



Panditārāma Shwe Taung Gon Sasana Yeiktha

U Pandita



One Life's Journey

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INTRODUCTION

It has been a long time that I have wanted to honor Sayadaw by writing of this One Life's Journey of his. I did not think that it would materialize easily. I was convinced that it would take a long time. Due to good kamma and opportune conditions, I got the opportunity to pay my respects. It gives me great pleasure to honor Sayadaw by writing One Life's Journey. I am immensely grateful to all the people who talked to me about his life and made it possible for me to write.

I can't help but be pleased and astonished that this book was successfully completed during the rainy season I took off to rest for the sake of my health at the Panditârâma Hse Main Gon Forest Center. I did not intend to rest the whole rainy season. Neither did it cross my mind that I would write while I was taking my break. My impossible plan to recover during this rest period saw success at last. When I think about why it was this successful, I can't help but see Sayadaw's kammic influence as the primary cause. If you were to say that to him Sayadaw would not accept it. Nonetheless, I can't but see it that way.

I have written here of Sayadaw's seventy-five years to the best of my knowledge. While I have tried my best not include any errors, what mistakes there are are the author's own. No doubt there is much left out which was out of the scope of my knowledge. Given an opportunity, I would like to continue the effort and publish a second volume of One Life's Journey. This book has been written in a conversational style, with numerous literary sketches. It is my hope that those who read One Life's Journey will find herein things to increase their faith and their knowledge, to emulate and be inspired by, and samvega to motivate their practice, as well as lessons to take with them.

Thâmanay Kyaw
The 3rd day of the waxing moon of Tansaung,
Myanmar era 1358
(13/11/96)

Pâli

Buddha

The Awakened Ones, of which Gotama the Sakyan was the most recent. (Buddha is actually the plural form, Buddho the singular)

Dhamma

Used here as the teachings of the Buddha

Sangha Community

The ordained followers of the Buddha's teachings

Sîla

Morality

Samâdhi

Concentration

Pañña

Wisdom

Vipassanâ Insight

The practice (of meditation) which leads to insight (ie. Satipapphana)

Satipatthana Sati (Mindfulness) + Pa (in various ways; deeply) + phana (object)

Mindfulness meditation

Dhammâcariya Dhamma + Acariyo (teacher)

The name of the examination for Dhamma teachers held by the government of Myanmar, the culmination of a five-level course of Pâli examinations.

Kilesa or Kilesas

Refer to the defilements of the mind, attachment, aversion, delusion, and so on.

Mettâ

Lovingkindness or unconditional love

Karuna

Compassion

Pariyatti

Theoretical study of the Buddha's teachings

Pattipatti

Experiential practice of the Buddha's teachings

Samvega

Apprehension at the suffering of future rebirths, thus a motivation for the practice of the teachings.

Sâsana

The dispensation: the teachings the Buddha; their study and practice

Bhante

Respectful term for monk: Venerable Sir.

Sayadaw

Noble Teacher = elder or teaching monk

Sein Pan

Emerald Flower

Shwe Taung Gon Golden Hill

An area in Yangon

Yeiktha

Peaceful Shade : meditation center

IN HIS OWN WORDS

U Panditâbhivamsa was born on Thursday, the ninth day of the waxing moon of Waso, in 1283 Burmese Era (29 July, 1921) in Greater Yangon (formerly the town of Insein) in the Shwebosu Quarter of Tadahgalay Village. His parents were U Hpe and Daw Chit Su. He was the ninth of ten children.

When he was seven years of age his parents enrolled him in the Kocheh Village Monastery School, Pegu Township, Pegu District, under the auspices of U Jâgara Thera, and had him study subjects suitable for young people to learn. When he was a schoolboy he passed the First Lower and First Middle Standards of the Scriptural Ahgone Examination held at the Dakkhinâyone Shwegyin Daik, Ohnneh Village, Kawa Township, Pegu Division. When he was twelve years old, he became a novice under this same U Jâgara. As a novice he studied basic texts for the Tipitaka, Visuddhâyone grammar books, grammar rules, translation rules, and Abidhamma summary books, under the teacher U Gandodaga at the Kochech Village Monastery.

When he was eighteen years old he was sent by U Jâgara Thera to the most venerable Sayadaw U Kelâsmhây Thera, of the Mahabodhi Forest Monastery in Kyauktan Village, Pegu Division. When he arrived, he continued his studies of relevant texts both night and day under the Dhamma Lecturer and Assistant Sayadaw U Pandava and teachers U Nandiya, U Paññasirî, and U Obasa. While he was studying in this way, he passed the senior level of the Scriptural memorization examinations at the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery in Kyauktan village.

When he had reached twenty years of age, on the eighth day of the waxing moon of Dabodwe in 1302 BE (1941), U Pandita ordained as a monk in the Khanda Ordination Hall of the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery with his benefactor the Mahâbodhi Forest Sayadaw himself as his preceptor. His sponsors were U Bo Han and Daw Thaug of Kyauktan village. Within ten months of becoming a monk, his studies had not progressed as much as he had expected, due to the hazards of the Second World War which had broken out. After the war, when he was a monk of three vassâ, he went to the New Kyaikkasan Shwegyin Monastery, a branch of the Kyauktan Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery. Continuing his studies there under his benefactor U Sucinta and the teacher U Chandâdhika, he studied the senior level texts on the Pâli Canon, the Commentaries, and the Sub-Commentaries both day and night. When the first-ever government Patama Pyan Pâli examination was held in 1946 following the end of the Second World War, he passed the Middle Standard examination. In 1947, he passed both the independent Senior and Cetiyananaparigiyatti examinations.

Studying like this for himself, on the one hand, and giving classes to other students as a tutor in addition, every minute of his day was occupied. In 1948, being extremely tired, he took a one-year rest from examinations. According to the New Kyaikkasan Shwegyin Monastery Sayadaw's instructions, he went to the New Mahâvisuddhâyone Monastery, taking dependence on Zipin Sayadaw U Siyâtathera. While there, he continued his studies of concerned with the Dhammâcariya examination and graduate level Pâli Canon, Commentary and Sub-Commentary texts under such Mahâtheras as Vissuddhâyone Sishin Sayadaw U Kosalla and the teachers U Ânandapandita (Varanasi Sayadaw), and U Suvannajoti, as well as the Most Venerable New Ma Soe Yein (No Worries) Monastery Sayadaw together with Pathan Sayadaw U Visuddhâbhivamsa, U Vicettâbhivamsa and U Candobhâsâbhivamsa.

In Yangon, in addition to studying some of the Nikâya under the teacher U Aung Myat Htut (formerly U Âdiccavamsa) and at the Kyauk Tap Kyi Payah Kyi Monastery, he studied particularly procedures and methodology relating to the Dhammâcariya texts under U Vâsetthâbhivamsa of Dhammikârâma Monastery, Thabyekan Village, Than Lyin District, holder of the "Thiromani" title and author of the Great Paritta treatises.

While studying the graduate level literature under these various prominent teachers, between 1949 and 1952 he passed the government Dhammâcariya and Cetiya?gaòà examinations (1949-Sirîpavaradhammâcariya and Sâsanadhajasirîpavara Dhammacariya; 1952- Cediayangana) In 1950, convinced that the Buddha-Sâsana would endure only if study were followed by practical experience, he went to the Yangon Sâsana Yeiktha of the Most Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw and practiced Satipatthâna Vipassanâ with great effort according to the instructions given by his meditation teacher U Vicâra, presently Nâyaka Sayadaw of Warkheyma Sâsana Yeiktha.

Beginning in 1950, his benefactor the New Shwegyin Monastery Sayadaw gave U Pandita full responsibility for literature instruction within the monastery. While carrying out these Pariyatti (scriptural study) duties he was involved with organization and with Pâli editing during the Sixth Sangayana. In the month of Nayon, 1955, he resigned from his teaching duties at the monastery in order to return once more to continue to study and practice Satipatthana Vipassanâ. Coming to the Mahasi Sayadaw's place, he took up responsibilities there.

Attending the opening of a new meditation center in Colombo, Sri Lanka on the 12 day of the waning moon of Nattaw in the year 1320 BE (January 1959), during his trip to Sri Lanka and India, the Mahasi Sayadaw invited U Pandita to come as a member of the group of meditation teachers. While going on pilgrimage to sites connected with the Buddha's life, he had the opportunity to learn of the regions associated with early Sâsana.

When he had been carrying out his duties teaching meditation in Sri Lanka for nearly three years, as best his physical and mental strength would allow, and in accord

with his great teacher's guidance, he returned to Myanmar due to ill health. He continued to study personally extraordinarily deep methods of scholarship and practice with his benefactor the great Mahasi Sayadaw himself. During that time, training in the technique of his great teacher, he instructed monks and male lay yogis who came to meditate, on behalf of his teacher.

Having become a Nâyaka (senior teacher) of the Yangon Sâsana Yeiktha, Sayadaw U Panditâbhivamsa traveled to the Mandalay Yetanapoun Sâsana Yeiktha to look after matters there in accord with Mahasi Sayadaw's directions. Thus, at present, in the year 1964, while looking after the Yetanapoun Sâsana Yeiktha as Padhânanâyaka, leading meditation teacher, he is propagating the practical teachings of Satipatthana Vipassanâ.

(written by Sayadaw, excerpted from the book in Myanmar, Mahasi Practitioners)

THE HUMAN WORLD

"Sayadaw's younger sister, Daw Tin Nyunt, told me about his life when we happened to talk." So saying, Ma Saw Yin Win told the author as much as she could remember. Ma Saw Yin Win looked after Daw Tin Nyunt like her own mother, and Daw Tin Nyunt depended on Ma Saw Yin Win like a daughter. Ma Saw Yin Win wasn't only friendly with Daw Tin Nyunt. She was friendly and intimate with all of Sayadaw's relatives. Whatever help they needed she would provide for them.

When Ma Saw Yin Win talked about Sayadaw's life, the impulse arose to interview Daw Tin Nyunt and write about what she said. So, I was looking forward to the arrival of Daw Tin Nyunt, who lives in the Kyaukyedwin Quarter of North Okkalapa. However, due to poor health, the lady couldn't come immediately, although she wanted to. Only after the month of Thidinkyut did she come. She came to the meditation center by car one evening, along with Ma Hsu Myat Mun, the daughter of the lady's son, Maung Kyaw Naing U Htay Myine having gone to fetch her. During Daw Tin Nyunt's visit with the author, the Venerable U Nanda, Ma Saw Yin Win and U Htay Myine were also present.

Daw Tin Nyunt told us what she remembered of Sayadaw.

"Of ten brothers and sisters I was the youngest. Sayadaw was the ninth. He is three years older than me. When I was just a year old our mother died. She died in Kyaukyedwin Village in the Insein district of Yangon. After Mother's death, we moved to Father's birthplace, Kocheh Village in Pegu Township. When I was seven, Father died. Before he died, Father told Maung Mya Han (Sayadaw-to-be) that he would like to see him become a monk. So Sayadaw became a novice in Kocheh Village when he was twelve years old. This was at the Kocheh Village monastery.

The Kocheh Village Sayadaw's lay name was U Pein, meaning Mr. Thin. He was very fair, short and spare. There were about forty or fifty families in the village. This Sayadaw wielded great influence and his discipline was very good. Before he had become a novice, Maung Mya Han had been a schoolboy under this same Kocheh Village Sayadaw (U Zagara).

About two or three years after becoming a novice, Maung Mya Han returned to lay life. He went to live with his older brother Ko Aung Kyi in the pharmacy of Saya Kywe, on Sule Pagoda Road. The two boys peddled medicines for Saya Kywe. One day when Maung Mya Han was selling his wares, an Indian man with a rickshaw was blocking the road. Maung Mya Han asked the man to make way for him, but the man wouldn't. So they argued. The man got out of hand so Maung Mya Han hit him with a brick and broke his skull. Saya Kywe berated Maung Mya Han for having broken the man's skull and Maung Mya Han quit. His brother quit too and they both returned to Kocheh Village.

While our mother was alive our financial condition was all right. Before Father died, his health deteriorated. He required medical treatment for a long time and what money we was almost exhausted on that. After Father died, we moved back to Tadahgalay Village.

"You and your brothers and sisters certainly had a tough time, didn't you, losing both parents at an early age," the Venerable U Nanda remarked with compassion.

Daw Tin Nyunt replied, "Yes, it's true, Bhante." She continued, "But it's as they say, the older brother in as the father, the older sister as the mother. Our oldest brother, Ko Ohn Maung, was like a father to us. He worked in the fields to support us. Our oldest sister Ma Ma Hsait was like a mother to us. After our father died, Ko Ohn Maung and Ma Ma Hsait fed us, looked after us, brought us up. Ma Ma Hsait always told Maung Mya Han and me to love one another."

"Do you remember stories about Maung Mya Han and yourself from when you were small? Whatever you remember, please tell," said the author.

Daw Tin Nyunt replied, "The two of us used to walk hand in hand under the mango trees in Kocheh Village. We would pick up the little mangoes and sell them. With the money we got we bought snacks to eat. There were reaping competitions in the village. The two of us would go together, hand in hand, and watch them. We would play tag and another type of tag game called "tote-see-toe" with the other children. Before Mother died, she used to take care of Ma Chit Yu's three children and Granddad Kha's four children, I hear. While Mother was alive, we used to eat together on big trays with legs about the size of coffee tables. Four of us would eat all together of that one tray. After Mother died and we came to Kocheh Village we didn't eat like that anymore.

"Our grandfather (our mother's father), U Yit, wore his hair long and tied it in a topknot. He used to fix his grandson's hair in the same way. Before our grandfather died Maung Mya Han wore his hair like that. After grandfather died, though, our father gave Maung Mya Han a short haircut."

"Daw Tin Nyunt, of your brothers and sisters, with whom were you the closest?"

"I close them all, but I was closest to Sayadaw, of course. Maung Mya Han didn't ever scold me. He didn't raise his voice or hit me. Whenever Maung Mya Han had something to eat, he'd set some aside and give it to me. And he didn't bully others, or insult them. He avoided doing that."

"When did Maung Mya Han re-ordain as a novice?"

"He re-ordained when he was about fourteen. His older brother Ko Aung Kyi was his sponsor. After he became a novice, he lived in Kyauktan Village. He didn't return to Kocheh Village after that."

"But let me continue what I was saying earlier. When Maung Mya Han and Ko Aung Kyi were working in Saya Kywe's pharmacy, I was living together with our older sister Ma Ma Hsait in Kocheh Village. Maung Mya Han and Ko Aung Kyi missed me, so they came and brought me from Kocheh Village to Tadahgalay, where we stayed at the home of our eldest brother, Ko Ohn Maung.

"One time, when they were building a pagoda at Naga Hline Cave Hill, they were putting on performances of traditional Myanmar opera. I went and watched the performance for three nights. When I returned home it was morning and I very sleepily put a pot of rice on to cook. Near the fire was a box of firewood. I leaned against it and drowsed off. The pot of rice was bubbling. In my drowsy state, the sound of the rice pot, "put-put-put-put", sounded like the sound of the Myanmar orchestra. My eldest brother, Ko Ohn Maung said, "Hey girl, that smoke smells bad." When he looked, my long-sleeved blouse was on fire. Ko Ohn Maung hit me, and blood came out from my ear.

Maung Mya Han pulled up the edge of my skirt and used it to stop the flow of blood. Then he went to our brother Ko Aung Kyi and told him what had happened. The two of them went to our eldest brother and confronted him, saying, "Why did you have to hit your little sister so hard like that?"

"Oh, Maung Mya Han didn't like hitting, ever since he was a small child. Now that he has become a Sayadaw he tells his disciples, "Don't strike children. Don't berate them. Don't speak harshly to them."

"It was my own fault that I got hit. It wasn't Ko Ohn Maung's fault. My oldest brother and sister did so much for me. I share merits with them every day. I always send mettâ to Sayadaw, too, and pay respects to him."

"Daw Tin Nyunt, when was the time that Maung Mya Han showed the most consideration for you?"

When I asked this, Daw Tin Nyunt started to reply without a moment's hesitation. But when she spoke, a shadow came over her face and her voice didn't sound as it had before. The sound of grief came in. She steadied herself and replied as follows.

"Sayadaw went to stay at the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery in Kyauktan Village when he was a novice and a young monk. When he was in his first years as a monk, he sent a piece of cotton cloth to me in Kocheh Village for me to make myself a blouse."

When she said the words, "piece of cotton cloth", Daw Tin Nyunt's heart seemed to become blocked. She had to gather her strength to continue speaking. She looked sad and sounded like she was crying. Tears welled in her eyes and all of us listening felt sorry for her.

Ma Saw Yin Win, apparently trying to ease Daw Tin Nyunt's mind, asked, "Where did he send the cloth from? From Kyauktan Village? From Mandalay?"

Daw Tin Nyunt looked as though her sadness had gone, and her voice returned to normal. "He sent it from Mahabodhi Forest Monastery in Kyauktan Village," she said.

Venerable U Nanda entered the conversation, asking, "Where did he get the piece of cloth?"

"He tore it off of his mosquito net," she replied.

"Oh...your brother really loved his little sister, didn't he?" the author said in surprise.

Venerable U Nanda remarked, "Sayadaw's mettâ for you, Daw Tin Nyunt, is quite apparent."

Daw Tin Nyunt tried to suppress the sadness that arose when she thought about Sayadaw's mettâ for her, but she couldn't. Her voice became more sorrowful and she couldn't stop the tears.

Ma Saw Yin Win tried again to lift Daw Tin Nyunt's sadness. She said, "Bhante...you must know how good that kind of cloth would be wear, it's so light and cool. You must have seen it before." Daw Tin Nyunt listened attentively to what Ma Saw Yin Win said. I think her mind had changed. Her face and voice became normal again.

It looked as though that piece of cloth torn from a mosquito net had touched her heart. No doubt that why she remembered this incident as her brother's deepest act of consideration for her. It was an act worthy of her deep emotion. Hearing her caused the listeners' hearts to quiver as well.

Whether it was because she had heard the story before, or because she wanted to change Daw Tin Nyunt's mood of sadness, I can't say. In any case, Ma Saw Yin Win began to laugh appreciatively. The rest of the listeners began to laugh too. As the saying goes, "Laughter is stronger than tears."

HIS LITTLE SISTER

"Devotee, I met all you relatives when you came to make offerings on Sayadaw's birthday. It's been about four years since I've had the pleasure of seeing you all together as a family like that. Before I got to meet the whole family as one, I knew Sayadaw's relatives only vaguely."

The author was speaking to Sayadaw's own sister, Daw Tin Nyunt. She replied, "Sayadaw doesn't want us to celebrate his birthday. We dedicate the good deed of donations on that day to all those who have passed away, our parents, our older brothers and sisters, our and aunties, and we share the merit with them. Sayadaw wants to us to be related not only in the worldly sense but also by the blood of Dhamma. So, he wants those of his relatives who haven't yet meditated to do it. 'Only if you've practiced to become satisfied with the Dhamma will it have been worth it to have been born as a human and have gotten the chance to meet the Sâsana. It is not enough to be related by blood in the worldly sense. We still need to become related by Dhamma blood,' Sayadaw says. 'To look at him, with his solemn attitude from his strong concentration, you might well think Sayadaw was cold, Bhante. But in his mind, he really has mettâ for all of his relatives, Bhante.'"

"Devotee, when have you meditated? With which teacher did you practice? How long were you on retreat?"

"Sayadaw lived at the Mandalay Sein Pan Meditation Center for a full two years. When we were packing his things in the car to go to Mandalay, I told him, "I want to come to Mandalay and meditate, Bhante."

"Can you really come?" Sayadaw asked. He told me to think about it for three days. Then, "...if you have really made up your mind to come meditate, when I have arrived and got settled in Mandalay, I will just send a telegram. Come on over then," he said. When Sayadaw's telegram came from Mandalay, our older brother Ko Oun Maung's daughter Ma Htwe Kyi and I went together to Mandalay and meditated. We stayed for three months. Sayadaw himself gave us interviews. Back then, Ma Htwe Kyi was not yet married, Bhante. When the three months of meditation were up, Sayadaw asked us, "Are you satisfied? If you are not yet satisfied, keep going."

"Devotee, hadn't you meditated before the time at Sein Pan Yeiktha?"

"I had practiced with Sayadaw himself at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, Bhante. Those times, I just practiced for a week or ten days before going home. The reason I gave for going home was that my health was not good. Sayadaw even tried to stop me from going home, saying, "Don't go home. There are doctors here. Get them to treat you."

Actually, my health wasn't the reason, Bhante. It was because I missed home, Bhante. I came for a week or ten days like that three or four times."

"After practicing in Mandalay did you get to meditate again, Devotee?"

"I did, Bhante. Sometimes for a month, sometimes for forty days, I meditated at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, Bhante."

"Has Sayadaw come to your house?"

"He has come twice, Bhante. Once was when one of our sons died. The other time was when I was severely ill, Bhante."

"What kind of conversations do you have with Sayadaw when you go to see him?"

"Sayadaw doesn't say a lot, Bhante. 'When did you come? How is your health? Take care of yourself' That's pretty much what he says, Bhante. Once, I went alone to see him. 'In the future, when you come, come with a companion,' he said. He was speaking according the Vinaya, Bhante. Ever since them, whenever I go to see Sayadaw, Ma Saw Yin Win always accompanies me, Bhante."

"What does Sayadaw say to those relatives who haven't meditated yet?"

"Once, Sayadaw's niece Ma Twe reverently invited him to come dine. 'I intend to come dine, but not before you have meditated,' he declared."

HIS GRANDFATHER AND HIS FATHER

He was called U Yit. He was from Shwebo. He was courageous. And he had a good head of hair, they say. During the Colonial period he fought against the English government; to avoid capture he fled to the Insein section of Yangon, to Tadahgalay Village. At that time Tadahgalay Village was just a big forest. U Yit and his relatives cleared some land and farmed. Because people from Shwebo were gathering there, the area was called "Shwebosu", or the group from Shwebo. U Yit's estate was quite large. After the Tadahgalay quarter was abolished it was divided into lots and became what is now called North Okkalapa (1) Block. U Yit's estate was where the school is now, just across from the Swe Daw Myat Zedi.

U Yit used to carry his sword wherever he went. He relied on his sword for self-defense against the English enemy. When the English were following in search of him, trying to capture him, he jumped over a fence as tall as he was, using his sword as a support. His long hair went flying behind him as he jumped over and ran away. They say he had inserted needles under the skin of his arms [as a charm against physical harm]. When he died, the needles appeared and they were taken out, it's said.

U Yit was Sayadaw's grandfather, his mother's father. Therefore Sayadaw's mother, Daw Chit Su, was a Shwebo woman.

Sayadaw, U Yit's grandson, was also interested in stories about this brave man from Shwebo, U Yit. When he met someone who knew about U Yit's life, Sayadaw would urge that person to tell what he or she could about U Yit. Both U Yit's granddaughter, Daw Tin Nyunt, and his great-grandson (U Yit's son U Hpo Kha's daughter Daw Than Than's son), U Htay Myaing, talked about U Yit with pleasure, laughing heartily.

As for Sayadaw's father, his sister Daw Tin Nyunt told me about their father, U Hpe.

"Father was born in Kocheh Village, Pegu Township, Pegu Division. After his father died, he worked to support his widowed mother. He worked tending other people's water buffaloes. One time when he was tending the herd, he slung a pebble with his slingshot and hit one of the animals directly in the eye. So he ran away to Yangon. He came to one monastery. A monk there gave Father a place to stay in the monastery. Father knew English. But although he himself knew English, he wouldn't permit his children to learn the language. He said it was "dog-talk." The monk got Father a job. When they were digging Thadu Kan (Gyo Hpyu Pipe Line), he got work as a foreman.

To dig Thadu Kan (Gyo Hpyu Pipe Line), they dug an area one hundred feet wide wherever the pipeline ran. Wherever the pipeline ran, whoever owned the land had to give it. This pipeline ran right across U Yit's estate. When they came to dig the road through U

Yit's property, U Yit went after Father with his knife. But after Father's superiors came and spoke to U Yit, he didn't say anything at all, he just gave them permission to dig the line. While the pipeline was being dug, my mother and my father fell in love. Grandfather didn't agree to this match. Father was dark-skinned, just like my nephew here, U Htay Myine. My mother, on the other hand, was plump and very fair. Apparently, my grandfather thought that this dark-skinned man, my father, wasn't equal to his fair-skinned daughter. Grandfather even said of Father, "He's like that fellow who follows behind the drummer, carrying the flute." But despite the fact that Grandfather didn't agree to the courtship of his daughter and his future son-in-law, his daughter liked him and eloped with him. They went to Kocheh Village. The monk who had sheltered Father came and told Grandfather about the elopement.

My older sister Ma Ma Hsait told me this story. People of Grandfather's day didn't think much of the Myanmar opera. In the Myanmar opera, the last act was the drummer. After him, there was a fellow carrying a flute. To say that someone was like that fellow was a great insult. But when Father worked as a foreman, he rode around in a pushcart. He rode in that wherever he needed to go. Workers had to push the cart for him. Grandfather looked down on Father, but in fact he was a leader.

Next, Daw Tin Nyunt spoke about her brothers and sisters.

"We were ten. Ma Hsait, Ma Thein, Ko Hla Maung, Ko Hla Aung, Ko Ohn Maung, Ko Aung Kyi, Ko Chit Min, Ma Thee, Ko Mya Han and me. Of these, Ko Chit Min drowned. It happened right in Kocheh Village. At that time, Kocheh Village was flooded with water. Ko Chit Min's eyes weren't good and for that reason Father strictly told him not to go out with the farmhands. Ko Chit Min was still in school then, but he didn't listen to his father. He went along with the farmhands. His life ended that day. He went together with one of the farmhands to Chinese Cemetery. Ko Chit Min couldn't swim, but his companions could. They tied a longyi in such a way that the two of them could swim in tandem. The longyi broke, and poor Ko Chit Min was pulled into the strong current and drowned. That was when Father began to lose his health."

"As for our eldest brother Ko Ohn Maung, he was bitten by a snake while in his field in Tadahgalay Village and died. It was about 8:00 a.m. or 9:00 a.m. in the morning while he was cutting grass. The viper bit him once. Ko Ohn Maung just felt a little pain, a little heat, so he wasn't sure it was a snake. He stepped again with his foot and the snake bit him a second time. So that the poison wouldn't go up into his body, he bound the leg with sedge by himself. He tore his longyi to bind the leg further. They took Ko Ohn Maung to the home of his brother-in-law in Tadahgalay Village. When he was near death, his younger brother, Sayadaw, arrived from the Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha. Ko Ohn Maung took Sayadaw's hand and asked him to look after his children after he was gone. He named them one by one. Ko Ohn Maung was forty-five years old when he died. For that reason

Sayadaw invited forty-five monks to attend Ko Ohn Maung's funeral. Sayadaw made offerings of robes and other such things."

"Ko Ohn Maung was like a father to Sayadaw and me, Bhante. Ko Chit Min, Ko Hla Aung and Ma Thee all died young. Ma Thein married and died in childbirth. Ma Ma Hsait was like our own mother. Ko Ohn Maung worked in the fields while Ma Ma Hsait kept the house and cooked for us. Ko Ohn Maung, Ko Aung Kyi and I all meditated under Sayadaw's guidance. Sayadaw was satisfied with Ko Ohn Maung and Ko Aung Kyi's meditation practice."

"Sayadaw's sponsors when he entered the monkhood were U Bo Han and Daw Thaung from Kyauktan Village. He ordained at Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery in Kyauktan Village. Ko Ohn Maung and Ko Aung Kyi also helped supply Sayadaw with items he needed. They were donors of Sayadaw's four requisites as well."

HIS LITTLE BENEFACTRESS

"There are many people whom I should thank in this world. Among them there is even one woman whom I planned to kill with a knife." Shwebo Sayadaw U Nanda was speaking surreptitiously about himself to the author.

"That you would get angry enough to kill is really frightening, isn't it? What did the woman say to you?" The author was very surprised by the monk's anger and interested in the woman as well.

The monk continued his story. "After I had meditated for about one month at the Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha under Sayadaw U Pandita's guidance, he instructed me to practice mettâ meditation. From that time onward, in every aspect of my life, I became able to put mettâ in the place of anger. My gratitude to Sayadaw is very great."

"Hmm...as far as the incident with this woman is concerned, it happened when I was a student studying at the Payakyi Monastery in Mandalay. This woman was a volunteer at the monastery where I lived. She was a spinster. Some visitors from lower Myanmar came to stay at the monastery. I was friendly with them. Among them there was a young girl. I was friendly with her too. It was just simple friendship. This spinster went and told the Sayadaw. Of course, I heard about it. At that time I went so far as to consider killing this woman.

My sponsor in Yangon came to know about the situation. At that, she invited me to come to Yangon and arranged for me to meditate. That's how I came to meditate under Sayadaw's guidance. Later, when I thought it over calmly, I found myself feeling grateful to that woman who had accused me of misbehaving with the girl. And I remembered from time to time the story about Nga Khon Sayadaw."

"Nga Khon Sayadaw was very well known. But that's about all I know about him. I don't know much about his life. Please go on."

"Nga Khon Sayadaw was truly a learned person. He was a great writer. He was someone upon whom the king himself relied. And like me he had someone to thank -- the young woman he had once courted."

"When he was young he had become a novice. But at eighteen or so, he wasn't happy with his life as a novice anymore and he left the order. When he returned to lay life, he thought he should get married. He thought about which village girl he should court. He had a tic in one eye, and he was ugly. He figured that if he sought a beautiful girl, it wouldn't be suitable, so he decided to pursue someone who was as unattractive as he. Having decided on a woman, he proceeded to beautify himself. He put on a red-checked

longyi and a fawn-colored jacket. There wasn't any mirror in his house, so he looked at his reflection in a pond. And he put a traditional kerchief on his head."

"Your story about Nga Khon Sayadaw is very interesting. Please continue."

"After getting dressed up, he went to see his young benefactress and began to court her. With that the young woman spoke the words for which he would be grateful for the rest of his life. She said, "Sir, is it because you think you and I are alike, you and I are equal? Sir, please leave at once!" With this strong ultimatum, she refused him.

He was so ashamed by her refusal that he fled to the golden city of Mandalay, where some monks from his area were studying. He went to the monks and asked them to ordain him as a novice. At first they didn't want to. But he begged them, saying, "This time I'll stay in robes for good. I'll do whatever work you give me. And I'll study hard to learn my lessons." So they ordained him.

Having ordained, he did whatever tasks they gave him. He studied very hard. Because of this he became famous for his scholarship. Due to his widespread reputation the king himself came to pay respects to him and relied upon him. The king even rewarded him with a title. After becoming so renowned and revered, the Sayadaw reflected on the story his life. He thought, "I have come to this point in my life thanks to that young woman I met when I was young. If she hadn't spoken to me as she did, if she hadn't rejected me, I wouldn't be here now. My debt to her is very great." In this way he came to see how she had helped him.

And so, when he was meeting with the king, he mentioned that he would like to repay someone who had once helped him. When the king heard this he said, "Bhante, what is it you need? Whatever you need, please tell me, Bhante." The Sayadaw replied, "Rice, oil, and fabric."

"The king ordered cart after cart to be laden with bags of rice, drums of oil and bolts of fabric. He ordered the Minister of Religious Affairs to invite the Sayadaw to Nga Khon Village to repay his debt to the person who had benefited him. With great ceremony the Sayadaw proceeded to Nga Khon Village and asked that his benefactress be called to see him.

"He asked her, "Do you remember me?" By this time, his benefactress was very old. She studied him carefully, with eyes dimmed by age. She didn't remember him. The Sayadaw related everything that had happened. He concluded, "I am very grateful to you. Thus, I give you all these things in repayment of my debt to you." So saying, he left.

"Bhante, how about you; have you repaid your benefactress?"

"Though I can't repay her in the manner of Nga Khon Sayadaw, I really am grateful to her. If she hadn't done something that made me want to kill her, I wouldn't have come to meditate and experience the Dhamma. The fact that I came to practice this meditation is due to her."

"When you were speaking about Nga Khon Sayadaw, I remembered the story of a young woman who was our Venerable Sayadaw (the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw)'s benefactress."

"That's very interesting. What is the story?"

"It took place when our Sayadaw was a boy of fourteen. He was then known as Maung Mya Han. He lived in Kocheh Village in Pegu Township, Pegu Division. At that time, both his parents had died.

"During the rainy season, Maung Mya Han was helping his brother Ko Aung Kyi plant rice. He was walking along a paddy dyke, bringing his brother young seedlings. As he walked along, he was looking down. It happened that a young girl, one of a group of women who were working in the field, was walking along the paddy dyke carrying cigarettes. She too was looking down. Neither one saw the other. Not even when they drew near each other did they look up. So they had an unexpected, unintended collision.

"This girl didn't blame Maung Mya Han. There was no fault to find. He didn't say, do or even think anything wrong. They simply ran into each other by accident.

"When the girl returned to her friends in the field, they asked her what had happened. She replied quite honestly, "It was an accident. We just bumped into each other, that's all." But there was one woman in her group who was cunning. She said, "Hey, girl, don't say that. Say he grabbed your hand." The young girl who had actually been involved replied, "He didn't grab my hand. Don't make me lie."

"Despite the young girl's honesty, the cunning woman worked on her and in the end she went to the village headman and made a false report. Wanting to settle the matter, Maung Mya Han's brother Ko Aung Kyi paid a fine of fifty-five kyats. The cunning woman had guessed that Maung Mya Han had some money. When she saw the fifty-five kyats she became greedy and wanting more, she thought up a scheme. Having gotten what she did, she wasn't willing to give up. She was really quite frightening. As they say, she planned to soak him for all he had. One certainly would have wanted to strike back at her somehow. If it had happened to me, I would likely have gone after her with a knife."

"I certainly would have, if it were before I had practiced meditation."

"At this point there arose in Maung Mya Han's mind an urge like that of the Nga Khon Sayadaw-to-be. Maung Mya Han ordained as a novice at the Mahâbodhi Forest

Monastery branch school in Kocheh Village, with Ashin Zagara as his preceptor. He studied the basic texts there and later transferred to the main Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery to continue his studies. He became a monk there.

"Now that the former Maung Mya Han has become Panditârâama Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, he teaches men and women both here and abroad. His teaching is truly worthy of praise by both humans and devâs. Nga Khon Sayadaw wasn't able to teach abroad. But like Nga Khon Sayadaw, if one were consider this event in our Sayadaw's life carefully, the young girl in Kocheh Village would emerge as his benefactress. If she hadn't been entrapped in that cunning woman's scheme, would Maung Mya Han have come to be the great Sayadaw that he now is? One would have to say that it is thanks to that young girl that you and I both have the chance now to be near to Shwe Taung Gon Sayadaw. I really feel grateful to her."

Venerable U Nanda seconded the author's sentiment, saying, "It's just as you say, this girl is a benefactress to you, me and all of us. Most likely, she did not have a long life. She probably is no longer in the human realm. But if she is still alive, I want to repay her for Sayadaw."

"And with what would you repay her? With a knife?"

"No, Bhante, I wouldn't. I left knives behind when I practiced under Sayadaw's guidance and came to know the Dhamma. Because of Sayadaw's instruction I'm not a fool like before. I've become cultured and civilized."

SMILING AND SERIOUS

Yesterday, on Saturday, the first day after the full moon of Tawthalin, Sayadaw's first cousins (once removed), U Htay Myine and his brothers and sisters, came together and offered lunch at the Panditârâma Forest Center. U Htay Myine's older sister Daw Ngway Yee, Daw Khin Htway and Daw Pu Sein were all there. Sayadaw's cousin Daw Thein also came to answer the author's queries. Daw Thein was then 83 years old. U Htay Myine, Daw Ngway Yee, Daw Khin Htway and Daw Pu Sein were the children of Daw Thein's younger sister Daw Than, they said. Daw Than had passed away, however. Sayadaw used to call his cousins Daw Thein and Daw Than "Ma Ma Thein" and "Ma Ma Than," they told me.

By 9:00 a.m. the author had bathed and was awaiting the arrival of Daw Thein, to whom he would ask his questions. At about 9:30, an old, slightly stooped lady came to the author's quarters. At the elderly woman's side, supporting her, was a young girl. It happened that I knew this young girl. Her name is Ma Omma Hlaing. She was a university student, one of three sisters who came from Inntagaw to help out at the center. The two of them, young girl and old woman, seemed like granddaughter and grandmother as they approached. With the idea of testing the elderly woman's ears, I said, "Is that a granddaughter and her grandmother coming?"

The two of them entered the author's room. To test the elderly woman's hearing further, I asked her name and age. She seemed to have lost a little hearing. If I had to shout my questions it would be tiring and I would have to ask Ma Omma Hline to repeat my questions. But I didn't have to shout much at all. The elderly woman could hear all right.

I wanted to know whether or not she could see well, so I asked, "Grandmother...please look at me. Is my skin fair, or dark?"

She looked carefully and said, "It's brown." Ha...when I was living in Yangon people would say my skin was average (neither fair nor dark). But staying in this forest monastery I've become brown due to the sun and wind, I thought to myself.

Seeing Daw Thein I remembered my own grandmother, my father's mother. She was just about Daw Thein's age. She too was still alive. For this reason I kept on calling Daw Thein "Grandmother" when I spoke to her. Like own my grandmother, she was over eighty years old and still in good health.

"Grandmother, when you were young did you ever live with Maung Mya Han?" I knew from Sayadaw's nephew U Mya Maung that Maung Mya Han had been Sayadaw's name, so I straight away used Sayadaw's lay name in my question.

The lady answered easily. "Of course I lived with him. I was eight years older than Maung Mya Han, so we ate and played together, of course."

"What was Maung Mya Han like when he was young? Can you tell me about your younger cousin?"

"Yes I can, Bhante. Maung Mya Han was smiled a lot. He was calm. He didn't speak much. He was well-behaved and kind. He didn't do things to make others feel badly."

"Calm...didn't speak much...well-behaved...kind...didn't do things to make others feel badly." One can see these characteristics in the seventy-five-year-old Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw to this day. All of a piece, Sayadaw had had these characteristics from an early age.

"I'm surprised to hear you say Maung Mya Han smiled a lot."

"Why's that, Bhante?" The elderly lady, who had been speaking with her head bent down, lifted her head to look directly at the author when she asked this.

"Your cousin isn't like that now. He's very serious."

"That, Bhante; must be due to his samâdhi and his Dhamma." Grandmother seemed to respect and revere her cousin's training and concentration very much. Her answer was great. During this exchange, Daw Thein's companions, Daw Ngway Yee, Daw Khin Htway and Daw Pu Sein, came in. Supporting the other two of the three university students from Intago, Ma Nyo Me Hline and Ma Khine Win Thanda. Ma Nyo Me Hline is Ma Omma Hline's older sister and Ma Khine Win Thanda is her younger cousin. With so many arrivals joining Daw Thein, the gathering became more like a party.

"Grandmother, how many brothers and sisters did Sayadaw have? Can you tell me their names?"

"There were ten, Bhante. Maung Mya Han was the ninth. Daw Tin Nyunt, who is still living, was the tenth and youngest. They two are the only ones still alive. The other eight have all gone, Bhante."

"Grandmother...where did they go?"

"To the next life of course. To the kingdom of death."

"Oh...so they've died. Please tell me the names of those who've gone."

"Ma Hsait, Ma Thane, Ma Thee..."

"Grandmother...wait a minute. I want to make a note of this. Ma Nyo Me Hline, Ma Omma Hline and Ma Khine Win Thanda's presence is very opportune. You three, please write the names on a piece of paper. There's some paper on that table over there. Right. Please go on, Grandmother."

"U Hla Maung, U Hla Aung, U Ohn Maung, U Aung Kyi, U Chit Min."

"Is it correct that Maung Mya Han was born in Tadahlay at the junction of the road to Yangon?"

"That's correct, Bhante. Maung Mya Han's father was U Hpe. He spoke English. During the British colonial period U Hpe was a foreman on the Thadu Kan Project. Later, he worked as a merchant. When U Hpe was alive they were well-off materially."

"How old was U Hpe when he died?"

"He was about sixty years old."

"Who died first, U Hpe or Daw Chit Su?"

"Daw Chit Su, Bhante. U Hpe died about three years later."

"How are you related to Daw Chit Su?"

"My father was U Hpo Kha. His younger sister was Daw Chit Su. Thus, Daw Chit Su was my paternal aunt."

"Where did U Hpe and Daw Chit Su die?"

"Daw Chit Su died in Tadahlay Village. U Hpe died in Kocheh Village. After Daw Chit Su died, U Hpe returned with their children to his birthplace, which was Kocheh Village. Tadahlay was Daw Chit Su's birthplace."

"Please tell me more about Daw Chit Su, Grandmother."

"Daw Chit Su was very kind-hearted."

Daw Ngway Yee, Daw Khin Htway and Daw Pu Sein prompted Daw Thein when she forgot something and helped fill in the gaps. The three of them were full of smiles. They seemed to enjoy recalling and relating the events of the past. The three young women from Intago, who were writing down what Grandmother and her three nieces said, also appeared to be enjoying themselves. Smiling, they listened with interest and took notes carefully.

"Grandmother, how was Daw Chit Su kind-hearted? Please say more."

"When the snack-seller would come around, Daw Chit Su would buy the whole basket of treats. She would call all the neighborhood children and feed them. All of us relatives lived next door to one another in a big group. Daw Chit Su would bring out all sorts of clothing and give it out to her relatives. She didn't have a lot of extra things but she had an abundance of good will. She was very good-hearted. Her father was called U Yit. He was from Shwebo and very brave and loyal. He had been in service to King Thibaw. He lived to be one hundred years old. Daw Chit Su's mother was known as Daw Thit. She was a Shan woman. U Yit lived to be one hundred because of his daughter's good care. Daw Chit Su made sure that he was never in need of anything."

"Grandmother, are you getting tired?"

"Of course I'm tired. But I'm not tired, I have to say, Bhante. After all, I'm interested."

Grandmother was certainly up-to-date. "Of course I'm tired. But I'm not tired," are the words of a now-popular song. These words are on the lips of people of today.

Perhaps because they were worried that Grandmother was getting tired, the three nieces talked about U Yit. "Our mother Daw Than told us this story. One time Daw Chit Su fried a big fish and served it to her father, U Yit. U Yit was very fond of his grandson, Maung Mya Maung. Maung Mya Maung was sitting near U Yit. But because there were other people present as well, U Yit couldn't easily give him a big piece of fish without the others knowing. He reached under the table to give Maung Mya Maung some fish. Maung Mya Maung wasn't aware of what U Yit was doing, but the big house-cat was. The cat made off with the fish."

The three nieces were laughing while they talked, talking while they laughed, thoroughly enjoying themselves. The author was asking questions freely, in a close and familiar way. The elderly lady and her three nieces were speaking frankly and openly. Of the author's two months at Hse Main Gon to date, this day was filled with the most laughter. The three cousins from Intago were pleased and laughing heartily. It was very free and easy, with Grandmother's three nieces prompting her when she forgot something and asking questions when there was something they wanted to know. Hearing the four of them talk back and forth so freely one found a lot to laugh about. One niece said to the author, "Bhante, don't tell Sayadaw we are saying all these funny things, or we'll be in for a beating." She was joking, of course. All of them respected Sayadaw.

One niece continued, "We went to Yangon Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha for Sayadaw's birthday this year. When we arrived Sayadaw asked, "Isn't Ma Ma Thein with you?"

"She didn't come because she wasn't well," I answered. This year Sayadaw told us, "We are relatives by blood, worldly relatives, but we aren't yet Dhamma relatives. Those of you who don't work to become Dhamma relatives, I don't really want to call relatives."

"Of the three of us nieces the two oldest have meditated already. The youngest one hasn't yet. But she is trying to arrange things so that she can meditate this year during the rainy season."

"Sayadaw would be very happy to have relatives who are related by Dhamma as well as by blood. Please try. I'm happy to have met you all," said the author.

I told them to try to become Dhamma relatives as well as worldly relatives. I urged Sayadaw's other relatives as well to make their relationship to Sayadaw truly valuable by working to become Dhamma relatives.

JOY

The article which I am writing today is the thirty-seventh in this series about Sayadaw. Thirty-six articles are already complete. Sayadaw was sixty-three when the author first came to Sayadaw's place. Sometimes I find myself wondering what it was which brought about this coincidental meeting. I can only imagine that we were connected in our past lives, for I can't see them. If I could, I would get to find out how it was that the two of us were related. Anyway, I can't see it now, so I can only speculate.

There is one peculiar correspondence. That is that, by the Gregorian calendar, Sayadaw and the author have the exact same birth day and month. 28/7/1921 - that is Sayadaw's birth day, month, and year by the Gregorian calendar. The author's birth day, month, and year are 28/7/1956. By the Myanmar system, Sayadaw was born in the year 1283, on the ninth day of the waning moon of Waso. The author was born in 1318, on the sixth day of the waning moon of Waso. Even by the Myanmar system, they are only three days apart. You would have say that this is a remarkable little coincidence.

I can only write of the happenings in Sayadaw's life which I saw since the very first time I met him, when he was already sixty-three. Even of those, without having kept notes, I can only write as much I recollect clearly. It really takes some digging through my memory to drag some of them up. When it does not come easily, it makes it difficult to write. For all intents and purposes, at those time, I can't write.

Moreover, we need to give an account Sayadaw's childhood background. Only then will we get the complete picture of Sayadaw's life. Giving an account of Sayadaw's life starting from his adulthood would be like including only the buds, flowers, and fruit in an account of a grand old tree. Only if we describe sequentially how the tree was conceived and how it matured would we have a full account of the tree's life. In this case as well, only with an account of Sayadaw's childhood will we have the whole story of his life, and I want to write the whole story. However, when I didn't meet those who could describe Sayadaw's childhood, it was difficult to write. So I had to put it off while I awaited such an opportunity. While waiting, I had to make use of the material which was within reach.

During the rainy season of 1996, Sayadaw came to give Dhamma talks every Saturday to the eight foreign monks, two foreign nuns, two foreign women and local yogis who were practicing at the Panditarama Forest Meditation Center. To honor Sayadaw's presence on one of these Saturdays, the midday meal was donated by Sayadaw's cousin U Hte Myaing, who is responsible for the ongoing construction at the Forest Meditation Center. Assuming that Sayadaw would be coming, Sayadaw's relatives had also been invited. Unfortunately, Sayadaw had already come and gone on the Uposaka (Sabbath), the day before that Saturday.

I had seen the relatives who came that day when they had come before to the Yangon Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yiektha to donate the midday meal on Sayadaw's birthday, so I recognized them. I definitely wanted to ask them about Sayadaw but I was hesitant because I didn't know when they were expecting to go back to Yangon.

While I was resting in my room after the meal, U Nyan Sein brought another man and called at the author's place. The man was a little thin and wearing a reddish-brown jacket. He had a wad of betel stuck in his mouth, too. He gave his name as U Mya Maung. He said he was seventy years old, which made him five years younger than Sayadaw.

When I met people who could talk about Sayadaw, I had to go ahead and ask the things I wanted to ask.

"Devotee, How are you related to Sayadaw?"

"I'm Sayadaw's nephew, Bhante. Just like Maung Hte Myaing. I'm a carpenter, so Sayadaw even asked me to oversee the construction of this center. With my ill health, I wasn't able to do it."

"Devotee, what was Sayadaw's lay name, and the names of his parents?"

"His grandfather called Sayadaw 'Maung Mya Aung'. Most people called him 'Maung Mya Han'. Sayadaw's father's name was U Pe, his mother's name was Daw Chit Su."

"You and Maung Mya Han must have lived together as kids. Won't please tell as much as you remember of your childhood together as nephew and uncle?"

"Sayadaw-to-be Maung Mya Han had a mind of his own. Whether the children were working, playing, or chatting, Maung Mya Han played the leader. He led the playing. He led the conversation. He was really the teacher. He set the program.

Bhante, the place of Maung Mya Han's Birth was Tadahgalay Village. That's the Tadahgalay that you hear about nowadays as the Tadahgalay junction on the road to North Okkalapa. On Kyaukyetwin hill, where we live now, there is a man named U Nyan. He used to be an important person in Kyaukyetwin. He was responsible for village affairs. One of his responsibilities was the budgeting.

One time, Maung Mya Han went to his place to take a look at his bookkeeping. U Nyan told him, "You kids won't understand any of this. Run along."

Then Maung Mya Han replied, "What is it you're writing that we won't understand? Show me." U Nyan was dumbfounded. Maung Mya Han did not give up easily, he always had a comeback. At that time he would probably have been about twelve or thirteen.

Maung Mya Han respected his elders but he was not afraid of anyone, neither his elders nor those his own age. He was sharp academically. He was fierce, too. One time, there was a funeral in Kyaukyetwin Village. By then, Sayadaw was a monk studying at Kaikkasan study monastery. He came back to Kyaukyetwin Village for the occasion. At the funeral, he saw U Nyan. Going up to him, he asked, "Devotee, do you remember me? Do you remember what you said?"

"Of course I remember you, Bhante," said U Nyan. "Good," said Sayadaw. Not having seen U Nyan since he spoke to him as a child, Maung Mya Han was just then seeing him again. After U Nyan's dismissal, Maung Mya Han had avoided him. Wherever U Nyan was, he stayed away. Only now, as a monk, did he see him again."

Then the author asked, "How do you all address Sayadaw now?"

"Before, we just called him "U Zin (young monk)". Even when he was living at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, we still called him "U Zin". Only now, since he has come to the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha have we switched to calling him "Poun Gyi (elder monk)".

"What for, Devotee?"

"The engineers who are our supervisors and our department head were all calling him, "Sayadaw, Sayadaw (Noble Teacher)" so it would have been inappropriate if we didn't change. That's why we stopped calling him "U Zin" and switched to calling him "Poun Gyi".

"When you all come on Sayadaw's birthday, what does he say to you? What does he say about your chewing betel?"

"He tells me not to chew betel. Even now, he asks me, are you still chewing betel? After he says that, I refrain from chewing it for about two or three days. After that, I can't quit, so I always go back to chewing it. Every time his birthday comes around he gives me good advice."

"What advice is that?"

"To do Dhamma work. What he says is worthy."

"What else does he say?"

"My memory is not very good anymore. I forget."

" 'Now we are just worldly relations. If we were related in the Dhamma we would be much closer. That would be better. Keep working to become Dhamma relatives'-doesn't he say something like that?"

"It's true. That's what he says, Bhante."

"I think he probably invites his relatives to come on his birthday because he wants to urge them to meditate. I saw Sayadaw give away some little books on his birthday. What books were they?"

"Uhm...The names of those books are just not coming to me."

"Devotee, did you really read them? What were they about?"

"I just remember 'Thamanay Kyaw'. I really did read them. I just can't think of them right at the moment, Bhante".

"Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw's Sayings (Raindrops in Hot Summer) andThapyekan Sayadaw's Answers to Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw's Questions- weren't those the books?"

"I'm sure you know, Bhante."

"Devotee, you all are students of Sayadaw's, aren't you?"

"Yes. His memory is about as good as ours is bad. When we go to his place he remembers the names of all the relatives he knows and where they are and what they are doing."

"Are there any other of your relatives who have become monks? Is Sayadaw the only one?"

"Sayadaw is the only one who has become distinguished like this. There is one other, though: Sayadaw's older cousin U Obatha."

"So that means there was only one prominent one from that family."

"Right, Bhante."

"Indeed, if only Sayadaw's father, U Pe, and his mother, Daw Chit Su, could have seen their son's various Sâsana enterprises and the many ways in which he works for the benefit of others, they could not but have been gratified. I'm sure the faces of U Pe and Daw Chit Su would turn to grins and glow with joy. If they could say "Sâdhu (Well done)"

for their son's sharing of accumulated wholesome deeds they would. 'This grown son of ours is a true jewel', they would say, with great satisfaction.'

"Devotee, isn't that the way U Pe and Daw Chit Su would feel?"

"The way you said it is too conservative. They would have been even more pleased that that, Bhante. From many perspectives and in many ways, they would be ecstatic, Bhante."

"Oh...parents, parents..."

SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY

Some people came today (the fifth day of the waxing moon of Tawthalin) to plant toddy palm seeds at the Hse Main Gon Panditârâma Forest Center. U Thaung Naing, a practitioner of traditional Myanmar medicine, was the group's leader. U Thaung Naing is from Upper Myanmar where there is an abundance of toddy palm trees. He brought the seeds from his village, Htan Hpu Taw Village in Sagaing Township, Sagaing Division, he said. "Htan Hpu Taw" means "forest of toddy-palm buds" and true to its name there are many toddy palms in Htan Hpu Taw Village. It is not very far from the author's own village. I have been to this very Htan Hpu Taw Village together with Sayadaw, for the opening of a meditation retreat. Sayadaw was U Thaung Naing's meditation teacher, of course.

In addition to practicing Myanmar medicine, U Thaung Naing also practices massage. He comes every Monday to Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha to give massage treatments to Sayadaw as well as the other monks. Since this year is 1358 according to the Myanmar calendar, he brought 1,358 toddy palm seeds to plant.

His group arrived at the same time as Nâyaka Kyauktan Sayadaw came from Yangon. Because Kyauktan Sayadaw was planning to offer breakfast and lunch at Hse Main Gon Forest Monastery on the eighth waxing day of Tawthalin (20 September 1996), I guess he came early to make preparations.

Since the Kyauktan Sayadaw and all arrived in time for lunch, after they had eaten I asked, "Bhante, there are a few small questions I'd like to ask." At this Kyauktan Sayadaw gave a big smile and said, "Ask, ask. What is it?"

"I want to ask for information about Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, Bhante. Since both of you lived together at the Kyauktan Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery, I'd like to know what it was like when you were young. I've heard that there were about eighty monks and novices at the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery when you both were living there."

"Yes, about seventy or eighty. There were about thirty buildings, quite a lot. That was before the war with the Japanese. During the war with the Japanese the buildings were destroyed and we had to move to the monastery in the village. However, the most senior Sayadaw, U Kelasa, went to stay in Thabyu Village. The second Sayadaw stayed on at the monastery in the forest while the fighting was going on. But at that time kidnapping for ransom had become rampant. Get wind of the news that he would be kidnapped, we asked him to come to the village, and he did."

"Please say more about Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, Bhante."

Kyauktan Sayadaw didn't say, "Umh...I forget." He was thinking. He seemed to be interested in relating the events of their younger days. He appeared to be eager to speak

about this Sayadaw whom he revered. This year, 1996, Kyauktan Sayadaw turned seventy-one years old, Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, seventy-five. The two Sayadaws are just four years apart in age. Kyauktan Sayadaw spoke as follows.

"When I was a young novice at the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery, Sayadaw was a senior novice. When I became a senior novice, he was a young monk. Sayadaw lived at the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery up until his fourth vassa as a monk. He studied Pâli grammar, a summary of the Abhidhamma and some Vinaya texts under Sayadaw U Paññasirî. From the Middle Standard on, Sayadaw lived at the Kyaikkasan Monastic School in Yangon and sat for the monastic examinations there.

"Sayadaw didn't follow the crowd. He just stayed peacefully to himself. He didn't mingle with lay devotees or relate to them intimately. For example, when we lived at Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery, people would come on the Uposatha day to observe the sabbath (uposatha). At around 8:00 a.m. they would offer something to eat and drink to those monks and novices whom they revered or with whom they had some connection. No matter who made the invitation, the Sayadaw-to-be wouldn't go to eat or drink anything. It was his habit not to do anything that was unnecessary. Whoever had made the offering would remark on his absence, saying, "U Hpo Han and Daw Thaung's monk is very proud."

"Were U Hpo Han and Daw Thaung Daw Kyi Kyi's parents, Bhante?"

"Yes. In Kyauktan Village U Hpo Han and Daw Thaung were truly wealthy. People even called them "the rich man, U Hpo Han" and "the rich man's wife, Daw Thaung." People used to say the the Sayadaw-to-be was a rich man's monk who had a lot of pride because he was looked up to by rich people. From an early age, if Sayadaw thought he was right, no matter how many people opposed him, even if he stood alone he wouldn't back down. He wouldn't give up or surrender. He dared to speak, and speak he would. He wasn't afraid.

During the war with the Japanese, some people brought their valuables to the Mahâbodhi Monastery and kept them there. The monks were supposed to guard them with weapons. There was a Sangha meeting to assign monks to guard duty. The meeting was held in the presence of the Second Sayadaw of Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery. Sayadaw's teacher U Paññathiri, the present most senior Kyauktan Sayadaw U Pandavamsa, Byu Kon Sayadaw U Âseinna, Sayadaw's older cousin U Obasa and other monks more senior to Sayadaw-to-be were there. Sayadaw-to-be and I were also present. Among those associated with the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery, we did not have the style of young monks talking back to their elders. At this meeting, when the time came to assign guard duty, the Sayadaw-to-be asked, "What are we supposed to do with these weapons?"

"If the enemy comes, we'll fire at their legs, or someplace where it won't kill them, of course," was the reply.

"If we do that, the enemy will kill us," Sayadaw-to-be said. I wasn't brave enough to say anything so I just kept silent. None of the monks who were senior to the Sayadaw-to-be dared to speak either, so the plan was dropped. When we got back to our rooms, Sayadaw's cousin U Obasa said to him, "Why did you say that?" Sayadaw isn't afraid. If he has something to say, he's brave enough to talk back."

"What was Sayadaw like when he was a child? Was he brave like that, Bhante?"

"One time, when the two of us were at the meal table, at the Yangon Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, I told Sayadaw that I was often afraid. Sayadaw said, "What for? I haven't been afraid since I was a small child." He told me of an incident that took place when he was a boy of five. A group of adult men ganged up on him and were teasing him. They teased him a lot, so he said, "Gentlemen...don't tease me, please. If I have to say this one more time, I'm going to go to the Village Headman and report you." The men enjoyed hearing this and teased him all the more. "All right, I'm going to the Village Headman to report you," he said, and started walking away. Only with great difficulty did the men manage to get hold of him and restrain him. Actually, he didn't have any idea where the Village Headman's house was. But he had heard someone once talk about going to the Village Headman to make a report, so he said that."

"Where did this happen, Bhante? In Sayadaw's father's birthplace, Kocheh Village, near Kyauktan Village? Or in Sayadaw's birthplace, Tadagahlay Village in Yangon?"

"In Tadagahlay."

"No-one has to sharpen the thorns in the forest, they come out by themselves, isn't it so, Bhante? One can see Sayadaw's bravery from an early age in this story. I'm very glad to have got to hear it. Sayadaw, please take a rest, now that you have finished your meal."

"Yes. Yes."

HIS NATURE

The fourteenth waxing day of Tawthalin was sunny, so I went to Kyauktan Village. I arrived at Thîrimingala Mahâbodhi Monastery, where I saw two great wooden buildings. Thîrimingala Mahâbodhi Monastery was built after the buildings of Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery were destroyed during the Japanese occupation of Myanmar.

U Aung Hmu, of Kyauktan Village, brought U Ngwe Hline (formerly the Venerable U Khandibala), to see me. U Ngwe Hline had lived together with Sayadaw at the Mahâbodhi Monastery. The man approached me, walking with a stooped back. When asked his age, he replied, "Eighty years old." That would make him five years older than Sayadaw.

Sayadaw and he were monks together at the Mahâbodhi Monastery under the great Sayadaw U Kelâtha. I asked him, "When you were living at the Mahâbodhi Monastery did Sayadaw U Kelâtha teach the monastic studies?"

