) and his wife and Mr. Own Khin (the publisher of Bamar-khit Journal) and so on flew from Rangoon by special flight to pay their final homage to Sayādawji. They were very eager to see a miracle that happened to Sayādawji's body, but much to their dismay they found they were too late, indeed.

Then, Mr. Own Khin, the publisher of Bamar-khit Journal, asked me why I let Sayādawji's body put into the casket. I replied that I did not give my consent to it. So, the people who flew all the way from Rangoon for viewing were so disappointed that they first made a humble request to open the casket. When their request was ignored, they apparently demanded to open it. In the end, therefore, the casket was opened with a ceremony. Much to the surprise

⁴³ This is the way Burmese devotees traditionally do to preserve the body of their respected monks.

of everyone, the Sayādawji's body was found with the fresh complexion. So, people from Rangoon and local people in charge—having found the body with a remarkably clear complexion without being bloated—unanimously decided to get it out of the casket and put it back on the majestic couch. And then, they made all arrangements for public viewing.

Contribution Made by Mr. Nu and Mr. Own Khin

At 8 o'clock in the morning on the 13th day of Dagoon in 1316 (1954), Mr. Nu (the then prime minister), Sir U Thwin (the holder of *Thado-thiri-thudhamma* Title), Mr. Win Phe (the then minister for religious affairs), Mr. Own Khin (Bamar Khit Journal) and many other honorable guests came from Rangoon paid respect to the body of Sayādawji, which was put on the majestic lotus couch for public viewing. And then, they as representatives of the Government of Union of Burma donated K.10,000, and Mr. Own Khin K. 5,000⁴⁴ for Sayādawji's funeral ceremony. Moreover, the Prime Minister Mr. Nu also proudly pledged that the amount of K10,000 was just the first portion donated by the government, and the government would contribute further more as necessary.

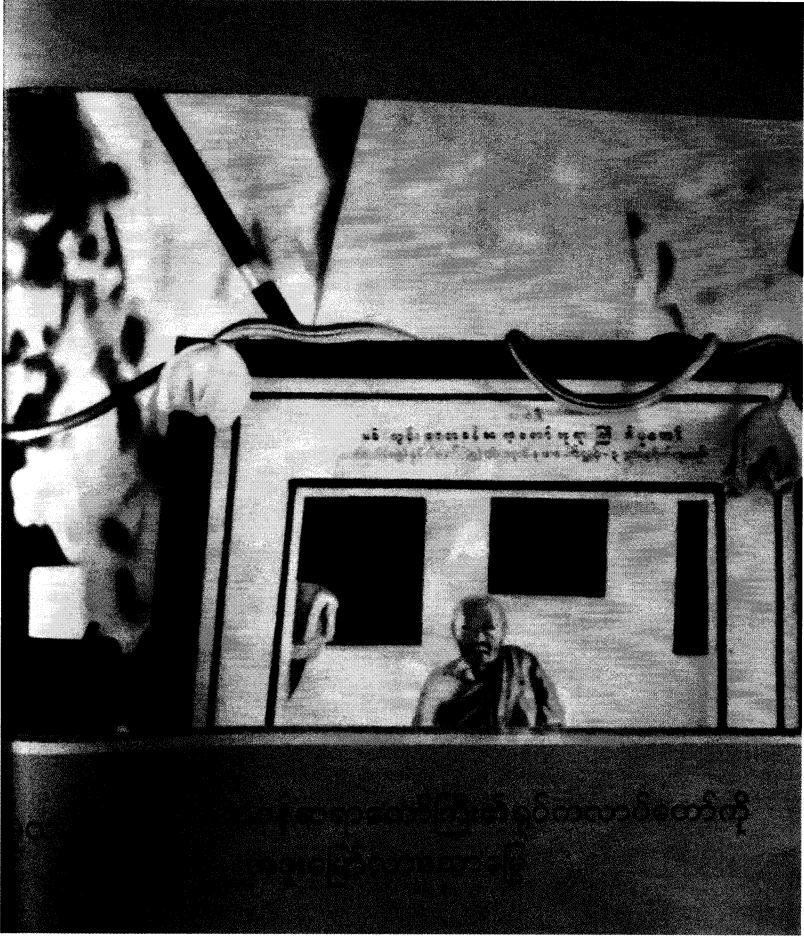
Snake's Salute to Sayādawji

The unanimous decision was made to have the funeral ceremony for the Sayādawji on the full moon day of Dagoon (the first month of the year). So, many people kept coming from everywhere, day and night. Passageways had to be

⁴⁴ These amounts of Burmese Kyat in those days would be approximately equivalent to the same amount of US dollar nowadays.

made to separate between coming in and going out. The closer the funeral, the more crowded the monastery became. During that time, at 1:25 p.m. on the 13th of Dagoon month, a snake about five feet long came in from the southern direction and pushed itself between left and right sides of the crowds toward the Sayādawji's body. It first tried to reach for the Sayādawji's body by climbing up from the back to the shoulder of a lay devotee called Mr. Pan (from Taung-zon, Zwe-ga-lar village). But later, it easily found its way over his laptop to the Sayādawji's body and stood at the foot of the body nodding its head repeatedly in a gesture of bowing down to Sayādawji.

All the people, lay and monastic, saw the snake bowing down to the Sayādawji and got a photographer to take its picture (attached hereto). It was a miracle that an animal like a snake took a chance to pay homage to Sayādawji. It stayed there for about two hours and fifty minutes starting from 1:25 P.M. At that time, people pushed themselves into the crowd to see the snake as something miraculous. So, their attention was drawn to the snake even more than to Sayādawji's body itself. Thus, the news of a snake's homage to the Sayādawji's body spread out far and wide.



The Snake
that came and paid respect to Sayādawji's body

A Weird Snake

While it was a miracle that Sayādawji's body remained with a clear complexion, the snake—risking its life by pushing itself into the crowd and found its way to Sayādawji's body to bow down—became something astonishing. So, some people interpreted it in different ways. Some interpreted it as a spirit in disguise, but others said that a snake—an animal wandering around in search of its pray—would be going whichever direction it was facing. That was the way animals did, nothing special.