"No, he didn't. He just did his own meditation practice. His student Sayadaw U Pandava was the head teacher for monastic studies."

"You studied together with Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, didn't you? With which teachers did you study?"

"Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw and I studied the Second Level (Patama Ngay) subjects under both Sayadaw U Pandava and Sayadaw U Pan?ñathirî. After finishing the Second Level subjects Sayadaw U Pandita left the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery."

"When you were together at the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery, did you live in the same building?"

"No, we didn't. He stayed in the Middle Building and I stayed in the Thapyay Tree Building. The buildings were very small and close to each other."

"Living together, you would have been friendly with each other and talked in a intimately, certainly."

"Sayadaw U Pandita didn't speak much with others, from when he was quite young. He kept to himself. He would just do whatever work he had to do. He did his work very regularly."

"When you say 'whatever work he had to do,' what do you mean? What did you monks and novices do each day?"

"The monks and novices got up at 4 a.m. and all gathered at the Shrine Building to pay homage to the Buddha. After that we went to the building where Sayadaw-gyi stayed. We each took our sitting cloths and sat under a tree, taking a vow to remain under the tree, all of us, both monks and novices. Sitting under the tree, we all meditated with strings of beads, using the qualities of the Buddha as our meditation object. We thumbed the beads, one after another. We all had to tell Sayadaw-gyi how many rounds we had done. After each person spoke, Sayadaw-gyi would call out sâdhu. At dawn we ate breakfast. Afterwards the monks and novices lined up and went on almsround. We didn't return until about 8 a.m. On the almsround, the donors would offer us rice. Sayadaw-gyi would go by himself on almsround. Behind him would go the kappiyas (monastery boys) to carry the flowers and rice that were offered him. Sayadaw-gyi would pay homage to the Buddha seventeen times a day."

"That's quite a lot."

"Sayadaw-gyi would even offer flowers and pray to the Buddha at rest-houses while going on almsround. Sayadaw offered quite a lot of flowers and water. He would get up before the other monks and carry buckets of water himself for making offerings. After the others went to sleep at night, he would also carry water. He also offered many flowers to the Buddha. Sometimes the flowers offered to him by the lay devotees on his almsround were so numerous that the monastery boys would cry because they couldn't carry them all. For offering water there were seventy-five big "Maung Daung" water vessels and small water jars as well. Sayadaw-gyi would offer an almsbowl full of rice and many curries as well to the Buddha. The rest of the time he meditated with his beads."

"Sayadaw-gyi's faith was very strong. Please, continue to tell what duties the monks and novices carried out each day."

"The monks and novices began classes at 8 a.m. and finished at 10 a.m. After that we offered flowers, water and rice to the Buddha. As for our meal, we ate at 10:30 a.m. When we returned from almsround, we had to put all the rice we received together and leave it at the dining hall. Sayadaw-gyi would offer all the rice he had received to the other monks of the Sangha. After receiving the food brought by lay devotees and offered to him in his room, he would eat observing the ascetic practices of eating only once a day and mixing all his food together before eating it."

"From noon until 1 p.m. we rested. From 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. we returned to class. From 4 to 5 p.m. we studied grammar. At 7 p.m. we paid homage to the Buddha. We studied and then recited our day's lessons until past 9 p.m. To answer your question, that's what we did each day, Bhante."

The Sayadaw-to-be U Pandita was very punctual. When the time came to pay homage to the Buddha, he was there. He offered flowers, water and rice at the scheduled

time. He took his vow to remain under the tree and meditated with the beads punctually. He was on time for classes. He studied and read according to the schedule. He was on time for recitations. He did his work quite regularly."

"Devotee, are you getting tired?"

"It's all right, Bhante," the layman replied. He continued, "Sayadaw U Pandita once told me that he never asked his sponsors for so much as a box of matches."

"Our most venerable Sayadaw U Kelâtha cautioned us like this. When we ask for something, the person we ask may become angry. If the person we ask doesn't give us the item requested, we may become angry. Sayadaw-gyi told us that in the olden days there was a monk who lived alone in a certain grove. The birds would go to a pond by day to get their food and by night would return to stay in this grove. As the noise of the birds disturbed the monk's meditation, he went to the Buddha and told him of the situation. The Buddha said, 'If you want the birds to leave, ask them for one of their feathers each day.'

As the Buddha advised, the monk made this request of the birds during the first, second and third watches of the night. The birds could not tolerate the burden of the monk's requests, so they all together flew away to a distant place. After telling us that even animals don't like demands, Sayadaw-gyi warned us not to make excessive requests of our lay supporters."

"Sayadaw must have refrained from making requests of lay devotees because of Sayadaw U Kelâtha's exhortation. I'm very happy to hear this account."

From the time Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha was started, there have been many needs. But Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw doesn't ask anybody for anything. Just as he didn't make requests when he was young, he doesn't now that he has become older, either. Sayadaw admonished his disciples that without his asking for anything or even saying what was needed, donors have made offerings. Sayadaw said, "We don't lack for donors. Sometimes the donors even give more than what we need. On our side, we monks and novices need to do our work. Monks should only do the jobs of a monk. Those jobs are sîla, samâdhi and pa?ña. If we do these jobs, we experience the peace of purity, the peace of freedom from kilesas. When we are free of kilesas the donors benefit greatly. That is why we should do our work," he said.

Sayadaw has met good teachers and lives in a good place because of his past good deeds. Coming to a good place and meeting good teachers because of his past good deeds, he is doing more good deeds. Because of these new good deeds, in future lives he is sure to come to a good place, meet with good teachers and acquire more good kamma.

A THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE

When I think back over the time Sayadaw was a Nayaka at the Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha during Mahasi Sayadaw's lifetime, the great Mahasi Sayadaw seems like his father. His meditation teacher U Visâra, on the other hand, was his teacher. The other Nâyaka Sayadaws - Shwe U Min Sayadaw U Kosalla, Kohmu Sayadaw U Nandavamsa, U Sujâta, U Javana and Hpya Pon Sayadaw U Vaòòita were like his older brothers. These five venerable elder brothers seemed to see Sayadaw as their younger brother. I could see that Sayadaw revered and relied on these five monks, his elder brothers, in the field of meditation practice, that is.

In the area of scriptural study, if I were to mention only those of Sayadaw's study teachers that I know of, there were such persons as the Senior Sayadaw of Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery in Kyauktan Village, Sayadaw U Kelâsa, the second Sayadaw of Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery U Pa?ñava; Paññalingara Monastery (Thaketa) Sayadaw U Paññathiri, Kocheh Sayadaw U Jâgara, Kyaikkasan Sayadaw Ashin Sucinda, Pyay Vâranasi Sayadaw U Ânandapanditâbhivamsa, Pathan U Visuddhâbhivamsa, and U Âdeiccavamsa (who later disrobed and was known as U Aung Myat Htut).

Sayadaw-to-be, Maung Mya Han, lived in Kocheh Village, his father's birthplace, having moved there after the death of his mother Daw Chit Su. At that time, he studied as a young schoolboy under the Kocheh Village Sayadaw U Jâgara. U Jâgara was very well-disciplined. He produced many monks and novices. At Kocheh Village Monastery, when children became old enough to ordain as novices, they weren't allowed to stay on unless they ordained. After ordaining and completing the basic studies under U Jâgara, they were sent to Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery in Kyauktan Village to continue their education. It was said that U Jâgara wielded great influence not only over the laypeople, novices and monks who were his disciples but over the village itself. Sayadaw-to-be Maung Mya Han was more afraid of U Jâgara than of his subsequent teacher U Pa?ñasirî, he said. U Pa?ñasirî was U Jâgara's student. He was from Kocheh Village. Kyaikkasan Sayadaw U Sucinda was also from Kocheh Village and was another of U Jâgara's students.

U Paññasirî was said to be very fond of his young pupil Maung Mya Han. U Pa?ñasirî even combed Maung Mya Han's hair for him. One favors young students who can be relied on for the future of the Sâsana, but more than that one loves them. When Sayadaw moved from the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery to the Kyaikkasan Monastic School he took refuge in the mettâ of Kyaikkasan Sayadaw U Sucinda and studied the monastic texts from the Middle Standard onwards. While U Paññasirî had always called his student "U Pandita," U Sucinda called him "Maung Pandi." When Sayadaw had become a Nâyaka and was teaching meditation at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, as long as his two teachers U Paññasirî and U Sucinda were alive, when he had any food which they liked he would remark to the monastery volunteers, "Kyaikkasan Sayadaw likes those," or "Pa?ñalingara Monastery (Thaketa) Sayadaw used to eat those." The volunteers, knowing

this, would send the food for him. Sayadaw used this stratagem in asking others to send things to his teachers. The student of a good teacher adorns the teacher like a flower, it is said. A teacher of a good student lives happily. Teachers of wise students always live happily. What teacher wouldn't love and depend on a student who is well-trained and knows his wishes? That teachers love, remember and depend on such disciples is simply in accordance with the Dhamma.

When Sayadaw lived at Zipin Monastery in the New Mahâvisuddhayone, he studied the Atthathalinî texts under Pyay Vâranasi Sayadaw. He never seemed to forget this debt. Whenever he had the chance, Sayadaw would repay his benefactor. When Vâranasi Sayadaw fell ill and entered the hospital in Yangon, Sayadaw would go to pay respects and bring him medicines. I myself went along with Sayadaw three times to see Vâranasi Sayadaw. Both teacher and disciple were smiling. Watching the two of them, teacher and disciple, was very gratifying. Vâranasi Sayadaw used to come to the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha also. Once, when Vâranasi Sayadaw was in the hospital to received treatment, his condition was very bad. He was losing consciousness often. For this reason Sayadaw went to pay respects to him. Sayadaw asked him, "Do you remember me, Bhante?" Vâranasi Sayadaw replied, "How could I ever forget someone as outstanding as you?" Even when Vâranasi Sayadaw was in such a condition, he didn't forget his disciple the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw.

Sayadaw used to go to Ma So Yein Monastery to study the Pathan under Pathan Sayadaw Ashin Visuddhâbhivamsa. The gates of Ma So Yein Monastery closed at 9 pm. When the gates were closed, Sayadaw had to scale a brick wall in order to get to his lesson. The life of a young study monk is like this. Don't think that getting an education is easy for student monks. There are many difficulties in a student monk's life: food, water, lodging, a place to study, health, education and so on. Only when a student can get over the obstacles the way Sayadaw got over the brick wall of Ma So Yein Monastery can one become accomplished. The difficulties Sayadaw overcame in order to become the learned person he now is were certainly not few in number.

When Sayadaw lived at Kyaikkasan Monastery he studied the Samyutta Nikâya and such texts under U Âdiccavamsa (later known as U Aung Myat Htut). He also went to Paya Kyi Monastery to study, after his classes were over, of course. Sayadaw would put four books in his shoulder bag and go to study, rain or shine. Kyaikkasan Sayadaw arranged for him to get a ticket that allowed him to ride the bus for free. Sayadaw liked the way Sayagyi U Aung Myat Htut taught very much. He was very satisfied with Sayagyi U Aung Myat Htut's expertise in literature (scholarship). Sayadaw wanted to become expert in the same way, so he asked his teacher, "Sayagyi...what should I do to become an expert scholar?"

"Bhante...read the Pâli texts thoroughly. Read them again and again, and form your own opinion again and again. Don't look at the commentaries. Just read the Pâli over and

over again. Think about what your own opinion is. When you can't read or think about them any longer, read the Commentary. After you have read the Pâli, formed your own opinion and then thought it over time and again, you will be able to write your own Commentary. When you are reading the Commentary, don't go to the Sub-commentary just yet. Read the Commentary again and again so that you understand it. Think it over repeatedly. When you can't think it over any longer, then read the Sub-commentary, Bhante."

These were Sayagyi's words to Sayadaw, he told me. That was Sayagyi's methodology, to be sure. In conversation I have heard Sayadaw praise Mahasi Sayadaw and Sayagyi U Aung Myat Htut's scholarship. That Sayadaw not only met such great persons but adopted their methodology shows he was quite satisfied with them. I know of their expertise from what Sayadaw has said. One can also estimate this from their writings. Even now, at more than seventy years of age, Sayadaw still wants to study under the guidance of great scholars like these. Sayadaw's thirst for literary knowledge is very great indeed.

LESSON FROM A BROOM

I came to live with Our Benefactor the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw even before the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha had come to be. At present, in the year 1358 (1996), the author has a full twenty vassa (years as a monk). Since I came to live with the guiding teacher of the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw-to-be, in my seventh Waso, it has already been thirteen years I have spent with Sayadaw. This is the longest I have lived with any teacher. I did not spend this long with any of my other teachers, not even at the Amarapura Mahâgandâyone Monastery, where I did my scholastic studies. I spent eight years as a novice, from age thirteen until I became a monk at twenty. During those of eight years, I heard a great many pieces of advice from Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw U Janakabhivamsa. He gave a few words of guidance every morning, so if I were able to recall all of them, they would be countless. I didn't really have the ability to listen and memorize while I was young, so I have probably forgotten more of those words of advice than I remember. However, since I heard them again and again, the number I do remember is not inconsiderable.

Having lived with the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw for about thirteen years, I have had more chances get his words of guidance. No matter how much advice teachers give, a student only gets as much as he can listen to carefully and retain. The Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw gave words of advice every morning. The Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw does not have a routine of giving words of advice every day. That is one way in which they differ. The Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw's custom is to give advice only when an appropriate opportunity comes along. Thus, it is possible that I remember distinctly a greater number of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's pieces of advice. My power of memorization was not the same when I was young and listening to words of advice from the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw as when listening to words of advice from the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, starting when I was a monk of seven vassa. So it is unlikely that I remember distinctly fewer of the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw's pieces of advice. I probably remember more of his. I will repeat as many as I remember.

One piece of advice is: "You must make a practice of checking the work you do for needs, deficiencies, or flaws."

Sayadaw has a habit of mentioning these words of advice whenever a suitable opportunity arises, which is often. He himself makes a practice of putting these words into practice. Because he makes this a practice, he has benefited in many ways. He is still receiving the benefits at present and will continue to do so in the future. Sayadaw is continually receiving them. Among Sayadaw's good qualities, there are some in which I take a disproportionate delight. If I had to choose only one, it would be the way in which he takes pride in his successes when they come, checking to see whether or not there are

any needs, deficiencies, or flaws. If there is any need, he fills it. If there are any deficiencies he supplements them. If there are any flaws he corrects them.

I find myself again and again watching attentively to see if he is just saying these words of advice for others, or if he himself really follows them. One can see how he wholeheartedly values and practices them. At present (1996), Sayadaw is seventy-five years of age. Along this lifetime journey of his, he has worked on a great many enterprises. He has tried to use that practice on every one of these enterprises. As much as he has been able to apply this practice, his projects have seen success. He has found that he achieved much greater success.

People all over the world work to make a success of their various enterprises. There are those who are successful because of their efforts, and there are those who are unsuccessful. Those who are unsuccessful generally search for the cause of their failure. Those who are successful get intoxicated. They get greedy and forget the task at hand. They bask in the taste of success. Though they have been successful, their enterprises may yet have needs, flaws, and deficiencies. Successful people often forget to attend to these. They don't make a practice of being watchful for them. Those kind of people may have enterprises which see success once, twice, even thrice. Yet, no one can say whether they will see more and more success, time and time again. If one can fill the needs, and rectify the flaws and deficiencies which can be present even in successful enterprises, one will surely pile success upon success.

At present, the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha has just turned five years old. Seeing the awesome facilities large and small, like the three story Dhamma hall and the three story ordination hall, some of the monks, nuns, and lay people even say, "Did the devâ Visachoun come down and materialize these with his psychic power?" These facilities large and small came into being in such a short period of time that some say, "Palaces in the devâ realms must be built like this!" That is what you call successful development in the realm of material things.

No matter how much development one achieves in the realm of material things, if the inner essences of sîla (morality), samâdhi (concentration), and panña (wisdom) are not developed, it is not yet fully solid development. It is not something to look up to and emulate. Neither can this be called essential progress of the Sâsana.

It seems to me that the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw has carried out many more projects for the Sâsana than proportionate to his age. He is striving with the firm intention to ensure that the theoretical study of the Sâsana (teachings) is not devoid of practice, and that the practice is not carried out in the absence of theory. His aim and object is successful, as it should be. You would have to say that he has been successful from the perspectives of both scholarship and practice. To take the perspective of scholarship, in the five year existence of the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, it has had

students pass the government Pâli examinations in first place out of the entire nation every year. As for the practice perspective, yogis are arriving all the time to come meditate.

The occasion on which I heard the words of advice above was when the three story Dhamma hall was nearing completion. The Buddhist Culture Course was about to begin. The middle story was already ready for use, so we were tidying up, fixing things up and putting things in place for the course. Sayadaw had come along to watch and make sure we were being thorough in tidying up, fixing things up and putting things in place. He seemed satisfied with our work. He seemed also to appreciate that everything was ready for the course to start. His expression was rather joyful and approving, with a hint of a smile on his face, too. Then, in one corner of the hall, he came upon a broom of rushes which was placed disadvantageously. It was placed so that it stood with the handle upwards, and the fibers downwards.

"You shouldn't place that broom like that," he told me. He had me fix the broom so that the handle was on the bottom and the fibers sticking upwards.

While he imparted these words of wisdom, Sayadaw was bracing himself with his staff, and smiling slightly. I was listening carefully, with my palms together at my chests in homage. Sayadaw's words of wisdom are a superior piece of advice. These words of wisdom are exceedingly valuable, the kind of words you rarely get to hear.

Now the Dhamma hall has been completed. It is grand and magnificent indeed. This three story Dhamma hall is named 'Sâdujanatosnâ Dhammasabâ Building', meaning 'The Dhamma assembly hall giving joy to the virtuous ones'. In that great Dhamma hall, local and foreign monks, nuns and lay yogis sit and walk in meditation, listen to Dhamma talks, radiate mettâ and share merit. The ordained Dhamma teachers give Dhamma talks. The Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Dhamma family offers robes at vassa (the rainy season), sîla (morality) is observed, various activities are carried out and from it the sounds of "Sâdhu!" emanate. During the Buddhist Culture Course, too, the sights and sounds of Buddhist children reciting and spreading mettâ offer cause for joy. In accord with its name, too, it is a great cause for rapture. I have heard tell of even those who don't have a mind to sit finding the desire to sit and meditate arising in that great Dhamma hall.

TWICE-HEARD WORDS

It is rare to hear Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw speak these words. In the thirteen years the author has lived with Sayadaw, I have heard these words just twice, once at Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha and once at Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha.

The time at Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha was when Sayadaw was suffering the most severe storm of ups and downs in his life. It was in 1990. At that time the attacking storm was quite strong. One would have to say it was the most violent upheaval of Sayadaw's life. To use a phrase from boxing, it was knock-out. They were gathering around Sayadaw and punching him so that he couldn't get back on his feet. Even a person of some resilience wouldn't have been able to get up again after being knocked down like that. One might even have died of the opponent's blows. One can't say exactly how much Sayadaw was suffering while this was going on, but one can make a guess based on what he often said at that time. "When there was a big earthquake in the town of Sagaing, the great Kaung Hmu Daw Pagoda is supposed to have said, 'I don't know how the little pagodas on the hills will survive this earthquake. Even I am groaning under the impact.' I don't know how much all the small pagodas of the Sagaing Hills, ones that aren't huge like Kaung Hmu Daw, can take. If even such a great, massive pagoda is groaning, the earthquake damage will be quite extensive," Sayadaw would say.

The Mahasi Sayadaw too had to endure a violent upheaval in his life. The Mahasi Sayadaw, whose endurance was very great, wasn't beaten down by it. But the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, whose endurance wasn't as great then as the Mahasi Sayadaw's, seemed to be taking a pounding. While this storm was raging, I went to see Sayadaw at the No. 2 Nâyaka Housing where he was staying. I remember what Sayadaw said then as follows.

"U Dhammika, state a truth, then ask for what you need and do your work. You have carried out your work with pure goodwill. For example - when the schools close for summer vacation, during the one-month Buddhist Culture Course for children, you taught the novices, nuns and schoolchildren with pure goodwill. You carried out other necessary tasks as well with honest effort. 'I have done such things as this for the welfare of the many, with a clean pure mind and sincere effort. By the virtue of this truth, may I be free of the disturbances I am now experiencing. May I be able to work for the good of others easily and happily, as much as I desire, as much as I can.' Like that, declare a truth, then ask for what you need and do your work," Sayadaw said.

That was the first time I heard these words. Before this, I didn't think Sayadaw would make a practice of declaring a truth, making a wish and then doing his work. "I must just do what is necessary and suitable for the Sâsana, to the best of my ability," is what I thought he would say. I had heard of other famous Sayadaws declaring a truth, making a

wish and then carrying out their task at times like this when they were meeting difficulties or problems. I had also read what other writers had written in this regard.

But I had never before heard Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw exhort anyone to work like this. However, having heard Sayadaw give this exhortation for the first time, I became interested in this practice of declaring a truth, making a wish and then undertaking one's task.

It was only an interest, however. I didn't do it myself, neither effectively nor ineffectively. I remembered reading in the Pâli scriptures how many good people of the olden days, such as the Bodhisatta as the Quail King, the parents of the Bodhisatta Suvaòòasâma and King Mahâkappina had accomplished their aims through declaring a truth and making a wish. One can find examples of declaring a truth and radiating mettâ in protective verses such as the Ratana Sutta and the Factors of Enlightenment Sutta. In this day and age one can read in religious magazines here and there accounts also of success through having declared a truth, made a wish and then doing one's work. Still, I wasn't very interested. For that reason I didn't get around to trying it wholeheartedly myself.

At this point I recalled a small event related by Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw of Amarapura. In a monastery in a certain village, there was a novice who was ill with a fever, he said. One monk living in the monastery was taking care of the sick novice. He wanted the novice's fever to be cured quickly. I guess that monk was one whom the novice respected. The monk stated, 'I have liked that girl in the village, Mee Chin, for a long time. Even now I like her. By the power of this truth, may this novice's fever be cured.' It was said that the sick novice laughed uproariously when he heard this declaration. He rocked back and forth with laughter, broke out in a sweat and the fever went away, according to Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw. One can't tell whether the fever was cured through the power of the oath, or through the sweating that resulted from his laughter. However, it is true that the disease was cured.

In the story of Kaòhadîpâyana, a young boy was succumbing to a snakebite. His parents and the Great Hermit spoke the truth openly, according to what was in their hearts. On account of their declarations of the truth, the effect of the snake's venom wore off. In this instance, the young boy didn't laugh as the feverish novice did.. For this reason it is apparent that the venom wore off due to the power of declaring the truth.

Another incident created more interest in the declaration of truth. This took place at Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. From the time Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw had arrived at Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, for about four years he occupied a room on the upper story of the Tha Htun Aung building. author Some young monks, including the author, also lived in other rooms on the upper story. Later, after the Chan Tha Myaing building was finished, Sayadaw moved there.

One day, while Sayadaw was staying in the Tha Htun Aung building, my sponsor for entering the monkhood, Daw Khin Saw Nyunt, came to see Sayadaw. I was also present

at the time. We met in Sayadaw's room. As Sayadaw and Daw Khin Saw Nyunt's group were intimate, being teacher and devotees, Daw Khin Saw Nyunt spoke openly with Sayadaw about her life-problems. Sayadaw was advising her, keeping mettâ and karuna foremost in his guidance.

At that time, Daw Khin Saw Nyunt related her problems and difficulties. Since her husband U Aung Khaing had died, Daw Khin Saw Nyunt seemed to rely on Sayadaw as a "Dhamma Father". She respected him very much. This seemed to be why she spoke about her life-problems.

Sayadaw was truly like a father. With great mettâ and karuna, he gave the following exhortation.

"This is just the way life is. I also have had to suffer from lokadhamma, the vicissitudes of life. It is appropriate to compare your problems to those I suffered. In a former life I did this to someone else, therefore I endure this now. I suffer like this only because of my past misdeeds. I have the attitude that no one is doing this to me, it is my own doing. You yourself have done many good deeds. You do good deeds now as well. You truly do things with a lot of goodwill. You should declare those things, ask for what you need and get on with your work," Sayadaw said.

This was the second time I heard these words. My interest in the declaration of truths became stronger. The desire arose to try it and see the result. When difficulties arose in my life, I tried declaring the truth. I found that within myself also there are many good abilities, enough to declare. Declaring my pure and noble acts gave great force to the mind. I became brave enough to face and surmount the obstacles I met. The desire arose as well to do more good deeds, both now and in the future. I came to understand that whatever one does and says with a good mind needs to be increasingly perfected. I came to know that when the occasion arises, this becomes something truly reliable. For that reason I increasingly wanted to rely on a good spirit, good deeds and good speech. I came to realize more the value of these things. The more one knows their value, the more one cherishes them. One develops a taste for them.

Hearing this exhortation just twice from Sayadaw, I became fully interested, fully accepting and found myself putting it into practice as much as I could. It isn't true that renowned and successful persons always get to walk along an avenue strewn with flowers. They have to walk over difficult terrain as well.

Difficulties are what every person has to face. That isn't anything unusual; it's common. Those who haven't encountered troubles or who have little such experience are apt to be scared. They tremble with fear. When I read Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's personal account of his life in his book, "One Life Cycle", I made a note of a verse I liked. As he is a great writer, Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's verse is very beautiful.

The verse goes:

A Human,
[Can] only be human,
With the normal human experience,
Ever meeting
Cause and Effect,
Good and Bad,
Lokadhamma, [the vicissitudes of life].

From just a whisper,
The obsessions of the mind,
Gladness and Sorrow,
Grow and grow.

Therefore, Oh humans,
Rejoice in the Dhamma
The Buddha has discovered.
Fixing it in mind,
Be steadfast, never fearful,
So the mind does not waver.

This will be the cause
Of your departure from
The human realm.

LIKE A CLEANSER VENDOR

It should be mentioned that the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, in his days giving Dhamma interviews as a Nâyaka Sayadaw at the great Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, interviewed a great many male yogis, both lay men and monks. In the past, most of the monks who practiced at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha practiced with Sayadaw. It seems like there were a great many male lay yogis, too. Those monks and lay men who practiced with Sayadaw speak of the very strict discipline he put them under. They also tell of how there were those who became frightened by Sayadaw's rather harsh and strict manner of speaking in interviews and ran away. There are plenty of those who are very grateful to Sayadaw, having found the taste of the Dhamma because they accepted his strictness and strove to be mindful and note. Of these, there are many monks, novices and lay people, not only locals but also foreigners.

As for Sayadaw, it is likely because he so wants students to gain fully, strongly, and rapidly the lovingkindness, goodwill, and compassion which he realized through practice, nurture, and effort, that it happens that he gives this strict discipline. How could he possibly be doing it to increase the yogis' suffering? He is constantly looking after the places where the yogis do their sitting meditation, walking meditation, their rooms, the dining hall, and so on. Neither is his a leisurely life, with the Dhamma talks and interviews he must give and all the other various tasks he must carry out for the Sâsana. If he is constantly looking after the yogis as well, it is even less leisurely. If he were focusing on his own happiness, he would be better off just sitting back and relaxing, saying, "Whether the yogis make progress in their Dhamma practice or not is not important. It's enough if I get to live leisurely." Sayadaw, however, cannot live like that. It is like the way parents who want their sons and daughters to thrive and develop are constantly worrying about them. Those who have been parents will appreciate this most. Those who have been teachers, as well, will have a good understanding. Most parents and teachers can't stand to let their children and their students out of their sight. If possible, they want to be able to keep an eye on them all the time.

A cattle owner has to light fires of grass and send smoke to keep flies and gnats from biting his cows. After lighting these repellent fires, he does not work to make the cows' living places uncomfortable; he works so that the cows won't have to suffer the bites of the flies and gnats.

In the very same way, this strict discipline is like wafting repellent smoke. It is to help prevent the yogi from having to experience the kilesas, which are hindrances in the progress in meditation. It is not to cause the yogis suffering.

People have reasoned that yogis who have practiced with Sayadaw are not superficial yogis. It's probably true. Sayadaw does not accept such superficial work. He does not like it. Thus, Sayadaw's yogis don't get many chances to be superficial. Since

they have experienced well the taste of the Dhamma due to meditating with Sayadaw, due to the opportunity they got to fully understand Sayadaw's lovingkindness, goodwill, and compassion, yogis often say, "Sayadaw, only Sayadaw". They are incomparably grateful. They point to him as their great benefactor.

I have heard one monk who has meditated with Sayadaw, Shwebo Sayadaw U Nanda, say, "On special occasions, Sayadaw comes in in the morning to sit with the yogis. He comes in a little late. After looking around to see which yogis come to the sitting and which do not, he sits down to meditate. When he stands up, he stands behind the yogis. Then, in the interviews, he gives little inspirational illustrations and explains them. If it is a yogi who is really making effort in their meditation, he gives them great inspiration. He exhorts them to keep noting even the whole night without sleeping when the practice is strong. If it is a yogi who is not making effort, he is usually firm and does not show favor towards them."

U Nanda continued, "There are two things for which I am most grateful to Sayadaw. One happened when I was meditating during the rainy season. My robes would get wet and I hadn't any extra robes to change into. Sayadaw got an inkling of this, so he gave me a good set of robes from his place which he had worn himself. In those days, receiving a good pair of robes was greater cause to be delighted and grateful than it is these days."

"The other one was that he had me practice mettâ at the end of the three month rainy season retreat. I don't know, perhaps it's because I am Saturday-born. I'm high-strung and stubborn. I am aversive by nature. If something's not true, I don't intend to accept it. I had the kind of disposition just to kill someone without hesitating. That's how strong my aversive nature is. When I practiced mettâ as Sayadaw had me do, that aversive nature decreased to the point of being almost gone. I became able to be patient and accepting with whatever is happening. I have gained great benefit from being able to live with that noble mindset. So I am exceedingly grateful to Sayadaw. I have not yet been able to repay my debt of gratitude to Sayadaw for these two gifts," he said.

Just as there are many different types of novices and monks, of various levels of spiritual attainment, among those who have practiced with Sayadaw, there are also lay people of every type, level of spiritual attainment, and stratum of society. Among them, there are some very attained beings, some at an intermediate level, and some who have fallen to a low level. There are people of other religions, and there are those without religion. There are locals and there are foreigners. Sayadaw wanted them all to experience the taste of the Dhamma in the way he did. There have been some yogis who wondered, "Is he just treating us to this taste? Does he really partake of this great taste himself?".

He is not like a stereo turned on only for the benefit of another; neither is he like a detergent vendor who just sells his cleanser to others; nor is he like a rancher who does

not taste the products of his cattle, these yogis realize profoundly when they study him. When they go and peek at Sayadaw, they see that he is just noting. Morning, noon, and night, whenever he's free, he seems to be noting. In the morning, he makes a regular practice of getting up very early and meditating. Sayadaw has a little lump, on his buttock, I think. He makes a practice of noting to master all of the associated physical sensations. He sits cheerfully noting those physical sensations the whole day through. He comes late to breakfast from time to time because he has been meditating on physical sensations. If one can note these natures, the more one can note the more invigorated, healthy, and stronger one's body becomes and likewise, the more the mind becomes joyful and strong.

Sayadaw has a little saying, "The more you work your body the more exhausted it becomes. In the mental work of Satipatthâna, the more work you do, the more it fills the mind with energy. It's like a car battery and the engine. When the mind is turning, more the more it turns, the more the energy increases, naturally.

In accord with this little saying, Sayadaw recharges his mental energy as much time as he can get and then does his Sâsana works. How could these works done with full strength of mind be unsuccessful? They are successful indeed. The more the strength of mind is increased, the more successful they become. Therefore, all those who wish to increase their success really need fill up their mental energy.

IMAGINED TOMES

The monks and lay supporters with whom the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw is close urge him to write Dhamma books. "The books which my eternal benefactor the Mahasi Sayadaw wrote are plenty. I, too, look at those books and take the technique to give Dhamma talks. There's no need for me to write," Sayadaw often says. Monks and lay supporters who get to hear Sayadaw give Dhamma talks delight in his teaching. They realize its profound essence. Though Sayadaw's teaching has been recorded on cassettes, if they were to be made into books, both the listening and the reading audience would have a chance to access them. Thus, the benefit would be even greater. That is why monks and lay supporters alike exhort him again and again to write books.

When Sayadaw was carrying out his Sâsana responsibilities as guiding teacher of the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, officials from the Religious Affairs Department came and asked him for a short personal history, as they wanted to present him with a title. That time, Sayadaw told them, "don't make me climb the slippery May pole" (for the more people applaud a contestant climbing the greased May poles, the more times he has to climb). They returned later and asked again. Sayadaw told them, "I have not yet been able to live up to the title 'Pandita' which was given to me by my teacher."

It was quite a while after that, when he was still living at the Mahasi Sâsana Yiektha, that I heard an unexpected statement from Sayadaw.

"I intend to write a book about Satipatthâna. The explanations of the word "Satipatthâna" given in the Commentary and the Sub-Commentary are exquisite. It would be great if it could be written bringing together the theory and the practice.

Sayadaw often explains theoretical constructs using practical experience. There are not many people who are able to speak that way. They are rare. The great Mahasi Sayadaw's skillful means in combining theory and practice and explaining it lucidly is a pinnacle of pinnacles. His paramîs (perfections) were extraordinary indeed.

The Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw evidently emulates the Mahasi Sayadaw. There is one thing Sayadaw says regarding the great Mahasi Sayadaw's wisdom, "If I had even one out of four of the great Mahasi Sayadaw's kinds of wisdom it would be plenty." Sayadaw respects, admires, and relies (takes refuge in) on the great Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw in the same way as he does the great Mahasi Sayadaw. Just as he studies to assimilate the writings of the great Mahasi Sayadaw, he studies to be well-versed in the writings of the great Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw. As to his view on the writings of these two great Sayadaws, Sayadaw once said,

"Before I practiced Satipatthana, I thought the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's writings were the very best. After meditating, I found them to be slightly superficial. If the process of Satipatthana were just added to the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's writings, in which the theoretical aspect is evident, they would become more vibrant. If the Mahasi Sayadaw's works, written to emphasize the practical aspect, were to make use of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's works, they would become more mellifluous."

It seems as if Sayadaw will write an explication of the word "Satipatthana", combining the approach of the great Mahasi Sayadaw and that of the great Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw. If it really gets written it would be great. It would be very beneficial. It doesn't seem as if Sayadaw has the same propensity for composing works as the great Mahasi Sayadaw and the great Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw. His books have not materialized.

After coming to the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, he said once again that he wished to write a book about Satipatthana. He said that he wanted to write not only about the meaning of the word "Satipatthana" but also that of "Yogi". These have yet to actually be written. The Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw's workload is only increasing. Since the branch centers have come to be, the work is even more hectic. He is more concerned about getting the facilities built than about writing books, and when things have come up to be written, from time to time he has had the author do it.

Once, the author said to Sayadaw, "If you took the time off to do it, it would be possible to write the books you want to write on "Satipatthana" and "Yogi". Both the Mahasi Sayadaw and the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw set aside time in order to write. I am sure that if you set aside time and gave it your best they would come to be, Bhante. In order to write you just have to start, Bhante."

Sayadaw replied, "It takes a huge amount of time to get all the facilities taken care of. That is the issue most on my mind. Before, if I thought back on the things I have read and digested, they came to mind easily, I remembered them. It's not like that now. My hands recoil from writing. My hands aren't as willing as before."

"It's because you haven't started yet, Bhante. If you just started writing, your hands would follow, too, Bhante. You have the capacity to be able to write, Bhante," the author replied, "You should be able to write in peace after the facilities are built."

The Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's Practical Abidhamma included in the curriculum of the advanced class in the Buddhist Culture Foundation course at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. It would be great if the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, drawing on that Practical Abidhamma, were to write a book called Experiential Abidhamma.

"If that got written it would be great, Bhante," I have told him. A great many people have enjoyed the book Practical Abidhamma, in which the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw combined the essence of Abidhamma with Sutta and Jataka stories so that it could be understood by the common man. The Mahasi Sayadaw, as well, composed The Great Abidhamma as Dhamma talks. In accord with its name, it is a truly great composition. Perhaps Sayadaw is planning to adapt the approach of the great Mahasi Sayadaw and that of the great Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw and add his own experiences to write a Experiential Abidhamma. That one, as well, has yet to materialize. If it does come to be, it seems as if it would be an very interesting book.

A NOBLE TEACHER'S NOBLE STUDENT

"U Pandi, please find this little one for me."

When he had become old and forgetful, Mahasi Sayadaw would often ask U Panditâbhivamsa, later to become the Shwe Taung Gon Sayadaw, to look for texts that he wanted. Mahasi Sayadaw studied not only the scriptures but writings on other subjects as well. He was extremely well read. He was especially well-versed in writings on the scriptures. He read and fully absorbed the Pâli texts, the Commentaries and the Sub-Commentaries. He seemed to readily know what could be found in any text. He seemed to have thought about and questioned every point one could consider in these texts. Having pondered and questioned, he seemed too to have sought the answers for himself. His intelligence was very sharp. He had the responsibility of being the questioner at the Sixth Sangha Council. And he translated the sub-commentary to The Path of Purification into Myanmar, something even many of the foremost scholars have failed to do. From these two facts one can estimate the force of his intelligence.

It is said that a student whose teacher relies on him or her in scholarly matters is not bad at all himself. The Shwe Taung Gon Sayadaw appears to emulate Mahasi Sayadaw and all his other various teachers who were versed in the Pâli literature. He seems to be satisfied and inspired by them and to follow and put into practice their methods. Sayadaw's familiarity with the Pâli texts makes us respect and rely on him. In order to be this well informed, Sayadaw reads every day after getting dressed, and he instructs his students to do the same.

Just as Sayadaw cherishes literature, he also respects and values books. He has a large variety of books concerned with the Pâli texts as well as on many other topics. He stores his books and papers systematically and respectfully. Some people have the inclination to collect books but aren't really inclined to read them or take note of them. Some people read books, but they just read them. They don't remember anything they read at all. Sayadaw, however, not only accumulates books, he reads them and remembers what he reads as well. He doesn't read superficially. One can see his concentrated attention and meticulousness from his opinions, remarks and corrections found in this book or that.

Sayadaw doesn't read only texts that are so difficult that only scholars study them. He reads everything from children's books on up. In the books he reads one finds Sayadaw's opinions, comments and corrections. It is like this with the books that would be of interest to most, as well as with those boring to most people.

I have come to understand that people with sharp intellect don't do anything lightly. It isn't their custom. They are careful and meticulous. This is a characteristic of a brilliant person. The way Sayadaw takes note of what he reads is an example that should be followed.

Sayadaw takes down quotations from the Pâli texts, the Commentaries and the Sub-Commentaries, as well as quotations from such Sayadaws as the Mahasi Sayadaw, the Mahâgandayone Sayadaw, the Thabyekan Sayadaw, the Mahlain Township, Kan Kyi village, Gabyavidu Sayadaw on note cards. His handwriting is neat, clear and beautiful. His note cards are many. When he gives Dhamma talks both at home and abroad he uses these notes. He takes them wherever he travels. When he gives a talk they are really good weapons.

Sayadaw reads and uses the texts of respected Sayadaws, valuing and cherishing them. He uses them when giving Dhamma talks, when interviewing yogis, in ordinary conversation and when giving words of advice. He quotes exactly from both the Pâli scriptures and worldly texts. For this reason he doesn't read worldly texts carelessly. He reads them bearing in mind what would be useful in the Dhamma arena. He makes note of such points and quotes them.

When he reads science books, as well, he makes note of quotations which would be useful in his talks. When he meets scientists, he uses scientific language to explain characteristics of the Dhamma clearly. When he does this, scientists can understand Dhamma concepts easily. They are pleased and can accept what he says.

When Sayadaw reads something noteworthy about doctors, engineers, schoolteachers, sailors, farmers, shopkeepers, drivers and so on, he writes it down. Later, when he meets with such people, he can use quotations relevant to their lives to illustrate the Dhamma. They really appreciate this, and they praise him. They can understand his illustration easily and therefore come to acceptance. Sayadaw has seen good results from this many times, both at home and abroad. This is why he reads a variety of books about many kinds of people. In this way he can learn about the lives of many different kinds of people. Knowing about people's lives and their situations, Sayadaw can speak about the Dhamma in a way that suits the listener's taste. Words spoken in this way can bring great benefit to his listeners.

When Sayadaw goes on a trip, if he reads or comes across something that he has read about before, he investigates and asks questions in order to understand both theoretically and practically. He investigates, studies and makes inquiries. Coming to an understanding, he can make use of it when the time is ripe. Putting theoretical and practical knowledge together, Sayadaw explains the characteristics of the Dhamma.

In his room, Sayadaw meditates when he wants; if he isn't meditating and visitors aren't present, most of the time he can be found reading. He even has books to read in the bathroom.

Sayadaw usually gives Dhamma talks holding a monk's fan. He puts his note cards in the zipper-pocket on the back of the fan. He takes the notes out and looks at them

when he gives a talk. When he goes out in a car, he looks at the notes while in the car. If he has to attend a meeting, he reads his notes at the meeting.

I have heard Sayadaw speak English to foreigners many times. He doesn't give interviews or Dhamma talks in English, but if the translator leaves anything out, or adds anything extra, I've seen Sayadaw point it out. And when Sri Lankan monks who know Pâli come to see Sayadaw, he speaks to them in Pâli. He hasn't only studied Myanmar and Pâli, but Hindi and English as well. When Sayadaw wants to be very certain about the meaning of a word, he consults all four dictionaries - Myanmar, Pâli, Hindi and English.

Because Sayadaw stayed for about a year in Mawlamyine in Mon State, he seems to have picked up enough of the Mon language to talk about food and drink and such. He also appears to understand sufficiently the other major Myanmar dialects, with the exception of Rakhine, when they are spoken.

In spreading the Buddha-Dhamma, not only at home but also abroad, if Sayadaw's Dhamma and worldly knowledge were to fall short, it wouldn't be easy to speak the Dhamma or give explanations to the satisfaction of foreigners. It wouldn't be easy to provide satisfactory answers to their questions. However, Sayadaw is able now to preach and explain the Dhamma to foreigners, and to answer their questions to their satisfaction. Even foreigners from the most developed countries, who don't tend to think highly of others, place Sayadaw in high esteem. They revere him and come to take refuge in him.

If one wants to work widely for the welfare of others, it won't be possible if one hasn't read much or doesn't have much general knowledge. One must read a lot, and read so as to remember what one has read. One must understand that it requires a great deal of knowledge.

GENEROSITY BRINGS GOOD COMPANY

"If you give away one set, you get two back. I have no doubt of that," he says.

The Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw is often calling the author to come perform the ritual of accepting his robes. Though Sayadaw stows away the robes which come to him, before long some more have arrived. It is at those times that he often gives the little speech above. I am sure it is not just for appearances. He says it because he really believes it. Sayadaw is frequently giving away robes. Every year on Sayadaw's birthday, for one, not only robes, but alms food, as well, is donated. After drawing lots, useful things like sandals, umbrellas, hand-towels, soap, and toothpaste are offered to the ordained yogis. Robes and sandals are also offered annually on the occasion of the Thamanay Kyaw examination, which is held in Yangon. For the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery sect's Vinaya recitation ceremony, robes, umbrellas, towels, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and such, are offered every year. There is the annual robe offering ceremony at the beginning of the rainy season in Kawche Village, as well. Various things are offered by lottery on the New Year, too. There are best, good, and clever prizes and consolation prizes offered to novice monks and young nuns at the annual Buddhist Culture Course awards ceremony. There are also various superior goods such as Malaysian-made robes offered every year to the teachers of the Foundation Course. Not least are the robes and other useful things offered to the monks teaching abroad.

Taking stock of all the things Sayadaw offers, one would realize how much he does give. Others learning of his wholesome deeds would be gratified, indeed. They would have to say "Sâdhu! (Well Done)". How glad the one who did these deeds himself must feel. How happy he must be. Noble ones exclaim with joy, "Generosity is the cause of great happiness". When Sayadaw returns from trips abroad, too, he brings things specially for the senior teachers, the monks who are teaching literature, and for the 'working monks' with responsibilities at the center. He has things to give to the lay attendants, volunteers, and the members of the Theravâda Buddhist Institute (the lay organization of the center) as well. He has things to give to the nuns and special prizes for those nuns who have passes their examinations with honors.

Sayadaw also receives donations of books in English when he is abroad. He offers these to deserving people. He also has a habit getting books in Myanmar which he enjoys giving away. He sends books of the Pâli Canon to the noble monks doing duty abroad to complete their sets. He also has a habit making offerings of supplies and money to both monks both at home and abroad from that which has been offered to him. He donates various things which are needed by the Sâsana Yeiktha. I can't even estimate how many of the donations he makes I don't know about.

Even the author is exhausted recording all of Sayadaw's donations. Perhaps the reader is exhausted already, too. I think it would take a lot of writing just to record the

things Sayadaw has given to the author. It seems if one had to record just those who received donations while the rest Sayadaw's donations were being catalogued it would amount to a huge tome. Sayadaw uses few of the gifts which receives for himself. When supporters realize the pure intention with which he works for the benefit of the Sâsana, they are moved by strong faith and goodwill to offer. That is why gifts are being received continuously by Sayadaw and his Sâsana Yeiktha.

With his personal experience in receiving them, Sayadaw understands well and believes fully in the various good effects resulting from benevolence.

Though the author has not yet been able to give donations on the scale that Sayadaw has, I am just happy to get to know of his offerings. If I do get to offer that much myself, I will be all the more happy. One saying of the Buddha comes to mind, "If you only knew what I know, you would give away your meal rather than eat it." It is natural law that those who have seen and realized the results of generosity for themselves give unstintingly. They themselves are getting the benefits. Who would not give more and more? It becomes an endless cycle of giving and reaping the rewards, reaping the rewards and giving them away. It is said that once, in a previous life, the Buddha-to-be had a tremendous propensity towards generosity, and gave with enthusiasm. Unsatisfied with the level of his giving, he gave away his own wife and children. Feeling that this was still not enough, he even gave away his eyes, his ears, his arms and legs. Still unsatisfied, he turned around and gave away his life. Really over the top! Why did he do this? With his great omniscience, he wanted to do it for the benefit of others.

Those who have the desire to work for the benefit of others are constantly making these kind of sacrifices.

Having himself this desire to work for the benefit of others, it is apparent that the Shwe Taung Gon Sasana Yeiktha Sayadaw deeply appreciates this type of attitude. "Generosity brings good company," he says. "If one shares liberally, one is bound to be surrounded by good people," he says. If one shares little of what one has, one is bound to have little company. Sharing liberally, the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw has lots of company. Monks, novices, and nuns, men and women of all ages surround him.

Sayadaw doesn't give things away in order to increase his following. He just gives so that people may be well and happy. Charity is noble and sublime only when it is done with the intention to give happiness to others. Noble people share their wealth with the intention of giving others happiness. If it is done looking out for oneself, it is not noble. Thus, if you want to give in the way the noble ones do, one must do it with the welfare of others in mind.

POSSESSOR OF THE SÂSANA

The fourteenth Shwegyin Sangha meeting was held in Yangon, at the big Shwegyin building near the eastern gate of the Shwe Dagon Pagoda. Sayadaws of the Shwegyin sect came from all over the country. At that meeting, U Vimalâbhivamsa of the Kan Kyi Pariyatti Monastery in Nyaung Shwe was given the title "Possessor of the Sâsana." Together with him, U Supi?ñinda, Sayadaw from the Patama Gandâyone in Sagaing, was also named "Possessor of the Sâsana." It seemed that the most important function of this meeting was the naming of the two "Possessors of the Sâsana." When they were holding a meeting to plan for this meeting, Shwe Taung Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw took me along. When the big meeting itself was taking place I also accompanied Sayadaw. The government undertook whatever was necessary for this big meeting. (underwrote the cost of whatever was needed for this meeting). On the opening day, I noticed important officials coming to make offerings. Sayadaw went for the first day.

That day, Sayadaw donated two books to all the Sangha who came - Sayings of Mahasi Sayadaw and Thabyekan Sayadaw's Answers to Shwe Taung Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw's Questions. The donor's name, however, was listed as "Shwe Taung Sâsana Yeiktha Dhamma Family." Sayadaw wanted to donate one copy of the latter book to each Sangha who attended, but he ran out of books and he wasn't able to do so. At the close of the meeting, nuns and laywomen from the Yeiktha presented the books to the Sangha for Sayadaw. At that time, Sayadaw was standing nearby with some devotees who were making offerings to him. He was talking with Sangha who came to greet him.

After Sayadaw had finished talking with the Sangha, he spoke with a layman. This layman had a very nice, clean appearance. Sayadaw and he were talking comfortably in a very friendly way. While they talked, I was wondering who this layman was. I couldn't guess, as I hadn't seen him before. I was the only one who didn't know him, for he was a well-known writer, I learned later. He was known as Dhammâcariya U Aye Naing, I heard. He was a major author who wrote articles for religious magazines. His writing was good and his knowledge of the scriptures quite broad. Formerly he had been a monk at Shwe Hinthada Forest in Nyaung Don. He had belonged to the Shwegyin sect, hence his coming to this meeting.

It seemed that Sayadaw and this layman had known each other since their student days. They were discussing the situation at hand with regard to the Shwegin Sect and the Sâsana. Apparently, Sayadaw wanted to know how this man saw the situation. The man mentioned being satisfied with the condition of the Shwegyin sect. Sayadaw, however, didn't appear to be satisfied.

"Devotee, within the Shwegyin sect is the Sâsana going forward, standing still or declining?" Sayadaw asked. The layman didn't want to say, "The Sâsana is declining," or

"the Sâsana is standing still." He said something to the effect that the Sâsana was progressing.

At that Sayadaw replied, quoting the words of the Buddha, "Oh monks...the Blessed One does not praise stagnating with regard to the good, much less the deterioration of the good. Oh monks, I only praise the prospering of the good."

"Oh devotee, one can't say that the Sâsana is prospering, whether in regard to the Shwegyin sect or any other sect, if the Sâsana as a whole is stagnating or declining with regard to what is good (kusala). Just because the number of external buildings or the number of servants of the Sâsana is increasing, one can't say the Sâsana is progressing. By Sâsana we just mean the teachings of sîla, samâdhi and panña. If in the mind-stream of the monks who serve the Sasana, the teachings of sîla, samâdhi and panña aren't prospering, one can't say that the Sasana is prospering. If in the mind-stream of Buddhist men and women, the teachings of sîla, samâdhi and panña are not prospering, one can't say that the Sasana is prospering with regard to the laity, either."

"Now people are using the phrase, 'Possessor of the Sâsana.' It isn't right to name just one person as 'the Possessor of Sâsana.' Nor is it right to name two persons 'the Possessors of Sâsana.' Every novice and monk, every servant of the Sâsana, should work to become a possessor of the Sâsana."

The conversation was over and so was the offering of books to the Sangha. At this juncture, Sayadaw's talk stopped for awhile. Sayadaw had said that every novice and monk should become a possessor of the Sâsana. This was novel. The words used by the Shwegyin sect, "Possessor of the Sâsana," were intended for the leader of the Shwegyin sect. Sayadaw didn't want to give this phrase the same meaning that others were. Just as he would say that someone who has things is an 'owner', or 'possesses wealth', someone with wisdom 'possesses wisdom,' someone with mettâ 'possesses mettâ,' someone with morality 'possesses morality,' someone with self-restraint 'possesses self-restraint,' and someone with training 'possesses training,' Sayadaw wants to say that someone who is accomplished in the Sâsana 'possesses the Sâsana'. He wants to give the phrase this meaning.

For just this reason he said that every novice and monk should work to become a possessor of Sâsana. Novices have the sîla, samâdhi, and panña teachings for novices. Monks have the monks' teachings. Laypeople have the lay sâsana. In this way we can say that there is a novice Sâsana, a Bhikkhu Sâsana and a lay Sâsana. Novices should accomplish the novice Sâsana. Whatever novice does so, possesses the Sâsana. Monks should accomplish the Bhikkhu Sâsana. Whatever monk does so, possesses the Sâsana. Laypeople should accomplish the lay Sâsana. Whatever person does so possesses the Sâsana. If stated like this, every novice, monk and layperson can become a possessor of the Sâsana.

In the Buddha's teaching there are three kinds of accomplishment. The first is the accomplishment of sîla. Every novice, every monk and every layperson should become accomplished in the teachings of sîla. One should not be satisfied until one is accomplished in sîla. Second, there is the accomplishment of samâdhi. One should make effort stage by stage to become fully accomplished in the teachings of samâdhi. Third is the accomplishment of pañña. One should continue striving to develop pañña based on samadhi. One can only say that it is worthwhile to have met the Buddha's teachings, the Buddha Sâsana, when one has realized the knowledge of Path and Fruition. For this reason, every novice, monk and layperson should strive to practice Satipatthana, which can lead one to the knowledge of Path and Fruition, thus making it worthwhile to have met the Buddha Sâsana.

HEALTH SENSE

There is another thing about the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw which pleases the author. That is that when he eats, he eats with gusto. It must be because of his good health that he has such good digestion. When Sayadaw has to go on trips within the country or abroad, it disturbs his sleep. His eating, though, remains unaffected. The author has been abroad once with Sayadaw and on many trips with him within the country. I have never seen his eating affected. The author, on the other hand, had a poor appetite due to insufficient sleep countless times. Even when I'm at my own place and not travelling, my appetite gets spoiled. Sayadaw's digestion is very different. We must have different kamma. Our health sense or the wisdom care for one's life, you might say, is different, too. Sayadaw studies [indigenous] Myanmar medicine as well as Western medicine. They say Sayadaw's father and grandfather had a good understanding of Myanmar medicine. Sayadaw must be his father's son.

I heard one practitioner of Myanmar medicine say, "Sayadaw really has a good grasp of Myanmar medical knowledge. Even I, a practitioner, really have a hard time answering the questions Sayadaw asks about Myanmar medicine. I don't dare underestimate Sayadaw's knowledge of Myanmar medicine."

Sayadaw has a habit of giving people instruction on which nutrients in food and drink are suitable for them. He once told the author, "Sticky rice, durian fruit, coconut, and shrimp agree with you, U Dhammika. Eat those."

Did he say sun type or moon type, cold food or hot food, number one or number two? I don't really understand it all. The practitioner Sayadaw depends on, Nelawizzwa Seya U Kyaw Min, even explained number one and number two to me, but I didn't retain it. I didn't listen carefully, so I didn't understand clearly. I was not very interested, you might say. U Kyaw Min finally wrote down the nutrients I am to eat and those I am not to and gave it to me.

A lady once spoke to me about it. Her name is Daw Sein Sit Phyu. She is the wife of U Kyaw Kyaw, who translates for Sayadaw when he gives Dhamma talks and interviews. She said that they were following the diet laid down by Sayadaw and U Kyaw Min. The effect on their health was evident and large.

"Why don't you the food which is suitable to you?" she said. She believed in it since she had experienced it first hand. It's not uncommon to have disbelief before one experiences the benefit of that dietary wisdom personally.

Though I've lived in Yangon for many years, being from upcountry, I don't really eat a lot of the Yangon specialty, fish sauce. I don't really like it that much. The northerners just eat 'beans'. Just as Southerners eat fish sauce from the time when they are kids, so

northerners enjoy beans all their life. Though I didn't like it, since Sayadaw exhorted me, "You don't eat fish sauce? It gives you strength!" I tried it. Now I like it a little. "Though you may not like them, you should things which are full of nutrients," Sayadaw often says.

There's another thing Sayadaw often says concerned with diet, "You shouldn't eat your food like a cow. You should eat like a goat." Cows fill their belly with one thing when they eat. Goats aren't like that. They eat a something from here and something from there, a little of this and a little of that, to have a variety. Humans should eat like that, a little of this and a little of that to have a variety, he says.

Sayadaw himself eats fruits, grains, and vegetables, and tells others to do the same. The novices and young nuns in the Buddhist Culture Course don't really eat the dishes they don't like. Sayadaw would like people to eat things with nutrients which make them healthy. Sayadaw doesn't like to see Myanmar children stunted and thin due to malnutrition. He wants Myanmars to be tall, strapping, and robust. That is why he has doctors talk about diet at the Buddhist Culture Course. He wants children, too, to have dietary knowledge. The really need to have that knowledge. The children who attend the Buddhist Culture Course and get to listen to this dietary knowledge have good kamma. The author's generation did not have this kind of good kamma. That's probably why we are frequently ill.

Sayadaw had me take myrobalan fruit soaked in cattle urine because my extremities often get cold and stiff. It makes you good and warm, he said. They call that the Buddha's medicine. Some in this country as well as abroad make a habit of taking that medicine. Sayadaw can speak in scientific terms and in terms of nature to make one want to take that medicine.

One time, the devotee U Maung Lay, who lives across from the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha entrance, fell ill, so Sayadaw paid a visit at his home. The author went along. Sayadaw spoke eloquently of the potency of the myrobalan fruit, the Buddha's medicine. When he was done, U Maung Lay said he would try it. Sayadaw had someone go and get it from the his room and gave to U Maung Lay, who said it was good.

I can't speak or write eloquently about it like Sayadaw. That's because I don't know much about it. If I knew, I would surely be able to write about it. I need to know enough to write about it. I have resolved that if I get another chance to listen to that Dhamma discourse on myrobalan fruit, I will take careful note. Abracadabra...on the basis of my good kamma, may I get another chance to listen to the Dhamma discourse on myrobalan fruit.

Sayadaw is rather plump, isn't he? Therefore, he has to avoid fatty foods. He has a few words of advice, "Though we like them, we have to avoid the kind of foods which make us unhealthy." Since he does not follow his taste desires but rather eats healthily, he

has good health. Sayadaw uses indigenous medicine all the time, too. As for Western medicine, he eats according to the recommendation of the doctors' instructions. It is due to his eating healthily and sufficiently and his prolific use of vitamins that Sayadaw has reached the age of seventy-five with strong health still carrying out his Sâsana works with might and main. I hope that Sayadaw will live to be one hundred years old due to his good kamma and mind, as well as suitable weather and nourishment. If he were to live to one hundred, the benefit for the Sâsana would be great, so I am praying and sending mettâ that he may. I do believe that many of Sayadaw's students, like the author, will pour cool mettâ in Sayadaw's direction over and over. I hope and believe that due to the great mettâ of his numerous students that the health of our benefactor, Sayadaw, will just get stronger and stronger.

HIS ENDLESS BENEFACTOR

Among the monks, nuns, and lay students of the great Mahasi Sayadaw, use of the term 'Our Benefactor' in front of his name has gained wide currency. I found myself wondering about the reasons for this. 'I must be because it was practicing Satipatthana meditation with the help of the great Mahasi Sayadaw's advice they have found mental peace,' I had to answer. Even those monks, nuns, and lay people who practiced not with the great Mahasi Sayadaw himself but with his students say, "Our Benefactor, Our Benefactor". Are they just mimicking the way the others say it? Those monks, nuns, and lay students who found peace of mind with the help of the great Mahasi Sayadaw's advice in the practice of the Satipatthana meditation would of course recognize him as their benefactor.

"Rare are those in this world who recognize the gifts they have received from their benefactors. Those who honor and acclaim these gifts." (A?guttara Nikâya) Those are the words of the Buddha himself. Those who recognize their debt to the Mahasi Sayadaw and acclaim him with, "Our Benefactor, Our Benefactor' in accord with these words of the Buddha are this rare kind in the world. 'In this world, those who give the initial gift are rare, as well." Those are the words of the Buddha, too. According to the Buddha's teaching, then, the great Mahasi Sayadaw goes down as one of the great and rare people in this world, one who made the initial gift.

No matter how great the gifts are, those who don't recognize their gifts will not know their benefactor. Ungrateful ones would not satisfied even if they were given the whole earth. Those who recognize and are grateful for the gifts they have received recognize even one who gives them a single drop of water or a one mouthful of rice as a great benefactor. Take, for example, the great Venerable Sariputta. Didn't he give the Brahmin Radha ordination out of gratitude, recognizing his offering of a single spoonful of rice?

The Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw is different than most. He doesn't just add 'Our Benefactor'. He tacks on the little Pâli word 'Ananta', as well. 'Benefactor without limit or end' it means. I've never seen any of the great Mahasi Sayadaw's other students using this extra little word. I've only seen Sayadaw use it. Perhaps the other students also use the little word 'endless' in their hearts. It probably just doesn't escape their lips.

Mahasi Sayadaw is famous for honoring people in accord with their aptitude. Today, one can look to prominent examples, both at home and abroad: distinguished Sayadaws such as Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, Cham Mye Sayadaw, Saddhammaransi Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, and Sayadaw U Silânandâbhivamsa. They are noble and famed human beings indeed. These kinds of people, as students of the Mahasi Sayadaw, are clear indications of his practice of honoring people in accord with their aptitude.

It is true that, as one of those people, Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw was honored by the Mahasi Sayadaw. Perhaps he honored the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw more than other intelligent people, or perhaps not. I'm not sure. In any case, I am sure that Sayadaw adds the extra little word 'Endless' over and above the others.

Most likely, the gifts the Mahasi Sayadaw bestowed upon the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw are varied and diverse. No doubt, the Mahasi Sayadaw have honored him in varied ways, as well. There must be a full range of worldly honors and of Dhamma honors.

In accord with the words of the Buddha, "In nobility, Dhamma honors far surpass worldly honors", no doubt the Mahasi Sayadaw has bestowed more gifts of Dhamma than worldly ones on Sayadaw. Due to practicing Satipatthana daily, aided by the Mahasi Sayadaw's advice, no doubt he experiences each day the extraordinary taste which comes of this Dhamma practice. As this experience arises in his heart, the words probably come to his mind 'How incredibly grateful I am. How incredibly grateful I am', though they may not escape his lips. It has resonated through his heart so many times that when his heart cannot hold it any longer, it come bursting out in the form of that little word, 'Endless' which slips off Sayadaw's tongue.

The gifts bestowed upon the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw by the Mahasi Sayadaw are great beyond measure. The Mahasi Sayadaw is like one who feeds a guest, and Sayadaw like the guest who enjoys the meal. Thus, Sayadaw has a very great debt of gratitude to the Mahasi Sayadaw. Apart from worldly honors, Sayadaw repays his debt of gratitude through Dhamma practice. Aside from repaying this debt by daily doing honor with his own practices of sîla, samâdhi, and panña, Sayadaw has the many yogis, locals and foreigners, monks, novices, and nuns, lay men and women, do honor with the practices of sîla, samâdhi, and pañña. Sayadaw does devotion not only with Dhamma practice, but with scriptural study, as well.

Mahasi Sayadaw appreciated honoring him with Dhamma practice more than worldly honors. If the Mahasi Sayadaw only knew of how Sayadaw does and has others do this kind of Dhamma honor, he would no doubt be very pleased. Sayadaw not only give thanks in his mind, but puts it to practical use, saying 'Endless Benefactor, Endless Benefactor' all the time. His students and successors appreciate the model he provides.

CONCERNED ABOUT DISDAIN

"Only with discipline, only with discipline, will one be successful."

Those are the words of a song I heard on the radio, on the Voice of Myanmar. In trying to become a successful and developed nation, we must have discipline to be successful. Once we have discipline, it must be followed. Without discipline, or if we have it but it is not followed, there is no way this will become a successful developed nation. In a household, in a school (or monastery), in a village, in a town, too, it is this same way. "A person's value is in his discipline," it is said. One must have discipline to become a valuable person. Without discipline one is a worthless person.

Each and every one must have discipline and follow it. A household must become a disciplined household. A school must become a disciplined school. A village must become a disciplined village. A town must become a disciplined town. If every person, every household, every village, every town has discipline and follows it, that is a developed nation. That is the worldly aspect.

As for aspect of the Sâsana, it is the very same way. There is a complete set of discipline laid down by the Buddha for the Sâsana. The Buddha's discipline is so complete that there is no instance where it is lacking that one can point to. No matter much discipline there is or how good it is, if it is not followed, the Sâsana will never progress. Each monk and novice has the responsibility to ensure that the Sâsana progresses. Only if each monk and novice follows the Buddha's discipline will the Sâsana progress.

"Only in good sons and daughters is the guidance of fathers and mothers alive," the Buddha said, "In goods monks and monks and novices the Buddha's discipline alive." Thus, we need many good monks and novices in the Sâsana. Monasteries and meditation centers with discipline must arise in the Sâsana. The leading Sayadaws of the Sâsana, who understand this, strive that the monasteries and meditation centers with which they are concerned have discipline.

The Shwe Taung Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw is one of those. Sayadaw has very great discipline. He is famous for his strict discipline. Some members of the Sangha and some lay people are frightened and apprehensive of Sayadaw for that reason. It is apparent that Sayadaw grew up with parents and teachers who had discipline. He must have lived in a place with good discipline. Sayadaw himself understands the value of discipline. That is why he respects, values, and follows it. He wants those who come to take refuge in him to follow it as he does. He does not like it if it is not followed. He usually explains the various faults and consequences of not following it. If, even with after this kind of explanation, one does not follow it, he is apt to speak and act rather coldly.

At the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, when one goes about, one must go about with discipline. When one eats, one must eat with discipline. When one drinks, one must drink with discipline. When one sits, one must sit with discipline. When one speaks, one must speak with discipline. When one showers, one must shower with discipline. When one goes to the bathroom, one must do it with discipline. When one puts on attire, one must wear it with discipline. Even when one takes off one's sandals, one must arrange them with discipline. When one walks one must walk with discipline. One must throw away trash, as well, in an orderly fashion. There are trash baskets placed all over. One must not spit in an inappropriate place. One must not smoke or chew betel.

That kind of discipline is present in other places, too. At the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha there are not only local but foreign yogis as well. There are yogis of many nationalities, both Eastern and Western. They come from many nations and from many strata of society. They come because they want to practice the Satipatthâna meditation from Myanmar. Sayadaw is concerned that when they come, they will look down on the people, the nation, and the Buddha Sâsana of Myanmar. Sayadaw has been on many trips to many nations, both in the East and the West. They have discipline in some foreign countries. He knows well the discipline they follow. That's why he doesn't want to see them look down on the people, the nation, and the Buddha Sâsana of Myanmar.

Foreigners don't like it to be noisy. So he pays special attention to making sure that his meditation centers are quiet. When people who come to offer meals get to talking loudly, from time to time Sayadaw himself reminds them to speak quietly. Foreigners don't just throw trash wherever they happen to be. They only put it in wastebaskets. As for Myanmar people, they mostly just throw it out wherever they happen to be. So at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, having put trash cans all over the place, he has everybody put trash only in them. Those from foreign nations are very neat and clean. Since those from Myanmar are not like that, Sayadaw really has to make a lot of corrections. Sayadaw does not relax the discipline concerning neatness and tidiness at all. Actually, that is really good. If he did relax it, the foreigners would surely become disdainful. There is strict prohibitions against smoking and chewing betel at the meditation center. There are many Myanmar people who spit and blow their noses without discipline.

The author once went on a Dhamma mission to the U.S. with Sayadaw. The author, who is prone to car sickness, became sick while riding in a car and had to throw up again and again in the car. I had to throw up into a sick bag. That road we were travelling on went through the woods for the most part. Nobody lived there. In Myanmar, if one was on forest road, they would just toss a sick bag like that out the window. There, they don't just toss it. They wait to throw out trash until they find a trash can to put it in. We were on a forest road where nobody lived! Realizing that nobody is around, they don't even toss trash, let alone pass water. We shouldn't look up to everything that is done in foreign countries. However, there are many things to admire and emulate. One should take what is good, whether from one's own nation or another's, and follow it.

Sayadaw, who has gotten to realize the way foreigners are, has laid down good discipline and has it followed and practiced so that neither locals nor foreigners have cause for disdain. That's why foreigners are interested and want to come to the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. And they do come, all the time. The foreigners who come are satisfied, and they resolve to come back again. Some come back again and again, time after time. Some stay for years on end. If the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha did not have discipline, they would not want to come like this. They would not come and stay. Having discipline, the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha is successful in many other areas, as well.

THE BUDDHA'S WISHES

"Meditation Center: of courtesy and quiet, please be considerate."

Those are the words of a conspicuous sign at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. It is indicative of the way things are at the center. It gives a reminder that when one speaks at this center, one must speak quietly and courteously. It urges one to be considerate, too. At this center, local and foreign yogis are meditating. The meditation yogis should not be disturbed. When people are speaking loudly, Sayadaw often gives them a reminder to speak quietly with a hand signal. He puts his index finger to his lips to show them. As there are also local and foreign students at the center, he has them study quietly. During the Buddhist Culture Course, he takes special care that the studying is done quietly. In order not to disturb the yogis, he wants doors to be opened and closed gently. He wants showering and washing to be done so that they are not noisy. I have seen Sayadaw give reminders many times not to be noisy in washing and showering. There are people who come who are not familiar with meditation centers, or who are familiar but don't have an understanding of them, as well as children of those who donate meals. I have seen many times Sayadaw give reminders to them when their voices get loud and noisy to speak quietly and gently. When speech gets discourteous, Sayadaw is not lenient nor is he shy. He is apt to speak rather bluntly.

The Buddha himself had a great desire for quietude. If the quiet was broken, the Buddha was apt to speak bluntly, too. He was neither shy nor lenient, I guess you would have to say. Once when five hundred newly ordained disciples of Sâriputta and Moggalâna were speaking noisily in the monastery, the Buddha expelled Sâriputta and Moggalâna along with their five hundred students. Didn't he show leniency at least to his right and left-hand disciples? I guess the Buddha was giving these two a lesson that noisiness was undesirable. Well, he must really have been one who liked quietude.

Only if they have quiet is the yogis' insight likely to progress. Thus, it is absolutely necessary that they do have quiet. Quiet and a Sâsana Yeiktha are a pair that must always go together. A Sâsana Yeiktha without quiet indicates that it does not have a good leader. Without quiet, a Sâsana Yeiktha does not have grace. It does give cause for rapture nor serenity of mind. A Sâsana Yeiktha must be so quiet that people who come say, "This Sâsana Yeiktha is peaceful. It gives cause for rapture. It makes one very happy." Sayadaw is working to make sure his Sâsana Yeiktha has that kind of quiet. So when Sayadaw comes by where some people have got to talking loudly, they often remind each other, "Sayadaw is coming. Talk quietly."

Here the words the Tittis said when the Buddha was coming come to mind. "Masters, the monk Gotama is coming. Master Gotama likes voices to be soft. He does not like clamorous speech. So don't make noise. Be quiet."

The Tittis had the habit of speaking loudly among one another. That is why they reminded one another. Even the Tittis knew of how the Buddha enjoyed quiet. Buddhist monks, nuns, and lay people, who call themselves students of the Buddha, should know and follow the Buddha's wishes in carrying out Sâsana affairs.

There are many various "Unceasing Papphana Chanting Ceremonies" done with loudspeakers all over the place in Myanmar. Even at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, yogis have to listen to those sounds of ones going on nearby.

"If the Buddha were alive would he like these 'Unceasing Papphana Chanting Ceremonies'? The Buddha, who cherished quiet, would not like them," Sayadaw often says. "People paying respects to the Buddha over blasting loudspeakers is not in accord with the Buddha's wishes, either."

I'm sure that those who organize "Unceasing Papphana Chanting Ceremonies" and pay respects like that would say that they are doing it with the intention of increasing the faith of those who hear. Buddhists, who are students of the Buddha, should think about how much something is in accord with the wishes of the Buddha and do it the way which is in accord with the Buddha's wishes. If those who hear the recitations are really filled with faith by them, then the organizers' intentions will have been realized. Most likely, though, they are not. Have to stay awake listening to that sound rather than having peace and quiet at bedtime most likely does not cultivate faith. There are probably those who find it chaotic, noisy and tiring. It's quite possible that those whose faith is not inspired by these types of things could see them that way. Meditating yogis, as well, would like to mediate in quiet.

That's the kind of experience I imagine that those who have to listen to this stuff could have. I don't mean to say that "Unceasing Papphana Chanting Ceremonies" and paying obeisance to the Buddha are not good. It's no good to get in the way of the faith aroused by these things. I find myself wondering if the "Unceasing Papphana Chanting Ceremonies" and obeisance were broadcast over loudspeakers in the Jetavana Monastery where the Buddha lived, and he had heard, whether he would have given the inspiring and gratifying words, "Dear ones, very good, very good, sâdhu, sâdhu", or would they have been expelled with the words, "Be gone, Be gone," as Sâriputta and Moggalâna and their five hundred students were. Students of the Buddha have to think about whether something is in accord with his wishes or not.

If you were to ask the yogis who come from abroad to meditate how they feel about the "Unceasing Papphana Chanting Ceremonies" and obeisance, they would probably be able to tell you about the way things are abroad. In their nations if one were to cause this kind of noise disturbance, the neighbors would make a complaint. If they were unsuccessful, they would take the offender to court, they would tell you. People who are not Buddhists value quiet, as well. They don't like interfering with others' freedom. These

non-Buddhist come from places many thousands of miles away and spend a great deal of money to come study this satipatthana from Myanmar, our own Buddha-Dhamma. Therefore, we who call ourselves Buddhists should be going all out to help them so that the guidance of the Buddha is established in the hearts of these non-Buddhists.

Sayadaw, who has been on many trips abroad to teach the Dhamma as well as giving interviews and talks to the foreign yogis who come to his Sâsana Yeiktha, has a deep understanding of foreigners' natures. That is why he goes all out to ensure that there is quiet at his center. Every son and daughter of the Buddha should enhance the grace of the Buddha-Sâsana with quietude.

HIS WORDS

"When you write, you should cite the words of your teachers."

The author received these words of advice from the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw at the Insight Meditation Center in the town of Barre, Massachusetts during a Dhamma mission to America. That was when I began writing with the pen name 'Thamanay Kyaw'. I wrote a piece called "Twice Beautiful" about a lady yogi named Kamala. I wrote it with that title because, besides being beautiful on the outside, Kamala had a beautiful mind. Sayadaw suggested putting in a poem by benefactor, the Amarapura Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw, at the end of that article. I hadn't thought to put it in. Sayadaw never studied with the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw. Only Sayadaw's teacher, the Thaketa Paññalinkara Monastery Sayadaw U Paññasiri had studied with the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw. Although Sayadaw had not studied with him, he been enlightened by the works and wisdom of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw, he says. That is why Sayadaw respects the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw like his own teacher. He really cherishes the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's writings. Looking at the advice above, one can see how much he respects and values him.

The poem which Sayadaw wanted me to use that time goes-

"To take a beautiful portrait, you spiff yourself up.

To have a beautiful view in the universal camera, a beautiful mind in a beautiful body, to reach the peaceful palace (nibbâna) observe the mental processes, beautifying yourself daily."

That Sayadaw would tell the author, himself a student of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw, to use this poem makes one all the more interested, admiring, and respectful of Sayadaw.

Very often in the world, who ever gains success and renown, whether lay person or monk, starts forgetting to pay respect to those worthy of it. Thinking, "I am intelligent. I am educated. I know just as much as him. I am just as intelligent as him. I am just as educated as him. In fact, I am know even more than him. I am more intelligent and better educated than he," the even begin to look down on people worthy of respect. The author has seen this kind of people among his own associates, and heard others talking about them.

One can see that Sayadaw, on the other hand, respects the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw and his writings so much that he even respects those, as well, who join him in respecting the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw and his writings. Sayadaw is so similar, both physically and mentally, to the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw that some of those who were

faithfully devoted to the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw have become faithfully devoted to Sayadaw.

To give one example: when Sayadaw speaks on the subject of kamma, both at home and abroad, he often uses excerpts from the Practical Abhidhamma written by the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw and the Basic Patthana which he composed as Dhamma talks. Sayadaw has them copied and reduced in size on a photocopier. Then he uses these papers when he gives a Dhamma talk. It is very difficult, both for foreigners and Burmese, to understand kamma as accurately as they need to. Undoubtedly, it is because he wants his audience to gain a full and accurate understanding that Sayadaw talks for note cards this way. One can see how Sayadaw uses material from the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's writings not only on the subject of kamma, but also on many other subjects. It must be because he has found great benefit in using them this way both at home and abroad. Doubtless, it is because of this great benefit that Sayadaw cherishes and values the use of these so much.

To give another example, there is a little verse on the meaning of the word 'Satipatthana':

"Adhering to, penetrating the inside of the object,
that attention, 'Satipatthana' is called."

The author had to memorize that little poem back when he studied Abhidhamma Summaries. In his Burmese translation of the Pâli text, the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw included this poem in his definitions. Sayadaw makes a practice of giving talks on the meaning of the word 'Satipatthana', combining the definitions given in the Commentaries and Sub-Commentaries with his own practical experience. Then Sayadaw recites this little poem and gives an explanation. Sayadaw could just compose such a poem on his own, but he instead he cherishes the use of this poem by the respect-worthy Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw. He uses the great Mahasi Sayadaw's poems similarly. If great elder Sayadaws have already composed a poem, Sayadaw does not make practice of devising a new one to use in talks. That's his attitude, respecting and cherishing the elder Sayadaws' literature.

He uses Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's writings so much that when Sayadaw was living at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, some of the Sangha would even say, "He is converting the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha into a Shwegyin Monastery." (The Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw belonged to the Shwegyin sect, as does Sayadaw U Panditâbhivamsa). Sayadaw has established a Buddhist Culture Course in which children come to study for a month during their hot season vacation. In the Buddhist Culture Course, there are four classes. The curriculum of all four classes consists mainly of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's writings. Some of the great Mahasi Sayadaw's work is also included. The writings of renowned elder Sayadaws such as the Ledi Sayadaw, the

Mahâvisuddhayoun Sayadaw, the Thapyekan Sayadaw, and the Singajâ Sayadaw are included as well. It is only because none of the great Mahasi Sayadaw's work is written especially for children that the curriculum consists mainly of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's writings. If the Mahasi Sayadaw did have some works which were written especially for children, I am sure that Sayadaw would use the works of his "Endless Benefactor" and nothing else.

I hardly need mention that Sayadaw uses the great Mahasi Sayadaw's writings. Sayadaw, who gives his talks and interviews in accord with the advice of the great Mahasi Sayadaw, couldn't possibly go completely without some of the Mahasi Sayadaw's writings. He uses them completely and masterfully. It is because he can use them so masterfully that Sayadaw is able to carry out the propagation of the Buddha-Sâsana both at home and abroad.

Sayadaw has a habit of saying these words, honestly and sincerely, just as he feels it in his heart:

"It would be most accurate to say that the ability I have now to work for the benefit of the Sâsana is due in greater part to the genius of Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw, the great Mahasi Sayadaw, and my other benefactors than to my own."

Sayadaw does not say this to please others. He is sincerely speaking what is really in his heart.

They say it was a great burden for Sayadaw to give Dhamma talks when he first started. Not having given talks before, when he had to give a talk, he would take material from the Mahasi Sayadaw's two-volume *The Method of Vipassana*. Some even said, "If U Pandita was without just that two volume set of *The Method of Vipassana*, he wouldn't be able to give talks. He depends entirely on those two books."

Being subjected to those kind of comments, Sayadaw began to study to assimilate the great Mahasi Sayadaw's other writings and speak on them. It is precisely for that reason that he is now able to teach the Buddha-Dhamma in accord with the Mahasi Sayadaw's advice so that even those who are not Buddhists can accept it.

Sayadaw did not study and use only the Mahasi Sayadaw's and the Mahâgandayone Sayadaw's writings. He also studied and used the Thapyekan Sayadaw's and U Vâseṇṇapabhivamsa's writings, as well. Collecting some of the talks Sayadaw gave in the united States, the author has published a book by the name, "American Dhamma Discourse", an unabridged Myanmar version of Sayadaw's English book *In This Very Life*. This "American Dhamma Discourse" was published also in the magazine *Myat Hsu Mun* over many months. Then, in order to write *The Timeless and Priceless Sayings of Thapyekan Sayadaw*, I read the Thapyekan Sayadaw's *New Paritta*

Translations and a compilation of his Dhamma talks. One can see in the talks given in the U.S. contained in "American Dhamma Discourse" where Sayadaw excerpted from New Paritta Translations. Sayadaw took the whole piece the Thapyekan Sayadaw wrote on dâna to speak on the subject. He must use material by the Thapyekan Sayadaw on many other subjects in the same way.

There is another Sayadaw called U Candajoti. Sayadaw really treasures and uses the book Eternal Blessings by this Sayadaw. Every time he goes abroad to teach, he takes the books by the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw, the Thapyekan Sayadaw, and U Candajoti. He when he is abroad as well, he reads, takes note of, and uses them.

*Putting on an facade of wholesomeness, what a waste of money, just for pleasure.

*Great merit, less the cost, when done with wisdom.

He uses this little verse both at home and abroad. It is from that very same Eternal Blessings.

Sayadaw also appreciates especially the works of people such as the Ledi Sayadaw and U Shwe Aung. He studies and puts them to use. Thus I have come to understand and appreciate why it is that he says, "It is due to my teachers' genius more than my own." Nonetheless, the author still feels that Sayadaw is downplaying his own genius.

CONSIDER

"Don't stay all mussed up and messy like this, son," he said.

I think it was because I had a fever that Sayadaw came to my room. It is very rare for Sayadaw to come into to his students' rooms. It was when he came in and looked at the place where I was lying that he spoke the words above. If it were I, I would have had to say something, too. You would have to say that the place was messy enough to make Sayadaw want to say something. On my cot there was just one thin piece of cloth. There was no mat. Having been in use for a long time, even the pieces of clothing holding the thin little piece of cloth down at the corners were ragged in spots and quite dirty. Though I knew it was a little messy and dirty like that, I was satisfied thinking, "Just be content with austerity." The practices of contentment and austerity are indeed good. Nonetheless, Sayadaw had to admonish me because of how messy and dirty it was. That's a good example of how Sayadaw likes neatness and cleanliness.

Having lived at the Amarapura Mahâgandâyone, the author emulates the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's way of living, which was not luxurious. You wouldn't find a wide, luxurious mattress atop the bed Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw slept in. It was just a simple, tidy, compact one. The sheets on his mat, too, were clean and neat. They were not ragged or dirty like the author's at all. The way they both cleanliness and neatness is another similarity between the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw and the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw. They both really like to keep themselves clean, to keep the things they use neat, and to the environment around them clean. At the Mahâgandâyone Monastery and at the Shwe Taung Gon Yeiktha, respectively, they are each concerned about keeping their place clean.

It is said that once some foreigners who came to the Mahâgandâyone wondered how such a extensive monastery was kept so clean and neat. When they asked the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw, he replied, "By working in accord with the advice of the Buddha." It's quite true. In the Vinaya, the Buddha laid down rules of conduct for keeping monasteries clean.

Sayadaw left the room after giving the words of advice above. He had a devotee send over a mat to the author's place. It was an Indian sleeping mat, which I spread over the thin old piece of cloth, which had served so well. I have been using it ever since. Though Sayadaw had it sent over, I didn't really want to take it. I only accepted it to go along with Sayadaw's wishes. One more well-wisher offered yet another mat, which I did not want to take either. It was only after considering his good-will and faith that I accepted that one, as well. I spread that on top of the other. Then I spread a robe as a sheet on top of that. I guess I had quite a pile of mats.

Before the author came to the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, I heard one Sayadaw say, "I've heard that at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha the younger monks compete with one

another to have the best mats and things. You shouldn't emulate that style. Low-minded people probably think much of that kind of luxurious style. High-minded people would not think much of it. You should adopt the attitude of the high-minded people," he said.

I appreciated that Sayadaw's words, too. When I came to the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, I tried to put them into practice. All the things they used seemed new and different. I had all sorts of questions running around in my mind. I fancied I heard people from outside the meditation center criticizing the monks of the center on this issue. Are all other centers in the field of meditation like this? I can't say.

After living at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha for a long time, I began to understand what was going on. When the yogis who came to meditate with the meditation teachers got a taste of the Dhamma, strong faith arose in them. Due to this strong faith, they would offer things they thought the meditation teachers needed. Mahasi Sayadaw and the meditation teachers would all turn down offers of very luxurious items. However, considering the strong faith of the most enthusiastic supporters the teachers felt so bad that they couldn't just turn them down, and so would have to accept the offerings after all. The Mahasi Sayadaw, whose Dhamma practice was very strong, would have only have done it considering the faith of his devotees, rather than for his own pleasure, I do believe. The senior teachers, as well, with their strong Dhamma, would have considered the issue similarly. Other monks with strong practice, as well, would want to consider the issue similarly.

Wanting to know what the attitude of my benefactor the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw was, I tried asking the people who looked after his needs. This is what they said, "If we lay down an fancy mat when Sayadaw isn't around, when we aren't around, he removes it himself and lays down another one that is not fancy. Sayadaw doesn't like multicolored mats, either. He doesn't let us lay them down. If we do lay it down, he puts his old robe-color mat over it. Then he lays his leather mat on top.

'If you lay down a fancy mat, when monks from outside come and see it here they will have something to say about it. Don't put it in here.' Sayadaw would say."

In view of this statement, I am convinced that he only accepts those types of donations considering the donor's faith and not for his own pleasure.

I heard that once a lady devotee gave a curtain to Sayadaw's helper to give to him. It was a very fancy curtain, so, the helper, knowing that Sayadaw wouldn't like it, didn't want to give it to him, they say. However, considering the donor's wishes, he decided had to give it to him. When he was given it, Sayadaw said, "If I use this curtain my room will look like room decorated for newlyweds."

Knowing that Sayadaw didn't like it, the helper didn't use it. Finding this way of being respect-worthy, I couldn't help but admire him.

TRY A TASTE

There was a Sayadaw from the author's village who had a practice of reciting the Paritta, Papphana, Dhammacakra, Anatta Lekhana, Mahâsamaya Sutta and others Pâli passages both morning and night. He counted his rosary beads as much time as he had. He didn't really talk a lot. I guess I emulated him. After I left the Mahâgandâyone Monastery I did some little regular recitations. While I was at Mahâgandâyone, though, I had to do reflections on the Buddha and mettâ meditation. That's how the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw instructed us to meditate. He himself practiced these meditations, too. He himself did not use rosary beads, and he did not instruct his students to do so. After the author had practiced at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, as well, I used verses to recite in the pûjâ ceremony honoring the Buddha.

One time, the Mahasi Guiding Teacher, Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw-to-be, asked the author to write an article. At that time, I was not writing a lot yet. That was back at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, so I wasn't yet using the pen name Thâmanç Kyaw. It was only after coming to the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha that I began using that pen name. I still remember the title of the article that the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw-to-be asked me to write, "The Noble Buddha's Highest Wishes". It was written for the Rays of the Sâsana Magazine. In writing that article, I gave up my habit of reciting verses. It wasn't because it isn't good to recite verses; it is good. However, in order to be able to put energy towards an even more worthy cause, I decided to give it up.

I don't know whether or not the readers of that article got any particular benefit from it. I, for one, did receive the benefit of writing it. I could say that I successfully carried out Sayadaw's intention. If even the author does not get any particular benefit, a piece of writing becomes lifeless. Now, you can say that that article came to life.

Sayadaw has a habit of mentioning his objective when an appropriate opportunity arises: Once, the editor of the Sâsana Magazine came to see Sayadaw. His magazine is a very successful one. Sayadaw has urged him that editor time and time again to give articles on the benefits of practical meditation experience priority for prime space instead of ones on topics such as "how reciting Pâli verses gives one supernatural powers and keeps one free of enemies and danger". "I can't say whether it's because of my urging, but he doesn't come to see me very often any more," he says.

It seems as if Sayadaw has concluded that his urging came to no avail. I've heard that one other Sâsana magazine which has seen success only became prosperous because of putting in those articles on supernatural powers from reciting Pâli verses. The

senior editor of that prosperous magazine said, "People are difficult to please. They really like those superficial kind of articles. If there's too many of them, though, people get sick of them. Since they have unresolved issues in their lives, people look for something to solve their problems, something to depend on."

There are those who come to see Sayadaw and talk of supernatural powers from Pâli verses and Parittas. After listening to what they have to say, Sayadaw usually replies, "Satipatthana mindfulness is much greater than reciting Pâli verses or Parittas. Try meditating!" He elucidates in ways such as, "There were indeed instances of people miraculously protected against danger and enemies through reciting Parittas in the time of the Buddha, as well as today. The Buddha, however, did not teach the Dhamma with the intention of protecting people against such external harm. Neither was it to give people mere success in their career, fame or fortune. Those types of benefits are hardly worth mentioning. As far as enemies are concerned, the internal ones are much more dangerous than the external ones. External dangers torment one for only a single lifetime; the internal foes can torment one for not only one, but many lifetimes. Thus, internal dangers are more dangerous. It is more important to be free of the more dangerous dangers. That's why we must do the work of Satipatthana meditation, which can give us protection from the inner dangers, the kilesâs (defilements)."

In the words of Sayadaw U Vimala, famous as the Mogok Sayadaw, "the gristle and tendons are not as good as meat", meaning recitation of the Dhamma is not as good as practicing it. The Mogok Sayadaw could really speak so that common people could understand. Another of his sayings goes, "For diseases which can only be cured by taking medicine orally, ointments and salves are useless. They just relieve it." He was really good at coming up with easy-to-remember phrases.

Thus, the Sayadaws say, "If you want to recite Pâli verses and Paritta, fine, recite. But don't be contented to just stop at that little bit of wholesome action, with those sundry benefits. Those are hardly worth mentioning. Being satisfied with that, thinking one has got the essence, is like going into the woods with intention of getting the pith of a tree trunk and bringing back only some branches and twigs, thinking one is has got the heartwood. Only if you experience the essence of the Sâsana will meeting the Buddha's teachings have been worthwhile. If you are satisfied with just some branches and twigs, it won't have been worth your while.

There is a saying of the Buddha which the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw has explicated. It is one which states that those who read and recite are not yet truly ones who 'live in the Dhamma'. Thus, to be 'one who lives in the Dhamma', it is not enough to read and recite. One must gain practical experience.

There is another saying of the Buddha that goes,
Don't be satisfied just with the practice of sîla (morality).
Don't be satisfied with an intellectual understanding of the Buddha-Dhamma.

Don't be satisfied with mere concentration.

Don't be satisfied with peacefulness.

Don't be satisfied [even] with the happiness of Anâgami-Phâla (the fruition of the Non-Returner).

How great is this saying? Don't stop along the path before you have reached Arahantship, the final goal. Don't stop short. Just keep on going until you have reached end of the road, he said.

The article which I wrote at Sayadaw's request, "The Noble Buddha's Noble Wishes", included the saying of the Buddha above. In that article, the author noted the way the Buddha urged and aroused people.

- ❖ Do not be satisfied being left with the gristle and tendons of the Buddha's teachings, rather go for the meat.
- ❖ Don't just rub on the ointment, swallow the pill.
- ❖ The kilesâs, those inner foes so much more fearsome than the outer ones, subdue with the weapon of Satipatthana.
- ❖ Don't gather the twigs and branches of the Sâsana tree, rather go for the heartwood.
- ❖ Strive with Satipatthana mindfulness to earn the name 'one who lives with the Dhamma'.
- ❖ Continue travelling, headed straight for the final goal of the teachings.

Most likely Sayadaw has met those who stay satisfied with just the gristle and tendons of the Sâsana, over and over again, all over the place. No doubt he has urged people to try a taste of the meat, over and over again. Those who do experience the taste of the meat come to understand well the difference between the taste of the gristle and tendon and that of the meat. They come to have right view, realizing that they had been wrong, before they had tasted the meat, in thinking that the taste of the gristle and tendon was indeed the best. They also come to appreciate that it isn't because Sayadaw wants to put down those who are satisfied with just the taste of the gristle and tendon that speaks so, rather he is speaking with karuna (compassion) and mettâ (lovingkindness). Before long they come to be grateful to Sayadaw. They recognize him as their benefactor. They come to appreciate how much the Sâsana really needs Sayadaws who explain the difference between the gristle and the meat that way. Although before they gained this clear perspective they might have disliked Sayadaw for speaking in this way, almost putting people down, with this newfound clarity they can no longer dislike him. They revere him their whole lives. They come to depend on him.

A GOOD LEADER

"People only appreciate Sayadaw's good discipline when they themselves become authority figures. They understand the difference between using and wasting water and electricity. Knowing how expensive it is to use up water and electricity one couldn't not conserve it anymore. One comes to conserve it. One's not comfortable wasting," he said.

I was glad but surprised to here this from the one who said it. I definitely didn't expect to hear these kind of words from him. When I came to his place and he said that to me, he had a bit of a grin. Though I can't say exactly what he was thinking, I found myself imagining the circumstances of his past. He liked to be a bit contrary. It was back when we lived together at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha. He still had only about seven vâssa then, I think. I can't say if it was because he was young that he was so contrary. Back then he was living in a room in the wooden meditation building. An old, experienced monk lived in the room next to him. That monk would remind him not to leave the light on in the shower and leave water running. Just to be contrary, he would leave the light on and the water running. Since he has become an authority figure himself, I think his view towards that old monk must have changed. I say this because he has become the supervisor of a center. In vâssa, as well, he is no longer young. He has about fifteen vâssa now. 'He' is U Sa?varâlinkâra. He has become the Sayadaw of the Thingan Island, Kyaikkasan Dhammapiya Sâsana Yeiktha, a branch of the Shwe Taung Sâsana Yeiktha.

He lived at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha for about three years. While he was here, too, Sayadaw gave him a lot of constructive criticism. Over and over, Sayadaw gave admonishments not to him, but to everyone in general, concerning habits in using water and electricity. Perhaps he thought back then that he was already more than in compliance with Sayadaw's admonishments. I still remember what Sayadaw said when he heard that U Sa?varâlinkâra and the other young monks were using the phone a lot, and gave them some constructive criticism on the issue. Since there is a phone at his monastery, I would think he has come to appreciate well Sayadaw's advice about use of the phone. It seems like he follows Sayadaw's advice and puts it into practice himself and urges others to do the same. Since he is already following it, it is easy to remember.

Thinking of his situation, the story of Ajâtasattu comes to mind. Before he had a little son of his own, Ajâtasattu could not understand his father, Bimbisâra's fatherly mettâ (lovingkindness) for him. After a son by the name of 'Udayabhadda' was born to him, fatherly mettâ filled his heart. He really loved his son so. Feeling this great love, he wanted to know, "Did my own father really love me like this?" When he asked his mother he came to know how he had been loved.

Now U Sa?varâlinkâra has himself become a 'father'. Thus, he has come to appreciate his 'father', the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw's discipline,

lovingkindness, good intention, and compassion. Realizing the value of Sayadaw's admonishments, he is finding the great benefits of Sayadaw's discipline.

Sayadaw follows and practices good discipline himself. He himself experiences the wholesome benefits of good discipline. That is why he gives all those who take refuge behind him good discipline. Among his ordained students, he gives it to the senior teachers, to the 'working monks', and to the monks who are practicing as yogis. During the Buddhist Culture Course, he gives it to the novices and young nuns who attend. He gives it to those who work in the kitchen. He gives it to the nuns who are studying. He gives it to the members of the Theravâda Buddhist Institute (the lay organization of the center). He gives it to the those who work at the center. He gives it to people who come from outside to pay respects. And he gives it to those who come to make offerings of alms and such. He gives it to locals and to foreigners. He gives all sorts of advice to a people of diverse racial and socio-economic backgrounds.

Sayadaw hands it out freely, but definitely not everyone can take it the way he does it. Sayadaw no doubt gives it with the intention and the belief that they will get its benefits to the degree that they do take it in. When it rains, if one uses a pot shard to collect water, one gets only as much as the pot shard can take in. If one uses a small pot, one gets a small pot full. If one uses a great vessel, one gets as much as the great vessel can hold. You get as much as you can take in. Although it is Sayadaw giving the discipline and the advice, the recipients will get it according to the ability to take it in.

The author once asked one of the foreigners who come to practice with Sayadaw, a man from Australia, "What is the best thing you could bring back as a gift from Myanmar?" "I would like take home the Shwedagon Paya and Sayadaw U Pandita," he replied. One Japanese lady yogi said, "The thing I would most like to take back as a gift is a picture of Sayadaw U Pandita." That's an indication of how greatly he is cherished and valued. It is because of the many and varied benefits they are experiencing on account of Sayadaw that they cherish and value him so.

There are those who have gotten immediate benefits from Sayadaw's discipline and instructions because they have followed them as soon as they heard them. There are also those like U Sa?varâlinkâra who come to appreciate and follow them only later, and thus get the benefits only then. If one follows Sayadaw's discipline and instructions now, one gets the benefits at once. If one follows them only later, one gets the benefits only then. One gets the benefits at the time that one follows them. There's one thing Sayadaw said concerning the Buddhist Culture Course teachers:

"One must practice following discipline oneself. Only then will one be able to give it to others. If one doesn't have discipline oneself, if doesn't follow it oneself, I don't know how one could make corrections when one meets another without discipline or not following it. I can't understand how one could offer correction. If it is discipline one is

following oneself, when one comes upon an instance of it not being followed, one knows immediately. One can correct it easily. One knows the consequences of not following it and the benefits of following it. Thus, one can explain the benefits and consequences so that people can take it in and accept it."

"Thus, those who would teach must be disciplined people. When they see instances of discipline not being followed, they can correct it, should correct it. They need to be well-versed in it."

When Sayadaw is about to come to Panditârama Hse Main Gon Forest Center, before he comes those responsible usually go all out to take care of things so that Sayadaw won't have any problems to point out. Nevertheless, after he arrives, he usually says things like, "This is missing here. That is needed there. It's not fitting to put that this way. Please get rid of that. Please correct this."

One time after Sayadaw had gone again, before very long U Âsabhâcâra from Nepal came to Panditârama Hse Main Gon Forest Center. When those responsible for the to Panditârama Hse Main Gon Forest Center told him about Sayadaw's meticulousness, he remarked, "Sayadaw can find and point out problems that most people don't even see. People as careful and meticulous as Sayadaw are rare, very rare.' He is working as the head of the Sâsana Yeiktha in Nepal to the best of his ability. It was evident the he had seen a lot of Sayadaw's pointing out things in Nepal, too. He was really grinning when he spoke the words above. From his manner, it was if he was saying, "That's just Sayadaw's style." It was clear that he was used to it. From his mouth came the words, "It is because he is this careful and meticulous that he has been this successful, too."

A WEALTHY NATION

"Even the dogs here don't eat leftovers," he said.

These are some words of advice Sayadaw once gave me. I heard them the very first day I arrived in the U.S. It was 1991. It was at the lunch table. There were a great many novel experiences for the author, who had never traveled abroad before. The first surprising experience was the Bangkok airport. From the author's perspective, the Bangkok airport was really extraordinary. I guess Sayadaw got an inkling, for he asked, "How are you doing, U Dhammapika?"

"I can't help but remember my motherland and send and prayers that our Myanmar may come to be as developed as this, Bhante," I replied. After staying the night in Thailand, we continued our journey. We deplaned for a while at the Tokyo airport to change planes. We were greeted by the element of cold. My first experience abroad was of cold. We went over to our gate. When we saw our plane, Maung Khin Maung Htay told me, "You're lucky." While I was wondering what he meant, he continued, "You get to fly in a 747, a huge plane."

When we finally reached the U.S., we deplaned in San Francisco. For the author, this airport was quite awesome, too. Having seen the Tokyo airport and the San Francisco airport, the Bangkok airport didn't seem that extraordinary anymore. We went with the car which came to pick us up from the San Francisco airport to the Taungpulu Meditation Center where we were to hold a retreat. Since the retreat was organized by some Vietnamese immigrants to America, it was they who came to convey us there. I went in the same car as Sayadaw.

The Vietnamese devotee who was driving spoke with Sayadaw and everyone almost the whole way there. What language do you think he was speaking in? In Burmese? In Vietnamese? If it were one of those two languages at least one party would understand their own language. But neither party understood the other's language. So we had to speak in a language in which we could understand each other. What language was that? English, of course. It was the first time I had heard Sayadaw speak English so fluently. Never having heard him before, I didn't realize before that he spoke that much. That was another surprise. And that was just the beginning of our trip to America. There were many more extraordinary experiences to come the author's way.

I came to learn later that name of devotee who was driving was "Khan". We were to eat lunch at his family's home. Before we ate, we took showers. When I entered the shower, I tried turning on the first faucet. It was really cold. Then I tried the other. It was really hot. I didn't dare shower with the hot, so I decided to shower with the cold. The water was so frigid that I caught a cold. Later I came to know what an fool I had been. It's

fine if you mix the hot and the cold to take the shower. That was one time I had to accept that I had played the fool. That was another new thing.

After I caught that cold, I didn't feel very well. I had a bit of a fever. What a wimp! Shortly after showering, we had lunch. Since the donors were Vietnamese, they served us Vietnamese food. They eat rice like in Myanmar. The curries, too, are appetizing to Myanmar taste buds. The bitter chicken vegetable soup, though, was novel. That bitter chicken vegetable soup was definitely a bit undercooked, too. As I was already feeling a little sick, having caught a cold, I just couldn't eat that meal. Sayadaw, on the other hand, with his good digestion, was able to eat quite a bit. His eating was undisturbed. Sayadaw ate everything on his plate.

The author, though, having caught a cold and not feeling well, could not eat well. I just took a taste. There was still a lot left on my plate. Seeing all the food left on mine when they came to clear our plates, Sayadaw gave me the admonishment at the beginning of the chapter. I don't know whether or not dogs there eat the leftovers from someone's plate or not. I am sure the people don't. I think the hungry dogs I've seen in Myanmar would eat them. I think Sayadaw just said, "not even the dogs here eat leftovers," to make it stick in my head.

It was apparent that he was giving me this advice, not to leave leftovers on my plate, in such a way that I would be able to remember and follow it for the rest of my life. I will never forget that piece of advice as long as I live. It is a lifelong piece of advice. I will be able to follow it for the rest of my life. It wasn't that I didn't know already. I did. It wasn't that I wasn't already following it. I was. It was just this once that it happened. That was one of the many wonders I experienced in America.

If Sayadaw had given me those words of advice, that one should not leave leftovers on one's plate, in a normal tone, it would probably not have been that impressive. I would probably have forgotten. The way he said it, though, I cannot forget as long as I live. When I reaches old age, I will be an elder Sayadaw. I will have many disciples. When those students are a little out of line, as the author was, I will be able to use these words of my teacher. Like the author, they, too, will be unable to forget them. These are some potent words of advice.

Sayadaw puts as much as he can eat into his bowl or plate. If someone else put too much in, he puts some back into the serving bowl. Then, he eats all of what he has taken. He takes just as much curry as he can eat. Then he eats all of it. That's one Sayadaw's good habits.

He has his students eat that way, too. In drinking, it is the same. When he wants to drink, he takes just as much he can drink. Then he drinks all of it. One feels sorry if leftovers have to be thrown away. One should just drink it up. It should be put to use. It

should not be wasted. It's a very good habit. Sayadaw has many good habits like this in many different areas.

The author and other Myanmar people are quite wasteful. Not only in eating and drinking, but in many areas we need better habits. We must take care that not a single grain of rice or a single drop of water is wasted. Other peoples are wealthy because of they follow these kind of good habits.

Peoples in Myanmar other than the Burmese are wealthy because they have these kind of good routines. Each and every Myanmar person, both monks and lay people, must strive that Myanmar become a prosperous, developed nation with good habits. Only then will Myanmar become a strong and prosperous nation of the world.

FAMILY SPIRIT

"You are not taking care of it like it's your own monastery," he said.

There is a building at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha called the Tha Tun Aung Building. The land for the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha and the Tha Tun Aung Building were donated by U Than Tun Aung and Daw Ni and family. U Tha Tun Aung is long since deceased. Sayadaw named the building in memory of him. The monastery donor Daw Ni is still alive and living in New Jersey, U.S.A. Previously, Sayadaw lived in the upper story the Tha Tun Aung Building.

There was one old monk at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha who really admired Sayadaw. His name was U Aggavamsa. His practice was good. He practiced ascetic trainings. He respected the Vinaya, too. The great Mahasi Sayadaw gave him the responsibility of sounding the wooden wake-up gong. It turned out that he had given instructions that when he died, his books and bookcase should be given to Sayadaw. After his death, they were brought and offered to Sayadaw, in accordance with his wishes. That bookcase is just outside the door of the room the author lives in. Sayadaw had asked that that bookcase and the great many books be sent to the Hse Main Gon Forest Center, so while the author was out, some people from the office must have come, took the books out of the case, and took some away to pack. Most of the books, though, were set on the floor. A few were set on top of another bookcase, too. I wasn't there while they were doing it. I think I must have come back while they were off moving books. I bet they were going to come back before long to take another load. While I was waiting for them to return, Sayadaw came by and saw the books set out like that. Seeing them, he said,

"Don't you know that if you set books on top of a bookcase like this, the glass is liable to crack? It's definitely a problem. I don't like this kind of ignorance at all. Whoever runs into this kind of thing should say something about it."

Then he spoke the words of admonishment at the beginning of the chapter.

Sayadaw is a bird that has been hit once with a stone; he's once bitten, twice shy, you might say. I heard that Sayadaw once cracked the glass doors on a bookcase by putting books on top of it. He told me that only later. The bookcase on which books were placed that day had glass doors. Then, the top of the bureau was made of three-ply plywood, so it was pretty flimsy. It couldn't take heavy books. As soon as you placed books on it, it would sag. The glass doors were closed. After a while, the glass doors were liable to break. It is very true that 'ignorance is more trouble than poverty'. What Sayadaw said was an understatement. If it were the author, I couldn't help but say it more strongly. As soon as Sayadaw saw the books laid on top of the book case, instead on the floor, it was the author's fault. I thought it must be that Sayadaw had been there when they moved the books and Sayadaw was telling me to check it out. That thought was incorrect.

It's rare to hear the admonition, "You are not taking care of it like it's your own monastery." Whenever he comes on problems like this, his pat expression is, "They don't have the family spirit." He wants his students to have family spirit. He doesn't want them shirk their responsibility. He wants them to take care in all things. In accord with the saying, "A responsible person is one who know his responsibility", he wants them to have a sense of responsibility. He would rather one do something on one's own than because one was told to. He appreciates it when people take care of things on their own more than when they have to be told to. The father of the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha is Sayadaw. The mother of the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha is also Sayadaw. Sayadaw takes the place of the parents. The students are Sayadaw's sons and daughters. Parents take responsibility for whatever issues come up in the family. Yet the children are not free of responsibility. They have to take care of things with a sense of responsibility. At the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, too, Sayadaw takes most of the responsibility for whatever issues arise. It's not that the students don't take responsibility. They do. Rather, he who has the greatest sense of responsibility takes the greatest amount of responsibility.

When Sayadaw came back from the most recent trip abroad, he had an article with him. That article was laminated. He didn't seem to have many very many of these laminated articles. It don't think it was more than a few. He gave the author one to show to the novices and young nuns in the Buddhist Culture Course. Handing it to me, he said "Try reading it. What do you think it means?" It had a cartoon in it. In the cartoon, an infant lay in a puddle of blood, dying. Next to him was a gun and some ammunition. Among the group who stood by his side watching were his parents, his schoolteachers, and a policeman. They were all asking each other, "Who's responsible for this child's death?" Nobody said it was their responsibility.

The heading on that article read, "Who is responsible?" The moral of the cartoon is that all of them were responsible for the child's death. What Sayadaw wanted his students to understand from that cartoon is that we must have family spirit in dealing with every issue.

When we become successful in something, we want to take pride in our accomplishment saying, "I gained success all by myself". We want to get a good name. We want to be noted. We want to say, "I did it all on my own", to show our heroism. We want to grandstand. Then, perhaps our success in that area comes to an end. When there is a fault, we want to evade responsibility. We want to point to this person and that one. We want to say, "That's his fault". We don't want to say, "it's my fault." We usually fault others. We absolve ourselves of responsibility. Some act deceitfully to turn their own responsibility into another's. We often implicate others. We often have the attitude, "No matter who has to die, as long as I am free of blame, as long as I am healthy, it is

enough". To deceive, we spout falsehoods like water, without hesitation. We tell lies easily.

Sayadaw understands this attitude well. Though I don't know how many people like this Sayadaw has met along his lifetime journey, since they are not rare in the world, he has probably met plenty of them. Understanding a great deal about people's natures, Sayadaw gave the words of guidance above to help compensate for the little weaknesses that most human beings have. It would be wonderful if every household, every school, every monastery, every village, every city and every nation could follow and practice the words of guidance, "We must have the family spirit." If they were able to follow and practice them, every household, every school, every village, every city, and every nation would become developed. In this way, the Earth would become very livable.

Though Sayadaw isn't capable of propagating the family spirit for the whole world, he nonetheless is constantly giving guidance for what's at hand, the propagation of the Shwe Taung Gon Dhamma family spirit. Even though he can't make it happen in other places, in his own place he goes all out to make it happen. This attitude reminds one of the way the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw worked for the benefit of others and of the Sâsana until the day he died. The great Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw often said,

"I want the whole Sâsana and the entire nation to be great. I am working to make them great. If I can't do it elsewhere I must work to make at least my own place great. I mustn't slacken. I won't slacken."

Who could but respect, admire and be delighted by these words?

A MASTER

"I believe in my own strength," he said.

When I heard this, I didn't believe it was coming from Sayadaw. Living with Sayadaw for a whole year, I heard these words only once. It seemed like Sayadaw said it with no cause. It was clear that he was especially mindful not to be caught saying this kind of thing. Hearing these kind of words was quite a novelty. It was surprising and gratifying all at once. He did not boast about himself and when his students were boastful, he usually put a stop to it. He would often ask, "Is that boasting I hear?" Since I had not heard this kind of boastful language from him even once before, when I heard these proud words, how could I help but to be surprised? I was surprised indeed. As far as his own abilities are concerned, with not a word coming from his lips, he kept it hidden always, like a cat's claws.

I heard those words in the bedroom of the Chan Tha Myaing building where he lives. In that room, Sayadaw had me read a letter which had come from abroad. After I had read it, he said, 'Here, too, we need more teaching manpower. I will have to call him back and give him the responsibility of teaching here.'

Then, Sayadaw revealed his experiences with his students.

"A teacher is like a gardener. A gardener might plant fruit trees. Some go bad as seeds. Some go bad while they are sprouting. Some go bad after the little trees grow up. Some go bad when they have a full set of branches. Some go bad when their blossoms bloom. Some go bad when their fruit is nearly ripe enough to eat. Of course the gardener is sorry to lose them whatever stage the little trees he planted go bad at. But when they go bad when their fruit is nearly ripe enough to eat, he is definitely more grieved."

"Teachers are just like that gardener. They come to nurture and raise their students, like little fruit trees. They will feel bad, of course, no matter what stage the students go bad at. A gardener indeed looks forward to when he will get to enjoy the fruit of the trees he has planted. Teachers are like this, too.'

The author interrupted Sayadaw to say, "You seem like you're used to this kind of thing, Bhante."

"Yes, I've seen it before."

Since he hadn't revealed them to me, I had not thought that he had had this kind of expectation and this kind of experience with his students. Hearing him reveal himself, I felt bad for Sayadaw. I came to better understand the mettâ he has for his students, too. I couldn't help but to say,

"I believe in your ability to make your enterprises for the benefit of others successful, Sayadaw."

"Yes, I will definitely continue working on projects for the benefit of others. I would continue if I were the only one left," he said.

What he said next was the statement at the very beginning, "I believe in my own strength."

It is not that the going is always smooth and easy in Sayadaw's work for the benefit of others. There have been some rough spots, too. How could he walk on paths strewn with flowers all the time? He has had to walk some rough terrain, too, and doubtless more than once. Though he had to walk rough terrain, Sayadaw has kept straight on his journey. It is not his style to turn around. By whatever means, he keeps on rolling. He has already gone a long way. As he has in the past, Sayadaw is still rolling on. He will certainly continue for as long as he lives.

On his lifetime journey for the benefit of others, when he has felt like turning back, Sayadaw has remembered a few excerpts from the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's Practical Abhidhamma.

"The tallest tree catches the most wind."

Having reached great heights in his life, and having shared the merit, Sayadaw has had to endure many attacks from lokadhamma, the vicissitudes of life.

Another line from that book goes, "An expert seaman, in crossing an ocean, must face not only regular and fierce waves, but even waves which threaten his ship. Nonetheless, with the force of his wisdom and zeal, he cuts through these waves and reaches the far shore."

In navigating the oceanic journey of his life serving others, Sayadaw has faced not only the regular waves of the vicissitudes of life and even fierce ones, but also waves which threaten his very existence. Nonetheless, with the force of the kamma (deeds), zeal, and wisdom which Sayadaw has, he cuts through these waves of life to reach his cherished goal.

If Sayadaw had not just these endowments, he may well have sunk straight to the bottom of his life's ocean due to the ravages of the crashing waves of lokadhamma, the 'way of the world', the vicissitudes of life.

Looking back on the lifetime journey Sayadaw has traveled, one can see his strengths. From his words, "I believe in my own strength," one realizes his full faith in himself.

"Âpdâsu thâmo veditabbo- When someone is faced with difficulties, crises, and dangers can one see their strengths." When life is easy peoples' capacities mostly lie low. Only in crisis do they rise to the surface. When Sayadaw met the normal waves of lokadhamma, one time he tested his strength and prevailed. The next time he encountered them, he tried his strength again, and again he prevailed. After that, each time he met them again, he was able to triumph. Time and again he ran into them. Over and over, he tried his strength. Again and again he prevailed. Thus, Sayadaw's faith in his own abilities became stronger.

Another time, he encountered some more intense waves of lokadhamma. He had to be even stronger, but he was able to triumph. Over and over, he applied his strength. Again and again he prevailed. Thus, Sayadaw's faith in his own abilities became stronger and stronger.

It is because of his great fortitude even in the face of waves of lokadhamma which threaten his very life that the words, "I believe in my own strength," came from lips. Doubtless, Sayadaw has tested his abilities many times. When the vicissitudes of life have tried him, time and again Sayadaw has passed the test. Seeing his strength, the author can't help but feel admiration.

Sayadaw is capable in both the theory (pariyatti) and the practice (patipatti) of Dhamma. He is strong not only in pariyatti, the study of the Buddhist scriptures, but also in that of worldly literature. Strength in patipatti, on the other hand, is endowment in sila (morality), samâdhi (concentration), and panña (wisdom). To say it another way, it is the faculties of saddha (faith), vîriya (energy), sati (mindfulness), samâdhi (concentration), and panña (wisdom). Yet another description is the powers of metta (lovingkindness), karunâ (compassion), khanti (patience), and sacca (resolution).

Seeing Sayadaw apply these strengths, I appreciated his self-confidence. I concluded that the more of this strength he has, the stronger his winning momentum will continue to be. This is true not just of Sayadaw but of anyone possessed of these strengths on their life's journey; the more of this strength they have, the more they will be decorated with the garlands of victory. If one has a bit of ability, one will be decorated with just a few victory garlands. If one has many capabilities, one will be decorated with many victory garlands. If one is full of strength, one will be bedecked from head to toe with victory garlands. If one has enough to say, "I believe in my own strength," one must be very strong indeed.

NOT EXCESSIVE

"Parâdhîna? parâyatta? dukha?," he says, "Being dependent on others is suffering."

This a little saying Sayadaw cites regarding some experiences of his. With the experiences the author has had, as well, I can really relate. One little experience which made me appreciate it even more occurred yesterday evening (26/8/96). The author is spending the rainy season this year at the Hse Main Gon Forest Center in order to take rest for the sake of my health. This Sâsana Yeiktha is forty miles from Yangon, and ten from Pegu (Bago). From the tenth mile of the Yangon-Pegu highway, it is still more than a mile through the woods to the Forest Center.

Yesterday evening around seven-thirty, together with U Nanda, I went out along the monastery driveway to take a walk. The moon was bright. It's not so bright when it's cloudy. Just a few clouds block out the moonlight. Walking along, we came to a stand of bamboo. In the shadow of the bamboo, it was even darker, almost pitch black. Apparently, the snakes were out hunting for food. If I had taken just one more stride, I would have been stepping on one snake. The author had good kamma. Though it was dark, my eye was caught for a moment by the snake lying in the path of my next footstep. Apparently, it was not my kamma to be bitten by that snake and die. I have encountered many cases with just such a outcome. The monk U Nanda said, "If it strikes, it's not a grass snake. You have to be afraid." It was only after he said that that I became rather frightened.

Where the author was born, vipers are abundant. I've seen and heard of many who have died of viper bites. In places in lower Myanmar, like the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, there are no vipers, so I was not very frightened even if I did come upon a snake. However, if the snake I was about to step on turned out to be a deadly one, when I stepped on it and got bitten, then what would I do? Neither the doctor nor the nurse Daw Hla Myint were at the center to give treatment in an emergency. Since they were not there, one would have to go to Indago or Yangon. Without a car, it would be very difficult to reach even Indago, not to mention Yangon. If there was a car, on the other hand, before long one would be at the hospital receiving treatment and one would surely live. With thoughts like, "If I lost my life because we had car problems when I was seriously ill..." running around in my head, I got a chance to realize how vital a car would be in this kind of situation. That was understanding based on personal experience of the necessity and benefit of having a vehicle.

Before we had cars, Sayadaw would ask monks, nuns and lay people whenever the opportunity arose whether it was necessary or not to have a car. He asked the author once, too. I heard him ask others, as well. If Sayadaw were to ask me now, I would give it a one-hundred percent recommendation, "It is absolutely necessary to have a car." Without that kind of an answer, Sayadaw would question his own decision. If my kamma had not been good, that snake could well have caused my death yesterday evening. But

that hasn't happened yet. It was a really close call. Among Sayadaw's students, there have been some who have faced much more critical, distressing situations (than the author). So, undoubtedly, Sayadaw understands deeply that it is necessary to have a car at those kind of moments. In the field of his enterprises for the benefit of others, Sayadaw has probably encountered many situations which, if not a matter of life and death, were at least as close as the author's to becoming critical situations.

Devotees have told Sayadaw time and time again, enthusiastically and wholeheartedly, "Please tell us if you need a car, Bhante. Don't feel bad. Please allow us the honor, Bhante." There are many factors which have to be considered, though. It is evident that he has experienced time and again the many kinds of suffering in life which come of dependence on others. That's why it is Sayadaw's style to say, "Parâdhîna? dukha?; parâyatta? dukha?: Having to be dependent on and subject to others is suffering." It was after the fifth car had been purchased that, looking at [all] the cars, he spoke the words above to the author. Now there are not five, but six vehicles. The various difficulties due to lack of vehicles have now definitely been abated. If I am called a yokel for not knowing the names of the all vehicles, so be it. Not knowing, I had to ask Maung Khin Maung Aye, a kappiya, or lay assistant, and an expert on cars. In spite of his explanation, I didn't remember the English spelling or the Myanmar pronunciation, so I had to ask him to write it out for me. I have copied it just as he wrote it.