Having overheard people saying what they thought, a nun from Rangoon—wanting to distinguish between right and wrong—made a solemn wish, “If it is a real snake, may it be the way it is; or, if it is a mighty spirit in disguise, may it come down, coil me and bow down for three times toward the Sayādawji's body.” With such a solemn wish she sat respectfully at the foot of the couch together with about twenty other nuns. Strangely enough, the snake then came down to where the nuns were sitting. So, all the nuns except for the nun with the solemn wish were frightened and run away in all directions. The snake first circled around the nun and then climbed up again the lotus couch and stayed near Sayādawji's body in a manner of bowing down for three times. This strange snake got its back brown in color and its both sides covered in blotches together with small spots, colorful and shining. It was a beautiful snake, indeed.

At 2:45 p.m. on that day, people saw the snake getting down from the majestic lotus couch and moving to the decorated four-wheeled cart (designed for the funeral).

Some people tried to search for it on the cart, but it disappeared right there. At 4:30 p.m. on the 14th day of Dago, the body of Sayādawji was moved from its place onto the decorated four-wheeled cart. When the body was put in order on the cart, people got down from there. Then, many people and myself saw again the snake that had disappeared the day before and now reappeared with its upper part of body erected and looked at the face of the Sayādawji from the southern side of his body, nodding its head repeatedly toward Sayādawji as if it were paying its final salute to him.

(The Author's Note: The snake looked really sad, and apparently paid its final salute to Sayādawji.)

People Pleaded Aloud

Around 4:00 p.m. on the 14th of Dago month, in 1316 (1954), when Sayādawji's body was put in the four-wheeled cart topped with three spire-like roofs, so many people—as if they were overloading the earth and making it lose its balance—gathered together around the cart to pay their final salute to Sayādaw because on the next day, the full moon day, it would be scheduled for cremation. On that day, so many people came over and filled up the 100ft pavilion and the ten-acre monastery compound sparing no space under any tree around. Even then, more people were still coming in. Finding no place to sit, many had to stand here and there. There were no sufficient rooms for the monks who came earlier from other towns and cities. For those monks, we had to request Pyi-daw-thar Monastery to allow us to arrange emergency lodging in their monastery. Everywhere was crowded with thousands of people. The

cremation site was arranged at the southeastern corner of the monastery compound and the cremation time was scheduled at 2 p.m. At that time, an argument started to occur among the people about whether the body should be cremated or not.

Now, it was 2 p.m., the time scheduled for the cremation. So, people—led by three Sayādawjis all from Rangoon, namely, Ale-taw-ya Sayādawji, Bangali Sayādawji, and Kyou-n-daw-yar Sayādawji—moved Sayādawji’s body from the decorated four-wheeled cart to the cremation site and put it down gently and respectfully on the pile of sandalwoods there, without any ritual music or dance (common to other similar funerals). And then, Ale-taw-ya Sayādawji made an announcement with a broken heart and wet eyes as follows:

“We are very fortunate to have a chance to pay our last homage to Sayādawji, whose body has not been bloated at all for the last 21 days and still got clear complexion as if it were to be lying elegantly. Please give your last salute to him; last salute, last salute!!”

Then, many people cried pleading, “Sir, please don’t cremate Sayādawji’s body; please don’t cremate it.” Their pleading voice was so loud as if it would be heard from the heavenly realms. Under the democratic regime, the public opinion was always first and the body was brought back from the pile of sandalwoods to the place where Sayādawji spent the rest of his life.

Thus, the Sayādawji’s body was put back in his place and the monastery became constantly crowded with many people from different towns and cities. The body remained

intact without being bloated or oozing any liquid out for the last 21 days. It did not shrink in size, but progressively hardened. So did his soles and palms while still rosy. Strangely enough, a reddish lump, like a red water lily bud, appeared at the center of his chest. Regarding that lump, Ms. Khin Tint, a lady from Thaton, came and told me what she thought about, "Sir, a reddish lump in the chest may be where his relics have been accumulated." In this way, the whole body without shrinking in size came to dry hard enough to make a sound, '*dout, dout*' when it was knocked.

Much to everybody's surprise, the body became dry and hardened. It is a kind of miracle. But keeping the body that long would be disagreeable to modern mind and costly for long-term security because of persistent rebellions in Thaton County. Also, it is not in line with the tradition of noble ones like the Buddha himself and his noble disciples. So, a unanimous decision was finally made again to cremate the body at 7:00 a.m. on the 8th day of Ka-sone.

When that news reached the people in Rangoon, a big delegation led by Sat-Shwe Thite (the former president of Union of Burma and the chairman of tribal parliament) arrived at Thaton at 7:00 in the morning on the 7th day of Kasone. When they opened the glass casket and touched the body of Sayādawji, they found out it was dry and hard enough to sound '*dout, dout*' when knocking. They demanded no cremation and called for a meeting at noon.

In the morning of that very day, Taung-pu-lu Sayādawji (Mitthilar city), one of the foremost disciples of Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji, accompanied by his fellow monks and lay devotees, arrived to pay his final salute to

Sayādawji. When the time for the meeting was approaching, many people, lay and monastic alike, gathered together in the hall. At that moment, the rain fell heavily with roaring thunderstorm while the big dispute arose in the meeting because lay people did not agree on cremation but the monks did. So, they all had to agree to vote for or against cremation. In the end, the majority voted for cremation and, therefore, on the next day all the people, lay and monastic alike, put Sayādawji's body onto the pile of sandalwoods and cremated it at 7:00 o'clock in the morning, on the 8th day of Kasone, 1317 (1955).

Rightful Cremation

Thus, so many lay people and monastics from all over the country democratically participated in the rightful cremation ceremony. A miracle there was that no body in the crowd got any smell from the cremation and the body got burned in dignity without any disgraceful movement like twisting, turning, shrinking and so on. It was also a kind of miracle that the cremation emitted very awesome ray of lights in different colors mixed in a unique way, white, blue, yellow, brown, gray, green, and red. It was somewhat like the aurora in the night sky, so strange that it made people feel delightful and sorrowful at the same time. It was so beautiful that even a great artist may not be able to paint something like this. All the people there and myself witnessed it, indeed.