- ❖ Toyota Carina
- ❖ Toyota Hilux Diesel
- ❖ Toyota Town Ace Pickup
- ❖ Toyota Publica
- ❖ Nissan Banette
- ❖ Nissan Atlas

When I asked Maung Khin Maung Aye about the benefits of getting these cars, this is what he said,

"I'm comfortable with spending the money and the time. The cost of not having the cars would be many times greater than the cost of having them. With the great benefit we get from using those cars, they pay for themselves in a short amount of time. If we compared the cost of the cars and the money we have saved because we have them, the savings would already be much greater than the original cost. Whether here at Hse Main Gon or in Yangon, if we didn't have cars, I am sure that building projects and such would take much longer. Now, we finish a whole range of projects in a short while. That expediting of projects is the benefit of having the cars.

Compared to how convenient they are, the cars are hardly any trouble at all. Trifling, really. Its just incomparable, how much more convenient it is having the cars. One might think that six cars is getting to be too many, but with the expansion of our field, it's really not. People use them when they need them. There are many uses," he said.

U Dhammâjîvaka, a Sri Lankan monk supervising the cultivation efforts at Hse main Gon Forest Center, said the following regarding the cars, "One has to think of whether these cars are benefiting others and the Sâsana. They are a great benefit. Since they have so many benefits, it's a good thing that we have these cars. It would not be good if they were for our own extravagance. The cars at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha are being used for the benefit of others and of the Sâsana. They are not just there for the sake of Sayadaw's luxury. So, its good the that Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha has these cars. There is great benefit. Not just the cars, but also equipment like the computers, the copy machines, and such: if it is for the benefit of others and of the Sâsana, then it is only right to have it."

The German monk responsible for the water system at the Hse Main Gon Forest Center, U Vivekânanda, said this about the cars, "In the West, if there was organization with thirty members, each one of them would have to have a car. So, one couldn't say that having six cars at this center is excessive."

A monastery car is used daily to go get groceries for the cafeteria at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana in Yangon. It's the same at Hse Main Gon. At Hse Main Gon, when the monks go for almsrounds, they go by vehicle to town. When we go to teach Dhamma at the drug rehabilitation hospital, it is with a car that we must go. The flow of foreign yogis coming and going never stops. For running errands such as visa extensions for these foreign yogis, we have to use a car. To get necessities for the monastery facilities and such, we have to use a vehicle. When there are people and things to send to and from the Hse Main Gon Forest Center, they must be sent by car. There are a great many other issues for which the cars must used. Without the assistance of the vehicles, I am sure that completing the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha's facilities, both in Yangon and at Hse Main Gon, this successfully within just a few years would not have been easy. I don't think it would be wrong to say that the benefit afforded by the vehicles is an important part of Sayadaw's ability to make his enterprises for the benefit of others as widely influential as they are. One would have to thank the donors of the vehicles in like fashion.

"There is also the converse of the saying, 'Parâdhîna? dukha?; parâyatta? dukha?,' that is, 'Sabba? issariya? sukha?: Having control over things is the cause of happiness.' Isn't it true, Bhante?" the author inquired of Sayadaw.

"Yes, it's true," he replied. It well known that Sayadaw is working according with the latter saying to cultivate the happiness in the place of suffering.

THE GARDENER'S SMILE

"Before a baby has learned to stand, he tries and tries to stand up. Because he can't yet keep his balance, he falls back down on his bottom. He stands back up. He falls back down. He stands back up. He falls back down. Because of all the times he has stood up again and all the times he has fallen down again, he becomes fully able to stand up. When he can get up and stay standing he tries moving his left foot, then his right foot. He topples over. He stands back up and tries to walk. He topples back down. He tries to walk again. Because the baby doesn't slacken his determination, finally he becomes able to get around, too."

Those are the words of inspiration which Sayadaw gave to the monks under his tutelage. These were the monks studying English. During his time as guiding teacher at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, he raised a number of students to be mature monks with the two mature aspects of study of the Tipitaka (the Pâli Canon) and the practice of meditation. To become a qualified a Tipitaka scholar, one would have to pass the government Dhammâcariya examination. To become a qualified in practice, on the other hand, based in a strong practice of sîla (morality), one would have to practice Satipatthana until one is inspired and satisfied in the practice. Then, the monks under Sayadaw's tutelage had to carry out their responsibilities without hoping for opportunities in Sayadaw's altruistic enterprises. Sayadaw does not yet accept one as a student even after passing the government Dhammâcariya exam and practicing meditation. Sayadaw still has to study his character. Sayadaw asks all kinds of questions. These are questions to test his character: his disposition, his discerning wisdom, his allegiance to the Sâsana, his dedication to the benefit of others, his ability to endure hardship, his renunciation of his own benefit, and so on. Only if Sayadaw is satisfied with the answers to his questions does he accept the student. Once he has accepted them, Sayadaw gives the students some trial responsibilities and sees how they handle them. Only after studying and testing a student from many angles does he trust him enough to put him to work.

The author's was the first group of young monks under Sayadaw's tutelage to study English. Sayadaw inspired and exhorted us to strive in our studies with the above saying as well as others. Our teachers were skilled, too. There were some quite famous as English teachers. Of those young monks who studied English, some have gone abroad and are giving Dhamma talks and interviews in English. U Paññathami went to Australia, U Dhammapiya to America, and U Paññobasa to Canada. This group of monks have really been successful in showing the virtues of the Dhamma. U Râjinda, who went to Singapore, and U Âsabâcâra, who went to Nepal, are also proficient in English. Though their English is not yet sufficient to give fluent Dhamma talks, it is quite sufficient to give interviews in English. U Âsabâcâra can also speak and give interviews in Nepalese. Jçyyavatî Sayadaw U Sâsanabadda, in England, U Paññadipâbisa and U Gositâbhivamsa in the United States, and U Sujanappiya in Nepal will also become fluent in English before long.

There are still other monks from that first group studying English who have gone abroad: U Paññasiha in the U.S., U Uttara and U Sîlâsâra in India. U Sîlâsâra and U Paññasiha were especially gifted at their studies. So presumably, they too are already giving Dhamma talks and interviews in English. These three all have worldly academic degrees, too. U Uttara's English is not bad, either. These three are all living abroad of their own accord.

There is yet another who was part of that first group studying English. He has now returned to lay life. His name: Maung Hla Myint. His monk name: U Vannita. Because he passed the Mandalay Thâmanay Kyaw test and the Cetiyinganadhammâcariya test, those titles are appended to his name. Officially, he would be called U Vanntalinkarabhiwamsa. At Sayadaw's behest, he has translated into English the Abidhamma in Daily Life written by Amarapura Mahagandayoun Sayadaw, the two volume How to Practice Vipassanâ written by the Mahasi Sayadaw, and a New Translation of the Paritta written by Thapyekan Sayadaw. After that, he lived in England at Sayadaw's behest and studied. He is now acting as Sayadaw's English translator at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha when necessary.

In Sayadaw's garden, he also found a few little trees which went bad after they had fully flowered and were bearing fruit almost ripe enough to eat. Sayadaw must be sorry that those precious little fruit trees came to no avail. Yet, Sayadaw did not toss out the little trees which went bad but took them back again and kept tending them. Highly respected people, both monks and lay people, speak in honor of this spirit as deserving of esteem.

Sayadaw had the young monks under his tutelage study English so that when the time came, they would be fully endowed with all that would be necessary to work for the benefit of the Sâsana at home and abroad. He wanted them not only to be fully proficient in scriptural study and meditation practice, but also to become proficient in English to work for the benefit of the Sâsana. Sayadaw especially perceived that they would need to travel and work for the benefit of the Sâsana abroad.

As they work for the Sâsana abroad now, Sayadaw's students are finding out the utility of English for themselves. Therefore, they themselves continue to strive. Sayadaw's students advise the future generations of 'younger brother' monks, too, of the need to strive to become equally proficient in English. Other Myanmar Sayadaws who are living and working effectively for the Sâsana abroad, as well, give similar exhortations.

They all say the same thing, "Abroad, the Mahâyâna has had more success at becoming popular than the Theravâda. One of the main reasons is that the Mahâyâna practitioners excel the Theravâda monks in the matter of English proficiency. If more Theravâda monks became proficient in English, the Theravâda teachings could become

more widely disseminated. Of the Theravâda monks, there are still very few from Myanmar who are proficient in English. There are more Sri Lankan monks than Myanmar who are proficient in English. Although at present the Sri Lankan monks do not have the potency that their counterparts in Myanmar have in scriptural study or in meditation practice, they are more successful at widely dispersing the Theravâda teachings in English. If all the Myanmar monks qualified in the study and practice of the teachings were fluent in English, the global Theravâda Sâsana would surely gain stronger momentum than it has today."

Sayadaw's inspirational words were related above, "Because the baby doesn't slacken his determination, finally he becomes able to get around, too." Because those students of Sayadaw's, like babies learning to walk, did not slacken their determination, finally they have become capable of and proficient at getting around.

Trees flush with blossoms, trees whose luxuriant blooms have matured into fruit almost ripe enough to eat, trees with fruit ready to enjoy, what gardener would not delight in such a sight? Sayadaw, the gardener, seeing his students, like those fruit trees, cannot but have analogous feelings.

BECAUSE IT'S BETTER

One only gets to hear Sayadaw recite the scriptures when he goes outside to a meal offering. At the center, you won't hear him recite scriptures. Not at the time of the vâssa (rainy season) robe offering, nor at the kathina robe material offering, will you hear the sound of scriptures being recited. I can't say whether he recites them in his head so we all won't know. I've not seen him forgetting the verses or mixing them up at outside meal offerings and such. I can't say whether it's just due to his intelligence, or whether he practices in his head at the center, too. If he does not practice in his head at all, then one would have to recognize that he is indeed bright.

Once while we were chanting prayers to the Buddha, he told us to recite the Patthana Piccaya Niddesa in addition to the regular routine laid down by the Mahasi Sayadaw. He only told us to recite the Patthana Piccaya Niddesa that once, so I remember it particularly.

Though Sayadaw doesn't recite the scriptures and such, he does seem to make it his responsibility to go through the Pâli canon, the Commentary, and the Sub-Commentary on a regular annual basis. He would have his students, as well, take it as a responsibility to go through them on a regular annual basis. The saying, "One who learns by heart the Tipitaka (the three baskets of the Pâli Canon) is called 'one who meets the Buddha'," was coined by the Abhidhajamahâra?pguru Ma So Yein Sayadaw U Suriyâbhivamsa.

To put it in the Ma So Yein Sayadaw's words, Sayadaw wants his students to meet the Buddha every year. Then, in studying the words of the Buddha, one's faith grows stronger.

The Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw said of his experience, "Living in Pekhukku, and reading the Canon, the Commentaries, and the Sub-Commentaries, my faith was really brought to life. Aside from that, my knowledge was increased. Because I did not carelessly forsake this knowledge, this life as a son of the Buddha was not relinquished. It is because of that faith and that wisdom that I am able to write literature as I am for the Sâsana."

One can see that Sayadaw wants his students to study the literature of the Tipitaka and increase their faith and knowledge, in accord with the words of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw. It seems that he wants them to strive with this strengthened faith and knowledge to lead lives as children of the Buddha and to work for the Sâsana.

There's another one the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw once said, "My devotees say to me, 'Sayadaw, without really having to deal with the world of lay people, how do you know so much about householders?'"

So I tell them, 'You all probably don't know that I go to Rajagaha, Savatthi, and Vesali (names of cities of India in the Buddha's time) every day. Going there daily, I know human nature very well. Studying the Tipitaka scriptures every day I come across the literature on human nature daily in Rajagaha, Savatthi, and Vesali.'

Apparently, Sayadaw wants his students to have knowledge of the world of the lay people, in accord with this saying of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw.

Once, Sayadaw said, "You all should read through the Pâli Canon for about an hour a day."

I have heard that some Sayadaws, having read through and done honor to the entire Canon, go on to read and do honor to the Commentaries and Sub-Commentaries every day.

Children of the Buddha really need to be in contact with the Buddha's words at all times. They should be well-versed in his teachings. They should assimilate them. They should be accomplished in them. If they stay far removed from the Buddha-Dhamma, their faith is likely to diminish. A life lived removed from and out of touch with the Buddha-Dhamma would difficult to call the life of a child of the Buddha. It is not enough to study and pass exams, and then, thinking one is done, not to strive to become well-versed in the words of the Buddha. Monks and nuns as well as lay people who call themselves Buddhists, the sons and daughters of the Buddha, really ought to study to be well-versed. It is difficult for lay people to study in the Pâli language. So, they need Buddhist literature in their own language to study. Only then will we be able to spread our Buddha-Sâsana even beyond its current range. That must also be the reason that Sayadaw instructs his students to read the scriptures daily.

Each time we purchase a new vehicle, before we have ridden in it, Sayadaw has the monks under his tutelage recite verses in the vehicle. Sayadaw does the reciting himself, too. There is one verse which Sayadaw has a habit of reciting more often than that for the cars.

That Pâli verse goes, [From the Dhammapada, XXVI: Brahmins, 387]

Divâ tapati âdicco, rattimâbâti candimâ;
Sannaddho khattiyo tapati, jhâyî tapatî brâhmano;
Atha sabbamahoratti?, buddho tapati tejasâ;
Etena saccavajjena, hotudha sabbama?gala?.

In English, [as translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu (except the last line, which Sayadaw adds)],

By day shines the sun;
by night, the moon;
in armor, the warrior;

in jhana, the brahmin.
But all day & all night,
every day & every night,
the Awakened One shines
in splendor.

By this truth, may this place be filled with blessings.

It's not that I mean to say Sayadaw is constantly reciting this verse, now. Sayadaw prefers meditation to recitation, he says. "Because its better," he says. Neither do I mean to say that the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha has become so successful because of reciting this verse. Rather, it is to point out the truth about Sayadaw, that he honestly works for the benefit of others.

TO ESTABLISH AN ENDURING SÂSANA

"The Buddha did not like beautification. He did appreciate neatness and cleanliness. When people of dignity and character go out, they first check their garments to be sure they are decorous, and only then go outside. Novices and monks under the guardianship of people of dignity and character must even more decorous than their guardians in the area of dress. One must don the robes in a decorous fashion inside of one's room. The upper and lower robes must be even. One should not have to have one's robes adjusted after lining up for alms-round like this."

The local and foreign monks from Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha leave to go on almsround through Shwe Taung (Golden Hill) and Shwe Chaung (Golden Valley) at about six-thirty in the morning, after eating breakfast. They have to line up to go. Before they take off, Sayadaw comes by, and if he sees any untidy robes, he has them corrected. Some make their collar very high when they don the robes to go outside. Some do it so that it covers their chin. When he sees that kind of thing, Sayadaw tells them to redo their collar and make it small and neat. When he dons his robes to go out, Sayadaw wears does it carefully and neatly himself, too. The way I see it, it's no good if people have to see big, sloppy collars. It doesn't arouse clarity in the mind. Some wear their lower robes much higher or much lower than the correct eight finger-widths below the knees. In this case, he has them quickly correct it. If they still can't get it, he doesn't let them go on almsround. He tells them to learn how do it.

One's upper robe should be worn so as to reach about four-finger widths above the lower robe, that is, about four finger-widths below the knee. One must do it so that lower edge of both the upper and the lower robes are as even as if they were cut with scissors in front, in back, and on both sides. The lower edge of the upper robe should not be concealing that of the lower. Neither should the lower edge of the upper robe be more than four finger-widths above that of the lower. Some monks' collars don't cover in front at all, so that their throat is showing.

I have heard these words of guidance a great many times, both at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha and at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. I think I listened to the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw give these words of guidance, as well. That is why I caught myself wondering whether Sayadaw had memorized the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's words well enough to be able to repeat them off hand like this. It seems that Sayadaw to appreciates the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's view this much, I thought to myself. Anyway, no matter who's view it is, if it levels with the Buddha's, it's a good one. If it doesn't level with the Buddha's view, though, no matter who's it is, it's not one to appreciate.

Next, Sayadaw often checks to see if each monk is wearing his robe belt and whether he has clipped the fastener at the edge of his robes. If they haven't tied their robe belt, he has them tie it and if they haven't clipped their fastener, he has them clip it. One

still has to have washed out one's bowl with water. When going on almsround, we must go with the robes worn neatly in the style for almsround. In the area of meticulousness, the Buddha was unsurpassed. He even specified the style of wearing robes on almsround. Very thorough indeed. The Buddha wanted his students to work to be sublime and admirable in thought, speech and deed. That is why he gave guidance to help them be able to be sublime. He taught the Vinaya in order that their words and bodily actions be sublime. Those not yet admirable in their bodily actions and speech, following the Vinaya will indeed become so. There's no need to mention those already admirable. They will become more sublime, many times over.

Temporary monks and novices aside, the rest of the Sangha members must use a bag for their alms-bowl when they go on almsround. The strap should not be excessively short, nor excessively long. The bowl should come to about the level of the belt. Sayadaw is especially mindful of the color of the bowl bags. They should not too red, nor too yellow, nor should they be deep purple. He wants them to be the color of ripe jackfruit. For the Buddhist Culture Foundation Course, we make arrangements so that all the novices at the center have the same color robes and sitting cloths.

When one goes outside the center, one can see robes here and there that are excessively red or yellow, or ones that are deep purple. From time to time, some of the monks who come to Sayadaw's places from the Mahâgandâyone Monastery come wearing deep purple robes. When they have left again, he often asks, "Would the late great Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw like this deep purple color? Would he permit it?"

In the past, Sayadaw would come himself every day to inspect the almsround line-up. No matter how hard it was raining, he would come, toting an umbrella. He would have robes taken out from Sanghika (owned by the Sangha in general) storage for those without suitable robes.

Those monks and novices who have lived with teachers who haven't orderly discipline and those have lived with disciplined teachers but couldn't pick up the discipline have a difficult experience when they run into Sayadaw. For those monks who live in a disciplined manner, Sayadaw's discipline is nothing new at all. These are not additional rules particular to Sayadaw. They are just the Buddha's rules. All he is doing is helping people to be able to personally follow the discipline of the Buddha.

There are some famous Sayadaws among the monks who come to meditate at the center. There are head Sayadaws from study monasteries, too. There are probably those who try implementing the good discipline from this center when they return to their respective places. Of the young monks and novices who will shoulder responsibility for the Sâsana in the future, there may be those who try implementing the good discipline from this center when they become leaders in their own places. In this way, Sayadaw's good discipline could spread all over the place.

We need to have teachers like Sayadaw who work for orderly discipline all over place. Only then will it come to be a Sâsana with discipline. The Sâsana is full of discipline. It is only because of those who don't follow the rules that it would suffer being seen and criticized as an undisciplined Sâsana. It would not be wrong to say that if those monks carrying out their responsibilities were just to follow the discipline, the Sâsana would endure with virtue and dignity in the world. As we say, "Unfastened floorboards are unruly". If the rules are not followed, it will undoubtedly come to be seen as an unruly Sâsana.

If every monk and novice strove cultivating the attitude "The brilliant virtues of the Sâsana must not be dulled, but only increased in their radiance because of me," the brilliant virtues of the Sâsana would surely become polished and radiant.

Striving cultivating this attitude himself, Sayadaw surely appreciates it's significance. Monks and novices must strive to pick up good discipline from teachers who have it. As good students, they should strive to become good teachers, as well. Having become good teachers, they must strive to foster many well-disciplined students. Only then, where there well-disciplines monks and novices, will it be a dignified Sâsana.

TRY THIS

It's the way of the world to think of those one loves and respects when one has something good to eat, it is said. The Buddha said, "Sabbarasam dhammaraso jinâti" - "The taste of the Dhamma excels all tastes." Accordingly, those who experience the taste of the Dhamma must think of their loved ones all the more. Sayadaw himself, meditating and tasting the Dhamma each day, would remember those who have helped him. Sayadaw urges everyone, whether they have helped him a little, a lot or not yet at all, to experience the taste of the Dhamma. The ways which Sayadaw exhorts and persuades others to meditate are very clever, notable and worth emulating. I notice that Sayadaw's tactics for urging others vary from occasion to occasion and person to person. One time, U Htun Than, Daw Khin Mya Sein and their family, who donated land for Hse Main Gon Forest Monastery, came as they usually do to pay respects to Sayadaw. At this time Sayadaw spoke to them as follows.

"U Htun Than and Daw Khin Mya Sein, your family has donated land for this monastery, built a building, and you continue to make gifts. Your donations have brought great benefit to this monastery and to the Sâsana. I as well want to repay those who have helped so much. There is something I want to give you. You'll accept what I offer, won't you? It isn't a thing that you can see with your eyes. But although you can't see it, it can give greater happiness than anything you see. Things that you can see will only bring happiness in this life. But this thing which can't be seen can make you happy not only in this life but in the lives to come. When you donated land for the monastery, I didn't reject your gift. I accepted it gladly. When I offer something you, you as well shouldn't reject it, should you? You should accept it gladly. You will be able to accept in the not-too-distant future, won't you?" Sayadaw said.

Once, when Sayadaw was near the big Dhamma Hall at Yangon Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, U Htoon Than and Daw Khin Mya Sein approached him. He pointed with his cane to the Dhamma hall and said, "What is that?"

"That's a Dhamma hall, Bhante," was the reply.

"What is a Dhamma hall for?" he asked again.

"It's for sitting meditation, for meditation practice, Bhante," they replied.

Sayadaw was urging these two monastery donors, who haven't yet meditated, to come to the side of the Dhamma. They, poor things, know that Sayadaw wants them to meditate. They are dissatisfied with themselves because they haven't yet had the opportunity to meditate and fulfill Sayadaw's wish, but they are resolute. As the song goes, "One day, it will happen. But which day I don't know."

Among those who admire Sayadaw there are many government employees. When Sayadaw meets those who have reached sixty years of age and have retired on their pension, he asks, "Living in retirement, do you get one pension benefit or two?"

Those who have meditated before usually understand what Sayadaw means. They reply, "I get two pension benefits, Bhante." At this, Sayadaw smiles and says, "Sâdhu, Sâdhu." Some people have meditated before but don't understand Sayadaw's question. Then Sayadaw will ask, "Right now, are you being mindful?" The listeners answer, "Yes, I'm being mindful, Bhante." Sayadaw will explain, "When you are being mindful, you get Dhamma benefits as well as your pension benefits. So you get two benefits."

When Sayadaw asks retirees who haven't yet meditated, "Are you getting one pension benefits or two?" they tend not to understand. They hesitate. They can't guess what he means. Then Sayadaw explains, "You should collect benefits from the Dhamma as well as from your pension fund. Retirement is only good when you get two benefits. Try to get two benefits." This is how Sayadaw encourages those over sixty who have retired to meditate.

Sayadaw uses language appropriate to young people to encourage them. He says, "Young people's minds are still sharp and their health is good. They are enthusiastic and active as well. When the knife's edge is dull, it doesn't cut. Only if it is sharp does it cut. Young people are sharp like a knife. When young people with their sharp intellect meditate according to the Dhamma they can reach their goal very easily. So you should try to meditate while you are young and your health is good."

One time Sayadaw went to Moulamyine Panditârâma Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. To get to Moulamyine we had to take a car ferry from Muttama. We had to get out of the car at the dock on the Thanlwin River to ride the ferry. The Muttama River dock is adjacent to the railroad station. When Sayadaw arrived, they lined up respectfully with their hands folded together. When Sayadaw got out of the car, yogis from Muttama greeted him and paid obeisance to him. They carried his things and helped in various other ways.

Sayadaw passed by the yogis. Looking at them, he said, "May you be healthy, may you be happy," speaking words of loving-kindness. After that he made a short, noteworthy remark. "In doing Sâsana work, one can only carry out one's duties successfully if one meditates effectively to be fulfilled in the Dhamma. For that reason, those who haven't yet fulfilled their Dhamma practice should make effort so that their practice will bear fruit," Sayadaw said.

After yogis have meditated at the center and listened to "The Progress of Insight," they come to pay respects to Sayadaw. At this time Sayadaw usually exhorts them like this, saying, "Imagine a brass bowl. If you don't polish it and just leave it, what will happen? It will become stained with oxidation, won't it? But if you polish it every day, it will become shiny, gleaming and bright."

"In just the same way, when the practice of Satipatthana is absent in the mind, it becomes stained with the dirt of mental defilements. But if you meditate every day, the mind is free of mental defilements and is clean and bright. You should work to make time for meditation each day. Divide your time into two parts, one part for your worldly business and one part for meditation," Sayadaw would say.

Once when Sayadaw was eating lunch outside the monastery, a professor of chemistry was present. I remember Sayadaw speaking about the Dhamma using words suited to the professor. He said, "When you make a chemical analysis, you have instruments for performing the analysis, don't you? Without these instruments, one can't perform the analysis. It won't be possible. But there is a method for analysis without the use of instruments. Do you know this method? Have you used it before? Our very bodies are the laboratory. Which method of analysis will you use?"

Sayadaw posed these riddle-like questions as a way of urging the listener to practice Satipatthana. I think that Sayadaw referred to Satipatthana indirectly in this way because the listener, being a professor, was an intellectual.

When I accompanied Sayadaw once on a trip abroad, we stayed for a night at the home of the King of Thailand's cousin. The King's cousin told Sayadaw about her meditation experience. Her face was bright and full of grace. Sayadaw said, "Of all the kinds of make-up for making one's body beautiful and graceful, the best of all is Satipatthana." The royal lady was greatly pleased with Sayadaw's remark.

According to one American yogi, it is as if Americans live in air-conditioned rooms yet their hearts are ablaze. In their lives they are always hungering and thirsting, like the hungry and thirsty ghosts of the Peta realm, she said. This probably isn't true only of her country-people. Most people in this world are probably like that.

Sayadaw told her, "If you are living in an air-conditioned room and don't want to suffer from a burning heart, enshrine the Satipatthana practice in your heart. If you hunger, eat the food of Satipatthana. Your hunger will undoubtedly be appeased. If you thirst, drink the water of Satipatthana. Your thirst will no doubt be quenched."

Sayadaw has tasted the Dhamma, the best of all tastes. Wherever he goes, he urges the people he meets, using words that suit them, to enter the realm of Satipatthana, because he wants others to experience the best of all tastes as he has. He says there is nothing like it in this world. It is very good. If you haven't tasted it yet, try it and see. Anyone who is up-to-date in the Sâsana must taste it. There are those who have already tasted this taste, he says. Don't be behind the times.

ON THE BUDDHA'S SIDE

It happened while Sayadaw was at the Hse Main Gon Panditârâma Forest Center. After eating lunch, while he was checking out the kitchen, a car pulled in and a lady devotee got out. Seeing Sayadaw, she was overjoyed. It was an unexpected meeting. The author's thought was that they had know Sayadaw was coming on Saturday, and that's why they came. It was not so. I was wrong. She was speaking with glad words. She had brought two wall clocks, three umbrellas, and three sets of sandals to donate.

"It's so ideal that we got to see you, Sayadaw," she said.

Sayadaw was amiable, too. "I looked over at your house when we passed by," Sayadaw said. Though Sayadaw was speaking in an intimate manner with her, the author had never met that lady. I know a great many of the devotees with whom Sayadaw is intimate. I came to know her only later. Her name is Daw Tin Tin Aye.

Sayadaw went up to the upper story of the Dhamma hall. The lady and her group went, too. The group consisted of the lady's son, grandson, daughter, and a future son-in-law. Since the lady had told Sayadaw about all of them, he knew who they were.

"This daughter's health is not very good, Bhante. Believe it or not, she is said to have been a guardian spirit (of wealth) before taking birth as a human, Bhante. Shouldn't get married. If she does, she will be called back to the land of the spirits. They say she should stay single and support the Sâsana. She had a first marriage. He died. This kid is her fiancée. It is difficult to marry a second time. Her past is not implausible. These kind of things happen."

The lady's faith was evidently strong. Her words were intelligent and concise, too. Her words continued to flow without a pause. Sayadaw was listening quietly.

"I am now fifty years old," she said, "When I was about thirty, people said that I, too, had come from the life of a guardian spirit. When they said that I would be called back, I just went to a meditation center and practiced. Nothing has happened yet. So my daughter will also enter this meditation center and practice. She won't be able to help being upset, though."

The time had come for Sayadaw to speak. It was evident that the lady had pretty much finished what she wanted to say. She paused. How would Sayadaw respond to talk of guardian spirits (of wealth)? What would he say? What would his decision be? The author was eager to know Sayadaw's reaction, his words, and his decision. I was straining my ears to hear what Sayadaw would say. This is what Sayadaw said, "There will be truths, lokasicca (worldly truths), and there will be falsehoods. While the truths are few, doubtless the falsehoods are many. There was one little incident at the time of Buddha. A

son was born to a father and a mother. A renowned ascetic told them that the child's life would last only seven days. They asked how they could prolong his life past seven days.

"I don't know," said the hermit, "Go ask Master Gotama. He would know."

So they came to the place of the Buddha. When they told the Buddha of their predicament, he replied, "I will send eight monks. They will circle around the boy and chant the Paritta (protective verses). Go home and get a place ready."

When they had gone home and fixed things up, the eight monks arrived. Circling around, they recited the Paritta for seven full days. On the seventh day, the Buddha came, and great brahmas and devas (gods and deities) followed. Thus, the ogre who was going to eat the child stayed far away and couldn't come near. The ogre could only eat the boy within his first seven days; when the eighth day came, he could no longer eat him. The child was freed from the threat of the ogre. That child lived to be one hundred and twenty. From 'Master Shortlived' his name was changed to 'Master Longlived'."

The lady, her daughter, and the fiancée were all listening intently to the tale Sayadaw was telling. It was a tale which related to their own lives.

Sayadaw continued, "That's a little tale of how chanting the Paritta protected one from harm and allowed him long life. In this case, too, the internal dangers, which can't be seen, are much more fearsome than the external dangers which can. External dangers can only torment us for a single lifetime. The internal dangers, on the other hand, can continue to torment us lifetime after lifetime. When we are doing the work of meditation which frees us from the internal menace of the kilesas (defilements), we will also become free of external dangers. If we cultivate satipatthana (mindfulness) through our first-hand experience of our own mind and body, that experiential Paritta is more potent than the chanted one. Meditation was the Buddha's technique. The Buddha's technique is not mistaken. If there comes to be the Buddha's way and two others, sons and daughters of the Buddha must follow the Buddha's way."

Sayadaw's Dhamma speech became bit by bit more profound. The lady and her party were listening more and more intently. Sayadaw, who uses any means available to attract those who have yet to enter the realm of meditation, had begun once again working to bring people towards the realm of meditation. The author found himself wondering how would continue to bring them in, Sayadaw told this little story.

"Two close friends went on a journey. One was devoted to devâs (deities); the other was devoted to the Buddha. Having traveled far, they reach a magnificent old bodhi tree about sunset and took shelter under it. "Okay, we two will sleep under this old banyan tree tonight," they decided in concert. There was a great devâ shrine platform under the tree, as well. The one who was devoted to devâs, before he went to bed, bowed to the devâ

and then went to sleep on the ground. The one who was devoted to the Buddha, though, climbed up onto the platform and after bowing to the Buddha, he went to sleep on top of the platform. While they were both asleep, along came a tiger to the banyan tree they were sleeping under. When he reached them, he saw two appetizing humans. "Which of them shall I eat?" the big tiger thought to himself. Then the guardian devâ of the banyan tree spoke. "The human sleeping on the ground is devoted to me," it said, "The human sleeping on the shrine platform is devoted to the Buddha. Since the Buddhist is not mine, I can't possibly give him to you. I'll give you the one that's mine. Just go ahead and eat him," the guardian devâ said. And eating the devâ devotee, the tiger went off," said Sayadaw.

The lady, her daughter, and the fiancée really enjoyed this humorous little tale. The story is clearly a myth. Nonetheless, since it was so appropriate for the current situation, its moral was unforgettable.

When comparing another way or two to that of the Buddha, Sayadaw's direction, to follow that of the Buddha, is a great one to remember. Staying on the side of the Buddha himself and attracting others to come along, Sayadaw sets a great example. If one were to choose another side when comparing the Buddha's path to others, one would undoubtedly miss the benefit experienced by Buddhists with the teachings. Despite meeting the Buddha Sâsana, it would be difficult to call it a fortunate life. So when Buddhists compare the Buddha's way with another one or two, they especially need to stay on the Buddha's side.

KEEPING AN EYE ON THINGS

"Take care that we not have to suffer it being said of us 'At that meditation center, they don't care about the Vinaya'. On the patipatti side (practical Dhamma meditation, as opposed to the monks primarily concerned with pariyatti, theoretical scholarship), we need to take care not to have faults regarding Vinaya observance. In accepting meal donations, the table must weight only as much as an average person can lift. If it weighs more than that, the offering is not consummated, it is invalid. Some yogis who are careful around the Vinaya rules notice things such as the food offering. If they see people who accept food in such a way that the offering is not consummated, they will remind them. We on the patipatti side must take care so that we bear up under the watchful eyes of the Vinaya."

I heard Sayadaw say that once back at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha. When you accept meal offerings, things that will the table heavier than an average person can lift have to be taken off the table. Only after accepting them separately should they be put on top of the table. At the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, when the monks accept meal donations, they have to be especially mindful. No matter where he goes, Sayadaw doesn't cut any slack as far as the Vinaya is concerned. Abroad, he is this same way. No matter how other people in this country accept meal offerings, he says to just do it according to the Vinaya. If it's too heavy to lift, he'll have you accept it one dish at a time. If people who don't understand that hear, "Please offer it one dish at a time," they are apt to say "It's okay. It's okay. It's not heavy," and strain to lift it up. After you explain it so they understand, they do it they way you ask.

At the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, only after all the tables for the monks have been offered may the brass gong be rung. The gong may not be rung before dawn. That's because Sayadaw is worried that if the gong were rung before dawn, despite the fact that we don't eat until after, the neighbors who heard it might get the wrong impression and think that at this center they eat before dawn. If the gong is rung in an incorrect manner, Sayadaw asks, "Who is ringing the bell?" and has somebody who knows how to ring it. When the gong is rung, it must be struck so that the mallet hits the middle of the knob. The sound should not be too loud, nor too soft. It must be rung so its rings distinctly yet smoothly. The sound should be pleasant on the ears," he says.

The junior monks take responsibility for various necessities such as making sure that when the monks and male yogis eat they line up evenly and that their robes or clothes are neat. The nuns and female yogis have to line up before coming in, too. The female yogis come in more slowly than the monks and men. It's probably because the Kyauktan Sayadaw gives them instructions to note closely. The Shwe Taung Gane Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw sometimes arrives after the monks and nuns, men and women have entered the dining hall, and sometimes after they've started eating. Sometimes he arrives before any of them and does walking meditation in front of the dining hall. I have heard Sayadaw say something when their sandals are not taken off and arranged neatly. I know that he's said

things during the rainy season when people put the umbrellas they are carrying in inappropriate places. Once, I saw the Kyauktan Sayadaw, who teaches the female yogis, personally supervise the rearrangement of the sandals on the women's side because Sayadaw had said they were not neatly placed. He observes the yogis when they come to the dining hall to see if they are neat or not. When he sees sloppiness, he corrects it.

When yogis go [around] on the paths, they should just look about four paces ahead of themselves. They should not be looking here and there. Some hang their head excessively low. When he sees that kind, Sayadaw tells them, "Please pick up your head." Some sit with their heads hanging down between their shoulders. When he sees that kind, Sayadaw tells them, "Straighten your back and pick up your head. You shouldn't stay with your neck bent down like a chicken in the market." If it's a man, he's apt to correct them saying, "A man must be manly." When Sayadaw comes to the dining hall, from time to time he comes on the meal donors at the entrance. He usually says a few words to them and then scans all the people in the dining hall. First, he looks over at the 'working monks' tables. On his way, if he sees sloppiness at the yogi monks' tables, he corrects it. When he sees the rice bowl top placed on the ground where people walk, he has told them to put it back on the bowl. If the desert plate is put not on the table but under the table, I've seen him tell them to put it back on the table.

When he gets to the 'working monks' table, if he sees someone missing, he asks, "Where has he gone? What happened?" If there are things missing from the table, too, he tells the responsible parties to bring them. After the 'working monks' table, he walks over and checks out the foreign monks' tables, the foreign male yogis' tables, and so on. He checks to see whether all the food and drink is out. He is mindful of whether everything is sufficient. If there are things missing, he arranges for them to be taken care of. If he sees sloppiness on the part of the people working in the dining hall, he has them neaten it up. Sometimes spoons or cloth napkins are missing from the table. He tells people to be mindful that those things not be missing. If things are messy or dirty in the kitchen, he tells them to make them neat and clean. If the gas stove is left on with no pot on it, he reminds them not to leave it on. If the tea cups are put in a dirty area, Sayadaw tells them not to put them there.

After saying what he has to say, he goes over to his table. Before Sayadaw comes, the Nâyaka Sayadaws (senior teachers) have been getting everything ready. At the place where Sayadaw sits, they put cushions under his sitting cloth to make it relatively high. They make it up so he can sit comfortably, since Sayadaw is rather plump. After he sits down, they spread a ready-folded napkin out on his lap. That's so that drops of curry won't get his robes dirty. The other monks have to do the same. Sayadaw eats with a spoon and fork. After he eats with his hands, he washes with soap. If soap is not used, one's hand can get itchy and sore, he says. That's probably why he dines with spoon and fork. The other monks and yogis eat with spoon and fork, too. At lunch, Sayadaw eats from his monk's bowl. The monks have to eat from their own monk's bowl, too. At breakfast,

though, we don't have to bring it. We just have to bring our sitting cloth to spread out and sit on. The nuns have to bring their sitting cloths to both meals, too.

When he dines, Sayadaw eats only suitable things. Though he might want to, he doesn't follow his taste buds' craving and avoids unhealthy things. Since Sayadaw is rather plump, he avoids rich, oily food. Sayadaw often says he has to avoid those things because they are too good. The people who work in the dining hall make a habit of arranging to have foods which are good for Sayadaw and which he likes. They make a practice of putting the things Sayadaw usually eats near his place so he can reach them easily. When Sayadaw goes out with other monks to eat outside the center, he's apt to wait to finish eating so as not to finish before the other monks. The younger monks are often afraid of eating with Sayadaw outside the center. I think it's because of the imposing figure he cuts. It is evident that not only the younger monks, but also the Nâyaka Sayadaws (senior teachers) are afraid. Sayadaw definitely does cut an imposing figure. Evidently, Sayadaw has figured this out. He often says, "Go ahead and eat, you all. Eat until you're full. The donors have arranged to have everything here because they wanted you to eat. So try a taste of everything."

There are not as many dishes at Sayadaw's table as there are at the tables of the 'working monks'. The number of monks at the table is not the same, either. With Kyauktan Sayadaw and Bilin Sayadaw, there are just three people at Sayadaw's table. There are about five or six at each of the working monks' tables. That's probably one reason why there are more dishes at those tables. Sayadaw doesn't like more than necessary. He doesn't want to be wasteful. If Sayadaw hears noisiness while he's eating, he asks someone to remind whoever it is not to be noisy, to talk quietly. He doesn't want to hear the sound of forks and spoons. He doesn't want people's voices to be noisy either. They must stay quiet. Before anyone eats, one of the monks announces over the loudspeaker the name of the meal donor, their address, and the dedication. Everyone listens quietly with their palms together at their chests. Then we call "Sâdhu! Sâdhu! Sâdhu!" three times and begin eating. After that sound, there should be no loud sounds. We must eat quietly, continuing our noting. Rice grains and drops of curry should not be dropped. If they are, they should be cleaned up. Sayadaw doesn't like it if there's a single grain of rice left in your bowl when you're done eating. Just one handful of rice will be multiplied. With a handful from one person and a handful from another, when you put all the handfuls together, inevitably a huge amount goes to waste, he says. That's how Sayadaw reckons it. It is precisely the case.

If people hack up phlegm, spit, blow their nose, or burp while they are eating, Sayadaw gives them a reminder. It's not right to disgust others. Some people are used to washing their hands after they eat in the bowl they ate out of. One mustn't do that. It's disgusting. When one is finished with a dish, one must pass it to the person next to one. Some reach for things well out of their reach. That's not pleasing to the eye, either. One shouldn't put one's banana peel in the wash bowl or the dish you ate out of. One must put it on the dish for peels.

Outside, some monks squat while they are eating. That's not pleasant to the eye. Those are not pleasant to see. There are also those who eat with one knee up. Those are not pleasant to see, either. It doesn't seem that they respect the words of the Buddha, "A monk must eat without making a slurping noise." They make slurping noises while eating soup and such. Some monks even eat with their tongue sticking out. They don't know the correct way to follow the Buddha's manners. Those who are successful because they have good manners can't help but notice this kind of bad manners.

When Sayadaw and all are sitting at the table, after they have finished the meal and have moved on to dessert, if he has things to discuss with the Nâyaka Sayadaws, he discusses them. If he has reminders to give them, he does. When he's finished eating dessert, he then watches the dining hall workers and guests eating and drinking.

"Oh, when you're acting as an authority figure, you must check everything out meticulously. If you're not thoroughgoing, there are apt to be many deficiencies, excesses, and leaks. Only if you take notice and investigate to make sure there are no deficiencies, excesses, and leaks, will it all fall into place. Neither deficiencies, excess nor leaks are good, brother."

It is because he understands this well that Sayadaw works to make sure there is nothing needed, nothing extra, nothing wasted.

A LIFE GIVEN TO FULFILLING HIS DUTY

"Even I, at seventy-five years an old man already, am able to keep working with endurance for the benefit of others. Young people should be able to do even more!" he says.

That's one inspirational speech Sayadaw has a habit of making. Before the author came to the Mahasi center I thought that the monks at meditation centers lead luxurious lives. I has heard other people say that, too. Because I lived at the main Mahâgandâyone Monastery, some of the Sayadaws from the Mahâgandâyone branch monasteries did not take a liking to me. On account of their dislike, from their mouths came the words, "Even with this excellent education you have, you don't turn around and teach the knowledge you have to others. You should spread it far and wide. At the meditation center you live an easy life, intoxicated with pleasure. You wouldn't be able to leave the center." I guess I was reaping the consequences of past unskillful actions. Was it due to the fact that I had not only thought that the meditation center monks lead a life of luxury but had found the words coming out of my mouth, too? I guess my vacî kamma (verbal actions), my words, were coming back to me. Putting myself in their shoes, I was able to forgive them. No doubt, just as I myself had spoken out of ignorance before, they were speaking out of ignorance this way.

Sayadaw often speaks of "Patipatti which does not lack Pariyatti. Pariyatti which does not lack Patipatti: [Practice which does not lack theory, theoretical study which does not lack practical experience]." I told those Sayadaws about how, in accord with that mindset, there are three or four classes taught for the primary, lower, middle and upper, and teacher level scripture classes, during the course of a day at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. That is in addition to the Dhamma talks and interviews are given when necessary, of course. Nonetheless, they didn't seem satisfied. I guess they wanted me to be teaching the scriptures to large numbers of monks, like them. They definitely know that I am writing books under the pen name "Thâmanay Kyaw". Don't they want to take into account the fact that I am writing all those books? The author, whose health is not fully up to par, gets exhausted with just this task. When my health gets worse, I get even more exhausted.

Sometimes the line Sayadaw once said comes to my ears, "My mental energy is exhausted already". When he said it I didn't really appreciate it. Now I understand. Not long after I heard those words from Sayadaw, I heard him say, "I am going to go recharge my mental energy."

His recharged mental energy is apparently strong. The amount of altruistic work he does is out of proportion with his age. The more Sayadaw ages, the more his work increases. The more there is, the more he does. From the one Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha in Yangon, there have come to be branch centers in Mawlamyaing, Pyin Oo Lwin

(Mamyo), and the center in Lumbini, Nepal. With the Panditârâma Forest Center, there are now five centers. How could all things to be done for these five centers be few? The work has really multiplied. The more work there is, the more hectic it gets. As the saying goes, "With a group, there are bound to be issues". With one issue here and there another, what a great number of issues there will be. One can't help but be amazed that in between issues, he is able to work so enthusiastically on projects for the benefit of others. One can't help but to admire and respect him for it.

Be it one, two, or a great many jobs one has to take care of, if one gets pleasure from the work, no matter how much or how grueling it is, one won't think it tiring. It must be the same with Sayadaw: he gets pleasure from his altruistic work. Since he does this work with endurance, no doubt when he looks over the benefit that has been and is being created, the happiness that others are experiencing, he is greatly gratified. Sayadaw has to teach the Dhamma every day. Sayadaw takes responsibility for the foreign yogis. On the Upossatha sabbath day, he gives a Dhamma talk and interviews to the foreign yogis. On days when there are question and answer sessions, he answers questions. If there are breakfast or lunch donors, he still has to give them a gratifying Dhamma talk. Moreover, he has an inclination to teach the scriptures, so does that, too. He even gives a Dhamma talk to local yogis on the full moon Upossatha day. If he goes outside for a meal donation, he has to talk there, as well. If there is an ordination of monks, he has to speak on the Dhamma after the ordination. There are countless donors who come from outside to donate, for whom he has to perform the merit sharing ceremony of libation and talk on the Dhamma. There are all different kinds of donations given. People donate because they appreciate Sayadaw's works for the benefit of others. Since these devotees continue to come and pay respects, he has to speak words of Dhamma appropriate for them. At five in the evening, before new yogis have listened to the Mahasi Sayadaw's vipassanâ instructions tape, "A Dhamma Discourse: Presenting the Work", Sayadaw has to lay down the rules of sîla and give them words of encouragement. If he has any time free from all these little jobs, he takes his cane and walks all around the monastery keeping an eye on things.

Having an incredible ability to spot anything out of order, wherever there is any untidiness, he notes it carefully and says something about it. Walking around all around the monastery like this stretches the muscles and keeps him healthy, too. There's no need to go on a special walk. Sayadaw has a habit of talking his walk in the evening between seven and eight o'clock. Then he listens to the BBC on the radio from eight-fifteen to nine o'clock. He doesn't want to lose track of what's happening in the world. After getting a massage from the a monk at about nine o'clock, he talks of various things with him. He goes to bed at ten at the earliest, usually at eleven. Sometimes he reads a book before he goes to sleep. He wakes up at two or three in the morning. After going to the bathroom and washing his face, he sits in meditation until five o'clock, right on his bed. In the daytime, after eating lunch, he lies down and takes a short rest.

Without taking a rest all day long, who could keep going very long? In order to keep going one has to take a nap. You have to give a rest to this machine-like body when it needs one. Only then, will you be able to work very long. The amount of talking one has to do is not insignificant. When the author, who is a bit short-winded, has to do a lot of loud talking, I get tired. Sayadaw, with his good lungs, has the power to speak and give talks. It seems like as his lovingkindness, goodwill, and compassion have increased in his old age, so has his desire for others to understand. If he is supposed to talk for half an hour, the Dhamma talk lasts about an hour. If he is to talk for about an hour, it lasts an hour and a half or two hours. It seems that as he has grown old, he has gained a great deal of experience and wisdom, and thus things he wants people to know have also multiplied. There is no need for Sayadaw, rather plump at seventy-five years of age, to have to sit for a long time. So its not really necessary for him to have to sit and give interviews for a long time, either.

Sayadaw can't possibly not give interviews at all. The foreign yogis are only satisfied if they get to have interviews with Sayadaw. Therefore, one day a week, he has to give them interviews. If there are a lot of them, it is not very leisurely, either. Sayadaw might well be reluctant to do it. Sometimes it takes two or three hours. Since he has other work do to do on interview days, too, how could it be relaxed? Though I have thought and said, as well, that monks from meditation centers led luxurious lives, since I have personal experience with exhaustion here, I can no longer speak like I did before. I want to urge other people who say that to try doing the work they do in their own places like the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw does his, really working and testing out everything they have done. When they have done it first hand, if they find it to be luxurious, they can continue to say that if they want to. Perhaps it is due to the inspiration provided by elder Sayadaws like his own teacher the great Mahasi Sayadaw, the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw, and so on, that Sayadaw's endurance and effort are great. Perhaps this saying written by the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw often comes into Sayadaw's thoughts.

That its Strength not Fade

I do not work put out all the diligent effort am putting out today so that I alone will be happy. So that the force of the noble Buddha and the Sâsana which has been gained since the times of our forefathers never fade, I am doing my utmost. May I continue and keep on.

JUST FOR THE SÂSANA

"When the great Mahasi Sayadaw first gave me the responsibility of giving Dhamma interviews, I was not adept at it at all. I was just like a child first learning to swim, he goes swimming though he may not be good at it. With the stroke of a arm and the kick of a leg, it's stroke, kick, stroke, kick. He really has to put out effort not to sink. After going swimming many times, he becomes able to swim. He become a proficient swimmer.

To say it another way, it's like a hunter and a deer. When a hunter first starts tracking in the woods, he is not yet skilled at it. As he keeps tracking the deer, he gains skill. It's as if the deer has taught him how to be a skillful hunter. In the same way, while one is doing one's work, one will doubtless become trained. Just by doing the work, one becomes proficient at it.

Do the work with lovingkindness and goodwill. Do it with just the wish that the yogis gain the Dhamma, that is, do it with mettâ. Giving interviews is not difficult. In accord with the dictum, 'What arises, what is noted, what is perceived: three vital aspects,' give interviews employing just those three, what arises and what is noted and what is perceived. Give interviews two days a week and Dhamma talks two days week. Take care of your health," he said.

Those were Sayadaw's words of direction for the author while he was at the airport waiting for his plane to depart for a teaching trip abroad to present the virtues of the Dhamma. He had directed me to do the Dhamma talks and interviews for the foreign yogis here. He gave me the technique for interviewing, and he gave me inspiration to keep my mental energy up even when I met with difficulties. It's definitely one to remember.

The author is more enthusiastic about teaching academics than giving interviews or Dhamma talks. Nonetheless, I couldn't avoid or evade giving Dhamma talks and interviews, so I had to do it. The author been given this responsibility for giving talks and interviews for the foreign yogis once or twice in the past. I had said, "The Nâyaka Sayadaws, being older and longer in the Order, have more experience, so it would be more fitting just for them to do it. The foreign yogis would probably be more satisfied and get greater benefit. The next year when he went abroad again, he gave it to me again. Since I was teaching the scriptural study classes, I gave that gave that excuse. I was able to avoid it. The next two or three times after that Sayadaw went abroad the responsibility for teaching the foreign yogis did not come around in the author's direction. Thus the author stayed free of this responsibility, comfortable and carefree.

This time when he gave me the job, before he had left to go abroad, he called me to his room. When I arrived, he started in directly with this responsibility. The author even declined the offer. Sayadaw, though, was speaking abruptly and tersely so that the author could not get a word in edgewise. I couldn't help but get the sense that he meant, "Don't

talk back. Just do as I ask." It was like I was caught in ambush. I didn't think he had called me to his room to give me this job. I had had it easy, having avoided this responsibility. When I got to his room, he cut straight to the chase. I had no opportunity to reply. Before I arrived, he was speaking with some guests. When he had finished what he had to say to the author, he continued talking with the guests, without giving me an opportunity to respond. At that point, I was in a bad state, for I really wanted to refuse. Nonetheless, I had to go back quietly, without refusing.

Later, Sayadaw went on another trip abroad. That trip, Sayadaw said, "U Dhammika, I want you to get experience with the foreign yogis. If you do not get experience, you won't be able to do it, you want be able to handle it in an emergency. I need you to take care of it at times like this, when I go trips." This time, it would not have been appropriate to refuse, so I didn't.

Later, he went so far as to say, "Try hard so that you can do it without a translator. It's probably not satisfactory to do it with a translator all the time. You will often run into difficulties."

Deciding on my own that kamma to learn English was not present this lifetime, the author had given up trying to learn English. When I told Sayadaw about it, he said, "In that case, you will end up like me. How will you progress?" Sayadaw would like the author to acquire more English than I have at present. He doesn't want me to run into problems with translation like he has. Evidently, he has experienced a heap of problems with translation.

If the translator is tired or sick, they aren't capable of doing it. Foreigners really appreciate it if Sayadaw speaks in English. They praise him and give him encouragement, too. They talk about how good his pronunciation is. I am sure that if Sayadaw were to have put forth effort, he would be able to give Dhamma talks and interviews in English. I can't help but notice how intelligent Sayadaw is.

If Sayadaw and the author were to be inspired, it would be from our close associates, Sayadaw's students. They are foreign men and women who have studied Myanmar and the Buddhist literature. They are at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. They are from Nepal, Malaysia, Germany, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Vietnam, and the U.S. Among them there those in their teens, twenties, thirties, and even in their forties. Some of the Nepalese nuns will soon complete the government Pâli dhammâcariya teacher examinations. Some have even placed first in the nation (at the upper level examination). Among those foreign students there some like hares and some like tortoises. There are people neither as fast as the hares nor as slow as tortoises, as well. Some of the turtles, too, have become quiet fluent in Myanmar. They can even translate from Myanmar when people of their nationality who don't speak English have interviews. They really tried, those guys. As the author taught them all, I came to know their situation well.

As the Myanmar television audience knows, the German monk U Vivekânanda's answers in Myanmar to questions posed by the newscasters were broadcasted on the Myanmar television program "The Peaceful Shore; the Palace of Nibbâna". The words he said in Myanmar, "With the great many meditation centers in Myanmar, it is sad to see people who have not yet meditated," are still ringing in the ears and hearts of the Myanmar television audience. He is now even translating in English for Sayadaw and other teachers when they give Dhamma talks and interviews. It's inspiring, indeed.

I think I had to read it as a child in the fourth grade reader. It's the inspiration story of "Ma Pu Kywe and the Little Snail". The poor, unintelligent Ma Pu Kywe, greatly inspired by watching a little snail, strove in her studies and was able to achieve success. Another one was about an old monk, "U Kyi Pwe". Most Myanmar people know about this old monk U Kyi Pwe. He used to toss his toothbrush sticks from up in his room. Having tossed a great many out like this, there had come to be a huge pile of toothbrush sticks. Looking at it, he thought to himself, "If I start studying the Buddhist scriptures just a little each day, one day I could become a distinguished scholar." With that understanding, he worked hard. They say that later he really did become a distinguished scholar. The moral is, though one may old, if one does not slacken one's determination, one will progress in one's studies, indeed.

Sayadaw has spoken of the determination of the child who, though he falls down again and again, gets up again and again, trying to stand until he becomes able to. Though he falls down again and again from his standing position, again and again he takes steps, trying to walk until he becomes able to. His determination is an inspiration indeed. Motivated by these various inspirations, and with a unwavering attitude of doing it for the Sâsana, if I were to continue working hard on my English, without slackening my effort, perhaps I would have come to be able to give Dhamma talks and interviews without a translator, in accord with Sayadaw's wishes. If Sayadaw were to have seen this happen, I fancy I would have seen him smile like a gardener.

BE STRONG

Near the village of Hse Main Gon in Intago township, Pegu Division, the Panditarama Forest Center has come shining forth. It is nearly seventy acres. Since it is in the country, there is all the natural scenery. It is very, peaceful quiet living. The air is incredibly clean and fresh. Due to a lung condition, the author spent the rainy season of 1358 at the Hse Main Gon Forest Center. "Stay comfortable," Sayadaw said. I am grateful that Sayadaw gave me the chance to take a rest for health's sake. The author's health deteriorated two times while Sayadaw was abroad in 1996. The first time had a fever, vomiting and diarrhea. The second time it was the flu. Both times, because the fever did not break, I had to take antibiotics for about three weeks, in order that the medicine finish its course. Due to the effects of both the fever and the medicine, I wasn't able to regain my strength. Though my throat was raw, I kept vomiting, so my ordination sponsor Daw Khin Saw Nyunt had me get checked out by a doctor, had an X-ray taken, and had me take medicine. Thanks to my ordination sponsor, the disease decreased. I knew that I wasn't well. If it had continued that way, I could have gone around in circles and wasted away.

Realizing how much I might have suffered had I not gotten that chance to rest at the Hse Main Gon Forest Center, it's quite scary. I am so happy that I did get a chance to rest and thus be free of that suffering. I have come to deeply accept and appreciate the doctor's words, "You need to take a rest. You must rest."

It has been a long time that I have wanted to write an account of my benefactor, Sayadaw, at least as much as I am aware of. The opportunity came while I was taking this rest at the Hse Main Gon Forest Center. Before I wrote about Sayadaw, I had to plan out what I would write. I had to spend as much time as I had planning it. When I was strong, I had to think about how I would write it, what I would write about, what information would be included, and so on. If I were at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha in Yangon, I would not get an opportunity to write about Sayadaw. With the four or five scripture classes I would have to teach and the Dhamma interviews I would have to do, I would have no time. It couldn't possibly be good for my health, either. At Hse Main Gon, on the other hand, I had time and my health was good. It's calm and quiet there, too. The scenery is good and the air fresh. It's good for taking walks, too. So the planing and the writing was comfortable. Thus, I came to understand personally how much people who want to write need these kind of conditions.

I couldn't help but remember a few words Sayadaw said to the author one time, "If a new meditation center comes to be in Pyin U Lwin (Maymyo, a cool hill-station), if you want to go there and write, U Dhammika, that would fine."

Since Hse Main Gon has arisen before the place at Pyin U Lwin, I have gotten to write in peace there.

In the rainy season of 1996, there were ten monks at the Hse Main Gon Forest Center. Other than Shwebo Sayadaw U Nanda and the author, the other eight were foreigners. Among those was the German monk U Vivekânanda. He has seven vâssa (rainy seasons as a monk) already. Since he has lived with Sayadaw for every one of those seven years, no doubt he has gotten many words of advice from Sayadaw. The first piece of guidance which he recounted when the author asked him was, 'Just as you hold this steel begging bowl resolutely, may you hold to the life of a monk resolutely'. Those were the words of guidance Sayadaw gave to him after offering him his begging bowl. Hearing those words of guidance, I couldn't help but remember one thing U Vivekânanda said on a Myanmar television broadcast. His words were, "I will spend the rest of my life wearing these robes."

It would not be easy to live as a monk in his motherland of Germany, he says. He is happy here in Myanmar, he says. He is very happy at the Hse Main Gon Forest Center. He really delights in the practice of meditation. On a day that he doesn't get to meditate, he's not satisfied with himself. He tries not to have any days on which he doesn't meditate.

Back at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, Sayadaw asked him to teach English to the 'working monks'. That was during the rainy season. He wanted to spend the whole rainy season on retreat. He had to spend one day a week teaching English. The day after he had to teach English, his noting wasn't good because his momentum slackened, he says. After he had been giving those lessons for a while, the lesson were not a disturbance to his practice anymore, he says. He was able to keep noting well, he says.

Thus he finally understood, "Sayadaw gave me this responsibility in order that I could learn to practice so it did not become a disturbance."

I couldn't help but remember a line related to that which Sayadaw has a habit of saying. "One part to people's affairs. One part to the practice of Satipatthana. One has to do one's work with those two parts. One also has to set aside some time for the practice of Satipatthana."

As the saying goes, "There are many issues in the human realm". In the human world, what a great many matters there will be. No matter how many matters to attend to there are, don't give the excuse that there's too much to do and neglect the practice of Satipatthana. It's a inspiration to set aside time and do it. In the beginning one will probably meet with difficulty, as the German monk U Vivekânanda did. In the end, though, it will doubtless become easy, as the German monk experienced.

Another piece of advice of Sayadaw's that he remembered is "Be Strong". Sayadaw gave him this advice speaking in English. The German monk explained his situation this way, "The day before Sayadaw told me to 'Be Strong', I was talking with a foreign yogi in my room. Meanwhile, Sayadaw had come by room. Sayadaw said, 'Don't talk, Don't talk,'

very loudly. I was trembling with fright. When I went outside the room to talk with Sayadaw, I was shaking and stuttering. That's how scared I was. Actually, that foreign yogi had come to ask me a question because there was something he didn't know, so I was just explaining it to him. After that, Sayadaw was apparently displeased with that yogi who came to ask a question because he thought he wasn't trying hard. The yogi who came to ask me a question was trying hard and noting. Sayadaw said that three foreigners had arrived at his place, and told me to come right away.

When he had said that, he went back to his room. Doing my robes up quickly to cover one arm (as one does in the presence of a senior monk), I went. Sayadaw was giving the foreigners a Dhamma talk on peace. 'What is working to keep the world from being peaceful are the forces of attachment, aversion, and delusion. Only if one is able to extinguish those forces will one have mental peace. Only with mental peace will the world be at peace,' he said.

While he was speaking on the Dhamma to these guests, his face was smiling and joyful. When he had come to my place, it was a totally different face. I was surprised when I saw Sayadaw's smiling face. I couldn't understand how Sayadaw's face could change so drastically in such a short time. Those three guests were American students of great Indian gurus.

The next day, Sayadaw was to give a Dhamma talk to the foreign yogis. When I went to Sayadaw's room to get an amplifier ready for him, it was with a timid and fearful mind. After his talk, when I put back the amplifier and stand, I was timid, too. Apparently, Sayadaw understood my situation well. That must be why he gave me the advice 'Be Strong' in English."

Appreciating Sayadaw's guidance to "Be Strong", I found myself remembering [another] one of his pieces of advice. It is included in the Myanmar book Sayadaw's Words of Guidance, published in English as Raindrops in Hot Summer.

"A strong immune system is needed to keep one's body healthy. In precisely the same way, mental strength is necessary to keep one's mind pure and peaceful. This mental strength, however, does not arise of its own accord. It must be cultivated. When Satipatthana is effectively nurtured, it can yield this mental energy in abundance."

How great is that? Is your mental energy low? Try cultivating Satipatthana. Your mental energy will doubtless fill up. The Buddha's truth is one that can hold up under rigorous testing. If you don't yet believe it, you can investigate first-hand. If you don't believe pure talk, having experienced it, you will doubtless come to understand. The Buddha-Dhamma does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, age, or social standing. No matter what your race, religion, age or social standing, you can test it out.

For those who say they can only accept things experientially, the Buddha's truth is one-hundred percent satisfactory. Won't you try it out?

SILVER JUBILEE

Being nearly seventy acres, Hse Main Gon Forest Monastery is very good for walking. For that reason, Shwebo Sayadaw U Nanda and I usually go for a walk in the evening. Yesterday evening, the 7th day after the full moon of Wakaun, 1996, when I went to call the Venerable U Nanda for a walk he was in the dining hall talking with a group from Kyauktan Village led by Daw Kyi Kyi who were to offer this morning's breakfast of mohinga. So I came in and sat down to join the conversation. I didn't say much, just listened to their talk. After a little while, U Nanda said, "Okay...keep on talking," got up and left. I didn't know what to say, but there were some things I wanted to ask Daw Kyi Kyi in connection with Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw. I was considering whether or not it would be suitable to ask her, as it occurred to me that she and the group may have many things to do to prepare for the breakfast they were going to offer. When I asked, they said, "There isn't any work to be done. Everything is ready." I thought, "If that's so, it should be all right to ask." Then I thought, "I wonder if they will be interested in answering my questions."

I asked, "You have been holding the Kyauktan Village retreat for twenty-five years now, haven't you?"

"Yes, Bhante. This being the twenty-fifth year of the Kyauktan Village retreat it's the Silver Jubilee. And the Mahâbodhi Forest Sect Vinaya Examination has been held now for fifty years, so with regard to the Examination it is the Golden Jubilee," Daw Kyi Kyi replied. Her enthusiastic reply made me eager to go ahead and continue to question her.

"Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw started this Kyauktan Village retreat, I heard. And you are the daughter of Sayadaw's sponsors on entering the monkhood. Is that right?"

"That's right, Bhante. My father was U Hpo Han. My mother was Daw Thaug, Sir."

"In that case, how did Sayadaw start this retreat?"

"The big, sixteen-acre Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery had become a big forest, since there hadn't been a single monk or novice living there in thirty years. Thirty years previously, Sayadaw and others had lived there. Because of damage sustained during the war with Japan, the monks and novices weren't there any more. Thirty years later Sayadaw was living at Mahâsi Sâsana Yeiktha. A woman from Kyauktan Village, Daw San Kyi, who was doing sundry tasks for Sayadaw, told us that Sayadaw was going to return to Kyauktan Village to practice meditation at the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery. When we heard this, we told Daw San Kyi, "Ma Ma San Kyi, please tell Sayadaw not to come. It isn't possible."

It's true, Bhante. How could Sayadaw possibly come? There wasn't a single building at the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery anymore. It had really become a big forest. Tall trees overshadowed everything and below them were all kinds of young trees. Thirty years is a very long time. We ourselves hadn't even been there once in those thirty years."

"Until when did Sayadaw stay at the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery? Where did he go when he left there?"

"He stayed at Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery up until his fifth vassa as a monk. He also lived there as a novice. From Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery he went to Kalyâôn Monastery in Pegu."

"I've never heard that before."

"He only stayed at this Kalyâôn Monastery temporarily. My younger brother who was a novice went along with him. My brother's name was Maung Thein Htun. Later, his parents were anxious about him, so Sayadaw told him to return to Kyauktan Village where his parents were. In Pegu, too, bombs were dropping, so Sayadaw returned to Kyauktan Village from Kalyâôn. After the end of the Second World War he left Kyauktan Village for Kyaikkasan Monastery in Yangon. He went from Kyaikkasan Monastery to Mahâsi Sâsana Yeiktha in Yangon."

"Sayadaw said, 'Mahâbodhi Monastery was where I lived, and if one tree is still there I will manage to stay there.' Saying that, he came. He said he had spoken to Mahâsi Sayadaw. At that time his stomach wasn't good. Therefore he told Mahâsi Sayadaw, 'I am going to take a rest and meditate for the sake of my health. If all goes well, I'll stay one month. If not, I'll stay fifteen days.'" After speaking to Mahâsi Sayadaw he came, he said.

"Did Sayadaw go directly to Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery? Who else was there?"

"Sayadaw went to the monastery in Kyauktan Village. Then, the present Kyon Ma Ngei Mahâsi Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, U Pa?ñobhasa, came with him. Maung Khin Win and Maung Mya Thwei, two students from the monastery, accompanied them to the Kyauktan Forest Monastery. After taking a short rest at the monastery in the village, they came to Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery."

"For Sayadaw as well, surely thirty years had passed since he had been to this Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery."

"That's right, Bhante."

"Hmm....how much Sayadaw must have experienced, comparing the situation of thirty years ago with the present situation. Would he have had many reflections about the

past? Or would he have developed spiritual urgency, bearing in mind the impermanent nature of phenomena (sankâras)?"

"Surely both could have happened, Bhante."

"How did they arrange for the Sayadaws' lodging?"

"There wasn't a single building left within the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery grounds. There was just a small gatehouse. It was just a small bamboo hut. The floor was also bamboo. The hut was really tiny. It had become dilapidated. They put a bed into this tiny hut for Sayadaw. As for U Paññobhatha, he had to sleep right on the floor. The roof also wasn't tight any more. There were holes in it."

Among the men who had accompanied the Sayadaws there was a layman called U Thein. He spoke to Sayadaw like this, 'Venerable Sayadaw....Is your coming here now is only for yourself? Isn't there something for us as well?' he said.

"U Thein's speech was polite. Sayadaw also appeared to be happy to hear U Thein's words. He was probably hoping someone would come and say that."

"Bhante, it was said that Sayadaw underestimated us, that he thought we wouldn't be able to meditate. We lay supporters also underestimated him. We thought he wouldn't be able to stay in that big forest."

"Right....did the events that followed give proof to the low opinion Sayadaw and your group had of each other? What happened? What you all are telling me is becoming more and more interesting. Please continue," I said.

To explain my use of the words, 'you all,' sitting near me were Daw Kyi Kyi, Daw Hla Nu, Daw Bhu and Daw Shwe. Not far away were two schoolteachers, Ma Moe Moe and Ma Wah Wah, Ma Win Mah, Daw Khin Tint and Ma Cho Than, who had come together with the group to offer breakfast. Before long, U Nyan Sein and Maung Aung Zin, both schoolteachers, and Maung Saw Win Htut arrived. When Daw Kyi Kyi was speaking, Daw Hla Nu, Daw Bhu and Daw Shwe also joined in and spoke. For that reason I addressed my questions to the four of them. "Were you all present then at that Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery retreat?"

"Yes, we certainly were, Bhante," they replied. They spoke enthusiastically and wholeheartedly. They spoke with interest, just as if they were seeing again the situation they had encountered at that time.

The group became livelier with more people present. The facts were more firm and accurate. When Daw Kyi Kyi forgot something, Daw Kyi Kyi asked the others. Also, if

there was anything missing from what Daw Kyi Kyi said, the others completed the information for her. Daw Kyi Kyi continued, "In keeping with U Thein's request, Sayadaw taught us lay devotees the Dhamma."

"What about a place for all of you to sit? Was there any? You said the whole monastery had become a big forest."

"From the moment we heard Sayadaw was coming we prepared before he arrived, Bhante. We cleared a place under a great mayan tree (Bouea Burmanica). The tree was very big. It shaded the ground around it. We spread grass mats under the tree and meditated as Sayadaw taught us, Bhante."

"How many people were there sitting? Were there more men or women?"

"There were about sixty yogis. Between men and women, there were more women than men."

"What time did you start meditating and what time did you finish?"

"We would leave to come to the retreat just at dawn, each of us carrying a tiffin carrier. At seven a.m. we started meditating. We finished at three p.m. From three to five p.m. we did chores. When we were finished, we returned home."

"Who taught the Dhamma?"

"Sayadaw alone did, of course, Sir. U Paññobhatha supervised the yogis."

"When Sayadaw gave the meditation instructions, did he himself speak? Or did he play a tape?"

"Sayadaw himself gave the instructions, of course, Sir. Cassette players were still far away. At that time, there were rabbits and even jungle fowl at Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery. Even the big well, which had been in use thirty years before, was covered with rubbish and couldn't be used any more. So we had to go to fetch water at the small well which was outside the monastery entrance."

"At night, who else slept with the Sayadaws?"

"Sleeping at night there were just four men, U Thein, U Aung Maung, U Thet Pyin and U Wain, Bhante."

"How long was your retreat at Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery?"

"It wasn't short, Sir. It lasted about one month."

"In that case, the teacher and devotees' low opinions of each other must have been completely wrong."

"I would certainly have to say so, Bhante. If I were to speak of strange little occurrences at that time..."

I listened attentively when she said, 'strange little occurrences.' I wondered what they were. Daw Kyi Kyi continued, "When the group of us went into Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery there were unusual, pleasant fragrances in the air."

Daw Shwe, Daw Bhu and Daw Hla Nu, who were listening, seconded Daw Kyi Kyi's words.

"There was something else, Bhante. There is a Bodhi tree at Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery. Previously, it had just two branches and no leaves at all. But from the time the retreat began, branches, twigs and leaves began sprouting. They say that Bodhi tree was gotten from Bodh Gâya. The first Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery Sayadaw, U Kelâsa, had it planted," she said.

"There was one other thing. There was a schoolteacher named Daw Nyunt Tin at this one-month retreat of ours. For the first three days of the retreat she didn't come. She was sick. Her arms ached. Her flesh was dark and gaunt. On that account, some people encouraged her to go and meditate.

"What does meditation have to do with illness?" she is said to have replied.

They told her, "If you meditate, illnesses can be cured." Because they urged her, she was interested and came to meditate. When she worked, she could work decisively.

She told the people at her house, "If I fall from a tree or drown in the water, whatever happens, don't worry about me one bit. I've gone to meditate." When her meditation gained momentum, her neck became rigid. It seemed like there was something stuck in her throat. She didn't slacken, she noted energetically. As she noted, sweat poured from her body. But when the retreat was over, her illness was cured. She is still alive to this day. She is stout. She is about eighty years old."

Nearby, Daw Khin Tint, Ma Moe Moe, Ma Wah Wah, Ma Win Mah, Ma Cho Than, U Nyan Sein, Maung Aung Zin and Maung Zaw Win Htut were listening attentively. They had also given assistance at the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery retreat. They seemed interested because they hadn't known the history of the retreat. They also were old yogis who had practiced meditation.

"Daw Kyi Kyi, Daw Hla Nu, Daw Bhu and Daw Shwe, having helped at this retreat from the first year until now, the twenty-fifth year, you certainly have acquired a lot of wholesome merit through your service."

"The second and third years, we had a fifteen-day retreat. From the fourth year up until this year we have had a ten-day retreat. In the early years, Sayadaw came himself and taught the Dhamma. Now, he can't stay from start to finish and comes on the opening and closing days."

"In recent years he seems to give the responsibility to Kyauktan Sayadaw U Rucirañana."

"That's correct, Bhante."

Every time Sayadaw considers that he has repaid the kindness of his supporters with the best method of repayment, joy and rapture will arise, just as surely as one's hand strikes the earth. This isn't only true for Sayadaw. Everyone who has had the chance to repay their benefactors in this best of all ways must experience this kind of joy. Those laymen and laywomen who received Sayadaw's best repayment of all are surely fortunate. After all, they took refuge in the shade of the Dhamma, the best of all possible shades.

I am very grateful to Daw Kyi Kyi, Daw Hla Nu, Daw Bhu and Daw Shwe who told me this account. May the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery Dhamma Family be able to continue their efforts from this Silver Jubilee to the Golden Jubilee, from the Golden Jubilee to the Diamond Jubilee, from the Diamond Jubilee to the Ruby Jubilee, from the Ruby Jubilee step by step to higher and higher anniversaries.

SWEET, BUT NOT SUGARY

I heard a song that goes, "Samsâra never rests; in it's varied ways, it goes on and on." I tried singing it in my head because it contains aspects of the Dhamma, but I couldn't. It didn't look as though I have the genes of a musician. I couldn't sing a single verse of any song.

With regard to this song, "Samsaric Existence," Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw once gave a warning to a certain monk. While this monk was giving a Dhamma talk, he recited the words of the song. He said that when he recited, he was careful not to let the melody come out. But as he recited, the enunciation and intonation of the song came out naturally, he said. At that time we had to give Dhamma talks in the dining hall. In fact, this talk was broadcast over a loudspeaker. Sayadaw heard the song. When Sayadaw heard the song, he was on the upper story of the Tha Htun Aung Building giving a Dhamma talk to the foreign yogis. Due to the summer heat, he was giving the talk in the alcove between the bookcases. The alcove was cool. When Sayadaw heard this song, he stopped his Dhamma talk and shouted out from the upper story of the Tha Htun Aung Building, "Don't sing!" It appeared that no one heard Sayadaw's words.

With that, Sayadaw came to my room. When I opened the door he said, "Someone in this monastery is singing during his Dhamma talk. He's gone too far. Please tell him to stop right now." He then went back. So I went down towards the dining hall. By the time I got down, his "Samsaric Existence" song came to an end.

Singing while giving a Dhamma talk is one example of something Sayadaw dislikes.

As for another thing, one monk was giving a talk in the big, new Sâdhujanatosanâ dhammasabhâ Dhamma hall. The talk was amplified. Sayadaw was on the upper story of the Tha Htun Aung Building giving a talk to the foreign yogis. This monk's voice as he gave his talk was disturbing Sayadaw who was giving his Dhamma talk. The monk's voice was loud and with the amplification it became louder. When Sayadaw went downstairs after his Dhamma talk, I could hear him saying, "Who is giving the talk now? He shouldn't be giving a talk in that kind of voice, deliberately trying to please people."

Making one's voice go up and down, pulling and tugging at the listener is another example of something Sayadaw doesn't like.

Sayadaw doesn't want to have young monks at his monastery give Dhamma talks. If the audience likes the sound of his voice, he may break, just as the first Shwegyin Sayadaw said, "loaded with fruit, a small tree's boughs bend and break." When a monk can't withstand the effects of fame and fortune, he can fall in action. Sayadaw has seen and heard of such things. Therefore Sayadaw doesn't want to have young monks give Dhamma talks. Only after they have twenty vassas does he want them to give talks. This

is because when a monk has twenty vassas, he has matured and has the ability to control himself so that he won't be destroyed.

At Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, one can see that although they don't have twenty vassas, the young "working" monks are allowed to give Dhamma talks. But they don't have permission to exaggerate their voice while giving a talk. As for Sayadaw, he just goes and speaks as though he is having a conversation. Before their talks, some Dhamma lecturers recite verses of the Obeisance to the Buddha, explain the meaning of the verses and give a formal closing so that the listeners call out, "Sâdhu!" Some also recite mettâ verses. After giving their talk, some recite verses, explain the meaning of the verses, and the listeners call "Sâdhu" again. In the middle of the talk also, some talk in such a way that the audience repeatedly calls out "Sâdhu!" You won't hear Sayadaw giving a Dhamma talk in any of these ways. He usually gives a title to his talk. Sometimes he gives the title in Pâli, sometimes in Myanmar. Most of the time, he gives the title in Myanmar. Sayadaw even translates Pâli words which have become part of the Myanmar language into Myanmar. Because Myanmar peoples' ears aren't accustomed to Pâli words, he gives further explanation in Myanmar.

He doesn't usually give the bulk of his Dhamma talks to stories. He gives priority to Dhamma content. Having read the Pâli, Commentaries and Sub-Commentaries so as to know them thoroughly, he takes one fact and talks about it in terms of Myanmar culture and behavior, combining theory and practice. He talks a lot to the yogis about the Dhamma in connection with meditation practice. He instructs others to talk in this way. There is so much substance in Sayadaw's talks that someone who isn't a practicing yogi or hasn't meditated before tends to become bored. Practicing yogis, those who have meditated before, and those who have some wisdom although they haven't meditated, however, are interested.

Sayadaw's Dhamma voice sometimes has the semblance of the great Mahasi Sayadaw's voice. I feel that the Mahasi Sayadaw's voice has the sound of nibbidâ, weariness of existence. At other times a semblance of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's voice is present. Many say that Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's voice has the sound of compassion. Sometimes only Sayadaw's own sound is present. Sayadaw's voice is rather abrupt. Sometimes is rather firm. Sayadaw is in the habit of saying, "Whether talking in conversation or giving a Dhamma talk, one's speech should be sweet. When I say sweet, it shouldn't be sugary (ingratiating). It should be steady and stable."

I hear that when Sayadaw first began giving Dhamma talks, he found it very burdensome. Now, however, it isn't difficult at all. As Sayadaw became a meditation teacher at the age of thirty-four and has been teaching up until now, age seventy-five, he has forty-one years of experience giving Dhamma talks. That is the same as my age. Having given many Dhamma talks during these forty-one years, Sayadaw's ability and proficiency in giving talks has become very good, to be sure. Sometimes, he says there

are so many things to talk about that he doesn't know which he should choose. It is as if the ideas are competing with each other shouting, "Speak on me today. Speak on me today." The saying, "practice makes perfect," is certainly true.

It may be easy to make Myanmar Buddhists come to revere, take interest in and come to accept the Triple Gem, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the sangha. But it isn't easy to make foreigners who are not Buddhists revere, take interest in and come to accept the Triple Gem. One has to give them talks which are practical. One has to ask them to undertake the meditation practice. Building upon their own personal experience, they will become interested and come to respect and accept the Buddha's teaching. If one speaks exclusively on the scriptures to them, one won't get very far. Only if one combines theory with practice will they be pleased and accepting. They don't think the way Myanmar people give talks, using a lot of modulation of their voice, is anything unique. This type of voice doesn't have the ability to do the work of instilling the Dhamma in their hearts. Only a voice with the sound of wisdom can do that.

U Sîlânandâ-bhivamsa, living in America, said that once he had put on a Dhamma tape of a famous Myanmar Sayadaw and was listening to it. One non-Myanmar person asked him, "Is that singing?" It seemed that this person thought it was a Dhamma song. Myanmar peoples' ears aren't the same as other peoples'. It is something to remember.

CARP FRIED IN ITS OWN OIL

[A Myanmar idiom with the meaning, in this context, of: Practitioners mastering the Buddhist dispensation and then teaching through the medium of their own culture and language.]

" 'It's like frying pork in its own oil,' he said."

The Sri Lankan monk U Dhammâjîva told the author of the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw's words to him. He had come to the room where the author lives to tell me.

"U Dhammâjîva, the line Sayadaw usually says is, 'Fry carp in its own oil,' isn't it?" I asked.

Since he wasn't really fluent in Myanmar, he didn't immediately understand the words, "Fry carp in its own oil". After thinking about it a little, he said, "Yes, those were the words."

"The German monk U Vivekânanda was translating just then while U Dhammâjîva was asking permission to stay with the Yangon Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw and study Myanmar. He didn't understand the words 'Fry carp in its own oil', either. He couldn't translate it. Sayadaw laughed.

Since I've been practicing here for eighteen months, I'm going to go back to Sri Lanka soon. So, before I go I want to learn Myanmar for about two weeks. That's what I was talking to Sayadaw about. So Sayadaw said, 'In that case, go to the Theravâda Buddhist University'.

'If I might get permission, I would like to continue my studies right here at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha,' he said.

Then Sayadaw asked me, 'Why do you want to study Myanmar?'

'In Sri Lanka, the Vipassana method is not widespread. In Myanmar, there are great books by elder Sayadaws like the Mahasi Sayadaw, the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw, and so on. I would like to translate those books in Sinhala. I want to study Myanmar for the benefit of the Buddha-Sâsana, to use it for the benefit of others. It's not for my own benefit,' I said. When I said that, Sayadaw seemed to become interested.

Sayadaw spoke about himself, saying that he doesn't do what he wants to. He works only for the great benefit of the Sâsana.' Since I wanted to study Myanmar for the Sâsana and the benefit of others, he gave me permission to continue studying right here at this center. Sayadaw doesn't give Sri Lankan students permission to study Myanmar at

his center easily because Sri Lankans' vîriya (effort or energy) is weak. The climate in Sri Lanka is better than in Myanmar. That's why Sri Lankans don't work hard at their work. Since Sayadaw lived in Sri Lanka for about three years, he got a good understanding of Sri Lankans. Apparently, that's why he concluded that my vîriya is weak, too. It was just because of that.

'Venerable Sayadaw, my preceptor (into the Order) in Sri Lanka said, 'The Sayadaws like Mahasi Sayadaw in Myanmar have all passed away. Of the Sayadaws in Myanmar I know well, only U Pandita is left. U Pandita looks not for his own benefit, but only for that of the Sâsana and of others. So, if you want go to Myanmar, just go to his place,' he said. That's how I learned of you, Sayadaw, when I was in Sri Lanka, even before I came to Myanmar.' "

U Dhammâjîva spoke to Sayadaw like that, he said.

U Dhammâjîva spent the rainy season of 1996 at the Hse Main Gon Forest Center. There were another four Sri Lankan monks along with him. Those other four monks are not fluent in English. U Dhammâjîva, on the other hand, was by then quite fluent not only in English but also in Myanmar. At Dhamma interviews, U Dhammâjîva's fluency in Myanmar has been very beneficial. When they had interviews, with U Dhammâjîva translated what their meditation teacher U Nanda said in Myanmar into Sinhala for them. It was he who translated the Dhamma talks, too. Besides having a modern university degree, he is proficient on the subject of agriculture. Thus, he has taken responsibility for the cultivation efforts at the Hse Main Gon Forest Center and is working enthusiastically. There have been a great variety of trees planted under his leadership. I guess, when those trees mature this center will be like the Veïuvana monastery of the Buddha's time, known far and wide for its sublime beauty. Since they are planted evenly, they will be very pleasing to the mind, no doubt.

He has also translated into Sinhala Sayadaw's American Dhamma Discourse, the Myanmar original of the book edited and published in English as In This Very Life. Foreigners really appreciate Sayadaw's book In This Very Life, both in the East and in the West. Not a few have come to the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha because they had read that book and wanted to practice meditation. That book is famous abroad. They even had to print a second edition. There's yet another book of Sayadaw's in English, On the Path to Freedom. Then there's the books of Sayadaws called Raindrops in Hot Summer. If the Dhamma talks Sayadaw has given abroad were to be published, they would amount to a great many books. As Sayadaw's books are being into Sinhala, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese, Sayadaw's Dhamma discourses are really proliferating abroad.

If both the Dhamma discourses he has given at home and abroad were to be published, they would make a great many books, no doubt. So far, only the one book, American Dhamma Discourse, has come about in Myanmar. Since Sayadaw's Dhamma

talks have been recorded on tape, there are probably hundreds of tapes, both in English and Myanmar. If all of Sayadaw's Dhamma talks he has given over the last forty-one years at home and abroad had been recorded, there would doubtless be many thousands of tapes.

I will return to speaking of U Dhammâjîva. He is going back to Sri Lanka now. When he told Sayadaw about his plan to return, Sayadaw refused him permission. You will have to continue for at least five years, he is said to have said. Apparently, Sayadaw has realized the ability of U Dhammajîva, who is 'frying carp in its own oil'. He doesn't intend to give permission for him to leave willingly.

Sayadaw has quite a lot of carp to help him fry fish in its own oil. There are those from Nepal, from the U.S., from Sri Lanka. There are quite a lot from Nepal. If we were to count just those here now (with their level of accomplishment on the government Pâli examinations, followed by other degrees), there's Ma Aggâñî (Dhammacariya), Ma Vimaâñî (First in the Nation-Upper Level, Dhammasariya), U Janâdhipa (middle level, second level Thamanay Kyaw), Ma Nandavatî (lower level), Ma Sunandavatî (Lower Level), U Visadaâña (Primary Level), Ma Sâravatî (Primary Level), Ma Nimmalaâñî, U Pañajoti, and U Nikredha. From America, Ma Sumâlâ. From Sri Lanka, U Dhammâjîva and U Anoma. From Malaysia Ma Vivekânanda and Gin (a female yogi). From Vietnam there is Ma Sunandâ and from Bangladesh U Pañatiloka.

There are still some carp which were fried in their own oil in the past. To mention one obvious person, U Aggacitta. He's from Malaysia. He is expertise in Myanmar as well as Pâli as well as English is praiseworthy. It was he who translated in English for Sayadaw on his very first trip to the U.S. Don't even ask if the foreign yogis appreciated him. They definitely did. The book *In This Very Life* is his translation. I have repeatedly heard those who read that book acclaim the translator's command of English. In order that he learn Myanmar, Sayadaw taught him himself.

These days, people in the home countries of these carp are getting more of a chance to taste the value of frying fish in its own oil. No doubt they will continue to in the future. The style of frying carp in its own oil is really catching on abroad.

ALTRUISM AND PATIENCE

"One must be patient with others on one's own part. One should not expect others to be patient with oneself. Parents are extremely patient with their children. Yet, one should not expect that patience even from one's parents. If we have inconveniences in eating, drinking, living and health, we must be able to have patience with them, too. These things just happen."

"That's some advice Sayadaw gave to his students in 1994. Some of us foreign students went and meditated at the Mahâbodhi Monastery in Kyauktan Village. Do you remember, Bhante?" the Sri Lankan monk U Dhammâjîva asked.

"I remember," the author replied, "You went at the time of the Buddhist Culture Course. That was before the Hse Main Gon Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha had come to be. That time, it was the German monk U Vivekânanda and a German male yogi, two Korean monks, a Vietnamese-American monk, a novice from Singapore, and you, sir, wasn't it?"

"Yes, Bhante, Yes. You remember it exactly."

"He gave this piece of guidance when we came back to this center to spend the rainy season. He gave it to the male yogis from Austria and Switzerland who had come with us.

'Since the Hse Main Gon Sâsana Yeiktha is just starting to be built, the facilities are not really complete yet. The accommodations are not yet complete, either. If you can accept those little deficiencies, go right ahead. You came to meditate. If you just do your own practice, there isn't anything you won't be able to accept,' said Sayadaw. Then, Sayadaw spoke to those yogis directly in English. 'You must not complain at all,' he said. Since foreign yogis often have a lot of complaints and criticisms, Sayadaw gave them warning, Bhante. It's good to tell people beforehand, Bhante."

"The words of guidance 'One should not expect others to be patient with oneself' is advice given by the great Mahasi Sayadaw. Sayadaw was reusing his teacher's words. It's really good advice. The great Mahasi Sayadaw practiced the way he preached, too. He got many good benefits from practicing that way," I said. "Sayadaw has practiced in accord with that advice, too. To a lesser extent, he too has received many kinds of good results from practicing that way. Having personally received the wholesome results, he has realized the value of patience for himself. Coming to know the personally the value of patience, he values it even more. He must be giving advice to his students, so that they, too, will be able to value it as he does."

U Dhammâjîva replied, "It's true, Bhante. It's good to hear. Please continue."

"Do you really understand my Myanmar?"

"I understand it, Bhante."

"I'll tell you about an experience I had at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha. What Sayadaw said there was so extraordinary that I still remember it.

There was a meeting of monks about a certain issue. Sayadaw was speaking with the other elders. The other elders started speaking to Sayadaw with a bit of anger in their voices. While those elders were speaking like that, Sayadaw was just grinning. I couldn't see any anger in his expression. When the other elders had finished all they wanted to say, he said, "If I am talked to with anger like that, I set my own face in a smile. If I speak, I try to speak with a smile, too."

"Oh." U Dhammâjîva was surprised when he heard Sayadaw's words. He really appreciated them, saying, "Really great, really great."

"You've probably heard these words of the Buddha, U Dhammâjîva. 'Akkodhena Jîne Kodha?: With non-aversion, triumph over an angry person'"

"I have heard that, I've heard it before."

"Sayadaw was showing how he practices in accord with those words of the Buddha."

"In his Dhamma talks, Sayadaw often talks about the Bodissatta (Buddha-to-be in his life as the) Monkey King who patiently worked for the benefit of others. Have you heard about that monkey, U Dhammâjîva?"

"Tell me, Bhante."

"I have even written a poem about that Bodhisatta monkey king, because he's so admirable."

"You write poetry, Bhante?"

"Just a bit"

U Dhammâjîva did not understand the Myanmar expression "Just a bit".

"What is 'Just a bit'"

"Just a very little."

"Oh, Oh."

"I just write a very little poetry. You haven't seen the poem I wrote? Try reading the poem aloud."

"The title of the poem is 'The Trembling Attitude'. If there are words in the poem you don't understand, ask, ok? I'll read them for you.

To guide the foolish Brahman
From out of the canyon
The Bodhisatta monkey king
Exhausted himself.

Then the Bodhisatta
While sleeping on
The foolish Brahman's thigh,
His head broken open
By the Brahman fool,
Bleeding red blood,
Looked for the path
That the Brahman must follow.
Drop by drop
He showed the way.

He accepted
Great suffering
With the massive
Strength of Karunâ,
Mettâ and Khanti
He did possess.
Noble Bodhisatta.

Wonderful it is
To be depended on by others
Oh, how amazing!
Oh, to tremble!

"Sâdhu. Sâdhu. Sâdhu." U Dhammâjîva said in Pâli. In English: "Well done! Well done! Well done!" "I've heard this Jâtaka story. Does this word mean 'sleeping'?"

"Yes, Yes."

Sayadaw evidently is inspired by, and emulates that patient mindset of the Bodhisatta's. It's inspiring just hearing about possessors of that kind of mindset. If one can follow and practice it oneself, it will be even more gratifying. Reflecting on that attitude of patience, and about those who possess it, one has to nurture it. One has to nurture it through meditation, as well. The mindset of patience gained through the practice of meditation, though, is much stronger. Having become an Anâgâmi (Non-returner) through the practice, one is filled with patience.

There are many types in this human world. Without holding a patient mindset, no altruistic enterprise would see success. The more altruistic work you do, the more patience you must have. The Bodhisatta did an exceptional amount of work for the benefit of others. He had to be exceptionally patient. It was just like this in the Buddha's time. The Mahasi Sâyadaw, too, did many altruistic works. He had to be very patient. Sayadaw, as well, is doing a lot of work for the benefit of others. He has to have a lot of patience.

'Only with patience is Nibbâna attained' it is said. Meditating yogis need even more patience. That's why Sayadaw tells them to remain patient."

U Dhammâjîva spoke. "That is true, Bhante, that is true."

ALIVE AND STRONG

"There are two kinds of monks: monks by appearance and monks by practice. Monks by appearance are just those who wear the robes. In Pâli, monks are called "Samaàa". In Myanmar, you get the meaning, "One who has extinguished the kilesâs (defilements)". If one does not practice sîla (morality), samâdhi (concentration), and panña (wisdom), which cause the extinction of the kilesâs, the kilesâs are not extinguished. If the kilesâs are not extinguished, one doesn't get to experience the happiness which comes from that extinction. Only if one does the practices which cause the extinction of the kilesâs is one said to be a practicing monk."

"One can't be called a good soldier just for wearing a military uniform and going to the front line. Only if one fights to overcome the enemy can one be called a good soldier. In the very same way, a monk cannot be called a good monk just for wearing the robes and coming to the battlefield, the meditation center. Only if one actually does battle to overcome the kilesa-enemies can one be called a good monk."

"Those who become monks must have relinquished the sensual pleasures they enjoyed. If one does not do the monastic practice, one forfeits the monastic happiness, extinction of kilesâs. Thus, to prevent this, one has to practice the monastic practices of sîla, samâdhi, and panña." That is the counsel Sayadaw has the habit of giving in the ordination hall to new monks after they have taken robes.

Some take robes as temporary monks or temporary novices. Those who wear rosaries around the hand, wear them around the hand and those who wear them around the neck, wear them around the neck and with the robes all disheveled, go into the town or the village without wearing the robes in the formal manner. They handle money and buy whatever it is that they want to eat. As for temporary novices, they often continue to run around and make mischief. Saying it's just to keep them happy, their parents even give the temporary novices money to pacify them.

Some temporary monks and temporary novices take robes on an astrologer's advice. It is said that some take robes in order to gain wholesome kamma, because their kamma is bad. Some take robes in order to gain wholesome kamma to be successful in business or rise in their career. Some take robes because their parents or grandparents want to see their little son or grandson as monks before they die.

Thinking, "Freeing you once, I am freed ten times", people save the lives of others. Aiming not for others' happiness but performing actions intended only for one's own happiness, one does not gain merit. You have to focus on wanting another to be happy. Only then do you advance nobly. Some parents and grandparents even say that once they've seen their little grandson or son in robes, when they have to die, they'll die happy. These parents and grandparents only try to get their children to take the robes because

they are concerned with their own happiness in death. They are just looking out for themselves. This is just selfishness. One should give the robes with the intention that the ordainee will truly take the robes, and practice the novice's practice or the monk's practice in order to gain freedom from suffering. One should put the happiness of their son or grandson first, and not one's own happiness. Only in that way do you advance nobly. You rise in merit.

Sayadaw wants the temporary novices and monks who ordain at his place to have correct intention. He wants them to practice the monk's or the novice's practice with correct intention. So Sayadaw has his competent junior monks under his tutelage teach new monks and novices the Buddha's monastic code which they must follow in neatly wearing the robes, in eating, going, coming, staying, sitting, speaking, going to the bathroom, and so on, from the time of their relinquishment (ordination). New monks and novices have to learn for themselves the practiced method of wearing the upper and the lower robes, formal robes (for going outside the monastery), and 'half-robes' (for appearing before a senior monk), the method of holding the begging bowl, the method of determining the robes and begging bowl (as one's own), the method of using the sitting cloth, etc.

After they have taken robes, while still in the ordination hall, Sayadaw explains the four things a monk must not do. Those are to 1) engage in sexual relations, 2) steal the possessions of any person, even with the value of only a quarter (1/24 ounce troy of gold), 3) cause the death of a human being, and 4) claim to have attained such superior states as jhânas or path and fruition knowledge without have attained such. One who commits any of these four has been "defeated" as a monk (he must disrobe). So this must be explained when people become monks. Sayadaw gives the responsibility of explaining the other rules to his junior monks.

It is, of course, not right for parents to throw out a child after it is born. In accordance with their responsibilities, they don't throw away their children; they have to nurture and take of their children. As their preceptor into the Order, Sayadaw acts as the parents of these new novices and monks. Sayadaw does not throw out these new novices and monks after they are "born". He guides and instructs them. He takes care of them. Just as when parents are not free, they entrust their children to people they trust like aunts and uncles, when Sayadaw has things he must do, he entrusts them to students whom he has confidence in. Sayadaw himself has been doing this since he was young. So if there's anything missing in what his students do, he notices it, he corrects it, he completes it.

Sayadaw has his junior monks take care of all the guidance and Vinaya (discipline) instruction for monks-to-be. This is because he wants the junior monks under his tutelage to be competent at doing the whole thing. He makes sure that none of his students are unable or incompetent to do this. When foreigners ordain, he has the Kammavâca read with international Pâli pronunciation (as opposed to the unique Burmese pronunciation

which is taught in monasteries all over the nation). Sayadaw himself reads with the international Pâli pronunciation. When still at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, the author and other students had to practice the way of reading the Kammavâca with international Pâli pronunciation in Sayadaw's room. There are often foreigners ordaining. There have been many times when the Kammavâca has had to be read in international Pâli pronunciation, both at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha and at Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. So reading the Kammavâca with international Pâli pronunciation has gotten easy. When foreign monks take the vow to stay at the monastery for the rainy season, and do confession, it has to be recited in international Pâli pronunciation. If it were recited with Myanmar pronunciation, they wouldn't understand. Burmese people, especially the monks, should practice the method of reading Pâli with the international pronunciation. They should be competent with that way, too.

Advice and guidance is given to monks-to-be in English, too. Sayadaw has those students who know basic English practice this as well.

Sayadaw differentiates three types of Sâsana:

- ❖ A Dead Sâsana
- ❖ A Living Sâsana
- ❖ A Strong Sâsana

The saying "Vinaya is the life of the Sâsana" means that if the Sâsana lacks Vinaya (discipline) and sîla is not safeguarded, it is a Sâsana which has died. Thus, a Sâsana without sîla (morality) is called a "Dead Sâsana".

When sîla holds sway, there is life. Then it is alive. Though it is living, if it suffers injury, it does not look well. It is only okay when it suffers no harm. It seems like when monks are committing Vinaya offenses, there is some harm.

The entire Order of monks has yet to become a Strong Sâsana. To have a strong Sâsana, the practices of samâdhi (concentration) and panña (wisdom) must come next. Only then is it a strong and robust Sâsana.

Sayadaw wants temporary novices and monks to have fond thoughts of their time as novices and monks even when they return to lay life. He wants them to strive in their practice of Satipatthâna in accordance with the teachers' instructions so that they will be gratified every time in the future when they think back.

Sayadaw reminds every novice and monk not to let the Sâsana become a Dead Sâsana. He urges them to make it a Live Sâsana. He wants them to make further effort to move it from a Live Sâsana to a Strong Sâsana. If they strive as Sayadaw has advised,

every novice will find it worthwhile to have become a novice, and every monk while find it worthwhile to have become a monk. Only if it is worthwhile will they get the benefit of the novice's life or the monk's life.

FADING

"Sâdhu! Sâdhu! Sâdhu! May you be healthy. May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be happy."

These are the words Sayadaw usually says whenever he is offered material goods, or whenever he hears of wholesome works, to make the donor glad. When I hear these words, I find one incident in particular coming back to me.

In 1991, accompanying Sayadaw on his trip to America to present the virtues of the Dhamma, the author got experience abroad. That year, for a two-month retreat at the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, there were four meditation teachers, Sayadaw, Bilin Sayadaw, U Paññathami, and the author. During our free periods, an American lady devotee taught us English. Sayadaw was a student, too. It was just about an hour a day. It happened not to last for many days, either. Sayadaw said he would just listen, the other three should speak and learn. He took the lead in speaking quite a bit for some one who said he was just going to listen.

In Western culture, they use the words "Thank you" all the time. It's like you have to say "Thank You" for whatever is done. Apparently, the American lady who was teaching us wanted us to use the words "Thank you" profusely all the time the way they do. I don't whether they really feel thankful in their hearts. From their mouths, though, it's always "Thank you". As a monk, a son of the Buddha, not having the custom of saying "Thank you" everywhere, it is burdensome to do. Even the author couldn't help but feel it a burden. It must have been even more burdensome for Sayadaw. According to Western culture, whenever someone donates something, after accepting it, the recipient (a monk), would have to say "Thank you". In Myanmar, however, truly admirable and respect-worthy elder monks would not be caught saying "Thank you". If one were say that, it could even mean something rather inappropriate [such as that the monk was seeking gifts]. I think one would substitute "Sâdhu, Sâdhu, Sâdhu" for "Thank you" to show appreciation. Where one would say "Thank you" Sayadaw usually just shows his appreciation with "Sâdhu, Sâdhu, Sâdhu". Sometimes he sends mettâ verbally as well, saying, "May you be healthy. May you be happy."

I hear Sayadaw use those words a lot these days. Of "Sâdhu" and "Thank you", in sphere of children of the Buddha it is "Sâdhu" which is appropriate, proper, and fitting. Since Westerners' ears are not yet accustomed to the word "Sâdhu", I'm sure that it must be unfamiliar. It could yet not possibly be as widely accepted in their realm as the word "Thank you". Children of the Buddha should use the "Sâdhu" all the time the way they use

the word "Thank you" constantly. On the tongues of the Buddha's children, "Sâdhu" would be more becoming, more prestigious than "Thank you".

Myanmar Buddhists should always, must always give weight to their own Buddhist culture, to the culture of their own motherland. If we don't make it a priority, this Buddhist culture, this Myanmar culture, will undoubtedly start to fade and finally disappear, with its head hung low. Some in the sphere of Myanmar are already causing Myanmar culture to start to fade. If I had to give one example of the fading Myanmar culture, it would be the Myanmar calendar system. If you ask people from the city what year, month, or day it is by the Myanmar calendar, few of them know. Do they go so far as to think the person who asked backwards? I can't say. Perhaps they think, "Well, I've much more important things on my mind than the Myanmar date". More people from rural areas than from the city know the date by the Myanmar calendar. If you ask people from rural areas the date by the Western calendar, though, there are many who don't know.

Sayadaw does not want his Myanmar people to forget their own calendar. He wants them to use the Myanmar system more than the Western one. He wants the Myanmar system to be given priority. He has us at the center do it that way. He has us write the English date in parenthesis, after the Myanmar date. For example, he would have today's date written as the new moon of Wa Hkaun, 1358 (6/9/1996). Even if it has to be written without parentheses, he wants us to write the Myanmar date first, and only then the date by the Western calendar. As Buddhists, we should know the year by the Buddhist era, as well. Most don't know.

Among city dwellers, the Myanmar calendar system is in disregard. It's so sad. The Western calendar holds sway. It is put up front. The Myanmar system has been sent to the rear. Since the Myanmar system won't be put up front abroad, it should be allowed the front row in its own motherland. Perhaps, country folks are relegated to the corner because they use it a lot, like the Myanmar saying goes "Country folks in the corner". Perhaps urbanites are being cold towards the disregarded Myanmar calendar system. If they are not Myanmar, they can be distant if they want to. If they are Myanmar, it is not right to be distant. It should be close to their heart. They should champion it.

Sayadaw often gives this example when he meets those types. "After a hen lays eggs in her own nest, some are taken out and replaced with duck eggs. Because the hen has sat on them and given them warmth, the little chicks start to hatch. The poor hen just thinks that the chicks which have hatched are her own. When they all hunt for food, the chicks which hatched from the ducks eggs swim around in the pond, though. The hen, fixated on the idea that these are her children, cannot leave the side of the pond, the poor thing. Waiting for them, she clucks and calls to them. How could the ducklings come to her? They are animals which are happy in the water. How could they come live on land with the hen? They are not of the same kind.

Remember not to become like the hen, clucking, worrying and suffering. Don't be like the old hen, unable to tell the difference between duck eggs and chicken eggs. Chicken and duck are not the same kind. Chickens will live on the high ground. Their habitat is not the same either. That's the reason the unknowing hen worries and suffers," he says.

Sayadaw, who goes abroad to present the virtues of the Dhamma on teaching trips, often talks this way about expatriate Myanmar. "Chinese who were born in Myanmar and who have gone abroad speak Myanmar among themselves. They teach their children Myanmar, too. When they get home, they have them speak in Myanmar. Myanmar who have gone abroad, on the other hand, have forgotten their Myanmar. 'I don't speak Myanmar anymore,' they say proudly," he says.

Sayadaw admonishes that type so they will come to understand and accept that "Myanmar script is our script. Myanmar is our language. Myanmar culture is our culture."

Sayadaw also gives this advice. This one is for Myanmar both at home and abroad. "You don't have to give open air a special invitation to come in. The air enters of its own accord. In the hearts of Myanmar, where Buddhist culture and Myanmar culture are going extinct, foreign culture and foreign religion entering rapidly. Therefore, Buddhist culture and Myanmar culture really need to fill the hearts of Myanmar.

THE PAGODAS OF SHWE TAUNG GON

The Amarapura Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw said, "One monastery in each village is fine. Just one is sufficient to be neat and sublime." Being deeply involved with the Sâsana in Myanmar, the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw pointed out a great many necessary improvements. If the reforms he advocated were to be carried out, the benefits for both the nation and the Sâsana would surely be great.

In ancient times, the Myanmar people had a great penchant for constructing pagodas. It certainly remains that way these days. It seems like it's going to continue in the future, as well. "Four million, four hundred and forty-six thousand, seven hundred and thirty-three are the pagodas of Pagan," it is said. Though not numerous as ancient Pagan, other cities have their share, as well.

Its good to construct just as many pagodas are necessary for a certain place. When its getting excessive, it gives one pause for consideration. We do have to endeavor so that there are no places lacking pagodas. However, some are convinced that constructing pagodas is the propagation of the Sâsana and go about building pagodas indiscriminately all over the place.

The Shwe Taung Gon Sayadaw has met a great many who declare that in building pagodas, they are propagating the Sâsana. He usually replies like this, "We are also building pagodas. The pagodas we build are Dhamma pagodas indeed. We are working to help people establish the Buddha-Dhamma in their hearts. We are helping them build Dhamma pagodas.

The pagodas that most people are building, if they are built with no need or in places where they are not needed, are not very beneficial. The Dhamma pagodas we are helping construct are needed everywhere. They need to be built in every human heart.

Not all of the pagodas most people are building are valuable. With these Dhamma pagodas, however, the more you build, the better. The more you build, the greater the benefit. There is great benefit for the Sâsana, and great benefit for yourself. Each and every Buddhist needs to endeavor to construct a Dhamma pagoda in their own heart. Where these Dhamma pagodas endure, so the Sâsana endures. Where these Dhamma pagodas do not endure, neither does the Sâsana endure. As Dhamma pagodas disappear, so does the Sâsana. In the hearts of those who haven't established Dhamma pagodas, the Sâsana is absent. So that the Sâsana does not disappear, we need to construct a Dhamma pagodas in each of our hearts, inside each of us."

This is a really good point to remember. It's a wake-up call for those who believe they are expanding the Sâsana by constructing pagodas indiscriminately all over the

place. Only build pagodas where they are needed and only as many are needed. But it is necessary to exhort everyone to build Dhamma pagodas in their hearts.

When a pagoda is built with respect it is free of faults; if it is built carelessly it is not faultless. The thing is to build them with care.

In the Mahâgandâyone Monastery at Amarapura there is a pagoda. Encircling the pagoda is a brick wall. People make offerings of flowers and oil lamps. There is a large figure of a candle with a electric bulb at the tip which is turned on to make an offering of light. There is a flower pot in the shape of a boat, with flowers growing in it to make offerings with. The Buddha images have been put in a designated building to be worshiped. They may not be put in any other monastery buildings. No pictures may be hung in that Buddha room. It is not appropriate to act or speak disrespectfully in front of the Buddha images.

At the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, before the Sâdhujanatosanâ Dhammasabhâ Building came to be, the dining hall had to be used as a Dhamma hall. So a separate Buddha room was set up for the Buddha image. An electric light is used to make offerings of light. There are also flower pots to put offerings of flowers in.

There is another Buddha room in the Tha Tun Aung Building. Sayadaw doesn't permit Buddha images or pictures to be placed in any other rooms or buildings. He has them put in designated Buddha rooms. The one in the Tha Tun Aung Building is filled with a diverse collection of Buddha images. There you find statues from Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Malaysia, among others. Sayadaw also has pictures and paintings of the Buddha displayed there. He doesn't allow them in other rooms.

The Buddha room in the Tha Tun Aung Building was there even before the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha came to be. This Buddha room is a separate room to itself. The one in the dining hall is a just a curtained off enclosure. It is only to be opened when people are paying respects to the Buddha and making offerings. The rest of the time it is to remain closed.

Now that the Dhamma hall has been completed, a Buddha room has been built on the third floor. It is a fully enclosed room, protected by glass. On the walls, there is a mural of a natural landscape with forest and mountains. Various trees and flowers grow between streams and waterfalls. There are also sun and moon lights; when one is turned on, sunlight or moonlight shines forth. The Buddha image of cast bronze is sublime, as well.

The ordination hall, too, has three floors. On the third floor of the ordination hall is another Buddha room. When coming to give a Dhamma talk in front of the Buddha room, Sayadaw has a regular routine. First, he places the fan he is carrying on his Dhamma throne. Then, before he gives his talk, and after as well, he stands facing the Buddha

image and pays his respects by putting his palms together. Sayadaw doesn't really dare turn his back on the Buddha in order to turn and face the audience while he gives his talk. So he has the throne placed not directly in front of the Buddha, but off to the side. You also find a picture of Mahasi Sayadaw and one of Sayadaw as well as flowers and other offerings.

You find a picture of Sayadaw's preceptor (into the Order), the first Mahabodhi Forest Monastery Sayadaw U Kelasa, hung in reverence on the wall near his dining table. It is a picture of him on his way to almsrounds, with his begging bowl slung over his shoulder. It's very sublime. Near the table where the junior monks eat, you find another picture of the Mahasi Sayadaw. It was taken during Mahasi Sayadaw's trip to America. In the picture, he is sitting on a really high wooden chair with no sitting mat and with his legs hanging down. It is a picture attractive in its simplicity.

There are a great many pagodas at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. Local monks and nuns, men and women, old, young, and middle aged, of all ages and from every stratum of society, come to build their pagodas. Foreigners come in a similar manner. These foreign men and women take the pagodas they have been building at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha back with them when they return to their own countries and continue to work on them. These are Dhamma pagodas indeed. Satipatthâna Dhamma pagodas. These Dhamma pagodas are costless to build. Sayadaw and the other senior teachers have already imparted the proper construction technique.

These Satipatthâna Dhamma pagodas are being constructed without a pause from three in the morning until eleven at night. When sitting, they are being built. When standing, they are being built. When walking, they are being built. When reclining, they are being built. When eating, they are being built. When showering, they are being built. Even in on the toilet, they are being built. The Buddha advised us that it is possible to do this construction without missing a place, without missing a moment, and directed us to become proficient at this type of continuous construction. The Buddha Dhamma is very thorough indeed. In the Buddha's teaching, there is nothing superfluous, and there is nothing missing.

At Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, some yogis build their Dhamma pagodas for a week, some for a month, some for a year, and some for many years. Your own Dhamma pagoda grows by just as much as you are able to build. The higher your Dhamma pagoda goes, the more meaning your life has, the higher its value. So if you wish the value of the brief life you've got to rise higher and higher, just build your Dhamma pagoda higher and higher.

MUCH IN COMMON

Sayadaw lived for a time at the New Mahâvisuddhâyone Zipin Monastery in Mandalay. He stayed there to study for the Abhivamsa examination (Thakyathiha and Cetiwigana). The Amarapura Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw, too, lived at that very Zipin Monastery. Sayadaw stayed there only as a young monk. The Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw, though, lived there as a student, as a novice, and then as a young monk. Before he lived at the Zipin Monastery, Sayadaw had even gone to the Mahâgandâyone to ask permission of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw to live there. Sayadaw and the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw are fifteen years apart in age. Since Sayadaw is now seventy-five, if the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw were still alive, he would be ninety-four years of age. The Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw is Sayadaw's teacher's teacher. That's because Sayadaw's teacher, U Paññasirî, studied with the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw. When Sayadaw tells what the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw said when he went to ask permission to live there, he smiles before, during, and after he tells it. Before he says the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's words, he sets the stage.

"Sayadaw's words are the very essence of wisdom. They have deep understanding. They are really delightful," he says. He doesn't call him, "the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw". Neither does he use his name, "U Janakâbhivamsa". Since there's a little something to tell about his name, I'll go ahead and tell it. Sayadaw doesn't have the habit of calling respectable Sayadaws by their monk name. He doesn't let his students be referred to that way either. He has Sayadaw U Rucinañana, who is now one of the Nâyaka Sayadaws (senior teachers) at Sayadaw's place, called "Kyauktan Sayadaw". Sayadaw refers to him that way himself, too. Whoever it may be, monk or lay person, who refers to the monk name, Sayadaw usually corrects them by asking, "Are you talking about the Kyauktan Sayadaw?". He sometimes corrects by using himself, "Kyauktan Sayadaw, son". He has the Nâyaka Sayadaw U Paññadipa called "Bilin Sayadaw". It is because U Rucinaña was born in Kyauktan village, that Sayadaw calls and has him called "Kyauktan Saydaw". Likewise, "Bilin" is the name of Sayadaw U Paññadipa's birthplace. The Nâyaka Sayadaw U Sâsanabhadda is called "Zeyyawatî Sayadaw". That name is used in reference to the Zeyyawatî Monastery in Tavoy, where he lived.

Even if Sayadaw does call his students by their monk name, he makes a practice of prefixing it with the respectful, "U". Not once have I heard him call me by my name without the prefix "U". From time to time he uses the word "Ashin", or 'Master', in place of "U". Only a very few times have I heard him use the less respectful 'Maung' instead of "U" or "Ashin". Not once has he called me with the prefix "Maung" like that. Apparently, some of Sayadaw's teachers called him by his monk name prefixed with "Maung", when he was young. Each of us has our usage. In the great Mahasi Sayadaw's birthplace, Hsiep Hkun village in Shwebo Township, they don't even call him "Mahasi Sayadaw, Mahasi Sayadaw". Since the Mahasi Sayadaw's monk name is "U Sobhana", they call him "Bo (Granddad) Sobhana". Those who use his nickname say, "Bo So, Bo So". I can't help but be

surprised. But they just call him that way. Each region has its own usage. It couldn't be that they don't admire and look up to the great Mahasi Sayadaw from their own village.

There is respect, admiration, and affection in the way Sayadaw calls the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw just "Sayadaw", rather than "Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw" or "U Janakâbivamsa".

"Now, I still have to keep making effort so that we will be able to accept monks and older novices. Right now, there are things that are not complete, not yet totally sufficient. I expect that we will be able to accept you in the future. Later, when everything is in place, it will be fine, no doubt."

Those were the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's words to Sayadaw-to-be. The Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, took note, too.

"Sayadaw said in a gentle way, 'We can't accept you yet'. With his words, he showed the reason why, and he offered hope for the future," he says.

I have seen young monks and older novices come ask Sayadaw, now that he himself has become a Sayadaw, for permission to live at his place. At those times, he often repeats what the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw said to him. At times when he has a lot to do, he is apt to send those young monks and novices over to the author's place. At those times, I, too, speak according to the advice given by my own two teachers, the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw and the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw. There are young monks and novices who write to the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha because, having read in religious magazines about Sayadaw's brilliant success in the world of Pariyatti (practice of the Dhamma), they want to live here. There are also those who just come to check it out for themselves. If they come to see the author before they go to Sayadaw's, I explain to them about Sayadaw's attitude.

With these types of things, I see similarities between the way Sayadaw and the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw do things. From the author's perspective, these two Sayadaws have much in common. They both respect the Vinaya, even in trifling little matters. They both have a mindset of cherishing their people and the Sâsana. They have great discipline. Physically, too, they are extremely alike. The way they carry canes is the same. The way they both wear their upper and lower robes extremely neatly is the same. The way they make their collars small and neat when they make up their robes to go outside is the same. The way they want studies to be done quietly is the same. The way that things must be clean and neat in both of their monasteries is the same. The way they walk around their monasteries gripping their canes and keeping an eye on things is the same. They both have the habit of checking a piece of work meticulously. In accepting a student, they both consider that they should have not only a good mind, but also a good visage. They both follow what is appropriate, rather than what they like, in eating and living

arrangements. In eating and drinking, they both arrange not to have anything unnecessary. They both regulate their students to keep them orderly and disciplined. They both have statues and images of the Buddha placed only in designated Buddha rooms. They both honor intelligent students in accord with their excellence.

The way they both allow footwear to be worn in the monastery is similar, too. They have a similar way of correcting devotees who kneel on the road to bow to them, saying "Don't kneel down. Just stay standing. It's enough just to put your hands together at your chest". Their modern perspective is the same, too. They both fearlessly point out things in need of correction in the field of religious matters. Neither of them makes an issue of sectarianism. Neither of them follows the crowd. Not being acquiescent, they both have been seen as proud. They both had to suffer those who could not bear to see others succeed swarming around and condemning them. One maxim that the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw included in his autobiography, *One Life Cycle*, comes to mind. "Unable to hear the voices calling 'Sâdhu!', they are swarming and condemning". The two Sayadaws have a great deal in common. Undoubtedly, there are some differences, too.

MUCH IN COMMON

In 1950, Sayadaw came to Yangon Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha and meditated. His meditation teacher then was U Vicâra, who later became Wakhema Yeiktha Sayadaw. When Sayadaw was meditating, he noticed some shortcomings in his fellow meditators, also young monks, with regard to the monastic discipline. Thoughts such as, "Can he really make progress in meditation when he doesn't keep sîla?" revolved in his mind-stream. Because of this thinking, his meditation practice didn't progress. Rather, it stagnated for about two days. His meditation teacher appeared to guess that his practice was stagnating. The teacher reminded him, "If there is thinking and criticizing, the practice can't go forward. It tends to stagnate. A yogi's job is just to note thinking and criticizing when they arise without missing them, to note whatever arises without missing it." After that, Sayadaw also reminded himself, "I must do as my teacher has asked."

Meditating is like going on a journey by water. When going on a water-journey, a sailboat or ship can capsize when it is damaged by wind and waves. When the waves or wind are stormy, it won't do if one goes and tells others what is wrong with their boat rather than taking care that one's own boat doesn't capsize and sink. When one goes and talks to others one's own boat will surely sink. One must take care so that one's own boat doesn't sink.

In just this way, when the yogi goes on a Dhamma journey, he or she can suffer damage by the waves and winds of the kilesas. At this time it won't do to go and look at other's shortcomings. It won't do to criticize or brood. One must look after oneself so as not to be damaged by the winds and waves of kilesas. One needs to just do one's own Dhamma work without fail.