Relics Left

Venerable Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji's devotees and disciples from many different towns and cities gave their

final salute to him and cremated his body. Then, the relics from the cremation were shared among the disciples and devotees. The amount of relics was about three *pyi daungs*⁴⁵ approximately. 1000 relics and his robe and alms bowl were enshrined in a monument (*cetiya*) built in the Thaton Min-gone Jetavan Monastery compound. Same kind of monument would be built in the Rangoon Min-gone Jetavan Monastery compound, in Min-gone Goo-ga-lay Hermitage, and in Taungyi, the capital of the southern Shan State. Many devotees from all over the Union of Burma got their shares of relics to enshrine in their places.

Sāsana Duties He Discharged

As a boy, Venerable Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji was well disciplined under the guidance of good teachers. When he grew up, he became a novice and later a fully ordained monk during which he put heroic effort in the studies of the Pāli texts. At the age of 37, he changed his path from the scriptural study to the experiential practice. After about three years of intensive practice, he gained the penetrative insight into the truth.

Since then, out of compassion he had taught *dhamma* to the people from all walks of life in many different places. First of all, he taught at Min-gone Goo-ga-lay Hermitage, then at his native place Kanjigon village, again at Min-gone Goo-ga-lay Hermitage, and then Myo-Hla where he spent two years. During those periods, he had to endure the mockery and sarcastic comments on his

⁴⁵ *Pyi daung* is a small basket used to measure the amount of rice; it is 28 x 28 x 17 cm in size.

instructions and even stones thrown at him by opponents. And then, he ended up establishing a great meditation center where he spent years teaching disciples and devotees the *dhamma* from his own experience and profound scriptural knowledge.

Min-gone Jatavan Sayādawji—like a rocky mountain that cannot be shaken by the wind—had endured unkind criticisms and negative remarks from the misunderstanding of his simple instruction. With a heroic spirit of a lion—roaming alone in the dangerous territory of common people— Sayādawji bravely spread out the seeds of *vipassanā* taken out from the basket of mindfulness that would bear the fruits of *magg-phala* on the fertile soil of worthwhile disciples (*veneyya*).

Setting an Example

Min-gone Jatavan Sayādawji—having attained the progressive stages of penetrative insight and established meditation center with purpose to share his own *dhamma* experience with many others—managed to get monastic facilities suitable for meditating monks according to *Visuddhi-magga* (the Path of Purification). In his centers, he accepted all monastic facilities as donors-own, *gahapati-kuṭi*, but never as his own; he just let them stand as *sāsana* properties. Whatever requisites offered by devotees, he let them all belong to the Saṃgha in the center. He expected all the monks, whether senior or junior, in his centers to go for alms round regularly and routinely. He did not accept young boys and young novices who need to be raised with regular education (which was quite common to most monasteries in those days). And he did not raise temporary monks (known as *dullabha* in Burma) at his centers. People who came and

took retreat under his guidance were instructed to keep noble silence as much as possible. Men and women were required to stay separately whether visitors or residents.

He allowed only yogis at his centers. If they were monks, they must be well versed in monastic codes. So, monks were expected not only to have memorized twofold monastic codes, *bhikkhu* and *bhikkhunī*, but also to understand them comprehensively. He made sure that monks who were going to practice had purified their virtue of the second most serious offences by undertaking certain *vinaya* procedures called *parivatta* and *mānatta*.⁴⁶ Every *Sabbath* day, monks were required in rotation to recite the entire set of monastic precepts. Everybody at the center was expected to be a yogi who behaved properly in body and speech.

On *Sabbath* days, Sayādawji often gave advice and guidance to his devotees and disciples accordingly. He was most likely to give them brief advice to live up to *dhamma* of vigilance by developing mindfulness continuously. When I (the author) first met Sayādawji, he gave me the memorable instruction thus, “Try your best to seize great opportunity for your own sake.” This instruction has been impressed on my memory and I’ve lived up to it throughout my life. Whoever that broke the discipline laid down in the monastery was required to leave the monastery right away without delay,

⁴⁶ The most serious offences are called *Pārājika*, which require a monk to leave the monastic life forever; there is no remedy for them. And the second most serious are called *Samghādisesa*, which require a monk to confess their offences to his fellow monks as many days as he hid from them, and in the end to be readmitted into *Samgha* by getting the consent of at least twenty monks officially in a consecrated hall (*sīmā*). These procedures are called *parivatta* and *mānatta*.

without giving any lame excuse. Thus, Sayādawji—following the footsteps of his elders—trained his disciples so seriously that they would walk on the right path.

The ultimate blissfulness of *nibbāna* is accessible to beings only during the opportune moment of the Buddha's dispensation. It is indisputable that Venerable Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji—with the lofty aim to help us experience such ultimate bliss—taught *Dhamma* invincibly in different regions facing several kinds of challenges and difficulties. He also established a great meditation center where he had taught the mindfulness meditation to devotees and disciples for 45 years tirelessly and peerlessly. In view of the path he had rediscovered and revealed to us, it is very obvious that our great teacher, Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji, was born on earth for our sakes. Now, his time on this planet came to an end but the path he has showed us will remain timeless, indeed.

Undeniably, there appeared many meditation centers all over Burma, where many yogis have been practicing *vipassanā* by following the guideline laid down by Sayādawji. Moreover, we have learned from several kinds of newspapers, journals, and magazines that his method even spread far out to other countries such as Thailand, Cambodia, Lao, Sri Lanka, India and so on.

For an ordinary person like me (the author), it is impossible to describe all his accomplishments and to illustrate all his unique qualities and great personality in this small biography. Therefore, I had actually and eagerly waited for three years for someone to write an excellent biography of Sayādawji. Having found nobody coming forward to do that, I had to decide to try my best to write a

biography that would reveal the chronological lifetime of Venerable Min-gone Jetavan Sayādaw, one of the greatest teachers on earth. So, I started it during the rain-retreat (*vassa*) in 1319 (1957). Based on my own knowledge of his lifetime and information I had collected from many other persons concerned, I have written this biography as best as I can. As an inexperienced writer, I can by no means claim it a perfect work. No doubt, it will be much to delight of everybody if a better biography emerges revealing our great teacher's life in a blaze of glory in the same way as the sun rises in the east.