Sayadaw also came to understand this attitude. For that reason, and because he continued to do as the teacher asked, his meditation went smoothly.

Since Sayadaw became a meditation teacher, he has seen yogis whose practice, like his own, does not progress because of criticizing and brooding. At this time talks about his own little mistake and corrects them so that they can get on the right track. When Sayadaw talks about his own mistake, the listener also is interested. Moreover, it is easy for him or her to follow. Sayadaw's telling his own mistake and giving correction so that the yogi will work in the right way is an example to be followed.

Later on, Sayadaw made another mistake. It is hard for humans to be free of fault. There will always be mistakes. One errs and so do others, the only difference is in the size of the mistakes. It is unlikely that there is anyone in this world who hasn't made a mistake. Even in the lifetime when he became a Buddha, the Bodhisatta erred and followed the path of extreme austerity. Given this, it's not surprising that ordinary people make mistakes. But it is necessary to try to be free of mistakes as much as one can. Surely one

might make a mistake once. But it is necessary to be careful and develop understanding so that we don't make the same mistake again.

At a retreat in America, Sayadaw was receiving treatment from a massage therapist. The massage therapist told Sayadaw to stay in the position that the therapist wanted. He asked him to relax his muscles. Sayadaw was tensing his muscles. Given this, it became awkward for the massage therapist to treat him. The therapist asked Sayadaw again to relax. Sayadaw kept tensing his muscles. It was difficult for the massage therapist to work. Then Sayadaw realized, "At this time, I have to listen to him. I have to do what he asks me. He said relax your muscles, so I have to relax." Finally the massage therapist could treat him as he wanted.

Sayadaw tends to talk about this mistake of his when admonishing yogis who are resistant and don't meditate according to his instructions. At this time the yogis come to understand and at last make effort to practice as instructed. Talking about what he had done to correct his own mistake as a lesson is very effective.

There is yet another mistake of Sayadaw's. When he was teaching the Dhamma as a meditation teacher at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha in Yangon, Sayadaw mostly taught the novices, monks and male yogis. He only taught the female yogis for a few years. One time, there was a doctor among the male yogis meditating under Sayadaw's guidance. At that time, Sayadaw had a stomach ailment. So Sayadaw told the doctor-yogi about his illness. The doctor then said, "Bhante, for this stomach ailment one must be treated with an injection." Sayadaw made a note of this doctor's remark. Not long after that, Sayadaw went to see a doctor who was responsible for medical treatment at the center. At that time Sayadaw said to this doctor, "You need to give me an injection for this stomach ailment."

At this the doctor replied, "What did you say, Bhante?"

At this point Sayadaw immediately understood, "I've made a mistake." Sayadaw then said that he was just saying what the yogi-doctor had said. He wasn't trying to be a teacher.

Doctors don't like this kind of talk. The patient just needs to tell the doctor his or her symptoms. The patient doesn't need to, and shouldn't, say what medicine to give or what to do. It is the doctor's responsibility to prescribe the medicine or treatment after looking at the symptoms of the illness.

A meditation teacher is like a doctor and a yogi like a patient. The yogi just needs to tell the teacher what they have experienced in meditation. The teacher will look at the yogi's state and work from there. The yogi just has to explain how the object of awareness arose, how they noted it, and what they perceived. There's no need to say things such as, "Today my meditation was good. It was bad. It progressed. It regressed. With good

concentration, my wisdom increased. Today my meditation dropped off," etc. Having given a great many interviews, Sayadaw has met many different kinds of yogis. He has met some who talk to him the way he did to the second doctor. At these times, he often corrects them by telling them of his own mistake.

There is one thing which Sayadaw said which lacked first-hand experience. When Sayadaw, as a novice at the Kyauktan Mahâbodhi Monastery, was taking care of sundry tasks for his original preceptor, who had become chronically ill, he heard from a group of monks of the potency of a certain medicine made from the aloe plant. Feeling heartened for his Sayadaw, he went to him and expounded the virtues of this medicine, putting on airs as if he had first-hand experience with it. His teacher asked, "Maung Pandita, have you taken it yourself?"

When Sayadaw said he had not, his teacher just said, "Yeah." Starting then, Sayadaw never again talked about things with which he did not have first-hand experience as if he did, they say. When he meets yogis who tell him of things which aren't their own first-hand experience, he often corrects them, by explaining his own experience. It is a great example, indeed.

ONE CAN'T FORGET

I imagine I'm hearing the words which Sayadaw has often said since the beginning of the building process of the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha in Yangon. "When you are starting to build a new space, everything is needed. You need everything from reed mats to plates and cups. Everything is put to use.

Indeed, the devotees are very smart. Without even have to say what is needed, they look to see what is lacked and make donations after their own fashion."

The supporter who made the foundational gift at the beginning of the building process of the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, is Daw Than, called 'Mother Than' by most. Daw Than made a donation of twenty-seven million kyat, about two-hundred and seventy thousand dollars at that time. I hardly even need to mention the monastery donors, U Tha Tun Aung, Daw Ni, and family. That's because everybody knows how incredibly good to the center these benefactors have been. There were many who came and offered as much as they could. It was on the ninth day of the waxing moon of Bitinkyut, 1352 (1991), that we first arrived. "We" was U Ñanujjotâbhivamsa, U Sa?varâlinkâra, U Khamâcâra and the author. When we came, U Khamâcâra went on almsrounds all alone. U ?ânujjotâbhivamsa and the author went after breakfast to the Maòiratnâ Nunnery to give lessons to the NePâli nuns, and we ate lunch there. On Upossatha day, since we rested from lessons, we just ate at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha.

Back then, one of the breakfast and lunch donors at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha was the family of U Win Aung and Daw Tin Aye. They were the main donors, in fact. Their home is two houses south of the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. The sons and daughters of U Win Aung and Daw Tin Aye have participated in the Buddhist Culture Course, so they are familiar with the Sâsana Yeiktha. I you were to compare the time when the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha was just starting up to the way it is now, it's like having a roof versus the bare ground. Since everything was not as complete at the beginning as it is now, we had a hard time. As long as I live, I cannot forget the meals U Win Aung and Daw Tin Tin Aye donated while we were suffering like that. Back then, the family of U Maung Maung Aye and Daw Khin Khin Kyi from Hlaing took turns offering meals, too. The little things like fish sauce they offered back then are more unforgettable than the excellent stuff these days like pork and chicken.

I remember my answer to U Samvarâla?kâra (now Kyaikksan Dhammapiya Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw) just before we moved from the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha.

"For someone with lots of food, a mouthful of rice is not that beneficial, they don't really value it or feel a lot of gratitude. For someone in need of food, though, a mouthful of

rice is very beneficial, valuable and cause for great gratitude. Now my teacher (the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw-to-be) is in need of strength.

Thus, it is good to follow and repay my debt to him as much as I can. I've decided that once I repay debt for the two or three years while he is in need, if I go according to my wishes, it won't be uncouth.

When Sayadaw moved from the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha and spent the rainy season at the Thinkan Kyun Kankomyaing Sâsana Yeiktha, Sayadaw U Sâsanabhadda, U ?ânujjotâbhivamsa, U Samvarâla?kâra, U Vivekânanda (a German monk), U Visuddhâcâra (a Malaysian monk), U Pa?ñasâra and the author came with him. At the end of the rainy season, U Khemâcâra came from the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha to the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha.

I can't forget what U Ñanujjotâbhivamsa said back then, "If Sayadaw appreciates me, great, if not, ok. I will stay on the side I think right."

With that conviction, he followed along with Sayadaw. I, on the other hand, followed so as not to desert him in his hour of need. I felt that it would be uncouth to desert him. Coming under his protection while he was well only to desert him when he's suffering is disagreeable indeed. Like [the work of] 'a single brick or a single grain of sand' [in a building], I decided that I would give him as much strength as I could while he needed it and then when his strength was full and strong again, if I went, there would be no discourtesy. No doubt others have concluded the way I did.

When Sayadaw went from the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha to the Kyauktan Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery to meditate, the author and U ?ânujjotâbhivamsa lived at the Mahâbodhi Study Monastery in Yankin and went to the Maòiratanâ Nunnery to teach the Nepalese nuns scriptures. After the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw U Panditâbhivamsa had written a letter to the Mahâbodhi Study Monastery Sayadaw U Panditâbhivamsa, the two of us went and requested permission to stay there. Since U Ñanujjotâbhivamsa had taught there before, we got permission more easily. I can not forget my debt to Sayadaw U Panditâbhivamsa who gave us permission to stay at the Mahâbodhi Study Monastery. When we left the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha it was difficult indeed to get a place to stay where everything was satisfactory.

Sayadaw had a building built for the Nepalese nuns at the Maòiratanâ Nunnery. He had the two of us go to teach as a supplement to the teaching power at Maòiratanâ. It was because he wanted the Nepalese nuns to progress in their studies. When I think of the less than comfortable coming and going, dining, and living arrangements while teaching the NePâli nuns before the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha had come to be, I cannot forget my gratitude to all those who did their very best to make it satisfactory, such as the teachers of the Maòiratanâ Nunnery, the Mahâbodhi Study Monastery Sayadaw, the

family of Maung Pyi Phyo Maung from Yankin, the nurse Daw Hla Myint, U Shwe from Kaba Aye, and the family of Daw Aye.

The owner of Shwe Thamin Medicines, U Bo Sein, who is the donor of the Mawlamyaing Panditârâma Center, often made donations. Sayadaw once asked him, "Why do you keep on donating this much?"

"Because I have personal experience with the purity with which you do Sâsana work," he replied.

There are probably many other donors who answer like U Bo Sein. It is evident that there have been many since the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha was starting to be built who have had compassion for Sayadaw and made donations. Before Sayadaw officially became the owner of the Shwe Taung Sâsana Yeiktha, it seemed that donors were hesitant. After Sayadaw officially became the owner of the Shwe Taung Sâsana Yeiktha, donors heaped donations onto the center. Something Sayadaw said regarding one monk, though others have heard it, is a good one to remember, filled as it is with his first-hand experience.

"He doesn't yet understand. Just work for the welfare of others with pure goodwill. One's own benefit comes of its own accord."

WITH ALL HIS HEART

"After getting to look at the course books of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's, like the Foundational Pâli Grammar, the wisdom of the scriptures becomes more evident. When I was young, I even had the mindset of never being satisfied with my grammar, so when I studied the Foundational Grammar, I couldn't possibly not get it. I became confident that I would definitely master it. Sayadaw could really write to make the meaning clear for the readers," he says.

Sayadaw often talks about the advantages of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's writings. He really respects the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw. As a Padhana Nâyaka (head teacher) Sayadaw came to live and teach meditation to the Sein Pan Sâsana Yeiktha in Mandalay. At that time, he made a habit of going to pay respects to the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw. One time when he went, the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw was teaching monks. He taught one class from twelve noon to one o'clock, and another from one to two in the afternoon. The Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw taught using the course books he wrote. The first hour, he taught monks who had a solid foundation. The second hour, he taught just accomplished monks.

Around that class time, Sayadaw came and paid respects to the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw. The Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw gave him some words of advice. The Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw pointed out some weaknesses he had seen and heard of at the Sâsana Yeiktha. He spoke of how it wasn't proper to have things happening that were not in accord with the Vinaya, such as monks handling money and staying in secluded places with women, and about how if sîla (morality) was not observed, there would be no progress in the practice. He stuck in a piece about how one of the meditation teacher at a nearby Sâsana Yeiktha became a ghost when he passed away. The Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw spoke about how it was not appropriate to have monks becoming ghosts [due to poor morality], and about how he wanted them to make a special effort to observe sîla at meditation centers.

Apparently, it was a coincidence that Sayadaw came during the period when the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw was going on about how that monk had become a ghost. It wasn't like the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw was putting down meditation centers. It was evident that he was just giving a reminder, with pure goodwill. When he went outside of the monastery, the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw often gave his students guidance by talking about that one monk who had died, too. He often talked about how even some people who had gotten the Aggamahâpandita title and some famous Dhammakatikas had died and become ghosts. The Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's intention in speaking this way was just that he wanted those leading the Sâsana and all monks to observe the foundational sîla.

Apparently, some of the study monks felt bad for Sayadaw, a meditation center monk, that the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw was talking to him like this. Some probably even thought that their Sayadaw was speaking excessively harshly." Actually, the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw was speaking courageously and with pure goodwill.

After the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw had finished his hearty admonishment, Sayadaw put his hands together at his chest in respect and said, "Sayadaw, Bhante, as long as I don't refute what you said may I please have permission to say something?"

"Yes, Yes, go ahead," he said.

Then Sayadaw explained, drawing from the scriptures expertly, how at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha they were doing things in accord with the Vinaya regarding issues such as handling of money and association with women. When everything had been explained fully and clearly, the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw was very appreciative. That was how he wanted the meditation centers to be following the Vinaya, with care and respect. He was very gratified to know that they were following it they wanted he wanted. He was very pleased with Sayadaw, too. After that, he often invited Sayadaw to come and study at his monastery. Sayadaw even came another time and stayed about two days and studied. By then the two Sayadaws had become very intimate.

The study monks who heard how Sayadaw replied, after asking permission, were greatly gratified. They were amazed at Sayadaw's courage, too, and they appreciated him. They could not stop talking about that extraordinary business. It was something they would not forget for the rest of their lives.

At that time, I was studying as a young novice at the Mahâgandâyone Monastery. I only knew that Sayadaw had come to the Mahâgandâyone Monastery, not the rest. I only heard about it while talking with Sayadaw when I came to his place. Later, Sayadaw sent one of the young monks under his tutelage to study at the Mahâgandâyone Monastery. Knowing that he was a student of Sayadaw's, when this student was to go back to Sayadaw's place, the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw told him again and again, with all his heart, "Just tell to U Pandita to come by." As I didn't see or hear the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw send this wholehearted invitation, I came to know of it through a novice who hear and saw this extraordinary business.

Though the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw invited Sayadaw with all his heart, it happened that the conditions were not right and the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw passed away before he got to come.

If the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw were alive today, how many Sâsana matters those two would have dealt with together? To what extent would the project they both appreciated of "Patipatti which does not lack Pariyatti. Pariyatti which does not lack Patipatti: Practice which does not lack Theory. Theoretical study which does not lack

experiential practice," have materialized? I can't help but conclude that if those two had gotten the chance to work the way they desired, the Sâsana in Myanmar would have become more outstanding. The more Sayadaws and monks there are with great foresight to prioritize the Sâsana, the more sure the future of the Sâsana in Myanmar. Without them, the result would be sad indeed. The Sâsana in Myanmar might fade and disappear altogether. Therefore, Buddhist monks, nuns, and lay people one and all, for the sake of the future of the Sâsana in Myanmar, really need to keep its blood from running cold.

A FREE THINKER

I met a man who told me of himself. He was a high-ranking officer in the military. He was a Buddhist by tradition, but he had studied, appreciated and embraced Communist literature. While he was coming to embrace Communism, he started to notice some little disagreeable aspects to the Communist doctrine. Then, his belief in Communism weakened. Later, he came to appreciate the life of a free thinker. He called himself a 'free thinker'. Up until that point, He was not able to embrace the Buddhist doctrine. He was a Buddhist by name, though. Now, he has become a genuine Buddhist.

It was because of the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sâyadaw that he became a real Buddhist, he says. He was overjoyed to get to bow to Sayadaw, touching his forehead to Sayadaw's feet, he says. Now, as a member of the Theravada Buddhist Institute, he participates in Sayadaw's enterprises for the benefit of others as much as he is able. He spoke of Sayadaw with joy.

"Among all the admirable qualities of the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, if I had to choose one I especially appreciate, it would be his quality of straightforwardness. Perhaps it's because I myself am a straight-talker. I can't say, Bhante. I really appreciate Sayadaw's straightforwardness."

"Devotee, how did you first meet Sayadaw?"

"When I was forty, I left the responsibilities of my post. At that time my sons and daughters were to temporarily ordain as novices and young nuns, according to my wife's plans. My wife encouraged me to ordain temporarily as a monk, too. Actually, I didn't want to ordain. I had to ordain to go along with my wife's wishes. After he ordination, the Mahasi Sayadaw gave us some words of advice, 'Don't do what you think a monk shouldn't do.' They are small words, but they have great meaning."

The words Sayadaw usually says to new monks after they ordain, came into the author's head.

"A monk must refrain from unwholesome words and actions. If an action would be condemned by the wise, you must not do it but avoid doing it. If some speech would be condemned by the wise, you must not say it but avoid saying it. If you refrain from things like that both physical and verbal sîla will be secure. Sîla means refraining from unwholesome verbal and physical actions.

In essence, there are two-hundred and twenty-seven rules of the Buddha which monks must follow. Filled out, they would come to over ninety billion, according to one line in the Vinaya. Even if we don't know them all, if we avoid speech and actions which would be condemned by the wise, it is sufficient."

It seems as if Sayadaw adheres to the Mahasi Sayadaw's advice.

The man continued speaking. Though Sayadaw's advice came into my thoughts, the man's words went into my ears.

"Sayadaw himself taught me the details: how to wear the lower and the upper robes, how wear the robes for going outside, and such. At that time, Sayadaw was staying in one of the original little wooden meditation kutis (cabins). From time to time, Sayadaw came to check out where we were sitting in meditation. When we sat leaning against a wall, he told us not to. When we were nodding off, he reminded us not to. We slept only four hours a day. Back then, I was a very high-ranking officer. Sayadaw did not show favor to high-ranking individuals like myself. He did not cut us any slack. He just firmly told us to meditate. I really appreciate how Sayadaw makes people work, not showing favor to high rank or to big-shots."

"How many days did you practice, Devotee?"

"Ten days, Bhante. Being ten days, the benefit was ten day's worth, Bhante. Through meditation, the truth of anatta (non-self) became clearly evident. I found myself crying at the end of the ten days get ready to go back to lay life. I was sad to leave such a cool, peaceful realm for such a scorching realm, Bhante."

"With ten days of Satipatthana meditation, there was a huge change in your life, yeah? Satipatthana that potent."

"Bhante, Sayadaw says that he appreciates Communists because they follow his instructions in meditation. Have you heard about Ko Aye Maung?"

"I haven't, devotee."

"He was a Communist, too. He's Maung We Lin's older brother, Bhante."

"Oh, Oh, yeah, I know him, I know him."

"He practiced with Sayadaw, too."

"I wrote a little article about him. I gave it the title, 'Worldly Believers and Dhamma Meditation'. I wrote a book called 'The Rays of the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana, at home and abroad'. That article is in that book. His story is very interesting."

"With both Ko Aye Maung and I, if we missed just that one opportunity to practice Satipatthana with Sayadaw, despite being called Buddhists, we would probably not have become real Buddhists. I do believe that now we've really become true Buddhists. Every morning after getting up, I meditate. Only then am I satisfied with myself. Even when I

haven't slept well, if I get a chance to meditate, I feel refreshed. It's like it's due to the momentum of mindfulness. It's like someone's watching out for me telling me, 'That's skillful, go ahead and do it; That's unskillful, don't do that', Bhante."

"The Sayadaw who you have this connection with has said a few little things I would like to tell you about."

"Go ahead, Bhante. I've been the only one talking. It would be very beneficial if you were to speak, too."

"Listen carefully, now. 'When you see the Dhamma, you see the Buddha. When you know the Dhamma, you know the Buddha. When the qualities of the Dhamma are present, the qualities of the Buddha are present,' he said, devotee."

"It's true, Bhante. Because I see the Dhamma, I am seeing the Buddha, now, Bhante. Because I know the Dhamma, I know the Buddha, Bhante. Because the qualities of the Dhamma are present, the qualities of the Buddha are present, Bhante. Bhante, please go on."

"Don't you like it?"

"It has relevance, Bhante."

"In the work of improving the way one relates to the world, Satipatthana is critical."

"That one is really right on, too, Bhante. If I hadn't gotten the chance to practice this Satipatthana, it would not have been easy to change my attitude and my thought patterns, Bhante."

"Since you were a soldier, devotee, there's one example Sayadaw gives regarding soldiers."

"What's that, Bhante?"

" 'On the front lines of battle, soldiers have to follow their commander's orders. In the battle against the kilesas, yogis have to follow their teacher's instructions,' he says."

"Since I was a soldier, I have a better understanding of it than most, Bhante."

"Devotee, let's finish up, yeah?"

"Yes, Bhante. It's been great talking with you."

THE TRANSMISSION

The first time I meditated at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, I got to meet the great Mahasi Sayadaw. After the weekly Uposatha day ceremony I listened to his words of guidance, too. After the first time I practiced, it was four or five years before I got another chance to meet him. Never in my life will I forget the guidance that the Mahasi Sayadaw gave to me that time. His words of advice were, "A monk must always be permeated with a sublime quality." Wonderful words and right to the point. Having read nearly all his Dhamma books, I had taken note of many of his words from the Dhamma books. I had only heard what he said in conversation, though, a very few times. When the great Mahasi Sayadaw referred to himself, besides 'The monk', he had a habit of using also the words 'From Here'. He would say, "From here it has been decided like this," and such. I've heard how the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, too, when referring to himself, says, 'From here, from here.' Where did the usage, 'From here' come from? The great Mahasi Sayadaw used this expression.

When talking to lay people, the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw uses 'The Monk' to refer to himself. When he speaks with monks, he uses, 'Your disciple'. When he refers to lay people, he just uses 'Devotee'. Some he calls by their name. There are those for whom he uses nicknames. For example, he calls Maung Kaw Hpyo Tun 'Hpyo', and Ma Saw Yin Win 'Mi Saw'. Sometimes, there are special little words in the way he calls people. He calls Saw Win 'Awin' and Daw Nyo 'Anyo'. Sometimes the way he uses pronouns is rather strange. 'From that one' he says. He calls the study nuns 'daughter'. Studying under the refuge of his mettâ, they take the place of his daughters indeed. It seems that as he grows old, he's getting a more fatherly mindset. Girls in Yangon often use 'daughter' to refer to themselves. For the author, a northerner, when I first heard that usage it seemed rather bizarre. I can't say whether up north they have the usage of 'daughter' that they do in Yangon. I do hear people down south use the 'I, I' that they use in Mandalay.

No matter how great someone's position, how high their status, or how great their wealth, Sayadaw doesn't refer to them by their status. He makes a practice of calling them 'devotee' or just calling them by their name. I read something about that in the Mahasi Sayadaw's Discourse on the Tupakasutta. It's very good to remember. This is the excerpt.

"Millionaire, C.E.O., President and so on are glorifications. They are not good to use as titles. In these kind of places, some Sayadaws use the word 'U': 'U Phyu, great devotee' and so on. Some conclude that saying 'great' amounts to putting people up on a pedestal, so they don't use 'U' or 'Great', they just say, 'Devotee Phyu'. If this is just their regular way of speaking, and they're not expecting any gifts in return, there is actually no problem with the first way. It is quite appropriate. That's because the Buddha himself referred to the 'Mahâraja' or 'great kings' as was appropriate in his time."

There's another one the great Mahasi Sayadaw had a habit of using. 'Not exactly in order', he said. If he came upon someone at fault, the most he would say was "Not exactly in order". I have seen Sayadaw use these words, too. Sayadaw, though, often uses stronger words when he comes upon blameworthy actions. Nonetheless, Sayadaw's words are not uncouth, they are civil and wise.

No doubt Sayadaw makes use of a great many of the words of his endless benefactor, the great Mahasi Sayadaw. I have just indicated the two, 'from here' and 'Not exactly in order' because they are so unique. One has to recognize that words of wise people always contain wisdom, and write them down so that the reading audience can come to know them. That's the only way they'll come to know them. Otherwise, these noteworthy words would not be easy to find.

When I came to Sayadaw's place and heard him give Dhamma talks, in them I heard the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's voice of compassion. The Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw often said, "Because of my deep admiration" with the flavor of karuna. He used the word 'Oh...' as if he was saying, "Oh...very good. Very sublime indeed." It seemed to speak with gentleness, drawing out his words. Sayadaw has apparently listened to many of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's talks. Indeed, Sayadaw has a great many tapes of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's talks at his place. It is evident that with Sayadaw's enduring admiration for the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw, and listening to his talks over and over again, his voice, with its flavor of compassion, has become fixed in Sayadaw's ears and in his heart. No doubt that is why the kind of compassionate voice that the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw had is present when Sayadaw gives his Dhamma talks.

Emulating the style of speech and action of the people one respects is the way of the world.

The Mahasi Sayadaw allowed lay people to wear footwear inside the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha. The Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw allowed people to wear footwear inside the Mahâgandâyone Monastery, too. The Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw allows people to wear footwear inside the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, as well. That is following the way of one's teachers, too. Both the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw and the Mahasi Sayadaw had explanations for it. Since the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw explained his in his books, no doubt the Myanmar reading audience has come across it. The Mahasi Sayadaw's, on the other hand, is not included in his books, so the readers have probably not read it before. I came across it and included it in the Myanmar book

Great Mahasi Sayadaw's Extraordinary Perspectives. I cite it here as well, since it seems appropriate.

"In the Pâli scriptures given by the Buddha, there is no prohibition against people wearing footwear in monasteries. There is none evident in the Commentaries either.

According to the Pâli Canon, the king Bimbisâra did have the soles of his feet cut off for wearing sandals on a pagoda platform and for stepping on mats laid out for monks without cleaning his feet. The elder Sayadaws of the past used this shaky basis for their reasoning in not allowing footwear in monasteries. Only the pagoda platform, and not the monastery grounds, are mentioned here. In view of the reasoning based on the king's stepping on the monks mats without cleaning his feet, the contemporary practice of entering monasteries without shoes and without cleaning one's feet gives one pause for thought.

When journeying monks enter another monastery, they must follow the practices of journeying monks, such as removing footwear. It seems that based on that practice, people started paying respect by not wearing footwear in monasteries.

Yâvatikâ nâgassabhûmi. Nâgena gantvâ nâgâ paccorohitvâ pattikova yena maò?alamâlassa dvâram. Tenupasa?kami. (Silakkhandha, page 47)

Yâvatikâ yânassa bhûmi. Yânena gantvâ yânâ paccorohitvâ pattikova yena bhagavâ. Tenupasa?kami. (Silakkhandha, page 101)

[Going by elephant as long as the terrain was suitable for elephants, he descended from the elephant and went by bare foot to where the gate of Maòdalamâla was, and approached it.

Going by vehicle as long as the terrain was suitable for vehicles, he descended from the vehicle and went by bare foot to where the Bhagavâto (Buddha) was, and approached him.]

Herein, monastery grounds are not mentioned, only places which can be reached by vehicle and those which cannot are. Wherever vehicles can go it is fine to wear footwear, the Abhayârâma Sayadaw said. It would seem that, accordingly, it is appropriate to go by vehicle until one nears the staircase and to come up to it wearing footwear. If one comes without footwear, washing one's feet would be appropriate. Entering the monastery without having shoes and without washing ones feet soils the monastery and amounts to disrespect, the Abhayârâma Sayadaw said.

It is said that when his stepmother Gotamî went to see the Buddha to request permission to form an order of bhikkhunîs, she came the whole way from the palace without footwear, out of respect. In that act of reverence, there was nothing concerning the monastery. Considering all this, not wearing footwear does constitute a sign of respect. Not only in the monastery but also on the road, when people remove their footwear out of respect when they meet a respect-worthy monk, as some do, the monk may give them permission to wear their sandals. In accord with that permission, they can wear their sandals. In that same way, whether the monastery belongs to the entire Sangha of monks or individuals, if allowed by the monks, people may wear sandals on the monastery grounds. I don't see any fault in that. When people enter a monastery, if they have the intention not to dirty or soil it, that amounts to respect for the monastery."

This explanation of the Mahasi Sayadaw is similar to that of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw. Of course it is. The Abhayârâma Sayadaw was the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw's teacher. Of course Sayadaw is taking the styles of his various teachers and applying them in his own place.

OLD AGE

"As I get old, I'm becoming like the great Mahasi Sayadaw," he says.

That's one thing Sayadaw says again and again. How old does he mean by "I'm getting old"? He started saying that when he was seventy-three or seventy-four. How is he "becoming like the great Mahasi Sayadaw"? He is talking about how he's started getting forgetful. The great Mahasi Sayadaw started getting forgetful about two years before he passed away. They say he even forgot the names of the monks who usually took care of him. When he said, "Who is he? I know him well, but I forget," if you told him the name, he'd remember it for a little while. Then he'd forget it again. Just before his death, he was even more forgetful. He's said to have forgotten even the names of the famous Sâsana donors Visâkha and Anâthapina when giving Dhamma talks.

The Pazuntaung Shwegyin Monastery Thapyekan Sayadaw U Vâse?pabhivamsa, who knew about this forgetfulness personally, once said, "Getting old, I get forgetful. Getting forgetful, I remember the great Mahasi Sayadaw, and how he got forgetful." I seems like as one grows older, due to physical weakness, the memory and perception get weak, as well. The mindfulness to recognize wholesome actions, though, doesn't weaken. I guess the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw says "I'm becoming like the great Mahasi Sayadaw," because he's not satisfied with himself as his memory is not as good as before.

Many of the people who have lived with the author have said, "You have a good memory". Having had a lot of poor health, it is evident that the author has gotten weaker physically. These days, if I think about a memory, it doesn't come back to me immediately. Before, if I thought about something, it would come back immediately. Now, my head is hazy and things I've retained don't really come back to me. I can't help but be dissatisfied with myself, too. Having experienced forgetfulness myself, I can understand Sayadaw's.

Sayadaw just says he is losing his memory because he is dissatisfied with himself. His memory though, still remains strong. I am sure that he isn't as forgetful as the Mahasi Sayadaw or the Thapyekan Sayadaw. I've concluded that his memory is still better than my own. When he meets them, Sayadaw still remembers people and events which hasn't seen in many years. He can tell you the people's names, and explain about the events. His listeners are astonished.

One time, when monks were invited to the Kyantaw cemetery for a funeral, we went, with Sayadaw in the lead. From the mourning people and monks, an old man came up to Sayadaw and spoke intimately. "Bhante, do you remember me? You wouldn't remember me. It's been many years since I've seen you, Bhante. So you've become the Sayadaw of a monastery, and a very influential one at that, I hear."

The monks and devotees by him were staring at this man who had spoken so intimately to their greatly respected Sayadaw. Their looks said, "What kind of devotee is he? What kind of person is he?" Sayadaw listened quietly as the man spoke. The man clearly thought that Sayadaw wouldn't remember him at all. Contrary to his expectations, Sayadaw called him "Devotee Sein". When he said his name, the man was immensely pleased.

"So it is not as I thought! You not only remember me, you still know my name, Sayadaw. You really remember!" The onlookers who had been looking at his appearance and wondering what kind of a person he was changed their view of him.

That's one example of how good Sayadaw's memory is.

Another time a well known and well liked movie actor came to Sayadaw's place. That actor's name is "Kyaw Thu (Famous Guy)". His grandmother's family often come to donate meals at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. Kyaw Thu's family donates, as well. They sometimes invite monks to their home and offer a meal there, too. When they come to the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, Sayadaw gives them a gratifying Dhamma talk and performs the merit-sharing libation ceremony for them. Kyaw Thu has a wife by the name of Maung Hnan. Once, Kyaw Thu's grandmother said to Sayadaw, "Sayadaw, Bhante, he is in the movie business."

Sayadaw didn't look as if he understood the meaning of the modern Myanmar expression "movie business". "What is the movie business?" he asked.

So, using old-fashioned terminology, the grandmother said, "He's a cinema performer".

"Oh, Oh," said Sayadaw.

Being a famous movie actor, Kyaw Thu is well known. Sayadaw, though, didn't know him. Kyaw Thu enjoyed that. So he made a donation. "Only our Sayadaw, man," he said.

When we go to Kyaw Thu's grandmother's home for a meal, or when they come offer a meal at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, we call Kyaw Thu "Maung Maung". I can't say whether it's an affectionate nickname or a name they call him at home. His wife's name is Ma Zi Kwek. It's probably an affectionate nickname. In any case, the name the author heard was "Ma Zi Kwek".

Ma Zi Kwek was probably thinking, "Sayadaw doesn't even know my nationally famous husband, much less me." Though Sayadaw hadn't ever come to know Ma Zi Kwek, he reeled off the names of her parents, grandparents and other associates of hers. Ma Zi Kwek was so astonished her face went white. She smiled, too.

That's another example of how good Sayadaw's memory is.

Thinking that Sayadaw wouldn't remember them at all among all the people who come to pay him respects, some are pleasantly surprised when he says their names, or remembers people or things associated with them. No wonder those who come to pay respects are astonished and gratified. Even the other people around are astonished. There are many who have been surprised like this, wherever he goes. They are surprised again and again. Those who have seen this memory at work at many times in many places say, "Sayadaw's memory is very good." Given my own experiences, the author seconds that. I've been amazed by his recollections of names. I have appreciated and been inspired even more by his recollection of literature. Sayadaw reads more than all his students, including the author. I do believe that when he reads he reads more meticulously, and with more concentration than us, too. I've come to the conclusion that that is why he remembers more.

Be they monks or lay people, the author can't help but remember people who have achieved highly, because of their strong practice of mindfulness, meticulousness, and concentration.

THE POWER OF METTĀ

The full moon day of Tawthalin.

Today marks a full two months the author has stayed at the Hse Main Gon Forest Center. 'The sun in the month of Tawthalin, [is hot enough to] kill shrimp'. That's a Myanmar saying. The rain is better at Hse Main Gon than in Yangon. It's is better because the Hse Main Gon Yeiktha is situated in the Pegu Mountain Range. They say it rains more in areas with lots of trees, forests, and hills. Yesterday, the fourteenth day of the waxing moon of Tawthalin, it was very pleasant out. Since it's raining almost every day, there have been very few nice days. Upcountry, where it rains very little, it probably is hot enough to kill shrimp. At Hse Main Gon, it's not that hot. I saw a leech I had never seen before at Hse Main Gon. Not only did I get to see it, I got to experience it hanging off me, too. Since I didn't run into leeches up north, it's scary just seeing them. If you get bitten, it's even more frightening. I got that experience of leeches hanging off me while spending the rainy season at Hse Main Gon. My knowledge was expanded.

The facilities at the Hse Main Gon Forest Center are progressing more and more. In the two months the author has been here, nearly five single kutis have been finished. Another one or two have been started. A donor has arisen for the sîma (ordination hall) on-the-water. His name is U Chit Hlaing. There are many ravines, so to make it easy to go to and from the sîma a long bridge has been put in. Ponds have been specially put in. The biggest one is in the center of the property. There's even a little pond near the kuti where the author is staying. Since the dam was put in, I always hear the sound of water running over it. The more it rains, the louder the sound of the running water. It must be there even when I am not mindful and don't hear it. When I'm mindful, I always hear it.

Lotuses have been planted in that pond. There are all three varieties: white, red, and blue. The white ones open on moonlit nights. The red and the blue ones, though, open during the day, in the sunlight. There's been a little bridge built across that little pond, too. Looking at the kuti I'm staying in and the red and white lotuses, some people coming across that bridge start reciting a poem we learn in primary school. "A red lotus flower and a white lotus flower go well with a nice little cottage." Drawing on that rhyme, they do it like this, too. "A red lotus flower and a white lotus flower go well with a nice little kuti." Actually, there is not just one of each, but many lotus flowers, red, white, and blue. Some of the workers sing a line from the song by Thein Tan when they go across that bridge. The line goes, "A pond is only right with lotuses." The little pond was beautiful on its own. It's gotten even more beautiful with lotuses and lotus flowers. I find myself thinking that it's even more beautiful than the possessor of pretty eyes with natural thanaka make-up on.

Actually, the kuti the author is staying in was built for Sayadaw to stay in when he comes. It was because he wanted my accommodations to be comfortable that Sayadaw gave me permission to stay there. Sayadaw wants the author, taking a rest for health's

sake, to get better. When Sayadaw comes, I tell him to stay in the kuti I'm in. Other people tell him, too.

He turns us all down saying, "May U Dhammika stay comfortably at ease." Sayadaw would have been happy staying there but he doesn't consider his own happiness. He puts the author's happiness first. He gives me priority. The kuti has an attached bathroom. Since it has a space for walking, the walking is good, too. In a bureau, there are the sheets, mosquito net, and other things that Sayadaw uses when he comes. There's a writing desk, too. There's another little table for putting other things on. There's a bed, too. There's a chair for sitting. If the author gets stiff while he's writing or want's to think on his feet, I go out and walk on the walking deck. Wherever I look, the plants are lush and verdant. The air is fresh. It's quiet. If something to write comes up while I'm walking, I go back inside and write. It's great to be able to write so freely in this kind of place. I find myself thinking, "How good would it be to continue writing in a place like this!" How great it will be to write!

They call this kuti which Sayadaw stays in when he comes "Daw Nyo's kuti". On the right-hand side of the entrance, there's a sign with the names of the donors: "In memory of (Gallon Min Company owners) U Tin Maung and Daw Myint, U Oun Sein and Daw Oun Myint, by the family of Doctor U Win Maung, and Daw Khin Sein Win, their son Maung Za Ni and daughters Khin Umma and Zin Ma Win". It's just called "Daw Nyo's kuti". That name is not among the donors. Daw Nyo must be Daw Khin Sein Win. The donors' address is in England.

When Sayadaw comes and stays in the kuti, he meditates, reads, and send mettâ to the donors. When he rides in a car, he sends mettâ to the donors of the car. When he uses other buildings, he must send mettâ to their donors. At the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha in Yangon, he lives in the wooden Cham Tha Myaing building. At Hse Main Gon, he lives in this wooden kuti.

Sayadaw has a saying, "One should not follow what the mind desires. One should follow what the body desires." More than likely, his mind would like a brick building. But he doesn't follow that. His body likes a wooden building. "Therefore, I should live in a wooden building," he says. Following his body's rather than his mind's desires, in accord with his health, he lives in a wooden building.

The Amarapura Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw lived in a wooden building, as well. A great amount of literature was composed right in that little room. The Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw must have lived in that wooden building for health's sake. Both Sayadaws take special care of their health. In eating and drinking, too, rather than what they like, they take what is good for them.

Sayadaw has a habit of saying, "The Hse Main Gon Forest Center doesn't seem like a forest center anymore." We've now got electricity at Hse Main Gon. We've got refrigerators and washing machines, a flour mill and a juice machine. We've got a lawnmower, a mixer, and an electric stove. We've got a car and a moped. With all these modern appliances, it makes one say that the forest center is not like a forest center anymore. Sayadaw wanted it to be this complete and comfortable. He is working to make it that way, too. With everything in place, the people using it must be comfortable. No doubt it is due to Sayadaw's noble goodwill and lovingkindness that he so desires all of the monks, nuns, and lay people, from this country and abroad to be fully comfortable. Most of the things Sayadaw wants to happen come to pass.

Seeing that, the author could not help but note, "Oh, how strong his loving desire for others happiness is!"

THE EMBLEM

"U Dhammika, where have you read the definition of the word 'dhammacakka'?" Sayadaw asked me. It wasn't because he didn't know that he asked. Most likely, he wanted to see whether the author knew. I guess he wanted to explain it if I didn't know.

I answered, "I've read it in the Commentary on the A?guttara Nikâya, Bhante. I think it's also in the Great Commentary on the Vinaya, Bhante."

Apparently, he was just testing how much of the Canonical literature I had really read. It is evident that Sayadaw really appreciates the word 'dhammacakka'. He explained its meaning.

" 'Cakka' means wheel. It is because the five faculties, saddhâ (faith), vîriya (energy), sati (mindfulness), samâdhi (concentration), and pa?ña (wisdom), revolve like a wheel that they are called the dhammacakka. They are called the five controlling faculties or forces. What is the Pâli for 'controlling faculties'?"

"Indriya, Bhante."

Sayadaw was asking these questions of the author while he stood in front of the Tha Tun Aung Building. I stood with hands together at my chest, answering. Sayadaw said I was correct.

"What is force?"

"Bala, Bhante."

"That's correct. They are called the five Indriya or the five Bala, aren't they?"

"It's true, Bhante."

"In Myanmar you just say 'the five controlling faculties or forces' don't you?"

Although Sayadaw is familiar with the Myanmar, he has an strong inclination to translate the Pâli words which people don't know the meaning of. He wants one to know the precise meaning.

"These five controlling faculties or forces have to be revolving in us. One needs to have a foundation of sîla (morality) in order for them to be able to turn. Only with pure sîla will these five faculties be able to revolve. Isn't that true?"

"It's true, Bhante."

When Sayadaw elaborates the meaning of the words 'controlling faculties' and 'forces', he has a habit of giving a very elaborate explanation. He often speaks for many days explaining the meaning of those controlling faculties or forces and their types. He is apt to include their characteristics, their function, and their. Since he brings together the theoretical and the experiential aspects, it is meaty and engaging. Anybody who can read the scriptures can talk about the theoretical aspect. There is no way one who doesn't have first-hand experience could talk about the experiential aspects, though. It is a uncommon ability to be able to give explanations including first-hand experience. It is not easy at all.

It was after Sayadaw had given that explanation to the author that the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha emblem came to be. That symbol has come to be on all six cars, on all the books, buttons, gates, key-chains, and mopeds. There are five facets around that wheel of that emblem and there is one in the middle. All together, six facets. The word written on the middle one is "Sîla". The color of that middle portion is white. It means that sîla (morality) must be pure. It means that only with pure sîla are the five controlling faculties able to roll along.

Of the other five facets, on the one at the top is written the word "pañña". That one is colored yellow. Deep yellow. Yellow stands for radiance. The meaning is that that wisdom is luminous. It is true. Don't they say, "Paññasamâ Âbhâ natthi: there is no radiance like that of wisdom"? There are two aspects to the right of the aspect of pañña and two to the left. On the right side, the upper one bears the word "Saddhâ". That one is colored light blue. It is a clear blue. With saddhâ (faith), the mind stays clear, he says. Of the two facets on the right, on the lower one is written the little word "Vîriya". That facet is red. Red means courage. Vîriya is the courage to face and surmount whatever difficulty may come. With vîriya, the mind is courageous indeed.

On the left side, the lower facet bears the word "Sati". It is yogi-color: brown. The meaning of the brown worn by yogis [in Myanmar] is that with continual mindfulness, the mind keeps on repelling and rejecting the kilesas (defilements). Of the two left-hand facets, on the upper one is written the word "Samâdhi". It's color is deep blue. Deep-blue refers to steadiness, serenity. With samâdhi, the mind is peaceful and stable.

If you want pañña to illuminate the mental processes, strive to keep your sila pure, he says. Only then may the mind be cleared by faith. Then, with vîriya, the mind may become courageous. Next, with samâdhi, the mind becomes serene. Only then will radiance of pañña shine forth. The more illuminating the radiance of pañña, the stronger saddha becomes. The more the radiance of pañña shines forth, the more clear the mind becomes. As saddha increases, vîriya develops. As vîriya increases, sati develops. And sati increases, samâdhi develops. As samâdhi increases, pañña develops, as well. Beginning with saddha, they all increase once again. They turn just like a wheel. That is called the "dhammacakka-dhammachakra".

Sons and daughters of the Buddha must strive to keep the controlling faculties turning in ourselves. It is as a reminder, a wake-up call, "May you be able to strive!", that Sayadaw has this used as the emblem of the Panditârâma Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. People make all sorts of emblems according to their taste. Sayadaw devised this emblem to illustrate the meaning of the word "dhammacakka-dhammachakra".

With this emblem, Sayadaw wants to urge us to please:

- ❖ Strive to make our sîla pure.
- ❖ Strive with saddhâ to clear the mind.
- ❖ Strive with vîriya to make our mind courageous.
- ❖ Strive with sati not to accept kilesâs into the mind.
- ❖ Strive with samâdhi to make the mind steady and serene.
- ❖ Strive with pañña to illuminate the mind.

THE NAME

"I know 'Pandita'. What is 'Râma'?" he asked.

When we first came to the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha there were two young workers. It was one of them who asked this question. He pronounced it 'yâma'. In Myanmar, the character used for the 'r' sound in Pâli is pronounced 'y' in Burmese. In pronouncing Pâli and English, though, one has to pronounce that character as 'r'. The name is written 'Panditârâma' on the sign at the entrance, on the signs on the street and on the cars.

'Panditârâma' is a conjunction of two words, 'pandita' and 'ârâma'. 'Pandita' refers to Sayadaw U Pandita. 'Ârâma' means a monastery. Most will conclude it that way. That's the meaning they will take. There have certainly been these kind of names in the past. The Visuddhârâma was the monastery of Sayadaw U Visudda. The Dhammikârâma was Sayadaw U Dhammika's monastery. Janitârâma was the monastery of U Janita. Most Myanmarers will have heard these names before. Most will take the meaning of Panditârâma as 'Sayadaw U Pandita's monastery'.

Sayadaw U Pandita, though, does not give it this meaning. This is how he explains the meaning:

"Those wise people who can discern beneficial from unbeneficial, appropriate from inappropriate, are called 'pandita'. Young people who have the wisdom which can discern beneficial from unbeneficial, appropriate from inappropriate, are called 'pandita', too. Middle aged people are 'pandita'. Elders are also 'pandita'. Men are 'pandita' and women are 'pandita'. Nuns, novices, monks, and Sayadaws are 'pandita'. Whether from this country or abroad, whomever they may be, those who have the wisdom which can discern beneficial from unbeneficial, appropriate from inappropriate, are 'pandita'," he says.

Thus, the word 'pandita' does not refer to just the Panditârâma Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw U Panditâbhivamsa after all. It's quite expansive. The way Sayadaw gives the meaning is not like others, his is unique. This is how he gives the meaning of the word 'Ârâma'.

"Ârâma means a place of happiness."

There are many kinds of happiness in the world. There is the happiness of having sons, daughters, the happiness of having wives and husbands, and the happiness having of things, and so on. The kind of happiness contained in the word 'Ârâma' is not of that kind, he says. It is the happiness of the Dhamma. The happiness of having children and so on is not free of harm. The happiness of the Dhamma is a happiness free of harm, he

says. Thus, 'Panditârâma' means "The place of happiness of those with the wisdom which can discern beneficial from unbeneficial, appropriate from inappropriate".

Besides "Panditârâma", we use the name "Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha". The name of the part of town where this Sâsana Yeiktha is stands is "Shwe Taung Gon (Golden Hill)". The words 'Sâsana Yeiktha' were taken from the name of the meditation center of our Endless Benefactor the great Mahasi Sayadaw. It is a sign that Sayadaw values the words used by his teacher as he cherishes his teacher, the Mahasi Sayadaw himself. It was given the name 'Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha' to include the location and the word used by his teacher. It is a beautiful name, with a great meaning. Thus, I do believe, it will roll of people's tongues. It's well-known.

Sayadaw even has an explanation of the meaning of the words "Sâsana Yeiktha".

"The Pâli word 'assama' is translated as 'monastery'. The root meaning of that word 'assama' is 'place where the kilesâs are extinguished vigorously'. It's called a 'yiektha' in Myanmar, [literally 'a pleasant shade', though it is used to refer to a meditation center].

There are three categories of kilesas (defilements), course, intermediate, and fine. The course kilesas are called 'vîtikkama kilesas' in Pâli. These impel unskillful physical and verbal actions. How are these course kilesas extinguished? They must be extinguished with the teachings of sîla (morality). When these are extinguished, verbal and mental actions will no longer be untamed and uncouth, but rather will become gentle, civilized.

The intermediate kilesas are called 'pariyupphana kilesas' in Pâli. These break out and rampage in the mind itself. How are these intermediate kilesas extinguished? They must be extinguished with the teachings of samâdhi (concentration). When they are extinguished, the mind is no longer untamed, but becomes civilized.

The fine kilesas are called 'Anusaya kilesas' in Pâli. These kilesas are like seeds. When a cause arises, these kilesas have potential to occur. How are these fine kilesas extinguished? They must be extinguished with the teachings of pañña (wisdom). There are two types of pañña, though. Vipassana pañña and magga (path) pañña. [Magga pañña refers to the wisdom which arises when the four stages of enlightenment are reached]. With the teachings of vipassana pañña, the fine kilesas are extinguished temporarily. With the attainment of magga pañña the fine kilesas are extinguished permanently," he says.

We can regard the word "Sâsana Yeiktha" as an synopsis of this explanation of Sayadaw's.

"Sâsana Yeiktha" means:

*A place where the course kilesas are extinguished vigorously with the teachings of sîla.

*A place where the intermediate kilesas are extinguished vigorously with the teachings of samâdhi.

*A place where the fine kilesas are extinguished vigorously with the teachings of pañña.

In accord with Sayadaw's explanation of the meaning of the name, there are now at the Panditârâma Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha a great many young, middle aged, and elderly pandita, men and women pandita, nun, novice, monk, and Sayadaw panditas who come and are happy with the Dhamma.

The course kilesas are extinguished vigorously with the teachings of sîla. The intermediate kilesas are extinguished vigorously with the teachings of samâdhi. The fine kilesas are extinguished vigorously with the teachings of pañña.

GREAT IN GLORY

"It's embarrassing not to have accepted someone whom the Shwe U Min Sayadaw himself brought to enroll here. In future, when the Shwe U Min Sayadaw brings someone here, please accept the person."

It happened at a time when Sayadaw was abroad on a Dhamma teaching trip. The Shwe U Min Sayadaw came personally to the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha to enroll one nun. Because one Nâyaka Sayadaw rejected her, she unfortunately left without getting permission to stay. If she were an ordinary nun, Shwe U Min Sayadaw probably wouldn't have come personally to enroll her. This nun had won the first prize for nuns in the whole country for Pâli studies. She wanted to come to study for the final level of examinations at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. Her name was Ma Vûpasantâ. When she took the final level of examinations she also got the first prize among the nuns in all of Myanmar.

One can see how much Sayadaw respects the Shwe U Min Sayadaw from the words above. The Shwe U Min Sayadaw's Pâli name is U Kosalla. He lives in North Okkalâpa. Sayadaw goes to pay respects to the Shwe U Min Sayadaw, bringing donations with him. In particular he offers medicines. There are two Sayadaws in Yangon to whom Sayadaw goes to pay respects and make offerings. These are the Thabyekan Sayadaw U Vâse?phabhivamsa and the Shwe U Min Sayadaw U Kosalla. Both these two have the deep respect of many monks, novices and laypeople. They are so replete with respectable qualities that people respect them. There is one other Sayadaw to whom Sayadaw goes to pay respects. His name is U Paññasirî. He was Sayadaw's teacher for scriptural studies when Sayadaw was young. He lived in Paññalingâra Monastery in Thahketa. However, now both U Paññasirî and U Vâsethâbhivamsa have passed away. Only Shwe U Min Sayadaw is left. Shwe U Min Sayadaw is now age eighty-four, about nine years older than Sayadaw.

Sayadaw and the Shwe U Min Sayadaw lived together at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha. When Sayadaw came from the Kyaikkasan Monastery to practice meditation for the second time at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, he was thirty-four years old. He told the Kyaikkasan Sayadaw U Sucinda he was going to meditate for twenty days. When twenty days had become twenty years, Sayadaw U Sucinda is said to have remarked, "When U Pandita left he said he was going for twenty days. He's been gone twenty years and still hasn't come back." I guess he had been hoping his pupil would return. When Sayadaw meditated for the second time, Shwe U Min Sayadaw was carrying out duties as a Nâyaka at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha. Shwe U Min Sayadaw is said to have suggested to the great Mahasi Sayadaw that Sayadaw be made a Nâyaka. The great Mahasi Sayadaw accepted Shwe U Min Sayadaw's advice and appointed Sayadaw as a Nâyaka. When Shwe U Min Sayadaw lived together with Sayadaw at Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, he seemed to look after Sayadaw like a little brother. At that time Shwe U Min Sayadaw would have

been about forty-three years old. In the Chantha Myaing Building where he now lives, Sayadaw has hung an enlargement of a photo of himself together with Shwe U Min Sayadaw. The photo is brilliant to look at. In this photo they are both thin. Sayadaw has now become quite fat, but Shwe U Min Sayadaw is still thin. This photo seems to have been taken when the Sayadaws were both Nâyakas at Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha. They were both still young.

Sayadaw was the youngest of the Nâyakas for sure. Thirty-four years old is quite young. Although he was the youngest, he carried out his responsibilities brilliantly. Both his elder brothers, the senior Nâyakas, and his Dhamma father, the great Mahasi Sayadaw, relied on Sayadaw very much. After all, it was because he could carry out his tasks so well that they relied on him as much as they did. Because Sayadaw worked so effectively, even though he was young he could express his dissatisfaction to his students who were older than he. He wanted them to work as keenly as he did. Outside of the meditation center, Sayadaw had a reputation as someone with strict discipline who upheld the Vinaya. Many people, both laypersons and monks, talk about his strict discipline. I have heard many people who have meditated under this strict teacher speak with pride about how satisfied they are to have practiced like this.

One time, having heard that Shwe U Min Sayadaw's health had deteriorated to the point of being near death, Sayadaw came together with his disciples to pay his respects. But when he saw Shwe U Min Sayadaw, the situation was not as he had heard. Sayadaw was very happy to see that Shwe U Min Sayadaw was well, contrary to what he had heard. He gave Shwe U Min Sayadaw words of encouragement. Shwe U Min Sayadaw comes to Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. His coming is purely of a supportive nature. When Shwe U Min Sayadaw comes, Sayadaw receives him very gladly and pays respects to him. He personally goes around to show him the center's buildings.

In 1990, Sayadaw left the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha and went to the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery to meditate for two or three months. Shwe U Min Sayadaw didn't seem to have been satisfied that Sayadaw spent all his time working only for the benefit of others. He seemed to want Sayadaw to make effort to take more time for himself. Shwe U Min Sayadaw himself takes two or three months every year to meditate. He wanted Sayadaw to make effort to be able to have the opportunity just as he did. For this reason he seems to have urged Sayadaw on many occasions to take more time for himself. He was very happy and satisfied when, just as he had wanted, Sayadaw came to have the opportunity to meditate for a long time. Shwe U Min Sayadaw told Sayadaw, "Tell yourself, 'I have the opportunity to do great Dhamma work for myself,' and you'll be glad." Sayadaw probably was glad, just as Shwe U Min Sayadaw said. Those who saw Sayadaw's face on that occasion said, "It looked as though he had been meditating. His face was extraordinarily bright, clear and soft."

Sayadaw stayed at the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery as a schoolboy, as a novice and as a young monk under the protection of the most Venerable Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery Sayadaw U Kelâsa. It was said there were about eighty monks and novices studying there. There were big buildings also. Because of damage sustained during the war with Japan, the Sangha moved. Some disrobed. It came about that there were no monks and novices and no buildings there for a period of thirty years. After thirty years, when Sayadaw came to meditate, he taught the Dhamma to the lay people at their request. This year is designated the "Silver Jubilee" because it is the twenty-fifty anniversary of that retreat. Shwe U Min Sayadaw probably called 'Sâdhu' many times when, in 1990, Sayadaw returned to his true home, this auspicious ground, to meditate for three months. For many years, Shwe U Min Sayadaw has also come to the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery to meditate yearly for about three months. Just as the Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery happened to be the native soil for Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw's monastic education, it also became the auspicious ground for long-term, high-level meditation practice. Both Shwe U Min Sayadaw's and Sayadaw's centers are crowded with buildings, large and small. There are many yogis as well. Reverent supporters come in increasing numbers. It is for this reason that people say, "Their glory is great."

PÂLI NAMES

"Bhante, could I ask you a few little things I am wondering about?"

The supporter U Maung Maung Aye has a habit of coming to the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha every Monday and asking permission to ask me questions.

"If it's something I know, of course I will answer it. Please ask, please ask."

"Why is it that the word 'bhivamsa' is added on the end of our Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw's monk name?"

"The word is not 'bhivamsa', but rather 'abhivamsa'. In writing 'U Panditâbhivamsa', the two words 'abivamsa' and 'pandita' are combined, so it become 'Panditâbhivamsa'. It's like the way 'pandita' and 'ârama' combined become 'Panditârama'. 'Abivamsa' is a Pâli word meaning 'noble lineage', Devotee."

"That word 'abhivamsa' is not used for all monks. Is it a word which is used for those who have passed an examination?"

"That's correct."

"Which examination, Bhante?"

"It is an examination which is held in both Yangon and Mandalay. In Yangon, it is held by the Cetiyaigaña Association. In Mandalay, it is held by the Thakyathiha Association. Those who pass that examination use the title 'abivamsa'. Sayadaw passed the examination given in Yangon by the Cetiyaigaña Association. That is why his name is written 'U Panditâbhivamsa'."

"Well, I've got that one, Bhante. How about 'dhammâcariya', what is that, Bhante? Did Sayadaw pass the 'dhammâcariya' examination?"

"He did. That is an examination held by the government. It means 'Dhamma teacher'."

"What is the difference between 'dhammâcariya' and 'abhivamsa', Bhante?"

"The Abhivamsa test has two levels, student and teacher. At the student level there are subjects included in addition to those subjects included at the basic, the lower, middle and upper levels of the government examinations. The questions at the student level of the Abhivamsa are more difficult than those at the basic, lower, middle, and upper levels of the government examinations. The subjects included at the teacher level of the

Abhivamsa are the same as those on the government dhammasariya, however, the teacher Abhivamsa questions are more difficult. Only monks can take the Abhivamsa."

"People call Sayadaw 'Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Ovâdâsariya'. Does 'Ovâdâsariya' mean a Sayadaw who gives Ovâdâ (guidance), Bhante?"

"That's correct. 'Ovâdâsariya' is also a combination, of 'ovâda' and 'âsariya'."

"There's still a few more things I am wondering about. Would it be okay to continue with the questions, Bhante?"

"It's fine. Please ask. All you supporters need to know these words. It's not good just to be using the words and not understanding their meaning. You should understand them."

"The name of our Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Dhamma hall is so long I can't remember it. What is it called again, Bhante?"

"Sâdhujanatosanâ Dhammasabhâ Hall," I said.

"Please explain the meaning of that one, too, Bhante."

"'Sâdhu' means 'virtuous'; 'jana' means 'the people'; 'tosanâ' means 'giving joy'; 'dhammasabhâ' means 'a Dhamma assembly'. To give the gist of it, 'Sâdhujana' means 'the people who are virtuous' or 'the virtuous ones'. 'The Dhamma assembly hall giving joy to the virtuous ones,' I said.

"Inside the Sâdhujanatosanâ Dhammasabhâ Hall, there are rooms which have the word 'dhammasâkaccha room' inscribed on them. They are on the middle level. What is the meaning of that word, Bhante?"

"'Dhamma discussion rooms'. You can find the Kyauktan Sayadaw giving Dhamma interviews in those rooms. Don't you? A Dhamma interview is certainly a Dhamma discussion. To put it in terms everybody would understand, they are 'Dhamma interview rooms'."

"We certainly don't understand all these Pâli words which Sayadaw uses all over the place."

"The only way people will come to want to know the meanings of the Pâli words, and then ask and get to know them, is if Sayadaw makes use of them in visible ways. You are a member of the Theravâda Buddhist Institute (the lay organization of the center) so you would naturally understand the meaning of the name, no?"

"It's true. I do understand that one. How about the three-story ordination hall, what is its name, Bhante? If it's in Pâli, would you please explain its meaning?"

"The ordination hall is named 'Sâsanavilâsinî'. 'The ordination hall giving grace to the Sâsana', it means. Those who are ordained as noble monks in this ordination hall go on to do the practices of sîla (morality), samâdhi (concentration), and pañña (wisdom), in this way giving grace to the Sasana.