PART-IV

The List of Sayādawji's Books

Below is the list of books written by Venerable Mingone Jetavan Sayādawji, who was known as an *arahant* (a fully enlightened one) home and abroad:

1. Peṭakopadesa Aṭṭhakathā Pāli
2. The translation of the Aṭṭhakathā Pāli (volume-1)
3. The translation of the Aṭṭhakathā Pāli (volume-2)
4. The translation of the Aṭṭhakathā Pāli (volume-3)
5. Sajjetāvidhi Visajjanā
6. Ārambhāvidhi Visajjanā
7. New Translation of Visuddhimagga
8. The Commentary on 40 Perspectives
9. Milinda-pañhā Aṭṭhakathā Pāli
10. Nibbāna-kathā (prose)
11. Guide to Nibbāna
12. Article on Nibbāna
13. Article on Mindfulness
14. Satipaccaye or Vinicchaya-samūha

15. Kathina-vinicchaya (prose)
16. Translation of Kathina
17. Phala-samāpatti (Phala Absorption)
18. The translation of Mahā-salāyatana Sutta
19. The translation of Mūla-pariyāya Sutta
20. Pādāpādāraha Vinicchaya
21. Paṭiññāta-karaṇa Vinicchaya
22. Consecrated Hall (Sīmā)
23. Progressive Vipassanā Insight
24. About *Anusaya* (Potential Defilements)
25. Analysis of Atiritta

With sole purpose to propagate the Buddha's teachings, Sayādawji wrote the above-listed books.

His Scriptural Teachers

Min-gon Jetavan Sayādawji was educated so highly that he was able to write two prestigious Pāli commentaries, judgments on challenging scriptural issues (*vinchaya*) in line with Pāli canons, Pāli commentaries, sub-commentaries and sub-sub-commentaries. Sayādawji attributed his scriptural accomplishments to his teachers as follows:

“Saw-Ke Monastery Sayādaw, who kindly and carefully taught me basic education day and night,

starting from my childhood till I became a young novice at the age of 14.

My brother, Venerable Lakkhaṇa Sayādaw, the abbot of Majizu Forest Monastery, who taught me so systematically that I became well versed in Pāli canons, Pāli commentaries and sub-commentaries.

Venerable Rājindah, the abbot of Hilltop Monastery and the head of three schools, who taught me until I was able to literally translate and to comprehensively interpret words, sentences, and paragraphs of Pāli canons, Pāli commentaries and sub-commentaries.

These great teachers with immeasurable qualities are those to whom I (by the name of Nārada) owe the inestimable gratitude for providing me with enough scriptural knowledge to work for the proliferation of the three phases of *sāsana*.”

His Vipassanā Teachers

According to Pāli commentaries, sub-commentaries, *Sāsana* history, and so on, it is very obvious that many people, lay and monastic alike, had practiced the mindfulness known as vigilance (*appamāda*) passed down from generation to generation for one thousand years after the Buddha's demise. The profiles and memoirs of those noble people were documented in several kinds of literature.⁴⁷ Thus, the mindfulness had been popularly practiced over one thousand years after the Buddha's

⁴⁷ It refers to such scriptures as Therāpadāna, Therīpadāna, Udāna, *Jatāka* and so on.

demise, but later it became almost extinct because the number of practitioners decreased gradually, and a good teacher was rarely found. Fortunately, however, it did not totally disappear. It was still present in the documents and in the living memory of a few noble ones like the monks mentioned below:

Venerable Khemā of Kin Forest

During the time of King Min-don—who newly established the Ratanapūra Kingdom⁴⁸ and generously contributed to the 5th Buddhist Council and to the big project of having all the Pāli cannons and Pāli commentaries inscribed in thousands of marble slabs⁴⁹—there lived two historic monks, Venerable Khemā who dwelled in Kin Forest Monastery in the northern part of Min-gone region and Venerable Candimā later known as Thee-lone Sayādaw (one of the royal teachers in the kingdom). The two had been best friends since their childhood till they grew up and studied together with the same teachers (*dalhī-mitta*, *sandiṭṭha*, *sambhatta*). They as fellow *dhamma*-seekers often spent time happily chitchatting and agreeably discussing the *dhamma* (*piya-bhāṇita*, *saha-dhammika*, *samagga*, *samodāna*) together. They cared very much about each other's well-being (*atthakkhāyita*). They were trained together under highly learned teachers from two schools, known as Namo and Thee-lone, until they became highly educated and highly respected monks in those days.

⁴⁸ It is the last kingdom of Burma known as Mandalay. Its city walls, mote, and its ancient water supply system still witness its days of glory.

⁴⁹ These marble slabs have been known as the thickest book on earth.

Life Lived with Vigilance (Mindfulness)

One of two monks, Venerable Candimā known as Thee-lone Sayādaw—having accomplished his academic study—spent most of his time teaching in the Thee-lone School and later became the head of that school, and very well known as one of the royal teachers, highly respected by King Min-don. The other monk, Venerable Khemā—having completed his study—spent his time practicing in solitude in the forest of the northern part of Min-gone region until he allegedly gained a major breakthrough in *dhamma* along with supernatural powers (according to his profile mentioned later).

Keeping in Touch with His Best Friend

Venerable Khemā known as Kin Forest Sayādaw—with the purpose of sharing his *dhamma* experience with his best friend—often paid visit to Venerable Candimā (Thee-lone Sayādaw) and spent some time together chitchatting peacefully almost every evening. One evening, Kin Forest Sayādaw said a few words of wisdom to Thee-lone Sayādaw, “My friend, I do not want to die as a royal teacher like you just by carrying out the scriptural duty of *sāsana*.” And Kin Forest Sayādaw often seized a chance to talk to Thee-lone Sayādaw about such supra-mundane phenomena as *maggā*, *phala* and *nibbāna*. Sometimes he talked about how concentration was progressively cultivated up to jhānic level (*samatha*), how progressive stages of *vipassanā* insight were developed, and how it felt like to experiences *jhāna* and *maggā-phala*.



Venerable Takkhācāra
The 2nd Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji
(The author of this biography)

One day when it came to the attainment of *jhāna* and *magga-phala*, Thee-lone Sayādaw—analyzing the issue from scriptural point of view—said that any claim about spiritual attainment should be accepted as authentic and genuine only when it was in harmony with the Pāli texts, commentaries, and sub-commentaries. In response to him, Kin Forest Sayādaw said thus,

“My friend, empirical experience of *dhamma* cannot be exactly in accord with what you have learned from the scripture because the scriptures generally deal with different people of different temperaments and different levels of knowledge. (Scriptures are not tailor-made.) So, I don’t think everyone would experience *dhamma* exactly in the same manner. You should not make judgment that one’s own experience of *dhamma* cannot be genuine unless it is exactly in line with scripture.”

Getting into the Ultimate Peacefulness

Later on, however, Kin Forest Sayādaw no longer talked much about this kind of issue. Instead, he just listened to whatever Thee-lone Sayādaw talked about and gave his consent to him from time to time. However, one evening, Thee-lone Sayādaw said:

“What matters most is what the scripture says, but not what someone says from his or her experience.”

Then, Kin Forest Sayādaw replied thus:

“That is what everyone says before they gain own experience of *dhamma*. The empirical knowledge can’t be at fault for not exactly in line with scripture.”

Having thus said, Kin Forest Sayādaw got up and left for his monastery. As usual, Thee-lone Sayādaw followed him to some distance and saw him off at the entrance to the forest. Then, Kin Forest Sayādaw said his last words to his best friend, Thee-lone Sayadaw,

“My friend, I will leave you right now wishing that you put heroic effort in establishing mindfulness for the attainment of enlightenment during this Buddha’s dispensation.”

Having thus said, he flew up in the sky with his robes flapping in the air. On that very night just before the dawn broke, Kin Forest Sayādaw passed away into ultimate peacefulness of *nibbāna*.

Gazing Admiringly at Kin Forest Sayādaw

When Kin Forest Sayādaw flew up in the sky leaving him beneath, Thee-lone Sayādaw stood on that very spot while gazing admiringly at Kin Forest Sayādaw and vaguely expecting to see him again. Later, his disciples—worried about him when he was not back as timely as usual—looked for him and found him standing motionless and aimless. Only when they addressed him was he awakened. Later at that night, Thee-lone Sayādaw blamed himself with regret:

“Thee-lone, Thee-lone, you’ve been thus well known. But actually, you’ve been still useless. How wise your friend Khemā is! His human life during the Buddha’s dispensation is really worthwhile.”

A novice—having overheard him whispering—asked, “What are you talking about, sir.” Then, he replied, “No, it is not your business.”

Flying in Sky

Next morning, Thee-lone Sayādaw—being informed of Kin Forest Sayādaw’s demise—went there and made all the arrangements for the funeral ceremony and cremation of his best friend within seven days. After that, Thee-lone Sayādaw changed a lot in personality and behavior. Having noticed his changes, Koyin Guy insistently asked him about Kin Forest Sayādaw. He replied, “When I saw him off as usual, he said, “My friend, see me off right here,” at the entrance to the forest, and flew up in the sky with his robes flapping in the air, leaving me beneath.”

Kin Forest Sayādaw was very well known for the supernatural power he had attained by developing continuous mindfulness (*appamāda*) at all times.

A Royal Teacher

Venerable Candimā—known as the head of Thee-lone School and as a royal teacher—had witnessed his best friend’s spiritual attainment. Having aroused sense of urgency, he then gave up his successful academic career and all worldly affairs and spent the rest of his life as a recluse (*ekacārī*) practicing day

and night in a secluded place, allowing only one attendant (*kappiya*)⁵⁰ to help him. Endowed with the *pāramī* and progressive stages of insight, he gained a breakthrough in the truth in line with scripture. He had also allegedly attained supernatural power, which would be proved by his profile mentioned later.

Not to Tell to Anyone

On one occasion, at a moonlit night in a hot summer, the attendant wanting to wash went to a lake quite far away from the monastery. Much to his surprise, he found Thee-lone Sayādawji had been there washing there in the lake. While he was wondering how an old person like Sayādawji could possibly be here in the lake at night time, Thee-lone Sayādaw said, “Kappiya, don’t tell anybody about it as long as I’m alive.” And then, Sayādawji flew into the sky. Only after Sayādawji passed away, did the attendant tell people about this memorable incident he had witnessed.

Jhānic attainment of Thee-lone Sayādawji was directly attributed to the constant development of mindfulness (also known as vigilance, *appamāda*) according to *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

Up to Anāgāmi-phala (the 3rd Fruition)

On one occasion, during a consecration of a monastic building (*sīmā*) held in Shane-ma-kar Village, many famous senior Sayādaws, with or without the title conferred on by the king (*raja-guru*), from many different places including Mandalay Royal City, Zagain City, Min-gone and so on, came and gathered together there. On that

⁵⁰ He was a white-robed acolyte (*po-thu-daw* in Burmese)

occasion, Thee-lone Sayādawji was requested to give a *dhamma* talk. Then, Sayādawji started his talk saying that he would talk about what he had practiced up to the satisfactory stage, and then he explained in detail how to practice *vipassanā*, how to develop the progressive stages of *vipassanā* insight, how to experience *magga-phala* enlightenment, and how to get absorbed in the fruition, stage by stage, up to the 3rd stage of enlightenment.

Thin-ga-zar Sayādaw's Request

Everyone, lay and monastic alike, became very gratified with Thee-lone Sayādawji's *dhamma* talk on how to practice and attain *magga-phala* and *nibbāna* stage by stage. His profound *dhamma* deeply impressed even highly learned monks of those days. Among them, Venerable Agga, known as Thin-ga-zar Sayādaw, humbly requested him to write a book on that topic for the proliferation of *sāsana* in the future. Then, Thee-lone Sayādawji replied to Thin-ga-zar Sayādaw thus,

“Here, my friend, U Agga, you can practice or you can teach the way you want. But when it comes to writing a book, your work must agree with scripture. If there is something disputable while we are alive, we may make clarification. But we all will die soon and I'm afraid that the dispute, if happened, would remain unsettled.”