"There's another Pâli word used as an appellation at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, Bhante. The foreign women's building is called the 'Vidçsika Building'. What does it mean?"

"It means precisely the 'Foreign Women's Building'."

"Then there's still the 'Sakadçsika Building'. What's the meaning of that one, Bhante?"

"It means 'Native Women's Building'. It looks like Sayadaw is trying to get people familiar with the Pâli words. Weren't there Pâli names like Ariyâvâsa, Sanghâvâsa, Sukhâvâsa, Sâsanapâla, Sucitta, Mahâdhammacâri, and Sâsanamalavisodhanî at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, too? Sayadaw must be giving Pâli names to the buildings as the Mahasi Sayadaw did.

"The names of the Chan Tha Myaing Building, the Than Yi Myaing Building, and the Tha Htun Aung Building, though, are all in Burmese, aren't they, Bhante? These names are taken from the donors of the meditation center. Since those buildings were the benefaction of the couple U Chan Tha and Daw Than Yi from Mawlamyaing, they were given the names Than Yi Myaing and Chan Tha Myaing.

Bhante, what's the meaning of the 'baddanta' that's written in 'Baddanta Panditâbhivamsa, Bhante?"

" It means 'Venerable One' or, in Myanmar, 'Ashin'. That why you write 'Ashin Panditâbhivamsa'. In the literature, 'Âyasamâ Sâriputo' means 'Venerable Sâriputta'."

"Can I ask another which I am wondering about? In your name, apart from abhivamsa, there's another word 'Ala?kâra'. What is the meaning of that one? Why is it added on?"

"The little word 'Ala?kâra' is added because I passed the Mandalay Thamanythakyathiha examination. 'Alinkara' means 'a decoration'. It's also called the Thamanay Kyaw examination."

"Did you take Thamanay Kyaw as your pen name because you had passed that Thamanay Kyaw examination?"

"Indeed."

"Bhante, I am very glad you answered the things I wanted to know. May you work for the benefit of the noble Sâsana with health and happiness. Please excuse me, Bhante."

"Fine, fine."

LET'S GET PREPARED

"May only you body be fatigued. May your mind not be weary," he said.

I read these words in the introduction to the Mahasi Sayadaw's Ariyâvâsa Discourse. That introduction is a very good read. It makes you want to meditate. I have urged people who were not yet interested in meditation to try reading that introduction. After give it a read, they become interested in meditating. The introduction was written by Doctor U Myint Swe. When Dr. U Myint Swe fell ill and had to go to the hospital, some of the meditation teachers from the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha went to pay him a visit. I guess they went to visit him because of all their gratitude for the treatments he had given at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha. Among the Sayadaws who went to visit him was Sayadaw (Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw-to-be). With a serene face, Sayadaw looked at Doctor U Myint Swe and gave the words of advice above, "May only you body be fatigued. May your mind not be weary." Dr. U Myint Swe put it in that introduction.

When the author goes with Sayadaw to visit people who are ill, Sayadaw often says those very words. I've heard them many a time. At times such as when yogis experience dukkha vedanâ (unpleasant sensations), he says this, "When we meditate, unpleasant sensations, dukkha vedanâ keep on arising. They often arise. In accord with the maxim, 'Aware of arisings of the unpleasant kind, we relinquish control' we need to note them patiently and masterfully until we pass through them. In order pass through them with mastery we need to come to know those dukkha vedanâ, unpleasant sensations.

In noting to come to know them, the more we strive and are consistently aware of those unpleasant dukkha vedanâ, the more the noting mind penetrates. If we have not had that wisdom open for us before, we get obsessed with where it is painful and even more depressed, aching and hard, and our spirit is more apt to fall. We mustn't slacken. Note with concentration. If the more you note the more the pain, relax your mind a little and keep noting. If after increasing the mental energy again and noting, it doesn't relieve, relax the mind again. That's how we must do it.

If after working like that, it doesn't relieve, just put the attention on it for a moment, then let off for a moment. Note with even more concentration on the anchor. If it becomes painful again just boost the energy once and note. If it doesn't relieve, ease off for a moment. After noting many times like that, you come to increasingly know those little dukkha vedanâ.

Noting once, you come to know one moment. Noting twice, you come to know two moments. Having noted many many times, you come to exclusively experience the vedanâ. When that happens, you start to overcome the vedanâ. You become courageous. You come to clearly perceive the vedanâ disappearing over and over, too. Before, you thought they didn't disappear, now they've disappeared. You become gratified, saying "It's

so true that you have to note these vedenâ." You become courageous. That is called vîriya. Vîriya means becoming brave, becoming courageous.

When someone has been on the front lines in a victory against the enemy once, they naturally become encouraged to fight again. Courage comes. They are not hesitant anymore. When a yogi has engaged in battle and been victorious over lack of courage and spirit once, they naturally become encouraged to fight again. Courage comes. They challenge any unpleasant sensations which arise.

When a child is about to pass from one stage to another, such as from crawling to standing, they often have diarrhea and other unease. The transition is a kind of developmental progress. When yogis are about to progress from one stage of insight to the next, they often have unease. It is just the upheaval of progressing to a new level of insight," he says.

In his forty-one years of Dhamma teaching, Sayadaw must have spoken the words above and various others needed words time and again. No doubt there are many who have passed through dukkha vedenâ and have become accomplished in the practice as a result of these little words. In the Dhamma talks Sayadaw gave at one retreat in the U.S., compiled into the book *In This Very Life*, Sayadaw spoke of the many people who have been cured of illnesses through the practice.

"I have come across innumerable people who have recovered from chronic headaches, heart trouble, tuberculosis, even cancer and severe injuries sustained at an early age. Some of them had been declared incurable by doctors."

Most likely there are those who think, "Sayadaw just advises others to patiently note dukkha vedenâ. Does he really have the strength to be accepting with intense dukkha vedenâ himself?" I will just write of my own personal experience. I once went with Sayadaw when he gave a Dhamma talk in the town of Myeit. On that trip Sayadaw went to the home of a support from Myeit, U Pu. The author was also present. While Sayadaw was talking with U Pu, the subject of an ailment on Sayadaw's foot came up. It's an eczema, I think. U Pu talked of how his daughter, a doctor, had cured this type of ailment before. The daughter gave Sayadaw injections in more one place on his foot. When she stuck in the needle, red blood started to spurt from his foot. It was not just a little blood. Wanting to know how Sayadaw was experiencing it, I couldn't help but look up at Sayadaw's face. Sayadaw's expression did not change even a little bit. I couldn't see any screwing up his face, frowning, or grimacing at all. It was just serene as usual

I guess that ailment had been around a long time. It did not seem to be a comfortable way of getting an injection, either. Since the blood loss was not small, I am sure that Sayadaw must have been in pain. Yet, Sayadaw's expression did not change.

When I saw that, I took note, "Indeed, Sayadaw has great strength to accept intense dukkha vedenâ."

Apparently, that medicine was just the thing for Sayadaw's ailment. It disappeared once and for all. It has never come back again.

There is a course which all beings must inevitably go down. No one can avoid it. We must surely go. It is the course to maraõa, to death. The dukkha vedenâ one has to experience when death is near will be extremely intense, it is said. Having the strength to face those dukkha vedenâ with mindfulness, one will doubtless pass on to a good existence. Only if one cultivates the strength of mindfulness to be able to face dukkha vedenâ as intense as they are now, will it be sufficient. To put it in Sayadaw's words, "May only your body be fatigued. May your mind not be weary."

THREE WEEKS

Just as there are very highly learned people among those who come to meditate with Sayadaw, there are also uneducated ones. Just as there are those with great devotion to the Sâsana, there are those with no faith in it. Just as there are those who follow Sayadaw's instructions fully, there are those who don't follow them and those who refuse to follow them. Just as there are those who respect and think highly of Sayadaw, there are those who do not. Just as there are those who become filled with the Dhamma as Sayadaw desires, there are those who do not. Just as there are locals, there are also foreigners. Just as there are those wealthy in material things, there are those who suffer from poverty. Just as there are those with many possessions and little faith, there are those with few possessions and strong faith. Just as there are healthy ones, there are those whom doctors have pronounced incurable. Just as there are those older than Sayadaw, there are those who are younger than he. Just as there are elderly grandfathers and grandmothers, there are young ones. Just as there are the ruled, there are the rulers. Just as there are teachers and professors, there are students. Just as there are the sick, there are doctors. Just as there are upright and honest people, there are those who are not. Just as there are those who strive as students, there are those who intend to teach Sayadaw. Just as there are Myanmar people, there are non-Myanmars. There are those from all strata of society, of varying statuses, of diverse ethnicity, of all ages, of various religions, and of many different characters.

Over the period Sayadaw has been teaching Dhamma, he must have seen all kinds of yogis. Sayadaw says there are four types of yogis. These are: 1) swift and clear, 2) swift and vague, 3) slow and clear, 4) slow and vague. The 'swift and clear' yogis are those who, when they report their meditation experiences, do it rapidly and concisely. He says these yogis' speech and their meaning is clear. The 'swift and vague' yogis are those who, when they report their meditation experiences, do it rapidly, but their speech and their meaning is inextricable, vague. The 'slow and clear' yogis are those who, when they report their meditation experiences, do so slowly rather than rapidly, yet their speech and their meaning is clear. The 'slow and vague' yogis are those who, when they report their meditation experiences, do so slowly rather than rapidly, yet their speech and their meaning is inextricable, vague. Of these four kinds of yogis, the 'swift and clear' is the superior, the 'slow and vague' type is the most inferior, while the 'swift and vague' and the 'slow and clear' types fall in the middle.

I've heard Sayadaw say, "With the swift and clear yogis, if they put out energy in accord with the instructions, they are filled with the Dhamma in about three weeks."

When the author was a novice, about fifteen or sixteen years ago, I came across one of the Mahasi Sayadaw's Dhamma books. The title of the book was, "A Treatise on the Method of Vipassana Meditation Allowing Rapid Attainment of Magga, Phala, and Nibbâna (Path, Fruition, and Enlightenment)". That was the first book of the Mahasi

Sayadaw's which I had seen. I found myself condemning the unusual wording in part of the title, "Allowing Rapid Attainment". Other Sayadaws who teach the Dhamma are teaching in accord with the Buddha's method, too. The methods of meditation taught by other Vipassana meditation Sayadaws allow attainment of Magga, Phala, and Nibbâna, too. Thinking that saying that his own method of Vipassana meditation "allows rapid attainment" amounted to saying tooting his own horn, I faulted him. I thought it amounted to unwarranted extolling of his own method.

Later, when I tried practicing meditation first hand, I became interested in the Mahasi Sayadaw's Dhamma books and read them all. I remember one line of the Mahasi Sayadaw's that I read then. "The average for most people is roughly one month," he said. Among those who came to meditate at the meditation center of the Mahasi Sayadaw, there were those who were filled with the Dhamma in seven days. These were very few. Only those with very exceptional paramîs (perfections) could achieve that. There were also those who were filled with the Dhamma in fifteen or twenty days. Most, though, were filled with the Dhamma in a month. There were also those who due to limited wisdom or lack of effort who took longer than a month, he said. Reading these words of the Mahasi Sayadaw, my mind became very keen to test it out. So the day after I ordained as a monk, I went to the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha and practiced for month. It was then that I found myself interested in the unusual words in the title of the Mahasi Sayadaw's meditation treatise, "allowing rapid attainment of Magga, Phala, and Nibbâna". So I found myself straining all the time to hear anything that my benefactor, Sayadaw, might say regarding that issue. Only about twice have I heard Sayadaw speak the words, "with the swift and clear yogis, if they put out energy in accord with the instructions, they are filled with the Dhamma in about three weeks." Once was in this country and once was abroad. The author found himself wondering whether the slow and clear yogis might not also be filled with the Dhamma in just over three weeks if they really put out energy.

When Sayadaw teaches Dhamma, it is not as if it is just him teaching the practice to the yogis. Sayadaw also learns the practice from them. Once, Sayadaw said, "One doesn't acquire knowledge only from those with lots of it. One can also acquire knowledge from those with little of it themselves. A meditation teacher can get a great deal from yogis. When the yogis give Dhamma reports, one has to listen carefully and learn experientially."

Sayadaw wants yogis just to do their own work. When yogis pass by Sayadaw or he passes by them, some put their hands together at their chest in respect, or bow to him. At those times, Sayadaw tells them, "Just be aware of your own experience. Just do your own work." That's just Sayadaw's nature, to emphasize the Dhamma. He does not appreciate it at all if sounds disturb the yogis' Dhamma work. He takes care not to have cars driving in, horns honking, people's voices, footsteps, sounds of doors opening and closing, and such in places where the yogis are practicing. Sounds are a great

disturbance for meditating yogis. That's why Sayadaw takes care that not to let it get noisy.

If he sees yogis talking, Sayadaw often says, "Yogis, please do your own work." If he sees foreign yogis talking, he speaks to them in English. "No talking" he says. If he sees yogis looking here and there, he tells them, too, "Yogis, please look back at your self. Please do your own work." Sayadaw has given that type yogi the name, "chameleon yogi". When a chameleon wants to go from one place to another, it doesn't go in a straight line. Only after stopping and gazing around, stopping and gazing around, does it reach where it was going. Yogis should not go from place to place looking here and there, but rather should look about four paces ahead of themselves and continue noting all the way. When one doesn't do that, and instead looks here and there, one's like a chameleon.

Sayadaw strives with lovingkindness and goodwill to ensure that the yogis have no unfulfilled needs in eating and drinking, health and living arrangements and so on. If yogis do not put out energy in their meditation the way he does to make sure everything is adequate and suitable for them, he is apt to speak in a rather blunt and strict manner. In order that the yogis' wisdom develops, Sayadaw tightens them up when they need tightening. He loosens them up when they need loosening. When they need both loosening and tightening, he does both. When their need neither loosening nor tightening, he does neither. He does whatever their condition requires. There are a great many who have become filled with the wisdom of the Dhamma due to Sayadaw's various working strategies.

TO CUT WITH A KNIFE

During the period when Sayadaw was the guiding teacher of the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, Kyaswa Sayadaw U Lakkhana came to live at the center as a senior teacher. At that time, among the senior teachers, there was one who had a habit of speaking quite bluntly. After the Kyaswa Sayadaw had been there some time, he remarked once, "The guiding Sayadaw (U Pandita) doesn't speak one word in haste. He considers each word carefully. That other Sayadaw is just the opposite. If he were to take even half the time the guiding Sayadaw does to consider his words, it would great."

From time to time, Sayadaw's students are in situations which require some firm guidance. Yet, Sayadaw never speaks hastily. Sometimes he refrains from saying anything for an entire month, even as he sees the person day in and day out. It must be really difficult for Sayadaw to constantly restrain himself like that. It seems like there must be many times just ripe for speaking but, thinking it over, Sayadaw just keeps his silence.

Sayadaw does not make a habit of criticizing the character of people involved. Rather, he tends to explain the nature of the situation and give guidance by employing appropriate material from the Pâli Canon, the Commentary, and the Sub-Commentary. This is how he gives reminders and makes corrections. Sayadaw does not approve of teachers scolding and berating their students. He much prefers things to be explained in terms of cause and effect. Sayadaw makes a practice of teaching in this manner himself.

Once, the author found that he had to give some compassionate admonishment to a group of nuns whom he was tutoring. What the author had to say was correct, it was true, but the nuns had a hard time hearing it and they got a little upset. When Sayadaw heard about the situation, he called the author in to give him a description of the method of right speech practiced by the Buddha. Sayadaw described six possible kinds of speech:

- ❖ That which people don't like to hear and has no truth or benefit to it: Slandering a moral person, for example.
- ❖ That which people do like to hear, but which is not truthful and has no benefit: This category includes gossip, myths, and false statements about spiritual matters.
- ❖ That which people don't like to hear and is not beneficial, yet is true: Calling a thief a thief, for one.
- ❖ That which people do like to hear, and is truthful, but has no benefit: Hearing something from one person and then criticizing them when they are not present.

The Buddha did not engage in these first four types of speech. He did, however, in appropriate situations, employ the two types described below:

- ❖ That which people don't like to hear, yet is truthful and beneficial. This type includes various explanations of the direct nature of cause and effect: Counsel identifying unwholesome actions and lack of wholesome actions in one's past lives as the source of the suffering one experiences in the present life, warnings that current unwholesome actions and lack of wholesome actions will lead one to take birth in the four realms of woe and make it more difficult to free oneself from suffering, etc.
- ❖ That which people like to hear, is truthful and is beneficial: Conversation concerning generosity, morality, and meditation.

Not infrequently, Sayadaw explains it this way:

"In cutting with a knife, if you hack straight down in, your hand will get sore and the knife won't cut as well as it should. If, however, you give the blade a bit of an angle, the cut is clean and your hand doesn't get hurt."

Sometimes an indirect manner produces better results than a blunt remark. Sayadaw frequently exhorts his students to emulate the Buddha's admirable manner of speaking and reminds them of how to cut with a knife.

At the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, there are certain areas where contact with the public occurs, such as the dining hall and the office of the Theravâda Buddhist Institute. There, those responsible have to have dealings with the various people who come by. It is necessary, therefore, to take care to use courteous speech. If the speech of the people representing the meditation center is not appropriate and courteous, faith in the Dhamma will diminish in those who already have faith and will not be inspired in those who do not yet have faith. For this reason, Sayadaw has had the motto below framed and hung in both the dining hall and the office.

To Nourish Harmony
Sincere speech brings people together.
Kind speech brings people together.
Gentle speech brings people together.
Pithy speech brings people together.

Causes for the Disintegration of Harmony

Deceitful speech drives people apart.
Slandorous speech drives people apart.
Uncouth speech drives people apart.
Frivolous speech drives people apart.

Sayadaw's advice on right speech is in accordance with that of the Buddha. "Abstain from the four modes of wrong speech and practice the four modes of right speech," he says.

Sometimes when things get hectic and tiring, people find words coming out of their mouth which lead to disharmony. Sayadaw heard this kind of speech and saw the resulting disharmony. Thus he wanted people to try to use harmonious speech. Those who find themselves using disharmonious speech often don't know which kinds of speech are conducive to harmony, and which are destructive to it. Therefore, with the intention that they know, Sayadaw wrote this little maxim. Each and everyone should study these words and try to put them into practice when they speak.

Try hanging these words of advice up. If one's speech is at odds with these words, one has not yet got the benefit. It won't lead to harmony. Only if these words are truly put into practice when speaking will it lead to strong harmony. If one's speech is still at odds with these words after they are hung up, one might get sheepish enough to put them into practice.

KEEP A COOL HEAD

A bit of news reached the author from the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha in Yangon. "The son of your ordination sponsors has passed away in Mandalay," they said. My ordination sponsors from Mandalay have long since passed away. The son and daughter they left behind respectfully invited me to tell them if I needed anything. The son married Ma Khin Aung Aung Ngwe from Yangon. Two sons and a daughter were born to them. My ordination sponsors' daughter, on the other hand, is a free person. Ma Khin Nyunt Lwin, she is called. The son is Maung Ngwe. If the news I've received is correct, poor Maung Ngwe has passed on to the next life. His age is about the same as the author's. He would have been around forty. His family and friends are no doubt downhearted at a time like this. More than likely, they are being scorched by the fires of grief.

I decided that I will need to reach out to them with a letter bearing some words of inspiration, some words to cool the fires of their grief. Thus I found myself thinking again of some words of Dhamma which Sayadaw often says at times like this. I do hope that if I write them these words of Sayadaw's, their hearts will turn up and their fires of grief be extinguished. I am not the only one who has heard these sayings of Sayadaw's. Nonetheless, they are so unique that I can't help but remember them.

"All beings are on death row," he says.

How bizarre. Just like inmates on death row, all beings are on old age row, on pain row, he says. Now we have the words 'old age row, pain row'. It gets increasingly bizarre.

To clear up the meanings of "old age row, pain row, and death row," Sayadaw gives this explanation. "In the vast forest, there is a forest fire raging. It burns from the west and the north, from the south and the east. It approaches from every direction forming ring of fire. The forest creatures caught in the middle have no route to escape. They just suffer death. There's nothing they can do, the poor things.

All beings are like that. The fires of birth, aging, sickness, and death swarm around and scorch living beings. No matter where we run to, we cannot escape these fires. Thus, living beings are on old age row, on pain row, and on death row," he says.

The next illustration is so intriguing that having heard it once, it was stuck in the author's mind for life.

"You don't give someone coming out of the hot sun hot water to quench their thirst. You have to give them cool water," he says.

The analogy here is, "When you share wholesome merit with someone passing on to their next existence, and in great need of such good kamma, you don't share it with a mind burning with grief. You have to share merit with a cool, clear mind."

These words of Sayadaw's have the power to cool the fires of grief among those mourning. Those who hear these words are able to clear their grief away and share merit with a cool, clear mind. With mettâ (lovingkindness), the desire for the deceased to drink up the shared merits in peace arises strongly in the mourners. Hearing Sayadaw's analogy, understanding enters the hearts of those in mourning. Grief burns. Mettâ cools. One can't share merits with scorching heat. It is only possible to share merits with cool and calm. Thus, they share merits with a cool mind. It's very important to keep a cool mind while sharing merits. Sayadaw's analogy is a potent tool to encourage people to keep a cool head while sharing merits.

Another line that Sayadaw has a habit of saying in regard to one who has passed on to the next existence is from the Buddha. In Pâli, Sayadaw reads the words the Buddha spoke, and then explains the meaning. The Pâli goes, "Puññani paralokasmi?, patippha honti pâðina?."

In this place, most translate the word 'puñña' as 'good deed'. Sayadaw, though, reveals the root meaning. The root of the word 'puñña' is 'to purify the one's mental process and fulfill one's wishes'. Wholesome actions such as generosity, morality, and meditation purify the defiled mind of the doer of a wholesome action. Then it fulfills their wishes. This wholesome action supports the one who has passed away in their next life, it is said. The one who has just passed away did as much generosity, morality, and meditation as they could during their lifetime. Those good deeds will be their support, it is said.

Hearing these words, those left behind come to have a cool mind. The one who has passed away, as well, had all kinds of wholesome merit. All those wholesome actions flash in front of their eyes. Seeing that, they feel relieved for the one who has passed away. These words give strength to those left behind, too. It cools their minds.

Sayadaw often includes this next example. "The benefits of wholesome actions intended for the one who has deceased come back to the ones who do them, too. The one who has passed on does works to benefit those left behind, as much as the deceased one can. When someone repays someone they owe, their mind becomes light. When benefits come back to a benefactor, their mind becomes light, too. The account is settled. This amounts to continuing to preserve the tradition from the past of sharing merits with the deceased through good works.

Then, in accord with the words 'the dead give to the living', although the deceased won't give a 'here you are' along with the wholesome actions dedicated to them, because

they are done on account of the one who passed away, they are called good deeds given by the dead.

The author has gone many times with Sayadaw to celebrations of wholesome deeds dedicated to ones who have passed away. I have heard his standard routine many times. At those events, Sayadaw is apt to speak these very words. I have come to the conclusion that the audiences listening to those Dhamma talks get a chance to cool their fires of grief.

Just listening to the Dhamma of the Buddha clears worry. If it is practiced, it brings happiness. It brings great peace after practicing, as well. Thus, living beings being scorched by the hot fires of the kilesas should listen to the Buddha-Dhamma and practice it as well. Only in this way will the worry be cleared away and will we get a chance for happiness and peace.

Living beings have died countless times. Countless tears have fallen (because of crying) for the death of one's loved ones. We don't know how many times we will die in the future, nor how many tears will (fall) be shed. Until we know the Buddha-Dhamma, the cycle of death will continue on. The cycle of crying will continue. Those on old-age row continue to grow old. Those on pain row continue to suffer pain. Those death row continue to die.

WHOM CAN I ASK?

There is an intercom in my room at Yangon Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. It rang, so I picked it up. A voice spoke. It was Sayadaw. "U Dhammika -The Thabyekan Sayadaw has passed away. A sayadaw who could be depended on in the Sâsana has been lost. A sayadaw who was a true refuge is no more," he said.

Sayadaw had called me on the phone not long after hearing the news of the Thabyekan Sayadaw's passing away. There was a dejected sound in Sayadaw's voice, because he had nowhere to turn now that this true refuge of a sayadaw had passed away. He sounded as though he had lost something and felt badly. When I heard his voice the knowledge arose in me that Sayadaw had relied greatly on the Thabyekan Sayadaw. I felt sorry for him. When there were problems relating to the Tipitaka, Sayadaw had depended on Thabyekan Sayadaw very much. As much as Sayadaw relied on him, Thabyekan Sayadaw was learned. If you look at the book which I compiled, Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw's Questions and Thabyekan Sayadaw's Answers, you can find out how learned Thabyekan Sayadaw was, that Sayadaw U Pandita relied on him so much.

After Thabyekan Sayadaw had passed away and Sayadaw considered who he could ask, he was looking for a person to ask. In order to sound me out, he asked me also, "Whom should I ask?" Sayadaw has a strong inclination to ask questions. As the verse goes, "Don't inquire, and wisdom's eye goes blind; Investigate, and wisdom's light you'll find." Mahasi Sayadaw wrote this verse about the Buddha's reply to a question asked by Subhalulin. It is probably the case that Sayadaw asks questions to develop his wisdom, as the Buddha said. He poses questions to great sayadaws like Thabyekan Sayadaw and to young monks as well. When persons have finished meditating under Sayadaw's guidance and want to ask Sayadaw's permission to stay on, they should be ready to answer questions that sound out their attitudes, mental qualities, thoughts, vision and state of mind. Don't ask, "Does he ask questions?" He asks questions that would make your head spin. He questions meticulously. At first I didn't have to put up with being asked questions like this. But after I had stayed with Sayadaw for some time, he would ask me too quite a lot of investigative questions every time he had a chance. Sayadaw doesn't only question monks like me who are his disciples, he poses questions to all who approach him - nuns, men, women, old, young and middle-aged alike. There are questions to find out things he doesn't yet know, questions to reveal what he does know, questions for discussion, brief questions, argumentative questions, questions to presage a coming event and indirect questions.

Sayadaw doesn't only ask questions of local people. He also quizzes foreigners, themselves full of questions, so that they spin around and around. Even when foreigners ask Sayadaw a question, he turns it back to them without answering it.

I didn't think that foreigners, especially Westerners, would be afraid of Sayadaw during interviews. But what is really the case? They are intimidated indeed. Joseph Goldstein is an American meditation teacher and author who is very well-known in the West. He meditated under Sayadaw's guidance before and told this story. When he was meditating under Sayadaw's guidance, one night he was doing walking meditation. He was walking below Sayadaw's window. Inside Sayadaw's room, near the window, was a desk. On the desk was a lamp. When Joseph was doing walking meditation, he happened to look up at the window. He saw the lamp, but he thought it was Sayadaw U Pandita looking at him. Thinking it was Sayadaw U Pandita, he became afraid of the lamp. Fearfully, he resumed his walking practice. Even a truly famous meditation teacher may fear Sayadaw. The next morning when it was light, Joseph looked carefully and found that the thing which he had feared wasn't Sayadaw U Pandita after all. It was a lamp. At that point he laughed at himself.

Don't think that you can bluff when you report to Sayadaw. Probing here and there, Sayadaw will ask pointed questions. When that happens, local and foreign yogis alike get nervous and fall apart. Sayadaw is very meticulous when interviewing yogis. Sharon Salzberg is an American woman who teaches together with Joseph Goldstein. She is also a famous meditation teacher, and practiced under Sayadaw's guidance. One day, she came to report to Sayadaw. She sat down and bowed. When she bowed, her hair fell forward. She tossed her head to get her hair back in place. At that point Sayadaw asked her, "Yogi, did you note that?" He was asking about the movement of tossing her head. He asked her that because he knew she had forgotten to note the movement. She replied, "I didn't note it, Bhante." Sayadaw said, "Next time be mindful so as to note that." Sayadaw is truly meticulous. He isn't easy.

The next day Sharon returned to report to Sayadaw. She took up her pen to write down what Sayadaw had said. "That - did you not that? Yogi, can you write that?" Sayadaw is said to have asked her. When writing, also, one must be aware of writing, he meant.

Sayadaw isn't only like this during interviews. In other situations as well he asks questions meticulously. He gives time once a week for the foreigners to ask Dhamma-related questions. Both foreigners and local people attend. They ask Sayadaw a lot of questions. It is liable to make one's head spin, because just as Sayadaw's questions to others are many, as are his replies to other's questions. Sayadaw is cool and calm. He doesn't seem to find it a burden to answer other's questions. Sayadaw studies relevant matters so that the questions aren't burdensome. He also makes inquiries of great persons such as Thabyekan Sayadaw, you see. Just as Sayadaw's questions to others are many, so are the replies he has to give to others. Sayadaw's share of questions and answers doesn't seem unusual anymore. It has become ordinary.

Foreign women ask Sayadaw about the Bhikkhuni Sâsana. Foreign women want rights and privileges equal to those of men, you see. Sayadaw gave them an answer. However, Sayadaw preferred an answer from the Thabyekan Sayadaw more to his own. He had already asked Thabyekan Sayadaw the question, "Is it possible to have the Bhikkhuni Sâsana in the present day, or not?" It seems the Westerners also asked Sayadaw about the Bermuda Triangle. Sayadaw went to Thabyekan Sayadaw with this question and asked him to write a reply. "Now that I am old I've become very forgetful," Thabyekan Sayadaw said. While trying to write his reply, he died. His answer about the Bermuda Triangle was never written. For this reason Sayadaw lamented, "It's a shame not to have an answer about the Bermuda Triangle."

If Thabyekan Sayadaw were still alive, Sayadaw would still be asking him about what he wanted to know, and Thabyekan Sayadaw would still be giving him answers. But now that Thabyekan Sayadaw, whom he relied on, is no more, Sayadaw is without someone on whom to depend. He continues to look to see if he can find someone. "Whom can I ask?" he says.

WISE REFLECTION

"The Mahasi Sayadaw was very good at wise reflection. He could really use yoniso manasikâra," he says.

Sayadaw has spoken those words before. Since he lived for many years as a student of the Mahasi Sayadaw, he must know a great deal about his teacher's mind-set. Those of us who read the books of the Mahasi Sayadaw's discourses came on many little notes like, "If I had to come to a conclusion on this issue with yoniso manasikâra, this is how I would conclude". When we read that, we couldn't help but take note how the Mahasi Sayadaw decided things with wise reflection. No doubt Sayadaw knows methods of wise reflection of the Mahasi Sayadaw's which are not included in his books, too.

Some words of the Buddha concerned with wise reflection which I studied as a novice at the age of about fifteen come to mind. It is found in the A?gutara Nikâya, Ekanipata. It even comes off my tongue in Pâli.

"Yoniso bikkhave manasi karoto anuppannâceva kusalâ dhammâ uppajjanti, uppannâca kusalâ dhammâ biyyobâvâya vepullâya sa?vattanti"

"Monks, in those who practice wise reflection will arise wholesome dhammas which have not yet arisen and those which have arisen will be further cultivated," the Buddha said.

The wise ones use wise reflection in everything. Thus, in them wholesome Dhamma which have not yet arisen arise and those which have arisen are further cultivated. Sayadaw often gives one particular example of the Mahasi Sayadaw's method of wise reflection.

When Sayadaw went to pay respects to the Amarapura Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw, the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw spoke of how a monk from a meditation center had died and become a ghost [due to poor morality]. "You meditation monks had better watch what you're doing," he said. When Sayadaw came to see the Mahasi Sayadaw, he told him about it. I have read and taken note of what the Mahasi Sayadaw said in his book Legacy of Dhamma Advice.

"None of our branch Mahasi Sâsana meditation centers are near that monastery," he wrote.

In the book Legacy of Dhamma Advice, the name of the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw is not specifically mentioned. Not even Sayadaw, went to see the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw and reported the incident to the Mahasi Sayadaw, has his name mentioned. I only knew about it later, after we got to talking and Sayadaw told me about it.

The Mahasi Sayadaw continued, "I am sure that the that elder Sayadaw gave that reminder with good intention."

Looking at these words of the Mahasi Sayadaw, I take note of what Sayadaw said, "The Mahasi Sayadaw was very good at wise reflection. He could really use yoniso manasikâra."

I have a memory of one incident regarding Sayadaw's method of wise reflection. While he living as the guiding teacher at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, he went to the town of Myeit by plane to give a Dhamma talk. The author was among the monks who went with him. The lay assistant was Maung Khin Maung Htay. The plane arrived early in Myeit. When we got to the airport, we didn't see anyone who had come to pick us up. Maung Khin Maung Htay even searched all over the airport sure that there would be someone come to pick us up. We didn't find anyone. We didn't see a pick up car, either. So Maung Khin Maung Htay rented a car. The car he rented was a tiny little blue four-wheeler. That little car was quite old. Sayadaw sat in the front. The seat was rather torn. The author, sitting in the back, couldn't help feeling bad for Sayadaw. Maung Khin Maung Htay must have felt bad, too. Since there were no other cars to rent besides this, one, we had to use it anyway.

I couldn't help but think that if the car could only speak, perhaps it would say something like this, "Sayadaw, Bhante, I am so glad that a important Sayadaw like yourself is riding in a little, torn up car like myself, because this way I get a chance to carry you, Bhante. In Yangon I would have no opportunity to carry you around, Bhante. It has been many years since an important Sayadaw has ridden in a little, beat-up car like myself. In the town of Myeit, there are many cars better than myself, Bhante. Just this once, those good cars had bad kamma. A poor little car, myself, was the one with good kamma. Since I am not magnificent, I feel bad for you, Bhante."

I even found myself thinking that perhaps these words found their way into my thoughts from the car's, "chug, chug, chug, chug".

We arrived at the place Sayadaw was to stay. When we got there, the people who were to pick us up were still there, getting ready to go. The airplane had arrived earlier than usual. The people who were to pick us up were planning to pick us up at the regular time. That is how it happened that they hadn't gone to pick us up yet. The people who were preparing to pick us up came and paid respects to Sayadaw talking about how they had failed their responsibility and how bad they felt.

Sayadaw said with a smile, "I, on the other hand, am glad. If you had come and picked me up in grand style, it would have used up your time, energy, and money. For me, coming like this was free and easy. So I am quite pleased that it happened like this. So

don't feel bad. There was no dereliction of duty. You did your best not to. I have seen that for myself," and so on.

Then the their gloomy faces perked up like flowers freshened with water. They became joyful and glad. Sitting next to Sayadaw, seeing his smiling face, hearing the wise reflection in his words, and seeing the faces of the people who were to come pick us up, I made a note of how potent wise reflection is.

I came to understand more deeply the words, "Monks, in those who practice wise reflection will arise wholesome dhammas which have not yet arisen and those which have arisen will be further cultivated."

That is one of the ways Sayadaw uses wise reflection.

TO WORK FOR THE SÂSANA

"What is needed and what is appropriate, profoundly understanding those two, they did work for the Sâsana," he says.

Sayadaw has often said these words, back at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha as well as at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. I've heard him say it to the people who work in the kitchen as well as those from the office. I've listened to him say it in many different places to devotees, too. As an example of people who did work for the Sâsana with a profound understanding what was needed and what was appropriate, he tells of Anâthapiòà and Visâkhâ. These two were not only wealthy materially, they were rich in saddhâ (faith). Having become sotâpanas (stream-enterers, the first stage of enlightenment) as well, their faith must have been strong indeed. Those two profoundly understood what the monks of the Sangha needed and what was appropriate for them. They profoundly understood that what is donated to the Sangha must be needed and must be appropriate. With that understanding, they did works for the Sâsana. Their work was to the monks' hearts' content.

Thus, the people of the city of Sâvatthi wanted Anâthapiòà and Visâkhâ to come and conduct their dâna donation events. When those two didn't come, the event was not well attended. At events which they did come and conduct, it was always to the monks' hearts' content. Sayadaw often points out Anâthapiòà and Visâkhâ as an example of how to do work for the Sâsana. Sayadaw wants his student and devotees and all Myanmar Buddhists to be able to work for the Sâsana like Anâthapiòà and Visâkhâ.

It is not very easy to be able to do Sâsana work that is completely to the monks' hearts' content. Even millionaires have been unable to do Sâsana work to the satisfaction of the monks of the Sangha. It can only be done with abundant faith. There are many millionaires in the world. Are they all able to do Sâsana work to the monks' hearts' content? Their faith just average, not yet strong. Even if not quite as strong as Anâthapiòà and Visâkhâ, it can only be done with faith nearly as strong as theirs.

In Myanmar, there are many wealthy people with strong faith. Nonetheless, most are not still not able to do Sâsana work to the monks' hearts' content. They must understand much more of what is necessary and appropriate for the Sangha. For the most part, they do not yet understand correctly what is necessary and appropriate for the Sangha. They must understand profoundly. It cannot be done even with profound understanding of what is appropriate if the understanding of what is necessary is lacking. Both what is necessary and what is appropriate must be profoundly understood.

Among Sayadaw's devotees, there are those who are able to do Sâsana work in this way. Even if perhaps they are not quite up to the standard of Anâthapiòà and Visâkhâ, there are those nearly as capable as they.

Among the ten monks staying at the Panditârâma Shwe Taung Gon Forest Center this year (1996), there are eight foreigners: one Japanese, one Canadian, one from Holland, and the other five from Sri Lanka. There are two Malaysian nuns and one Japanese lady. There are also some Japanese among the male yogis. There are Americans, Australians, and Swiss. During the rest of the year, there still others from various nations. Daw Saw Yin Win and Ma Puòàacandâ have taken responsibility for cooking for the duration of this year. In about the middle of the rainy season, Ma Kyi Win and Ma Tin Tin Aung came to help out, too.

The author kept an eye on the foreign monks and nuns, and the male and female yogis. I did a little research, as well. They are very satisfied, pleased and happy with the nourishment from the dining hall. As a representative of the East, I asked the Sri Lankan monk U Dhammâjîva. He can speak Myanmar. He gave this analysis.

"The Westerners really give weight to cleanliness. They are very satisfied with the cleanliness of the plates and cups and such from the dining hall Daw Saw Yin Win is taking care of. The German nun Ujjotañani said that it's up to Western standards. It's in a very high state of neatness and cleanliness. You are seeing and experiencing it. We are seeing and experiencing it. All of us foreigners, Easterners and Westerners, second what the German nun said.

Daw Saw Yin Win really knows what is necessary and appropriate for the yogis. But she not only knows what is necessary and appropriate, she brings it about in full. She looks out for the yogis, not for herself. She doesn't care how exhausted she is. She just makes the yogis health and the fulfillment of their wishes her priority. She has a lot of work, and it gets hectic, too. She doesn't have much chance to rest. Her hands are almost never off her work. As many visitors as come, too, she looks after their happiness as well. With the goodwill she has in looking after them, the visitors' faith definitely grows. With growing faith, they donate breakfasts, lunches and kutis.

Westerners really prioritize food and drink. They are often quite fond of it. Those Westerners only appreciate food if it is clean, fresh, and nutritious. If the food is not that way, even if they are patient because you ask them to be, they'll only be patient once. They won't be coming back. If the food is not good, the news will spread, too.

Just as Daw Saw Yin Win has strong goodwill and faith, she sends mettâ that the yogis be happy. She is educated, too. Perhaps she was a teacher. She directs things that need to be directed. She can speak and organize well. It seems like that's the force of her goodwill, faith, and lovingkindness," he said.

Well, you've heard the analysis of U Dhammâjîva as the representative of the Easterners. As a representative of the Westerners, I asked U Vivekânanda. He replied in Myanmar thus, "Daw Saw Yin Win and Ma Puòàacanda are doing really good work here.

It wouldn't be possible without them. They play a key role. We support the plans and the work of those two one-hundred percent. In regard to their work with the food and drink, we foreign yogis are pleased and satisfied. It is to the foreign yogis' hearts' content."

Daw Saw Yin Win and Ma Puòàacanda are satipatthana yogis themselves. Thus, they have strong faith. Besides having done odd jobs for Sayadaw for many years, Daw Saw Yin Win worked in the kitchen at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha. That's another reason she knows what is needed by and appropriate for yogis and is adept at bringing it about. May they continue to be able to work for the Sâsana in accord with Sayadaw's advice.

DIE IF YOU WANT TO

"Let me beseech you in advance. I beg you, when they put me in the hospital because I am close to death, don't let them put me someplace where I will not be free of sahasayyâpatti offenses."

Thabyekan Sayadaw U Vaseppabhivamsa was put in Mingaladon Military Hospital because his physical condition was getting bad. Sayadaw went to see him and I accompanied him. Alas, the great Thabyekan Sayadaw didn't want to stay in the hospital. He very much wanted just to return to his monastery, the poor guy. He asked them to send him back. Whenever he had to urinate, the doctors made him do so while still in bed. Sayadaw-gyi wanted to go to the toilet to urinate. "I can get to the toilet," he said, and tried to do so. The doctors wouldn't permit him to move. Sayadaw-gyi wasn't used to urinating the way the doctors instructed him and found it very burdensome to have to urinate that way. He also seemed to be embarrassed to do so. It seemed to make him very tired, that he had to urinate and yet he couldn't do it the way he wanted. He seemed very worn-out. I felt quite sorry seeing Sayadaw-gyi. The monks and lay devotees who were taking care of Sayadaw-gyi had to carry out the doctors' instructions and were unable to follow Sayadaw-gyi's wishes.

At first it seemed we wouldn't be admitted, because the doctors had said that no one was to see Sayadaw-gyi. But then Sayadaw spoke and we were allowed to enter. Sayadaw saw Sayadaw-gyi's condition and said to him, "Venerable Sayadaw.... Now is the time when you must listen to the doctor's words, Bhante. Make up your mind and just do as the doctors tell you, Sir. Only if you do that will your illness be alleviated and your health return." As for me, I wasn't bold enough to watch Sayadaw-gyi tire himself so and wanted them to go along with Sayadaw-gyi's wishes. Because Sayadaw-gyi wanted to go himself to the toilet to urinate, he struggled when his disciples restrained him. He removed the hands that pulled at him and held him down. Perhaps Sayadaw-gyi was thinking, "My disciples aren't listening to me any more. They aren't following my wishes." Of course, wanting Sayadaw-gyi to recover his health, it wouldn't be appropriate for them to follow Sayadaw-gyi's wishes. I even found myself thinking, "If Sayadaw-gyi wants to go this badly, just let him go. He can go. Nothing will happen if he does."

While we were riding back from Mingaladon Military Hospital, Sayadaw spoke the words at the start of this chapter. Just as I felt compassion for the Thabyekan Sayadaw when Sayadaw spoke these words, I also felt compassion for Sayadaw and grew to respect him more. At the hospital, when a monk sleeps at night under the same roof as a woman, it amounts to sahasayyâpatti, a Vinaya offense. Hearing Sayadaw's request to be free of Vinaya offenses, I certainly respected him the more.

That was the last time Sayadaw saw the Thabyekan Sayadaw. When Sayadaw heard the news of Thabyekan Sayadaw's passing away, he said, "Yes, I thought he was

going to die, when I reflected on how much he wanted to return to his monastery." This hadn't occurred to me. I didn't think he would die when I saw Sayadaw-gyi in the hospital. The doctors had said the situation was critical, we heard. The doctors and Sayadaw were correct. He died the next day. When I heard that he had passed away, I was surprised and also felt a sense of loss. Sayadaw's sense of loss for the teacher on whom he had relied was greater. Every novice, monk and lay person who knew Sayadaw-gyi's worth felt a loss. Those who knew Sayadaw-gyi's worth more would surely miss him more. Sayadaw, who knew Sayadaw-gyi's worth better than anyone, felt the greatest loss.

I have seen the way Sayadaw upholds the Vinaya many times. Because he has observed the Vinaya rules carefully from an early age, Sayadaw can easily see when someone has shortcomings regarding upholding the training. Seeing an error, Sayadaw gives correction. When walking around the monastery, if he sees robes that are dry but still hanging in the sun, he has them put away. That amounts to not using the robes respectfully, a *dupparibhoga* offense. This is a Vinaya offense. When he sees a lower robe that has been sewn at the side (like a sarong) he has the seam pulled out. He strictly forbids the wearing of the *anthagaik aingyi* (a sort of undershirt for monks). Alms bowls aren't to be put near the edge of a shelf or someplace where they are likely to fall off. When Sayadaw sees this, he tells the monks not to place the bowl like that. He doesn't permit monks or novices who come to practice meditation to bring money with them. He also makes them discard articles that according to the Vinaya are to be discarded, or *nisaggiya*. Monks and novices who live at the *Yeiktha* are required to turn over any *navakamma*, or money intended for their requisites, to a *kappiya*. When an alms bowl is left to dry in the sun for a long time, Sayadaw has it put away. One can see that Sayadaw treats the Vinaya rules with great respect, from the most minor rules on up. Not only during the time I have stayed with Sayadaw, but also before I arrived, I have heard of Sayadaw's respect for the Vinaya.

I wanted to know what Sayadaw was like when he was young, so I asked *Nayaka Kyauktan Sayadaw*. *Kyauktan Sayadaw* said, "Sayadaw respected the Vinaya when he was young." *Kyauktan Sayadaw* himself treats the Vinaya with respect. Moreover, he is an expert in Vinaya matters. With *Kyauktan Sayadaw* speaking like this, it would be correct to say that Sayadaw has respected the Vinaya since he was young. Those who took refuge under the most Venerable Sayadaw of *Mahâbodhi Forest Monastery*, *U Kelâsa*, and other good teachers who upheld the Vinaya, would certainly become good disciples who upheld the Vinaya.

I recall some things that Sayadaw said in connection with *sîla*. It is easy to remember his examples. One wouldn't forget them. Sayadaw said, "*Sîla* is like a mouth. Only if there is a mouth can food enter the body. Only if food enters the body can it have energy. Only if there is the mouth of *sîla* can the food of *samâdhi* and *pa?ña* enter the mind. Only if the food of *samadhi* and *pañña* enter the mind will it be strong."

"When doing the Dhamma work which can develop the mind and cause wisdom to grow, one's physical and verbal behavior need to be pure and clean. If they aren't, the mind won't be pure either. When the mind is not pure, it can not develop, nor can wisdom grow."

"If a tree-branch is broken or withered, it can't bear fruit. It can't develop. In just the same way, if the branch of sîla is broken or withered, it cannot bear the fruits of Path and Fruition Knowledge. It cannot develop."

Sayadaw's request in anticipation of his death reminded me of a verse that we used to recite each day at Mahâgandayone Monastery before the Mahâgandâyone Sayadaw gave his morning talk.

The verse was, "Pâtimokkham visodhento, appeva jîvitam jahe/ Pa?ñattam lokanatena, na bhinde sîlasamvaram." - "May I follow Patimokkha sîla purely, laying down my life if necessary. I will not break the sîla which the great Teacher of the World laid down."

JUST ENOUGH

"If a young tree gets watered too heavily, its roots rot and it dies. If it doesn't get watered, it gets dehydrated, withers, and dies just the same. Keep that in mind."

This is one of Sayadaw's little sayings. Back when the nurse Daw Hla Myint was living at the Hse Main Gon Forest Meditation Center, she was looking after a young schoolboy. She was planning to support the boy to ordain as a novice and then send him off to a study monastery. That schoolboy helped take of the author's chores while I was practicing for a month at the Forest Center. That schoolboy ordained as a novice and attended the Buddhist Culture Course. After that, he was going to be sent to the branch of the Mahâgandâyone Monastery in South Dagon. On the day he was to go, the nuns got all his things ready. When the time for the car they were going in to leave got near, Sayadaw arrived and took a look at the things the boy was taking. He pointed out the things that were missing. He had the things that weren't really needed set aside. "There are a lot of robes and soap," he said. "If we're going to take him to a study monastery, we had better check the things he's taking carefully first." Then he mentioned the bit of advice above.

The author had heard this saying before when I accompanied Sayadaw on a trip to America. At that time, the Tathagata Meditation Center in San Jose had not yet come into being. It was the period when they were working to make it happen. A group of Vietnamese devotees in America requested Sayadaw to delegate U Dhammapiya to be the meditation teacher when the Tathagata Meditation Center opened. They said they would take responsibility for continuing with U Dammapiya's English lessons. These Vietnamese devotees had come from America and meditated under U Dammapiya when he was living in Malaysia. Thus, U Dammapiya had become their meditation teacher. They were really hoping to get their meditation teacher. It seemed like before they asked Sayadaw, they were worrying whether he would give his permission or not. They were really happy when Sayadaw did give his permission. They all started grinning. They would have the opportunity to support the teacher they really revered and rely on him for their spiritual development. Then, Sayadaw mentioned the words of advice above. Now Tathagata Meditation Center has come into being, and their teacher is living at their center as the meditation teacher. Sayadaw U Dammapiya is continuing with his English study. Sayadaw, too, has gone to the Tathagata Meditation Center to teach Dhamma for them.

When the time drew near for the car to leave to take the little novice to the Mahâgandâyone Monastery in South Dagon, Sayadaw asked one the novice one more thing. "Which class did you attend in the Buddhist Culture Course?"

"The middle class, Bhante," the novice replied.

"What grade did you get?" Sayadaw asked. Sayadaw asked about the novice's grade because he wanted to get an idea of his knowledge.

I replied, "He didn't pass, Bhante. He just got a consolation prize."

Then Sayadaw asked, "What grade have you passed in school?"

U Paññinda, who had been the novice's teacher, replied, "Third grade, Bhante,"

Sayadaw questioned the author, "Why did you have to put a third-grader in the middle class?".

Though he had been smiling before, when he said, "Why did you have to put a third-grader in the middle class?", Sayadaw's expression changed. His voice, too, became hard and loud.

There are four classes in the Buddhist Culture Foundation Course: The lower class, the middle class, the upper class and the advanced class. Children ages nine through twelve attend the lower class, ages thirteen through sixteen attend the middle class, and ages sixteen through eighteen attend the upper class. Children who have already passed the upper class attend the advanced class. The novice who got just a consolation prize in the middle class had turned thirteen. The author had thought that he would be able to keep up in the middle class. I came to that conclusion, in part, because he seemed like an intelligent young boy. Only when I saw on the register that he had gotten a consolation prize did I become convinced that I had been wrong in my assessment. I was even more convinced after Sayadaw's remark.

Another experience at Hse Main Gon Forest Meditation Center made me come to appreciate even more Sayadaw's comment, "Why did you have to put a third-grader in the middle class?" Another little girl attended the Buddhist Culture Foundation Course the same year (1996) as the novice who got the consolation prize. She was from Thay Hpyu Chaung Village. She was twelve and attending the primary class. All of the other children at the Buddhist Culture Course from Hse Min Gon village and Thay Hpyu Chaung village passed. She was the only one who got a consolation prize. She had left school while she was in the third grade, too. She, however, did not slacken her determination. "I will attend the Buddhist Culture Course another time. I want to repeat the primary class," she said. Often, children from rural villages really lack a strong education. This can also be due to financial problems. It is really too bad. Having had these kinds of experiences, Sayadaw has become acutely aware of this issue.

Sayadaw is helping children both in this rural area and in the city to enrich their Buddhist culture. Because he has heard how people are losing touch with their Buddhist culture, Sayadaw is striving to bring about a noble new generation endowed with Buddhist culture. The many kinds of afflictions dubbed 'social diseases' have already begun to break out. We need to come together to cure these diseases.

Sayadaw has an adage,

"Skilled physicians and specialists come together to concentrate and confer on a patient's recovery. They have discussions and they formulate a cure.

When people work to resolve a threat, as well, they must focus on the resolution and confer with each other. They must discuss the issues and search for a resolution."

Sayadaws, monks, parents, and children alike will have to come together with to work on a cure. Only then will these menacing social diseases be cured and will there peace and prosperity in Myanmar. A noble new generation endowed with Buddhist culture will arise. When this noble new generation arises, the culture of the people and of the nation will be enhanced. Sayadaw is trying with all his might in the hope of reaching that state. Sayadaw wants the monks, parents, and children to strive with this same attitude. The majority of Buddhists are not being vigilant, active, or dynamic. If even Myanmar Buddhists are not vigilant, not active, not dynamic in working for the progress of the Buddhist way of life, before long the nation of Myanmar will be disconnected from the Buddha-Sâsana. Those who wish Myanmar and the Sâsana, the Sâsana and Myanmar, to be always be united and strong, need to be exhorted to be vigilant, active, and dynamic in working for the progress of the Buddhist way of life.

BACTERIA

'Without food, live seven days, without water, live one morning,' we say. Without water, life cannot continue. "Without water, live one morning", means that if one doesn't drink water for about a day, one can die. Only if it is clean and fresh water can it keep living beings alive. If it is not fresh and clean, it will cause problems for those who drink it; it can even cause death.

At the Hse Main Gon Panditârâma Forest Center, there are reservoirs. There are wells and there are springs. Three wells were dug. None of them were unsuccessful. Water did not come out. The German monk U Vivekânanda, who has taken responsibility for water issues, made a special effort to get water. He worked hard to get the water clean and fresh, too. He and his party checked the water with Western assay methods. Only water which has been purified with a purifier is safe, they say. Boiled water is all right as well. Water which is mixed with that from the bathroom is not clean, they say.

The German monk U Vivekânanda, who has taken responsibility for water issues, and the American yogi Alan Jassby talked to Sayadaw about the results of their assay of the water. Sayadaw told them a story he had heard.

"Some Europeans went to Africa. While they were in the African jungle, they assayed the water from one pond. 'There are bacteria. This water is not clean. Don't drink it. You will probably get sick,' they said. Then, two of the Africans who had come with them, brushing away the debris on the top of the water with both hands, drank some water to show them. 'We have been drinking this water our whole lives, they said, 'and nothing has happened, either'.

Apparently, the Africans had immunity to the bacteria in that water. It must have been due to the fact that the people from Europe had no immunity. It's no doubt because their immune systems were different.

In Myanmar, too, in the Ayyawaddy River and the delta, people traveling in boats, steamships, etc., dump their excrement right in the water. If you think about it, it's not something you'd want to drink. Nevertheless, people use that water for drinking. It must be because Myanmar people have immunity to the bacteria in that water," he said.

Sayadaw gave this analysis, "In India in the Buddha's time, when the monks traveled, they had to take along water filters. When they traveled, they came on both clean and unclean water. If they thought it unclean, they had to filter it before drinking. Since microscopes like this to detect bacteria had not come about yet back then, they couldn't see the small bacteria. With the way it was back then, they were satisfied with water filters. Since microscopes to detect bacteria have come about now, we are afraid of the bacteria. There are bacteria in water everywhere. Nonetheless, since those who know

about disease causing bacteria are afraid, one has to try hard to have water as clean and fresh as possible.

Meditating yogis, on the other hand, have to give more priority to subduing the germs in our own mind-body process than to external germs. The inner germs are more dangerous. The inner kilesa germs are constantly tormenting us and causing us suffering. When noting mindfulness gets missed, they torment us indeed. They torment us both day and night. As the line goes, 'Sappâya kiriyâya sampâdeti: through proper action, one is perfected". Yogis must work as hard as possible to fill themselves with sîla, samâdhi and panña.

"There are seven suitable conditions. They are:

- ❖ suitable abode
- ❖ suitable village for almsround
- ❖ suitable speech
- ❖ suitable teacher and living companions
- ❖ suitable food
- ❖ suitable weather
- ❖ suitable sitting, walking, standing, and lying postures

If something is conducive to your Dhamma practice and to your health, it is appropriate. These seven are the seven types spoken of by the Buddha. We are striving to help fulfill these seven factors for the yogis.

- ❖ Be it a wooden, bamboo, or brick building, if it is fitting to live in, if it is quiet and so on, that is suitable abode.
- ❖ If one receives food, if there are not distractions, especially if distractions due to extraordinary objects do not occur, that is a suitable village for almsround.
- ❖ Speech which does not endanger the meditation practice is appropriate speech. The very best is to keep from speaking on issues other than the Dhamma without special cause.
- ❖ If there is progress in one's Dhamma practice due to the people one lives in contact with, those are suitable people.
- ❖ Food which is beneficial to one's health and one's Dhamma [practice] is suitable food.
- ❖ Whether it be a cool or a warm place, if it is good on the side of Dhamma and that of health, that is suitable weather.
- ❖ If one's meditation is better while sitting, sitting is a suitable posture. If one's meditation is better while standing, standing is a suitable posture. The other walking and lying postures are just the same."

"There is a statement by the Buddha which bears on the greater importance of subduing the inner germs than the outer ones.

A person is being pierced by an arrow. Before pulling out that arrow, subdue the kilesa germs of the false belief in self, he advised.

One person's head is being scorched by fire. Before putting out that fire, subdue the kilesa germs of the false belief in self, he advised.

Looking at these words of the Buddha's, the meaning one gets is that we must prioritize subduing the inner threats above the outer ones. To subdue the inner germs is of greater import," says Sayadaw.

Sayadaw is speaking to encourage people to come practice satipatthana. "Among footprints, elephants' are the biggest," he says. "In a home, the head is the leader. In the very same way, appamâda or satipatthana is the leader among wholesome actions." Thus, no matter how one travels to nibbâna, it is important to send as many nibbâna travelers as come along towards the satipa?phana station. If one intends to go to nibbâna, the end of the journey, one cannot avoid coming to the satipa?phana station. One must come. One can't pass it by. Remember that if one were to miss the satipa?phana station, the destination of nibbâna would be missed.

VINAYA

One Sayadaw who came to see the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw said, "The Vinaya is just a act. Though you want to do something, you have to pretend you don't. Though you want to say something, you have to pretend you don't." No doubt Sayadaw explained the issue to that Sayadaw. Since the author didn't get to hear the explanation, I don't know what he said.

Later, Sayadaw called a Sangha meeting regarding a particular issue. It was back at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha. Having got to chatting, Sayadaw asked the monks under his tutelage "Is it true that the Vinaya is just an act?" Sayadaw's students were not poor students, either. They all had passed at the very least the Dhammâcariya examination. Some had even passed an examination called the One-Pi?aka Examination [for which they learned by heart one entire basket of the three baskets of the Pâli Canon]. Some had passed the Cetiya?gaòà Abhivamsa or the Sakyasîha Abhivamsa. Some had passed the Aggamahâ Akyaw and some the Thamanay Kyaw examination. They were well qualified in pariyatti, scriptural study.

When Sayadaw asked that question, one sharp student answered right off the bat, "Sa?vara and sâdeyya are not the same, Bhante. Sâdeyya is pretense. Pretending to have virtues which one does not have oneself is sâdeyya. Sa?vara is restraint. Restraint to avoid finding oneself doing and saying things that, according to the Vinaya, should not be said or done is sa?vara, Bhante. It is not pretense, sâdeyya. Sa?vara is skillful. Sâdeyya is unskillful, Bhante."

The rest of the monks appreciated that quick and witty answer. Sayadaw did, too. The way he answered was very well said and clear. Though they probably could understand what he had said, perhaps it was because the other monks wouldn't have been able to answer as clearly that they stayed quiet. The monk who had answered so quickly and nimbly was U Vaòòitâla?karâbhivamsa. He has passed the Mandalay Thamanaysakyathiha (Thamanay Kyaw), the Cetiya?gaòadhammâsariya and the government dhammâcariya examinations. He lived at the Amarapura Mahâgandâyone Monastery. I seems that his pâramî to continue as a monk in the Sâsana was used up. He has become a lay person. These days, he acts as English translator for Sayadaw when necessary. Having gone to England and received a British academic certificate, he is teaching English classes, too.