Middle Forest Sayādaw

Here, Venerable Mañjūsā (the abbot of Middle Forest Monastery) was then among the disciples who got a chance to listen to such a profound *dhamma* talk given by Thee-

lone Sayādawji. So, Venerable Mañjūsā also gave up his scriptural works and fully focused on the *vipassanā* practice day and night until he reached the satisfactory stage of *dhamma*. So, Venerable Mañjūsā was also highly respected as Anāgāmī Sayādawji (the senior monk who had accomplished the 3rd stage of enlightenment).

[**The Author's note:** Venerable Mañjūsā, it is said, had been a dedicated student of Thee-lone Sayādawji since his childhood days.]

Referring to his *vipassanā* teachers, Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji said,

“These three great teachers, namely, Kin Forest Sayādaw, Thee-lone Sayādaw, and Ale-taw-ya Sayādaw (Venerable Mañjūsā) are those to whom I owe immeasurable gratitude for giving me guidelines on how to practice *vipassanā* until accomplishing a monk's purpose (the attainment of full enlightenment).”

This is the lineage of his teachers.

Both Scripture and Practice

Venerable Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji worked very hard to make *sāsana* flourish to its former glory in all aspects. So, he was a great teacher and a great Pāli commentator who was highly respected as an *arahant* by the government of Union of Burma and its entire population. He had spent 45 years from his age of 40 to 85 carrying out both duties of *sāsana*, scripture (*pariyatti*) and practice (*paṭipatti*) by learning and practicing *dhamma*

himself first, and then for the sake of people teaching others in many different cities, towns and villages in both Lower and Upper Burma. In the case of scriptural duty (*pariyatta*), he wrote two commentaries in Pāli in addition to scriptural judgments on monastic rules and regulations (*vinaya*) and *dhamma* discourses (*sutta*) and ultimate phenomena (*abhidhamma*). In the case of duty to practice (*paṭipatti*), he himself practiced intensively according to *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and taught the correct method to many others.

His Disciples

During 45 years of his commitment to the glorious *sāsana*, there were many disciples who came and practiced under his guidance. They include:

Monastic Disciples

1. Venerable Kelāsa, San-daw-dwin Monastery, Bago (This Sayādaw is now 77 years old; he is one of the most dedicated disciples of Sayādawji.);
2. Venerable Visuddha, the guiding teacher of Yangon Min-gon and Insein Min-gon Centers;
3. Venerable Sobhana or Mahāsi Sayadaw, the guiding teacher of Mahāsi Meditation Center, Rangoon;
4. Venerable Vaṇṇa, the guiding teacher of Tha-ton Meditation Center;
5. Venerable Nandiya, known as Taung-pu-lu Sayādaw in Upper Burma, who is highly respected as an *arahant*;

6. Venerable Narinda, Khandaw Center, Chaun-oo Township;
7. Venerable Paṇḍita, the guiding teacher of Kin Forest Center, in Myit-kwae Township;
8. Venerable Jotika, the guiding teacher of Kyidaw Center, Taungoo City;
9. Venerable Sundara, the guiding teacher of Shwe-pyi Meditation Center, Pyaw-bwe;
10. Venerable Paṇḍava, the guiding teacher of Myo-bout-wa Satipaṭṭhāna Center, Maw-la-myain City.

The ten Sayādaws mentioned in the above list are very dedicated disciples of Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji. They—between 55 and 77 years of age—have been guiding teachers of their own meditation centers, working very hard to help *sāsana* flourish to its former glory.

In the same way as monastic disciples, there are many laymen disciples who have been working hard to help *sāsana* shine in its glory. They are as follows:

1. U San Dun, the founder of Bo-de-gon Meditation Center, Myo-Hla;
2. U Chit Aung (ex-monk) who wrote *Satipaṭṭhāna-dīpanī*, which highlighted the method of mindfulness;
3. U Tun (ex-monk), Myo-Hla. This gentle man used to be known as Venerable Ledi Nandiya as he had been a dedicated disciple of Ledi Sayādawji. He wrote a book titled “Mindful Observation”;

4. U Myat Kyaw (ex-monk), Kamaryut, Rangoon. This gentle man was known as Dhamma-preacher Paṇḍita-dhamma (when he was a monk). He wrote many books on *vipassanā* including *Vipassanā* Manual, Guide to Noble Path and so on.

Sister Kusala

Sister Nun Kusala was the one who, as a laywoman, came and practiced with Sayādawji at the hermitage called Goo-ga-lay, Min-gone, in 1271 (1909). Later with strong faith in the *dhamma*, she was ordained as a nun by the name of Kusala. She established a meditation center where she was teaching *vipassanā* meditation for almost 40 years. Even some monks practiced under her guidance. Thus, she was a highly respected nun.

The Last Disciple

I, the author of this biography, was the one who among others came last to practice under the guidance of Sayādawji at Thaton Min-gone Jetavan Meditation Center. I spent the rest of my life taking care of all his needs until his last moment on this planet.