I WON'T DIE UNDER THE WEIGHT OF A MAN

When the twelfth Shwegyin 'Possessor of the Sâsana', the Sagaing Shwe Hintha Sayadaw U Pandipathiri, passed away, before the Shwegyin Sect Sangha Meeting was to be held in Yangon, a preparatory meeting was held under the leadership of the monk who had become the thirteen Shwegyin 'Possessor of the Sâsana', the Nyaung Shwe Kan Gyi Pariyatti Study Monastery Sayadaw U Vimalâbhivamsa. Tipi?akadhara U Suma?galâlinkara was very active at that preparatory meeting. At that meeting we discussed, consulted, and coordinated issues. I saw the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw, the Cham Mye Yeiktha Sayadaw, and the Sadhammaransi Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw at that preparatory meeting. Those three Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaws participated and spoke their piece in the discussions. It is definitely something to say for the Shwegyin Sect that these three Sayadaws are members. It is proof that the blood of the sect is not cold. I was very glad to hear these Sayadaws interested and participating in the discussions.

Pegu Kya Hkat Wain Sayadaw U Jotipâla said that the purpose of the meeting should be stated clearly. Sayadaw U Pandita cited the Pâli, "Evam te (=upajjhâyasaddhivihârikâ) a?ñamañña? sagaravâ sappatiassâ sabâga vuttino viharantâ imasami? dhammavinaye vuddhi?, viruïï?, vepulla? âpajjissanti." He then elaborated its meaning "Teachers and students, fellow monks must respect and rely on one another. If they do, the Sâsana will grow, prosper, and expand."

We had yet to decide the issue of the date for the Sangha Meeting so the Sayadaws gave U Suma?galâlinkara the difficult task of talking to the Sayadaws at the Shwegyin Headquarters. "I would die under the weight of a tree trunk but I won't die under the weight of a man. If you go over and talk to them this issue will be done with," Sayadaw said. When the preparatory meeting was over, U Suma?galâlinkara came to Sayadaw with his hands together and said, "Your advice was really encouraging. In the future, please don't hesitate to advise me, Bhante."

After that meeting, when Sayadaw's student Maung Hla Myint came to his place, U Suma?galâlinkara said to him, "Maung Hla Myint, your Sayadaw is not like he was before. He's really changed. Before I found him quite fierce. Now he's become very gentle."

BROTHERS

The Pariyatti Study Monastery held a meditation retreat in the center of the village of Insein. So Sayadaw U Tilokâbhivamsa from there came and asked Sayadaw to give a Dhamma talk on one day. He asked what day Sayadaw would be able to come. U Tilokâbhivamsa told Sayadaw that the Saddhammaransî Sâsana Yeiktha Sayadaw and Kyopinkauk Sayadaw from the Mahasi Yeiktha were to come and honor them with their presence. Sayadaw has a great desire and appreciation for interest by the noble masters working in the field of Pariyatti (scriptural study) in the Pappipatti (meditation practice) side. Study monks come to Sayadaw's place regularly, Sayadaws, scripture teachers, and students.

When he meets Sayadaws and monks from the Pariyatti side, Sayadaw often says,

"We should all strive that it be a Pappipatti Sasana which does not lack Pariyatti and a Pariyatti Sâsana which does not lack Pappipatti. Theoretical study without practical experience and practice without theory should really just not come to be.

If the carriers of Pariyatti call the carriers of Pappipatti this and that, and the practice monks call the study monks this and that, we will be like brothers calling each other such and such.

As the Myanmar saying goes, 'Let us, father and son, make amends and sit down together'. Let us, brothers, amend such speech," he says.

Sayadaw spoke the words above to U Tilokâbhivamsa, too. Then, Sayadaw called for the Bilin Sayadaw and the author to come by his place. He introduced us to Sayadaw U Tilokâbhivamsa. He asked a great many questions of Sayadaw U Tilokâbhivamsa regarding his view of the Sâsana. On the day the retreat was opened, Sayadaw went with the senior teacher U Paññathami, who had just arrived from Australia. Being invited by the Kyaswa Monastery in Sagaing, he went there and honored them with his presence, too. The study monks have a good arsenal of knowledge. Only if those weapons are up to the battle against the kilesa enemies can they really be called good weapons. Sayadaw wishes that the noble masters of scriptural study may be possessors of good weapons.

PRESTIGE

At the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, there was a regular Saturday evening Dhamma talk sponsored by the Hitesî Board. The audience would come by from many districts of Yangon to listen. The 'working monks' took turns giving this Saturday evening Dhamma talk. They took turns giving the two o'clock Dhamma talk to the meditating yogis, as well. At the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha, the 'working monks' take turns giving a Dhamma talk at two o'clock in the afternoon. One time at the Mahasi center, it was the turn of U Dhammpiya, who has now gone to the U.S., turn to give Saturday evening Dhamma talk. I took note of one line that he spoke because I appreciated it so. Even now, I still remember it. That was the first time I had heard those words. They went,

"In doing work, it is more important to be faultless than to be prestigious."

His words are great. Very pithy. Very valuable. Very good to remember and follow, too. Hearing these words ones, they were stuck in the author's ear for the rest of my life.

Later I came to know that these words were advice from Sayadaw. Appreciating these words so, the author exhibited them as the very first in Sayadaw's Words of Advice, published in English as Raindrops in Hot Summer.

"Guòavante passanti janâ," it is written, "People with prestige are popular". Wanting to be thought highly of and be an object of interest, people often find themselves prioritizing prestige, unable to think of whether they themselves are faulty or faultless. Sayadaw gives that kind of people a reminder with the words above. Most people think that the essential things is not whether something is faulty or faultless, but rather that it be prestigious. That view is incorrect. Sayadaw point out the mistake and shows what is right.

"Just take care to be free of fault. It is important to be faultless," he says.
Don't wish for prestige. If one wishes for prestige, it is apt to disintegrate.
Don't work for prestige. If one works for prestige, it is apt to be lost.
Don't lust after prestige. If one lusts after prestige it is apt to be spoiled.
These words are advice from the Mahasi Sayadaw which I noted.

LIKE CLEANING A WOUND

Back at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, after they had passed the Dhammâsariya examination, Sayadaw had the monks under his tutelage study English. Just as there were well-known teachers such as U Tet Ko and U Aye Maung among those who taught them English, there were teachers such as U Hla Maung who had traveled to foreign nations and received degrees there. From time to time, people from other nations taught, too. People like Dr. Kyaw Thein, professor at the Computer University taught, as well. Among the teachers who taught us English, the most effective was U Aye Maung. He had us repeat the lessons he taught so that we assimilated them. He was satisfied only after we really got the lesson he was teaching. When his class time came, he didn't speak a single superfluous word but just taught. When he was done, he did not speak any superfluous words, either. He left straightaway after class. He is a famous academic professor indeed. He has written many books in Myanmar including Character and Environment. He has also translated some of the great Mahasi Sayadaw's books into English. He taught us with his translations of the Mahasi Sayadaw's books. That old man had passed seventy. Though he was old, his voice was strong. He had to come by bus to teach us, the poor guy.

He would prompt us with a sentence in Myanmar from the lesson he had finished teaching us. The student monks would have to repeat the sentence and follow it immediately with the English. If you didn't master the lesson, you wouldn't be able to do the second half. If you couldn't do it, he would get angry. Not being able to do it, some got scared of him and got discouraged. Actually, his was the most effective teaching. U Dhammapiya, who has now gone to the U.S., U Paññobasa in Canada, U Paññasîha in the U.S., U Sîlâvâra and U Uttara in India, U Âsa Âsara in Nepal, U Sumana in Sri Lanka, and Sayadaw's sometime translator U Hla Myint all studied English with U Aye Maung. Sayadaw urged the teachers to strive to teach us. Through the teachers, Sayadaw sized up how the students were doing.

Sayadaw said this to the teachers. "Your little son or daughter gets a cut. The wound gets filled with pus. Tight with puss, it is painful. Parents open up the wound to let the pus out so it can heal. When they open up the wound, it is undoubtedly painful for the child. Nonetheless, they have to overlook that and open it up so it can heal. Teaching English to these monks now is just the same. Please teach them exactly," he said.

DHAMMA BLOOD

Doctor Kyaw Thein, now rector at the Computer University, was formerly the president of Dîgarî College in Sittwe, Rakhain State. While he was carrying out his responsibilities as college president in Sittwe, he invited Sayadaw to come give a series of Dhamma talks. When Sayadaw went, Pyankapye Sayadaw U Japila and the author went with him. The lay assistant was Maung Khin Maung Htay. That time, we went to the cities of Sittwe, Myauk U, Kyauktaw, and Kyaukpyu. On another trip, we went to Thantwe. We also visited pagodas and the other places one has to go. We went the NgaPâli beach. Sayadaw even went wading in the ocean water. At the Mahamyatmuni Pagoda we saw the photograph of Sayadaw U Candramuni, who started the work to bring the Theravâda Sâsana back to Nepal. Sayadaw greatly appreciates Sayadaw U Candramuni's prowess in Sâsana work. Sayadaw U Candramuni was Rakhine. Rakhine men and women take the record in the area of keeping the blood of the Buddha-Sâsana from going cold. They are extremely zealous in protection against the threat of foreign religion. Sayadaw spoke illuminatingly and exhaustively, in many places in Sittwe, in Kyauktaw, Kyaukpyu, and in Santwe, about prowess in protection against the threat of foreign religion.

"Only this Buddha; only this Dhamma; only this Sangha," he said, urging them to strive to come to an unshakeable faith in the triple gem. He entreated them to meditate to the point of satisfaction with the practice of satipapphana. Not only there in the Rakhine State, but also when he went to the Karen State and the Shan State, the author came along. Sayadaw told the nationals of Myanmar to become related not only by worldly blood, but also by Dhamma blood. With the relation of Dhamma blood, the various ethnic groups goodwill for each other would be all the more solid, he said. Sayadaw appreciates unity between the ethnic groups. He has com to the conclusion that if they were to be related to one another by the guidance of the Buddha, Dhamma blood, they would be all the more unified.

When he went to the Rakhine State, there were many places he was to speak. One time, he was scheduled to speak in two places at once. That time, Sayadaw had Sayadaw U Japila give one of the Dhamma talks. Sayadaw even gave the precepts at the place where he couldn't speak himself. Then, he spoke this way,

"Though Shwe Man Tin Maung can't dance, I've brought with me a master with all the ability of a son of Shwe Man Tin Maung, a proficient speaker."

THE VISUDDHÂYONE METHOD

The great Mahâvisuddhâyone Sayadaw had a habit of asking his students to answer questions which came to him, Sayadaw told me once. A devotee from Australia named U Aung Lin asked nine questions of Sayadaw. U Dhammapiya, now in the U.S., U Pañabâsa, now in Canada, and the author were asked by Sayadaw to write answers. Sayadaw said that in the future he would do it like that and have us answer questions which came to him. Later, some questions came to Sayadaw. They were questions from a devotee in Taung Ngu. U Dhammapiya and the author had to answer those questions.

Sayadaw has not only had his students answer questions which came to him. The Mingun Tipipaka Nikaya Association published a book, The First Three Year's Journey. Back when they published The First Three Year's Journey, they included a chapter of words of advice received from the great Mahasi Sayadaw. Since the great Mahasi Sayadaw was no longer in evidence when that group published the Second, Third, and The Fourth Three Year's Journey, they asked Sayadaw for material for articles and put that in. Just as Sayadaw had his students answer questions which came to him, to give them practice, when they asked him for articles, he had his students write them, to give them practice.

When they asked Sayadaw for an article for The Second Three Year's Journey, he gave the responsibility for writing it to the author. Sayadaw explained what he wanted included in writing the article. He said to base it on the Dhamma Vihâri Sutta. The Dhamma Vihâri Sutta is found in the Pañcaka Nipâta of the Añguttara Nikaya. The article was named "Dhamma Vihâri" after the sutta. When they asked Sayadaw for an article for the The Third Three Year's Journey, the author had gone away to take a rest for health's sake. That article was written by U Vaòitâlañkârâbhivamsa. He also wrote it based on what Sayadaw wanted included. The name of that article was "With a Settled Mind". He is a great writer, too. The articles for the Second and The Third Three Year's Journey were written back at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha.

They asked Sayadaw for an article for The Fourth Three Year's Journey, too. By that time, Sayadaw had come to the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. That article, too, he had the author write. It was in accordance with Sayadaw's perspective. That article was called "A Little Blank to Fill In". Sayadaw also had the author write the article which they asked him for the Thapyekan Sayadaw's Abhidhaja Mahârañpaguru Memorial Book. Sayadaw told me the outline of what he wanted written. Calling on his students like this, Sayadaw is sharpening their abilities.

TO GIVE STRENGTH

At the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha there are nuns studying from this country and from abroad. There are nuns each year who are brilliantly successful due to the outstanding kamma, intelligence, and vîriya (energy). There are also nuns each year who see normal success due to their regular kamma, intelligence, and vîriya. Just as there are those who see success, there are those who fail. If they see success, they are apt to joyous. If they fail, they are apt to get discouraged. The scripture teachers and Sayadaw, as well, make a habit of giving encouraging words to those nuns who are discouraged because they failed. When one is feeling low, one needs to be given strength. It is a dose of medicine for those feeling blue. If people whose body is weak take medicine, their strength comes back. If you speak words of encouragement to people feeling depressed mentally, their mental strength is apt to come back.

Sayadaw has a habit of giving these word to nuns who have failed their examinations. He says one line.

"Though you didn't get the hare, you've mastered the woods."

"It's a Myanmar saying. A hunter does into the woods and tracks hares. He strives to follow them. He goes all over the woods, but he does not get a single hare. Not having got a single he hare, he has suffered a loss, you might say. He has not. He has gained a profit. That profit is his expertise in the woods. He's become a master woodsman. He knows what's is where in that wood, and how one must go. If one goes a certain way, he knows well where it is that one will end up.

It's just the same way with you nuns studying the scriptures. You strive to follow all along the class. You take the test. You don't pass. If you don't pass this year, you will surely the next. There is no loss for not having passed this year. You profit. You master your lessons. If you study again this year you will definitely be even more masterful. Being more masterful, you will pass with even higher marks. Try hard. Don't be discouraged."

Then, Sayadaw is apt to give encouragement with another Myanmar saying.

"Getting lost, a pothutaw gets more rice."

"Going around the town or village to accept donations of rice, a pothutaw (lay assistant who takes precepts and acts as a lay assistant at a monastery) gets lost because he does not know the way well. The more he walks, the more lost he gets. Being lost, he comes to this house and that house; he comes by a great many houses. Going by so many houses, the pothutaw gets a great deal of donations of food and rice from the householders. In the same way, getting lost in the examinations, the nuns surely gain a

great deal of the food, the knowledge of the scriptures. With greater knowledge, they are even stronger," he says.

BAYINNAUNG

There is one long bridge at the Hse Main Gon Forest Center. It was built to cross a large ravine. The long bridge stands in front of a large reservoir. To the east of the bridge, there are forty acres. To north of the reservoir are the men's facilities. To the south of the reservoir are the women's facilities. About in the middle of the long bridge running from east to west, an ordination-hall-on-the-water is to be built. If it has running water coming up about up to one's knee for all four months of the rainy season, it is said to be a 'ordination-hall-on-the-water'. Since with a ordination-hall-on-the-water, there's no need for clearing the space and designating as a sîma, according to the Vinaya, it is more fitting indeed. It will be built to the north of the bridge.

From the east side of the bridge to the edge of the property, a waling path has been constructed. To the north of the walking path, the men facilities are being constructed. To south, the women's facilities will be constructed. In building that bridge, trees and brush had to be cut and cleared from where it was to be built. The German monk and other foreigners wanted to give priority to environmental conservation. They said not to cut and clear the brush and trees. The leader of the bridge construction, Maung Khin Maung Aye, and the German monk and all presented and discussed their views on whether was right to cut or not. Despite not getting agreement from the German monk, and even without Sayadaw's permission, Maung Khin Maung Aye just planned and built it the way he thought best. The bridge is 380 feet in length and eight feet in width. It is stable and strong. Without the bridge, it would not be possible to cross from one side if the ravine to the other. Besides the bridge itself, a platform for sitting and resting was built on it's north side in one spot. It was built with a mango tree growing through the middle of the platform. It's great to sit and take a rest at that little sitting place.

Seeing the bridge and that little sitting area, Sayadaw was pleased. He was quite satisfied with the way Maung Khin Maung Aye faced and surmounted the difficulties to see the bridge successfully built. Watching that, Sayadaw recalled a battle which stands out in the history of Myanmar, the battle of Bayinnaung. To engage the mighty Hanthawatti army camped on one side of the Naung Yo Gorge, Bayinnaung and his men crossed the river on rafts. Reaching the far shore, Bayinnaung had his soldiers destroy the rafts.

"Just fight to win the battle. Don't contemplate retreat. Do not worry about that," was the attitude with which he had the rafts destroyed. Due to their courage in battle, they annihilated the enemy and rejoiced in the victory. That aside, Bayinnaug fought without waiting to have his royal umbrella. Standing on the bridge, gazing at it, Sayadaw said to Maung Khin Maung Aye, "Your plan was rather like Byinnaung's battle, destroying his rafts and fighting without his umbrella. Wasn't it?"

OVERSHADOWING

Only about a week after the great Mahasi Sayadaw had passed away, Sayadaw U Sujâtaka passed away at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha. When the great Mahasi Sâsana Sayadaw passed away, Sayadaw U Sujâtaka and Sayadaw became guiding teachers. With Sayadaw U Sujâtaka gone as well, Sayadaw was left as the only guiding teacher. When he first started to serve as guiding teacher, the responsibility was a heavy burden for Sayadaw to bear.

"How can I carry out these duties?" he thought to himself.

The responsibilities of being a guiding teacher at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha were not negligible at all. Thinking to himself, a line of the Buddha's came to Sayadaw's mind. It goes,

"Monks, the suttas, Vinaya, and Abhidhamma I have taught will be your teacher when I have gone."

Remembering these words, Sayadaw was encouraged by the thought, "There are indeed the discourses given by the great Mahasi Sayadaw, his words of guidance, his rules and discipline." He decided that he would work according to the great Mahasi Sayadaw's guidance. It was as if this great burden on his mind became light. He carried out the responsibility of being guiding teacher for seven years. Rather than its rapid decline, he was successful in continuing the work for the progress of the Sâsana both at home and abroad. Both lay people and ordained Sangha spoke in praise of the developments.

Whatever extremely famous meditation center or study monastery it may be, when the famed head Sayadaw passes on, many of the senior students who received his legacy will not be able to maintain the influence that the former Sayadaw had. As the author has, many wise monks and lay people have accepted that Sayadaw is not among those students unable to maintain the legacy. With tremendous admiration and respect for the great Mahasi Sayadaw, he went all out working according to the great Mahasi Sayadaw's guidance. I noted the words he said at the end of his seven years,

"When one plants a tree, though the variety, the soil, and the weather be right, if it is overshadowed, the tree will not be strong. In the Sâsana, as well, overshadowing threatens the Sâsana's vitality and strength. We must avoid overshadowing."

DECISION

I did not spend the rainy season of 1988 at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha. I went to Tankyi Mountain to take a rest for health's sake. Though I had spoken to Sayadaw asking permission to take a rest for the sake of my health before he went of on his teaching trip abroad to present the virtues of the Dhamma, he did not give me permission. After Sayadaw went abroad, the author had to go to Tankyi Mountain. Though the end of the rainy season came, my health had not improved as much as I had expected. The Tankyi Mountain Sayadaw and his devotees made sure that I lacked not one little thing. Though on that side everything was sufficient, my health had not yet improved as much as I had hoped, so I had to continue to stay and rest until the month of Pyatho. The Tankyi Mountain Sayadaw came with me to ask Sayadaw to allow me to stay.

Then the Tankyi Mountain Sayadaw spoke this way to Sayadaw, "Sayadaw, Bhante, I want to invite U Dhammika to come on my trip to the United States. It would be for about two months."

Sayadaw did not say a lot about this issue. What he did say was, "This is not an issue I will decide immediately. It is an issue I will decide only after due consideration."

The Tankyi Mountain Sayadaw did not say anything further either. Apparently he gave it up for lost. After the Tankyi Mountain Sayadaw had gone back, Sayadaw called the author to his room, Nâyaka Housing No. 2, and spoke to me.

"You, too, think about it, U Dhammika. You definitely have the ability to think for yourself. From here (on my part), too, there is a plan to get you experience abroad," he said.

The author isn't great at thinking in terms of the big picture. Nonetheless, I couldn't help but appreciate the way Sayadaw got right to the issue at hand without a lot of talk. The Tankyi Mountain Sayadaw did not tell the author beforehand that he would say that to Sayadaw, either. I only got to know of it when he spoke in front of Sayadaw. When I knew, I found myself wondering how Sayadaw would reply. Sayadaw cut right through the issue to finish it off. The way he did it was great, too. I can't say whether the Tankyi Sayadaw didn't feel comfortable continuing or didn't want to continue. He did not say anything more. It was decided.

VIPASSANÂ

Back on the first trip abroad the author accompanied Sayadaw on, we stayed one night at the cousin of the King of Thailand. At the Bangkok airport, she asked Sayadaw a question,

"If you were to give the most concise, the most clear explanation of the nature of vipassanâ possible, how would you do it?"

Sayadaw had the king's cousin open her palm and then make a fist. "What do you perceive?" he asked.

"I perceive tension and hardness, Bhante," the king's cousin answered.

Sayadaw had her spread her hand, "What do you perceive?" he asked again.

"I perceive loosening and movement, Bhante," she answered.

Sayadaw told her to slowly, minutely and mindfully make a fist and open it. "What do you perceive?" he asked again.

She answered, "Other than coming to perceive even more the tension and hardness, looseness and movement, I came to perceive hardness and softness, warmth and coolness."

"That kind looking to perceive the natures which are, as they are, is the work of vipassanâ," Sayadaw said. When he said that, she understood well the nature of vipassanâ. She was extremely pleased with Sayadaw's ability to give such an immediate and experiential explanation. Most people think that vipassanâ is extremely difficult work. It seemed that the Thai king's cousin had thought that way, too. Apparently, she concluded that though she had thought it difficult work before, now that Sayadaw had explained it, it was quite easy.

Sayadaw often explains it this way to Myanmar and foreign yogis if they need it. One time, a lady yogi from the town of Hinthata asked Sayadaw,

"If when I meditate this once more, it is not extraordinary, I don't intend to meditate anymore, Bhante."

Though Sayadaw said, "Just work as you are instructed, no doubt it will be extraordinary," that yogi didn't look like she accepted it. So, he had her clench and open her fist. He told her to do it once more, more slowly. He told her to do it more mindfully. He

asked for a response. Then, extremely satisfied, that yogi made effort in her meditation, I hear. That yogi's insight progressed, he stated. Her state of Dhamma changed, he said.

If one can explain the nature of vipassanâ (satipatthâna) so that it's clear and sticks in the ears of the one's listeners. They become interested and embrace it, and they get the benefits of meditation first-hand. That is a very gratifying thing to see happen.

No doubt there are many more just in the nation of Myanmar who are convinced that the great work of vipassanâ is such incredibly difficult work that it is out of their reach. In other nations not as well endowed with the teachings of satipa?phana as Myanmar there are doubtless a great many. Compared with the human population of the world, those who know about satipapphana must be very few. Thus, we really need many of those who can explain the work of vipassanâ with ease and clarity. With many such people the practice of vipassanâ could not but grow even further.

THE FOUNDATION

Sayadaw says this one again and again,

"Don't the teachers who have to teach the children at this Buddhist Culture Course find that it doesn't match their status?"

The teachers have all passed the dhammâcariya examination. Sayadaw is apparently asking whether they feel disregarded having to teach the course. He inquires this same way of the Sayadaws who teach the foreign and local nuns studying scriptures. After asking, Sayadaw continues,

"It is not just average teachers who teach the children in basic courses abroad, really senior teachers teach them. The reason is that the foundation is so very important." Here, too, the foundation is important. So it is great that these kind of fully qualified teachers are teaching the children. It is very beneficial. It is very effective.

At the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, the author had to read the kammavâcâ and be the counselor at many an ordination. Sometimes there were an extremely large number of monks-to-be. At the ordination sponsored by the Hitesî Board, there would be more than one hundred monks-to-be. Reading the kammavâcâ for those monks-to-be and giving them guidance was the most exhausting part. My throat was hoarse most mornings. It was tiring having to read the kammavâcâ with a sore throat. Having to keep reading it without a rest was tiring, too. It was not comfortable to have to give the new monks the Buddha's discipline when evening came, either. With many things to show them, how to wear the lower robe and the upper robe, how to hold the begging bowl, how to determine their things, and so on, it was not easy. I got even more exhausted in the evening when I was hungry. I can't say whether it's because he puts a lot of trust in me, but he certainly had me take a lot of those responsibilities.

When the author's benefactor the Tankyi Mountain Sayadaw, who sent me to Sayadaw's place, came to the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha, he told Sayadaw the author's wish, second hand. It was the wish that those responsibilities be slackened, if possible. Sayadaw spoke to the Tankyi Mountain Sayadaw like this, I hear, "I want to give these responsibilities to someone trustworthy. I want people who are expert in the basics to be handling these responsibilities." I couldn't help keeping an eye out to see whether the work would be slackened after the Tankyi Mountain Sayadaw spoke to Sayadaw. It was not. Sayadaw continued having me do it.

DEVOTION

On one trip to Rakhine state, we went to the town of Kyaukphyu. Sayadaw had me give an opening talk. I spoke about the great devotee Dhammika. It was difficult for the author to give a whole talk. Moreover, I had to memorize the outstanding Pâli passages from the story of Dhammika. I gave them more meaty stories than meaty Dhamma. Sayadaw does not have a habit of giving talks with meaty stories. He just talks extensively on the meat of the Dhamma. It is more difficult to get the essence of the Dhamma in than to give an enjoyable Dhamma talk.

When I had finished speaking, Sayadaw said, "I have so much to say I don't know what to put in my talk."

I thought to myself, "Oh, I have difficulty because I haven't enough to say. Sayadaw, on the other hand, has difficulty because he has too much to say. Oh, how very different we are."

Of course we are different. How much practice does he have? Don't they say 'Practice makes perfect'?. There is a one thing that Sayadaw said which I heard of second-hand. Sayadaw had an engagement to speak in the city. Having fixed up his robes, he was waiting for the car coming to pick him up. While he waited, he looked at the scriptures he was going to talk on. I heard that while he was looking at it, he said, "Looking at the translation of the Pâli now, I feel like a outcast who runs into his room and reads up on how to get love only when he sees a girl coming". Only when it was almost time for him to give the talk did he have the time to look at what he was doing to speak on. It must have been because the rest of the time, he was busy with Dhamma interviews and such.

They say that one time the great Mahasi Sayadaw called Sayadaw and told him to give a talk at the Kandawlay Pomye Dhamma hall. When the day he was to give the talk arrived, Sayadaw had serious fever. His students told him not to go speak because he was so sick, but Sayadaw did not agree. One did not get the impression that he wished to deviate from what the Mahasi Sayadaw had told him to do.

"I don't care about the fever, I will just go and speak," he was saying. He was not just slightly feverish, either. His temperature was running 103 degrees, I hear. The car arrived to take him to the talk. His students and lay assistants even told the devotee who came to take Sayadaw about his fever and asked him to make sure that the place he was to speak was not drafty. When he got to the place he was to speak, it was an open field. Where could he possibly be sheltered from the wind? They say he spoke, with that fever and no shelter from the wind, for a very long time. I don't know how many times he has met difficulties like this along the journey of his career giving Dhamma talks. Having practiced like this so many times and developed it, Sayadaw's capacity to give Dhamma

talks is very great indeed. He can really say that he has too much to say he doesn't know what to put in.

ONLY WITH PATIENCE

Going back to where I had lived was a heavy burden for the author. I was not motivated to pick back up the responsibilities I had held before. I found myself talking to Sayadaw about it over and over in my mind. Whether Sayadaw called me back or not, the things I wanted to say kept cropping up. I wondered how it could be any good to have the kind of life Sayadaw has talked of, "Breaking rocks in the hot sun". I felt really bad just imagining the things I wanted to say. Nonetheless, I couldn't help but think that it would be more beneficial to act in accordance with the wishes of Sayadaw, with his powerful foresight, than in accord with my own.

Sayadaw has a habit of coming to the Hse Main Gon Forest Center to give the Dhamma talk on Saturdays. The second day of the waning moon of Thitinkyut, though, was not a Saturday. It was a Tuesday. Though the Sayadaw living and teaching in Singapore, U Paññasâmi, had been to the Hse Main Gon Forest Center once before, he had a desire to come see it again when he wasn't in a rush before he went back to Singapore. That is why Sayadaw came together with U Paññasâmi on a Tuesday. He had the Singapore Sayadaw give a Dhamma talk. Without a translator, the Singapore Sayadaw gave his Dhamma talk in English to the foreign yogis. Sayadaw walked around and checked out the ongoing building of the facilities. The Singapore Sayadaw walked around and checked things out as much as he wished, too.

By six in the evening, Sayadaw had not yet gone back. When it was nearing the time for him to leave, he asked the aunt-niece pair who are taking turns taking care of things at the center, Ma Kyi Win and Ma Tin Tin Aung, how they were and how the work was going. They both talked of how it was all well and fine.

Sayadaw asked Ma Tin Tin Aung, "Why is it going well?"

Unable to answer, she just stayed silent.

"It is because you've the patience to make sure everything goes well, isn't?" said Sayadaw.

"That's true, Bhante," said Ma Tin Tin Aung.

Then Sayadaw continued, "There are things which repress good qualities, such as accusations from others. If one can't have patience with that, it is apt to wreck one's good virtues. We have to be patient with others accusations. If we can have patience with them, rather than being spoiled, our good virtues grow.

Another is others blaming one. That one, as well, often wrecks one's good virtues. The good virtues of those who have patience, though, can not be wrecked. So we have to be patient with that one, too.

Another is the discomforts of hot and cold weather. We must have patience with that as well, it is said. If we can not be patient with them, it is apt to wreck our good virtues.

Another is dangers such as venomous snakes and vipers. We have to be patient with those too, it is said. Yet another is rough and uncouth speech, which is not pleasant on the ears. We have to have patience with that one too, it is said. Rather than being spoiled, the good virtues of those who are able to have patience with these will grow.

This patience is called *adhivâsana-khanti*. It's root meaning is means the patience of bearing something on oneself. When one meets these kinds of things to be patient with, one doesn't turn around and deny them or react against it. One restrains oneself. That is *adhivâsana-khanti*.

There is the patience stemming from the wisdom of restraint, and there is the patience developed through meditation. The patience developed through meditation is stronger than that from the wisdom of restraint.

Without expecting others to be patient with oneself, we have to just be patient on our own part with others. Patience benefits both oneself and the other. Patience is extremely noble. Only noble ones can have patience. We have to develop patience through this kind of reasoning. Those who have strength of mind from doing the work of *satipapphana* daily can be patient with things easily. With that kind of patience towards things, one can be satisfied with anything," he said.

Not only Ma Kyi Win and Ma Tin Tin Aung, but also Ma Saw Yin Win, Ma Puòàacandâ (of Muttara), Ma Nimmala?ânî (of Nepal), Ma Nan, U Htay Myaing, and other people working around the center were listening to the words of advice which Sayadaw spoke. It was apparent that Sayadaw was giving advice to us all. Everyone was silent, listening intently with our hands together at our chests. In front of the author, the Shwebo Sayadaw U Nanda was listening. It seemed as if Sayadaw's words of guidance enhanced my mental strength. Sayadaw must have experienced these kinds of challenges to his patience many times over the course of his life's journey. It was evident that Sayadaw was speaking from personal experience and with his whole heart. Words spoken from personal experience clearly have more flavor. Words spoken without personal experience are like food without salt: bland.

In conclusion, Sayadaw said, "Only people who are happy can do these kinds of work for the center, those who are suffering cannot." He went on to explain the meaning of

the words, 'happy people'. "Be they man or woman, one who has the noble qualities of saddhâ and sîla, hirî and ottappa, suta, câga, and pa?ña is a happy person."

Sayadaw went on to explain the meaning of these seven qualities of the noble ones. [They translate as faith and morality, remorse and apprehension of harmful actions, quality of listening, generosity, and wisdom.]

How pleased were those workers at the center, thinking of their lives? Extremely glad. How gratifying were Sayadaw's words? They would know best. Looking up at their faces, I was reminded of Grandfather Moon shining at full moon. They rivaled his shine.

Sayadaw's words of advice on patience gave the author more strength, both mentally and physically, than multivitamins. Since I am taking a rest for my health's sake, I am taking medicine to give my mind and body strength. Though I am getting as much strength as I should be from them, I got more strength from Sayadaw's words of guidance.

When he was finished with his advice, Sayadaw turned to me and asked, "U Dhammika, do you need any more medicine?"

"I don't need any. I've got it, Bhante," I replied.

O.K.

Of all the mountains the author has climbed, the highest and hardest I have had to climb was the Zwegapin Mountain in Ba An Township, Karen State. That time in the Karen State was one of the many teaching trips Sayadaw took within this country to present the virtues of the Dhamma when he was living at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha. We stayed at the Mebaung Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha in Ba An and gave Dhamma talks. In Ba An, both Sayadaw and Pyankapye Sayadaw spoke. When Sayadaw went to Ba An, he wasn't far from turning seventy. When we went on this trip to Ba An, the Sayadaw now called Bilin Sayadaw, U Paññadîpa, had become a nâyaka (senior teacher) at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha. The lay assistant that time was Maung Khin Maung Htay.

All of us who came with Sayadaw, the Pyankapye Sayadaw, the Bilin Sayadaw, and the author, went off to climb Zwegapin Mountain. Sayadaw came, too. Sayadaw did not have any intention of climbing the mountain, but looking at all of us and getting inspired, he began to want to try climbing it. Besides the monks and novices coming along to give Sayadaw a when he needed it, they were lay devotees escorting Sayadaw on the climb, too. They were behind all of us. We started climbing around seven in the morning. The three of us monks were speeding along in the lead. Sayadaw was just going along at a normal pace. Sayadaw is rather plump. Moreover, he was only about three years off from age seventy, I think. So how could his body follow everywhere his mind went? Despite all that, since he was still able to climb to the summit of Zwegapin Mountain, at over seven thousand feet, you would have to say that wherever his mind went, his body was still following.

It was a long climb up Zwegapin Mountain, and in some places so steep as to be quite difficult. There were places to rest and catch one's breath. The Pyankapye Sayadaw, a monk mature in vassa and a dhammakathika title-holder, started to compose a little poem comparing the places he came upon while climbing the mountain with the progress of insight. When evening came, he gave a Dhamma talk using that poem. Though both the Pyankapye Sayadaw and the Bilin Sayadaw were over fifty, they were able to climb Zwegapin Mountain without too much difficulty and without getting very tired. As for the author, since I couldn't keep going on my feet, I had to bend down and climb on all fours. Even Sayadaw, nearing seventy, didn't have to climb on his hands and feet. However, he did vomit both on the ascent and the descent, the poor guy.

Despite his own suffering, Sayadaw asked with concern, "U Dhammika, your health is not good. How are you doing? Can you really keep on going?" We reached the peak just before twelve o'clock. Though we were all eating, poor Sayadaw, unable to eat, fell down on his back and rested. After resting a long time, we went down. The ascent was up one trail, the descent down another. Sayadaw wrote an entry in the log at the top of the mountain.

Nearing seventy, Sayadaw climbed Zwegapin Mountain as a test of his health. The result: O.K.!

THE LIBRARY

Sayadaw has collected many books, in great variety. He has them organized systematically. Library science professionals come and take care of it. His books are organized by subject. Numbers are attached to the spine of the books. Every one of Sayadaw's books is stamped with his government dhammâcariya examination seal and his Cetiyingaòà Pariyatti examination seal. Next to the author is the book *On the Path to Freedom*. It's Sayadaw's book. It bears the stamp, "Cetiyingaòà Paritatti Dhammâcariya Gaòavâcaka U Panditâbhivamsa, Yangon Cetiyingaòà Paritatti Association: 1314". From that stamp we know that Sayadaw passed the Cetiyingaòà Dhammâcariya examination (Abhivamsa degree) in 1314 (1952). The government dhammâcariya stamp reads, "U Pandita, Sâsana Dhajasirîpavara Dhammâcariya: 1313". From that stamp we know that Sayadaw passed the government dhammâcariya and the additional Myanmar Gounhtu section in 1313 (1951).

Sayadaw treats his books respectfully and wants others do the same. He doesn't like books being bent or pages being folded. He has many sets purchased of high-use books like the *Concise Myanmar Dictionary*, U Shwe Aung's books [on Buddhism], the *Pâli Canon*, the *Commentaries*, and the *Sub-Commentaries*, the *Stories of Wisdom* [a set of Myanmar children's books]. He has the lay assistants check to make sure no pages are missing before they buy a book. When has his students buy them, he asks if they know how to do it and teaches them if they don't.

In Sayadaw's library there is a diverse collection of books. There is a wide range of books related to the *Tipapaka*: the *Pali Canon* itself, the *Commentaries*, the *Sub-Commentaries* and so on. The *Canon* is put in one area, the *Commentaries* in another, the *Sub-Commentaries* in one area, the *Mahâgandâyone* Sayadaw's literature in another, the *Mahasi Sayadaw*' writings in one area and books in English in another. All the various books are arranged into sections by type.

There is the full *Pâli Canon*. One can find Sanskrit and Hindi literature, as well. There is a wide variety of Myanmar literature. There is literature of health, stories, magazines and so on. There is a lot of English literature. There are a variety of books published by the *London Pâli Text Society*. There are many very thick books in English. All together, they probably have about the value of an automobile, he says. There are Dhamma books in Korean and in Vietnamese. Besides the Myanmar literature, there are books in Mon and other national languages of Myanmar. Sayadaw receives *Time Magazine*, *Buddhist magazines*, and scientific journals every month. Sayadaw reads those carefully, too, studies and retains them. Sayadaw has given some books leather covers, and some plastic. When he reads, he uses reading glasses. He has a habit of reading with a reading lamp at night. If he talks when he is reading, he looks over the top of the glasses. Sayadaw reads widely. Thus, his speech, his talks, his thoughts, and his

decisions, draw on literature he has read. They do not lack literary ideas. His is a model for those who value literature. Books and literature are good friends of Sayadaw's.

HAPPINESS

Sayadaw arrived at the Hse Main Gon forest center about twelve noon. When he had arrived, he sat in a chair in the dining hall. He sat there all dressed up without undoing his formal robes. The sun was hot, and since the dining hall had a roof of galvanized steel, the amount of heat radiation was not insignificant. Near Sayadaw sat the monk U Nanda, the author, U Htay Myaing, and Daw Saw Yin Win. Sayadaw doesn't use the name 'wilderness' for the Hse Main Gon Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha. That's because it's not a 'wilderness' as defined by the Vinaya. It is near the village of Be Phyu Chaung. So Sayadaw uses 'Forest Center'. I can't help but be pleased seeing the fruit orchard, gardens, forested hills, bridges, water purification system, wells and ponds, and center facilities. Sayadaw, who lead the effort for this to come to be, must be all the more gratified.

There is a great variety of fruit trees. The donors gave them in great diversity. There is a wide variety of flowers, too. The Agriculture Department donated trees and flowers. The donations to the garden makes one call 'Sâdhu!'. The wholesome merit of those who built the bridge and dug the reservoirs, and of the donors of the water purification machine and the kutis is being cultivated both day and night.

Sayadaw said, "Those who with good nature and good practice created the orchards and the gardens, the forested hills and the bridges, the water purification system, the reservoirs, and the facilities will end up in the devâ realms indeed. Their wholesome merit is being cultivated both day and night."

Those are the words of the Buddha. Every time Sayadaw looks at those facilitates, his wholesome mindset is cultivated. It is apparent that the joy of wholesome action overflows when he sees others happy, in accord with his placing of other's happiness first.

Sayadaw continued, "Yes, this is the happiness which comes of material things. The happiness of the Dhamma, though, is better. We have to try to be filled with that kind of happiness, too."

Those listening to these words of Dhamma have on the tips of their tongues, "Sayadaw's words of Dhamma are exquisite."

THE SUCCESSFUL DOCTOR

Doctors often come with Sayadaw to the Hse Main Gon Forest Center.

Sayadaw often says, "If you want to take my blood pressure you can. Won't you test it, Doctor?".

The author has high blood pressure, they say. "How old are you?" they ask.

When I answer, "Forty-one," they all tell me,

"Stay away from salty foods."

The first doctor ordered me to have my blood pressure taken again in a month. "You have a high risk of hypertension," he said. Since a another doctor came with Sayadaw before a month was up, I had my blood pressure then. Still high blood pressure, she said. She asked me my age and instructed me to stay away from salty foods, too. She is a female doctor named Ma Hla Thein. She's returned from England. She had meditated with Sayadaw at the same time as Ma Saw Yin Win, she said.

Sayadaw told Doctor Ma Hla Thein to give me whatever medicine I needed. "There's no need for medicine," she said, "His blood pressure is not very high."

"Fight it with the Dhamma," said Sayadaw. Sayadaw has seen people who have cured high blood pressure with mindfulness meditation. That's why he urged the author to make more effort in my practice.

Sayadaw gave these words to Doctor Ma Hla Sein, as he has to many other physicians.

"Vejjasippam mettâpubbabhâgam sattânam hitapa?isamyuttam: The work of scientific medicine is one done with mettâ that the ill be well, concerned with the welfare of living beings. (Vinaya Mahâvagga Commentary, 396)"

Sayadaw makes a habit using these words to advise doctors not to be in it for the money, but rather do thier work with good intentions and lovingkindness.

"Please treat patients with mettâ that thier diseases may be cured. Aim for the patient's welfare. Treatment with mettâ is noble work. Those with a noble attitude can do this kind of medical treatment with mettâ. Those who work for others' happiness get happiness themselves. It is extremely noble and good," he says.

When he spoke to Doctor Ma Hla Sein, Sayadaw did not continue with the part I have heard him use with other doctors. It goes, "At the time of the Buddha, the doctor Jîvaka gave treatment with mettâ this way. He treated the ill putting their welfare first and foremost. Compounded with his good intentions, his lovingkindness, and his medical expertise, his treatments saw success, his medicine was potent. In modern terms, you might say he could prescribe an effective dosage. Various doctors have the same medical knowledge and drugs at their disposal, yet there are differences in their ability to get the cure right. Treatment with mettâ that the patient be well and happy makes the medicine more effective and potent. So rather than being a doctor for the money, may you be able to emulate the mettâ doctor Jîvaka. May you be a modern Jîvaka. May you follow the lineage of Jîvaka."

When I heard these words, I couldn't help but appreciate them, because this advice is so effective with doctors. Sayadaw knows doctors' natures. Most doctors are in it for the money. Sayadaw doesn't want the doctors who come to be his devotees to be in it for the money. He wants them to be mettâ doctors. Sayadaw gives the doctors someone to emulate. He tells them of that doctor's style of treatment. Jîvaka is a super star in the world of doctors. He was the greatest doctor in the sphere of the Buddha-Sâsana. Those who follow his lineage and become modern Jîvakas, though they may not be able to have his great medical expertise, can strive to strengthen their mettâ like Jîvaka. If they can do that, they understand what Sayadaw meant about prescribing an effective dosage.

TOES OF A CAT

When Sayadaw comes to the Hse Main Gon Panditârâma Forest Center, he has a habit of sitting in a chair on the lower level of the Dhamma hall while he rests. There is a table placed in front of that chair. This trip, he came to give a Saturday Dhamma talk. He talked from two in the afternoon until after three. That was on the upper story of the Dhamma hall. After the talk, he came down to the lower level. On the table in front of the chair Sayadaw sits in was a big cat, asleep. Looking at the sleeping cat Sayadaw was amused. Then to U Mya Thaung, the translator who was near, he said, "I will raise little animals at this meditation center. So that they will be able to get along with one another, I will feed them together from when they are little." Then he asked, "U Mya Thaung, how many toes does that cat have on its paw? Go count them, please."

U Mya Thaung looked like he was fond of the cat, too. He took the cat's paw and counted the toes. "There are four toes, Bhante," he reported.

The author, sitting nearby, couldn't help but wonder why Sayadaw had him count them. Just while I was wondering that, from Sayadaw, the words came, "At the time of the Buddha, there was a wealthy man by the name of Biiâlapâdaka."

Hearing that word, I was engaged. The story of Biiâlapâdaka is found in the Commentary on the Dhammapada in the Pâpavagga section. I had to learn it back when I was studying for the Thamanay Kyaw examination. When I gave a Dhamma talk on that story, I called the talk, "Though it's Little, Don't Think Little of It". Both when I studied the that story and when I gave the Dhamma talk on it, I didn't fully master the meaning of the name. I just knew it vaguely. When Sayadaw put counting the cat's toes together with the name Biiâlapâdaka, I understood.

Sayadaw explained, "The meaning of the Pâli 'Biiâla' is 'cat'. 'Pâdaka' is 'toe'. The wealthy man named 'Biiâlapâdaka' picked out rice, beans and other things to offer with his fingers, and donated them. Following the monks of the Sangha, the lay attendant accepted what was offered. When they came to the house of that wealthy man, he came out and picked grains of rice out of the rice pot with his fingers and donated it. With the other offerings, he did the same. With the oil, he dipped the bottom of the ladle into the pot of oil and donated the oil which dripped off.

Thinking, "If that lay attendant wants to donate, he should do it himself. Why must he solicit other's donations?" the wealthy man became displeased with the attendant and donated in this bizarre fashion. The attendant had heard the words of the Buddha, "Those who make donations themselves will be materially wealthy in every life to come. Those who encourage others to donate will a rich abundance of good company." Thus he did this work of being a lay attendant on almsrounds, which would make him rich both in things and in friends. The attendant took the donations of the wealthy man and put them in

separate bowls. Because of this unusual style of the attendant, the wealthy man hired a private eye to follow him, thinking the attendant would humiliate and degrade him in public.

The attendant was working with a really good intention. Coming to somewhere rice and dishes were being cooked, he put all the rice, oil, beans and other offerings in their respective containers. It was with the intention, "May the donor's benefit be great". The next day when the attendant gave the offerings to the monks, under the leadership of the Buddha, and read out the list of donors, the wealthy man brought his dagger with him, intending to kill the attendant if he spoke his name with even a hint of an intention to humiliate him. The attendant did not do as the wealthy man had expected.

"The intention I am working with now, Venerable Monks, is 'May all donors, large and small, get great benefit' said the attendant. Realizing his mistake, the wealthy man respected and admired the attendant's noble intention and wise reflection and asked forgiveness.

The Buddha spoke of how we should not look down on small wholesome actions, thinking they will give no benefit. Just as drops of water falling off the eaves finally must finally a huge pot, as wholesome merit is acquired little by little, wise ones are filled with wholesome merit, he said. That wealthy man, being aware of the physical and mental phenomena just as they were happening in his mind-body complex, started to progress through the stages of insight and became a sotâpanna (stream-enterer). The door to the realms of woe was closed.

"How wonderful is the way the attendant practiced wise reflection in this story? How conducive was it to harmony? How much benefit did the wealthy man get? If we can think of that little one and cultivate wise reflection, it would be great. The power of wise reflection is very great," said Sayadaw.

Sayadaw's thoughts on the cat sleeping on the table in front of him are very interesting and noteworthy. I had wanted to know the meaning of the Pâli word 'Biiâlapâdaka' clearly. Now that wish has been fulfilled. Should I thank the cat, Sayadaw, or U Mya Thaung? Since it was only because the three of them came together that I came to know the meaning, I have to thank all three.

COMPASSION AND WISDOM

The Nâyaka (Senior Teacher) Zeyyavatî Sayadaw U Sâsana is due to come back from the U.K. A replacement for him needs to be sent. Sayadaw has selected U Indavamsâcâ to go. If he can, Sayadaw would like the German monk U Vivekânanda to be there until U Indavamsâcâ goes. U Vivekânanda, though, doesn't want to go at all. U Vivekânanda is evidently suffering since he has to go though he doesn't want to. Being sick, he didn't even come pay respects to Sayadaw. Thus, U Nanda and the author told him what Sayadaw had said.

"We monks would do well to bear in mind these words which the Buddha spoke in the early days of the Sâsana.

'Caratha bhikkhave cârikam bahujanahitâya lokânukampâya atthâya hitâya sukhâya devamanussânâma'-'Monks, do travel. But just to gain knowledge? No. Rather, travel for the welfare and happiness of others, with the appropriate emotion (compassion) towards worldly beings, for the welfare and happiness of gods and men.'

Here we find the word 'anukampâ'. The literal meaning is 'appropriate emotion'. It is the desire for the welfare of worldly beings and the extinction of their suffering. That is the appropriate emotion, indeed.

We have to cultivate this appropriate emotion. Bodhisattas have extremely deep sentiment: mahâkaruṇā or great compassion. As the saying goes, "An elephant with his foot span, a mouse with his". Though one may not have as tremendous sentiment as the Bodhisattas, one has to cultivate as much as one can. At first, it is small. When we start to cultivate it, it grows. This is our practice.

In working for the benefit of others, it is not enough just to have compassion. Wisdom is also necessary. With only compassion and no wisdom, one cannot discern wrong and right. With only wisdom and no compassion, some actions are apt to lack benefit. Thus, both compassion and wisdom are necessary.

We monks need to have both wisdom and compassion. Each and every monk must cultivate this appropriate mindset, compassion, and strive to develop discerning wisdom as well.

The Buddha approached devotees with compassion. With wisdom, he remained unattached to them, it is said. We monks, students of the Buddha, have to approach and have dealings with devotees, too. What we need to approach them and deal with them with is compassion, it is said. These little words are so wonderful. Feel for devotees. Cultivate the wish that they are freed from their suffering, it is said. We should be attached

and intimate with devotees, though. Rather, we must use wisdom to remain unattached to them. These are exquisite words.

If each and everyone of us monks were to cultivate this attitude in carrying out work for the benefit of the Sâsana and the world, it would be wonderful. It would be very beneficial," he said.

Sayadaw's words are very valuable. Anyone who wishes to do altruistic work must be a possessor of compassion, a possessor of wisdom. Just possessing compassion, one cannot do it. Just possessing wisdom, one cannot do it. Only possessing the pair, will one be able to work for the welfare of others, he says.

A FACE OF JOY

An American yogi by the name of Kalimus Kalchi recently came to ask Sayadaw's permission to ordain as a nun, which he granted. Her ordained name was Vîra?âni. This was her second time. Her first time was at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha in Yangon and Sayadaw gave her the name from her first ordination again. Sayadaw explained the meaning of the name 'Vîra?âni', in English, as, "One who has brave wisdom,". Ma Vîra?âni appreciated her name, too. She had already been practicing at the Panditârâma Forest Center for over a month as a lay yogi. Coming in wearing nun's robes and with a shiny shaven head, she bowed to Sayadaw, and sat with folded knees and hands together at her chest. Sayadaw spoke these words to her.

"Wearing robes as you are now is just assuming the appearance. Assuming the appearance is not enough. One has to assume the practice, too. The practice is that of sîla, samâdhi, and pañña: morality, concentration, and wisdom. Practicing meditation as a lay person on eight precepts was assuming the practice. When you practice as a nun now, you are assuming both the appearance and the practice.

During the Buddha's time, a wandering ascetic went to the Buddha and said, "Master Gotama, you use the name pabbajita (monk) for your students. I too, having relinquished the worldly life as an ascetic am a pabbajita (monk)."

"Oh ascetic," replied the Buddha, "I don't call one a pabbajita just for assuming the appearance of a monk. Only one who has assumed the practices which extinguish the inner enemies of the kilesas do I call a pabbajita." Worldly people wish to be called by the term the Buddha used to acknowledge virtuous people. It was because he wanted to be referred as a pabbajita that the ascetic spoke that way.

Assuming both the appearance and the practice, Ma Vîra?âni, in accord with your name, attack the inner enemies of the kilesas with courageous wisdom.

Will you take the precepts again?"

"Yes, Bhante."

"Then take them starting with 'namo tassa...'"

She paid obeisance to the Buddha three times, reciting it with international Pâli pronunciation on her own. Sayadaw did not lead her. Then she recited the three refuges on her own in international Pâli pronunciation. Finally she recited the eight precepts all on her own. Most Myanmar Buddhists probably don't know the meaning of the namo tassa recitation or the three refuges. Ma Vîra?âni knew them. Really, every Myanmar Buddhist

should strive to learn the meaning the meaning of the namo tassa recitation and the three refuges just like Ma Vira?âni.

FOREST FLOWERS

When Sayadaw comes to the Hse Main Gon Forest Center, as much time as he can get, he always walks around the center, keeping an eye on things. When he looks around like that, he comes on many violet forest flowers.

"These flowers are so beautiful. If they were collected carefully and planted in neatly, it would be great," he said, "These wild growing flowers are beautiful, but the pollen of these little flowers often makes people allergic. Westerners such as Americans get allergies from this pollen."

Regarding the little forest flowers he had come on, Sayadaw talked of Westerners. Then, he continued with knowledge from the Tipiṭaka.

"In the Pāli literature, it is called tiṭpupphaka yoga. It means disease due to grass flowers. The Elder Bâkula, in one of his past lives, lived in the forest with his students, hermits. His students had allergic reactions, tiṭpupphaka yoga. He treated this ailment they got from inhaling the pollen of grass flowers with appropriate medicinal roots and leaves. They were cured," he said.

"Due to the wholesome merit from that treatment, when the hermit was to become the Elder Bâkula took birth at the time of the Buddha, he had no painful ailments at all, not even the slightest cough. A slight cough is the smallest of ailments. Since he did not have even that little ailment, one hardly needs to mention other more intense diseases. That's how disease-free he was. He lived to be one hundred and sixty years-old, eighty years as a layman and eighty years as a monk, it is said. His entire life, not a single thing ailed him. He is hailed as the most disease-free of all the students of the Buddha.

The Elder Bâkula is an inspiration for all those plagued by illness and short life. If we wish to be long-lived and healthy like him, we must make give away medicine."

SAYAGYI U HPE THIN

They say that Sayadaw's father U Hpe called English "dog-talk". It seems as if he had a quite a grudge against the English language. Having decided that English was 'dog-talk', he didn't let his children learn it. Though he didn't let his sons and daughters learn it, he spoke English well. Sayadaw-to-be, Maung Mya Han, did not get chance to study English when he was young. It was only after he came to the Kyaikkasan Monastery as a monk that he began to study English. The name of his English teacher was U Hpe Thin. He lived not far from Kyaikkasan Monastery. Sayadaw had to go to U Hpe Thin's house for his lessons. After that, whenever he got the opportunity, he continued studying English. I believe wholeheartedly that if Sayadaw were to work hard and go all out he would progress to the point where he could give fluent Dhamma talks in English. That's because I have come to know Sayadaw's intelligence first-hand.

Sayagyi U Hpe Thin and Sayadaw-to-be, U Panditâbhivamsa, made an agreement, "Whichever of us reaches the stages of enlightenment first shall tell the other." Sayagyi U Hpe Thin was the first of the two of them to go meditate at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha. He practiced ardently and became accomplished. Since he had practiced to the point of satisfaction, when he came home, he told U Panditâbhivamsa all about his experiences, in accord with their agreement. He told Sayadaw to go practice at the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha as well. Following Sayagyi U Hpe Thin's recommendation Sayadaw went to the Mahasi Sâsana Yeiktha in the year 1950 and practiced.

If only Sayagyi U Hpe Thin were still alive to see Sayadaw now, or if perhaps he could watch Sayadaw from his next existence, how glad he would be! How sad it is that he probably never will. If you were to stack up all the practice of Satipapphana that Sayadaw has done up to now, the very practice which Sayagyi U Hpe Thin first turned him on to, it would be a huge pile of wholesome action indeed. If you were try collecting all the gifts of Dhamma he has given people through teaching at home and abroad, that would make a huge pile, as well. Having started in 1950, he has been practicing now for forty-six years. Since he became a meditation teacher after practicing intensively one more time in 1955, it has now been forty-one years of his teaching the Dhamma.

THE MEDICINE OF IMMORTALITY

This Saturday (the 13 day of the waxing moon of Thitinkyut) when Sayadaw came to give a Dhamma talk at the Hse Main Gon Paditârâma Forest Center, the American nun Ma Visadañanî (her lay name is Nancy) came along. I met her before the beginning of the rainy season at the Shwe Taung Gon Sâsana Yeiktha in Yangon. I had met when she came to meditate at the Center about two years ago, too. Her figure when she came to the Yangon Center at the beginning of the rainy season this year was very different from that of two years ago. As the saying goes, "Driving towards old age, pain, and death: humans are not permanent". Her figure had progressed through the years, not getting younger. Her figure had grown older, more mature. It was rough and saggy. It was no longer bright. She had been digesting the truth of old age during those two years. The truth of old age. The second time I met her, samvega (apprehension of further rebirths) arose, seeing the truth of old age in her face.

Seeing her again at the Hse Main Gon Forest Center, though, her figure was ever more bright than two years ago. She seemed to have become more youthful. Since she was in nuns robes, she certainly had more grace. Her figure was more becoming, more sublime. The face of hers I saw this time showed the potency of satipap̃hana. Looking at her face I couldn't help but be astonished. I found myself speculating on the state of her practice over the three month duration of the rainy season.

On the lower level of the Dhamma hall, she was handing medicines which she was donating over to Daw Saw Yin Win. While she was doing that, Sayadaw came along. He sat down in a chair and said, "All the Dhamma you gained, Visadañanî, will be spoiled by missing your noting." Hearing Sayadaw's words, I couldn't help but think that I was right in my estimation that her Dhamma was strong when I had seen her face.

U Mya Thaug, who was translating, translated the question Sayadaw asked in Myanmar as "don't you have your deathless medicine along?". I can't say whether Ma Visadañanî just didn't hear or if she didn't understand it. She asked him to repeat it. When U Mya Thaug translated it as "no death medicine", she understood and laughed and appreciated it.

Then Sayadaw continued. The time had come.

" 'Appamâdo amatam padam' it is said. Appamâdo, the conscientiousness to refrain from unwholesome actions and the conscientiousness to carry out wholesome actions, is the cause of attaining the deathless, nibbâna. Appamâdo, also known as satipãphana, is the medicine of immortality," he said.

Ma Visadañanî laughed like a flag waving in the breeze. Ma Visadañanî is one practicing satipatthana. She is a yogi. She is taking the medicine of immortality. She

definitely appreciated Sayadaw's calling the satipap̄phana she was practicing 'the medicine of immortality'. Nibbâna is immortal indeed. In Nibbâna there is no arising and no passing. In Nibbâna there is no birth, no old age, no illness, and no death. Free of arising and passing, it has the nature of peace. We are practicing satipa?phana, to attain that peace, that medicine of immortality.

"Visadañanî, your awareness is missing now. The medicines you are donating will prevent pain and death as best they can. The satipap̄phana you are doing, on the other hand, can help you never to age, never to be in pain, never to die. Strive to take this satipap̄phana medicine, this medicine of immortality, while you stay here at the Panditârâma Forest Center," Sayadaw seemed like he wanted to tell her. It was an impelling meaning indeed.

----- THE END -----