Many More Disciples

Actually, although not mentioned in the above list, Sayādawji's disciples are many more in number who have been teaching *vipassanā* in their meditation centers in many different towns and cities. Below is the list of their centers:

Affiliate Centers

Under the Guidance of Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji

1. Jetavan Center, Tha-ton Township
2. Sāsana Yeikthar, That-ton Township
3. Min-gon Center, Rangoon
4. Yangon Sāsana Yeikthar, Rangoon
5. Kamaryut Sāsana Man-aung, Rangoon
6. Five-tier Pagoda Vipassanā Center, Rangoon
7. Taung-gyi City, Mye-phu Center
8. In-sein Mingone Jetavan
9. Taunt-wine-ga-lay, Maw-la-myain Township
10. Myo-bout-wa, Maw-la-myain Township
11. Kyite-than-lan, Maw-la-myain Township
12. Mote-pon, Khemāsivam Center, Maw-la-myain
Township
13. Thin-gan-daw Center, Kyite-kami Township
14. Than-byu-zayat Center, Kyite-kami Township
15. Mudon Center
16. Mudon Block Center
17. Mudon Khayan Center
18. Kyun-doe Khayan Center
19. Zar-tha-byin Center
20. Center, Yin-nyain Township
21. Shwe-goo Center, Taung-zon Township
22. Kokatut Center
23. Sandwin Center, Bago Township
24. Sāsana Yeikthar, Bago Township

25. Toun-zon Kaa Village Center
26. Dike-oo Center
27. Taw-jwe Lake Center
28. Sāsana Yeikthar, Taungoo Township
29. Kyi-daw Center, Taungoo Township
30. Phew Center
31. Shwe-kyin Center
32. Myo-oo Center, Yedarshe Township
33. Satipaṭṭhā Center, Swar Township
34. Bo-de-gon Center, Myo-Hla Township
35. Relic Hill Center, Thar-ga-ra Township
36. Ye-dar-she Nut-ye-dwin Center
37. Satipaṭṭhāna Center, Pe-nwe-gon Township
38. Satipaṭṭhāna Center, Ma-u-bin Township
39. Pyin-ma-nar Daw Myavadi, Sudhamma-medanī
40. Sate-nyan-don Center, Pyin-ma-nar Township
41. Le-way Sāsana Man-aung Center Pyin-ma-nar
Township
42. In-daun Center, Ela Township
43. Ariyāvamsa Forest Center, Ela Township
44. Shwe-pyi-thar Center, Pyaw-bwe Township
45. Yee-le Center, Thar-zee Township
46. Taung-pu-lu, Mitthila Township
47. Min-gon Center, Taung-dwin-gyi Township
48. Gwe-gyi Kyaung Center, Taung-dwin-gyi Township
49. Yuar-thar Center Taung-dwin-gyi Township
50. Yet-mali Center Taung-dwin-gyi Township
51. Nabe-dan Forest Center Taung-dwin-gyi Township

52. Nut-mout Sin-the Lake Center Taung-dwin-gyi Township
53. Kyout-ba-daun City Center
54. Kan-yin Kyaun Center, Myit-guate Township
55. Min-gon Meditation Center, Pan-Hlain Township
56. Satipaṭṭhāna Center, Taung-thar Township
57. Sein-ban Sāsana Meditation Center, Mandalay Township
58. War-gin-gon Center, Mandalay Township
59. Shwe-pyi Center, Mandalay Satipaṭṭhāna Center
60. Khantaw Satipaṭṭhāna Center, Chaun-oo Township
61. Kye-mone Center
62. Saik-kon Center, Shwe-bo
63. Meditation Center, Kathar Township
64. Meditation Center, Moe-gote Township
65. Satipaṭṭhāna Center, Jobin-gout Township
66. Satipaṭṭhāna Center, Lebhadan Township
67. Min-gon Meditation Center, Mesout Township
68. Sāsana Man-aung Meditation Center, Toun-gyi, Shan State
69. Sāsana Man-aung Meditation Center, Lin-khay, Shan State
70. Sāsana Man-aung Meditation Center, Yap-sout, Shan State
71. Sāsana Man-aung Meditation Center, Pintaya, Shan State
72. Sāsana Man-aung Meditation Center, Pye-hla, Shan State
73. Sāsana Man-aung Meditation Center, Moe-ne, Shan State
74. Sāsana Man-aung Meditation Center, Mine-pan, Shan State
75. Sāsana Man-aung Meditation Center, Hanbat, Shan State
76. Sāsana Man-aung Meditation Center, Conbar, Shan State

77. Sāsana Man-aung Meditation Center, Pin-long, Shan State
78. Sāsana Man-aung Meditation Center, Aung-ban, Shan State
79. Sāsana Man-aung Meditation Center, Mout-me, Shan State
80. Sāsana Man-aung Meditation Center, Kyout-me, Shan State
81. Khemāsīvaṃ Meditation Center, Beeline, Indochina
82. Thein Kyaung Meditation Center, Bangkok, Thailand
83. Veluvan Meditation Center, Monkeying, Thailand
84. Kan-oo Kyaung Center, Waw Township
85. Twin-tay Center
86. Min-gon Center, Day-da-ye Township
87. Min-gon Center, Lamugyi village
88. Meditation Center, Kyike-lat Township
89. Meditation Center, Myaun-mya Township
90. Khar-daw-mi Meditation Center, Myaun-mya Township
91. Min-gon Center, Hin-tha-da Township
92. Nan-chaung Min-gon Center, Than-dwe Township
93. Jade-taw Min-gon Center, Than-dwe Township
94. Kin-maw Center, Than-dwe Township
95. Khan-daw Center, Myaung-mya Township
96. Khan-daw Center, Myin-moo Township
97. Khan-daw Center, Khin-mon Village, Mon-yuar Township
98. Vipassanā Center, Gun-nyin-sait Village, Myin-moo Township
99. Ye-le-ga-lay Center, Ma-u-bin Township
100. Min-gon Center, Basein Township
101. Min-gon Center, Laputta Township

102. Min-gon Center, Phaun-byin Township, Kalaywa
 103. Meditation Center, Ma-gyi-bin Matawkan village,
 Basein Township
 104. Min-gon Center, Thone-za Township
 105. Min-gon Center, Maw-la-myain-june

These are the meditation centers that were already established. Nowadays, during Prime Minister U Nu's government, many more meditation centers have been newly established in many different cities and towns, where yogis practice the mindfulness meditation by following the guideline laid down by Min-gone Jetavan Sayādawji.

“Half of Sāsana, a Turn of Good King”

Since ancient time there has been a *daboun*⁵¹ that says, “*sāsana tawet, min-goun taset*,” (meaning, “During half of Sāsana, there is a turn of good king”).⁵² My interpretation of it is that this *daboun* prophesied Sayādawji's lifetime because it is now exactly 2500 in *sāsana* era, which means ‘half of sāsana’ because sāsana is predicted to last 5000 years.⁵³ You may claim right to interpret the phrase “*min-*

⁵¹ “*Daboun*” means random utterances (of children, actors, or crazy ones) that become popular among people and are interpreted as prophecies.

⁵² Here, the Burmese word for ‘a good king’ is ‘*min-goun*’ that sounds exactly like ‘*Min-gone*’.

⁵³ According to the commentary on Long Discourses (Volume-3, 161) and on Numerical Discourses (Volume-1, 130), Buddha's dispensation will last 5000 years. During the 1st one thousand, there will be arahants endowed with four kinds of analytical knowledge; during the 2nd, arahants only with six kinds of supernatural powers; during the 3rd, arahants only with three kinds of supernatural power; during the 4th, arahants with no supernatural power;

goun taset” (a turn of good king) in your own way if you wish to. Anyhow, one thing we can say for sure is that it is 2500 in *sāsana* era; it is indisputably ‘half of *sāsana*’. So, we just need to figure out who would be ‘*min-goun*’ (a good king in English). In this case, I would like to interpret that the phrase (*min-goun*) simply refers to *Min-gone*.

Totally Undeniable

40 years before 2500 in *sāsana* era, Venerable Min-gone Sayādawji had rediscovered and revealed the path of mindfulness (*appamāda*), which had been lost for centuries, for the sake of people home and abroad such as Thailand, Indochina, India and so on. In view of the path followed by many people home and abroad, it is undeniable that his heroic effort in the rediscovery of this great path helps *sāsana* flourish to its former glory. In addition, he was such a talented person who successfully wrote two Pāli commentaries, the unique task that nobody has ever done in the *sāsana*’s history of Burma.

I’ve witnessed the fact that Venerable Min-gone Sayādawji—having carried out tirelessly and peerlessly two duties of the Holy Order (*sāsana*), which shines out with eight wonders⁵⁴ and promises the bliss of *nibbāna*—was highly respected as an *arahant* (a fully-enlightened monk) by the government of Union of Burma and its entire population.

and during the last one thousand there will be only lesser noble ones, i.e., no-returners, once-returners, and stream-enterer.

⁵⁴ For “Eight Wonders,” please refer to Pahārāda Sutta, Aṅguttara Volume-3, Pāli Page-38

Now, it is exactly half of *sāsana*, as it is 2500 years after the Buddha’s demise. It exactly coincides with the Venerable Min-gone Sayādawji’s 45-year mission accomplished by rediscovering and revealing the path of mindfulness (*appamāda*) that has now shone in all directions. It is exactly during half of *sāsana*’s lifespan that he rediscovered and revealed the Path to Nibbāna to the people home and abroad. Given this fact, it is reasonable to assume that the *taboun* that says “*Sāsana tawet, Min-goun Taset,*” (Half of Sāsana, a turn of good king) refers to Min-gone Sayādawji. That is why some even modified it thus:

“*Sāsana tawet, Min-gone Taset.*”

“Half of Sāsana, there is a turn of *Min-gone*” (in place of *Min-goun*).

Poem Composed by Old Sages

According to the *taboun* mentioned above, a poem was composed by old sages as follows:

“Almost half of *sāsana*, a peerless monk—endowed with great accumulation of merit and with profound wisdom powerful like *the weapon of diamond*—will appear on earth in the same way as Venerable Moggaliputta and Venerable Nāgasena⁵⁵ did.

He would set up the victory flag at the tip of the raft sailing it to *nibbāna*. Anyone wishing to follow him

⁵⁵ Venerable Moggaliputta and Venerable Nāgasena were great monks who were believed to be sent to this planet to accomplish *sāsana* mission impossible.

should shine the light of mindfulness-based wisdom removing the darkness of delusion. Hypothetically, he may be on this planet just to represent the Buddha himself.”

This poem was composed many decades ago by wise sages who shone out on earth with their mundane and supra-mundane wisdom like the sun and moon. Most probably they might write it referring to Venerable Mingone Jetavan Sayādawji, who had entered into ultimate peacefulness of *nibbāna* three years ago.

[**The author’s note:** I have written this biography of Mingone Jetavan Sayādawji depicting his lifetime as best I can. For sure, however, there will be many more, maybe even countless, left to write about his. So, I have to conclude it with this much.]

**Below are Pāli Verses and their Translations⁵⁶
Composed to arouse a sense of urgency
With reference to the demise of Min-gon Sayādawji**

*Evam aniccatam jammim; ñatvā durabhi-sambhavam
Tam pattum vāyame dhīro; yaṃ niccam a-mataṃ
padam*

Realizing the transience to be horrible and
unavoidable,
The wise makes effort to attain what is eternal and
deathless.

⁵⁶ The English translations here are rendered directly from Pāli, but not from Burmese translations.

*Tādisopi mahā-thero; saddhamma-dīpa-jalito
Maraṇassa vasaṃ gato; mādisesu kathāva kā.*

Even such a great monk who shed light on the saint
dhamma
Succumbed to death; not to mention common people
like us.

Amhe 'pi bhonto maraṇassatiṃ bhāvema —

“A-ddhuvā vata bho saṅkhārā!”

“A-niccā vata bho saṅkhārā!”

“A-sukhā vata bho saṅkhārā!”

“Dukkhā vata bho saṅkhārā!”

“A-sārā vata bho saṅkhārā!”

“Anattā vata bho saṅkhārā!”

Dear Dhamma-seekers, shall we contemplate the
certainty of death —

“Impermanent indeed are the conditioned
phenomena!”

“Transient indeed are the conditioned phenomena!”

“Unpleasant indeed are the conditioned phenomena!”

“Distressing indeed are the conditioned phenomena!”

“Insubstantial indeed are the conditioned
phenomena!”

“Devoid of soul indeed are the conditioned
phenomena!”

Sharing Merit

May all beings share this merit
Which we have thus acquired
For the acquisition of all kinds of happiness.

May beings inhabiting space and earth,
Devas and nagas of mighty power
Share this merit of ours.
May they long protect the teachings!

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