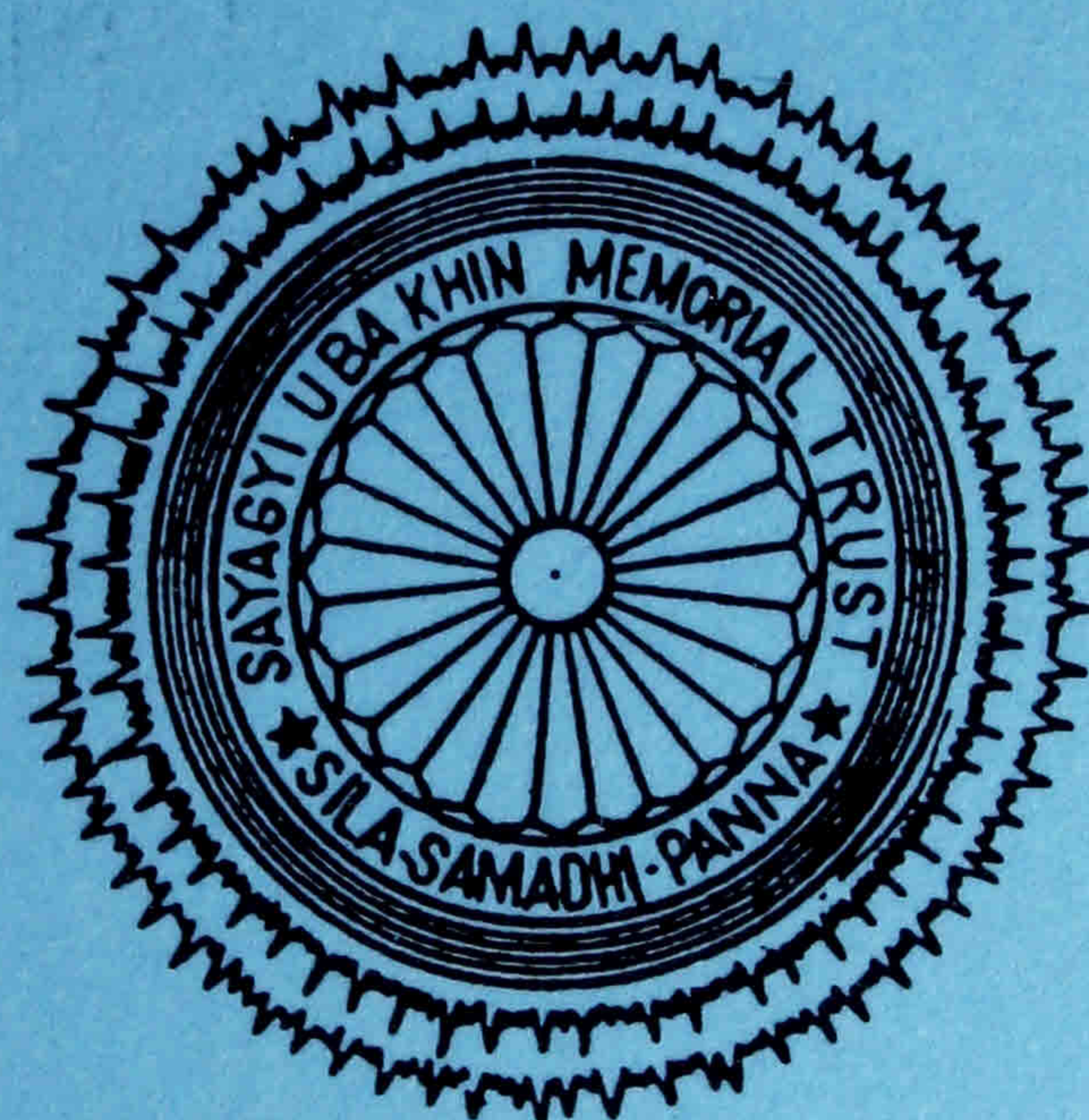


THE ANECDOTES OF SAYAGYI U BA KHIN, II



Compiled by
Saya U Chit Tin, WKH

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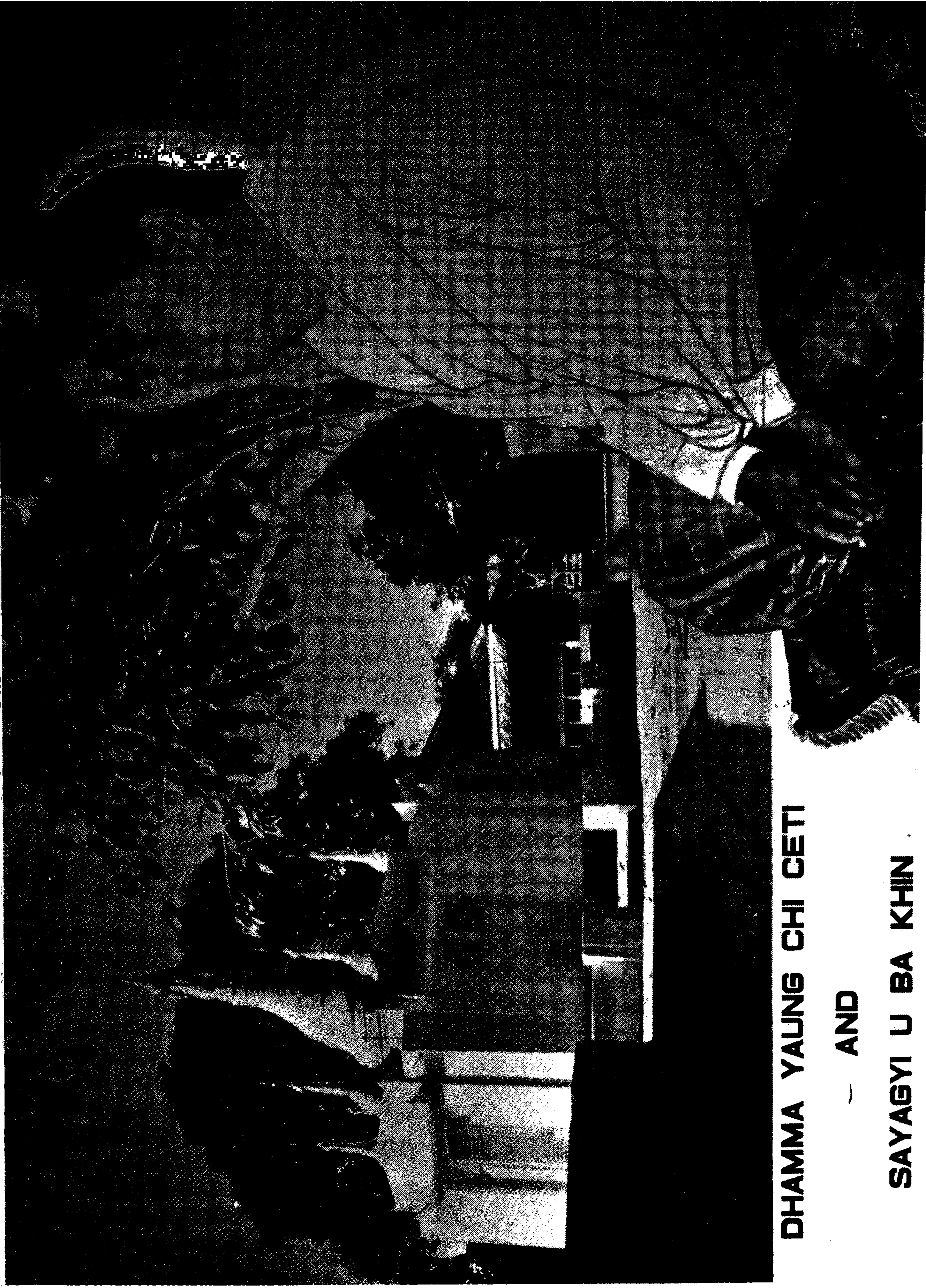
William Pruitt, Ph.D.

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Dhammadāna Series 8

Dedicated by the compiler to
Mother Sayama
(Sayama Daw Mya Thwin)

14954

This publication is one of several marking the tenth anniversary of Mother Sayama and Saya U Chit Tin's coming out of Burma to continue their work in the Tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin by teaching the Buddha-Dhamma in the West.



DHAMMA YAUNG CHI CETI

- AND

SAYAGYI U BA KHIN



Sayagyi U Ba Khin Paying respects at the Dhamma Yaung Chi Ceti ("The Light of the Dhamma Pagoda"), I.M.C., Rangoon, two miles due north of Shwedagon Pagoda.

This gift of Dhamma is made possible
through Dāna given to the Publication
Account Fund of the Sayagyi U Ba Khin
Memorial Trust.

(For those interested in giving Dāna to
make possible future publications, the
approximate cost of these booklets was
£1.50 each.)

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INTRODUCTION

This second collection of **Anecdotes** concerning **Thray Sithu Sayagyi U Ba Khin** brings together short biographies of his teacher **Saya Thet Gyi** and his teacher's teacher, **Venerable Ledi Sayadaw**, as well as a more detailed account of Sayagyi's life. We are very pleased to be able to include two anecdotes written especially for this booklet by Mrs Jocelyn B. King, a close meditation student of Sayagyi's who went to meditate together with her husband Dr Winston L. King in July 1959. We are also reprinting another article of hers and articles by two other students who worked under Sayagyi's guidance. These were originally published in the special issue of the **Maha Bodhi** magazine (April 1972) devoted to Sayagyi.

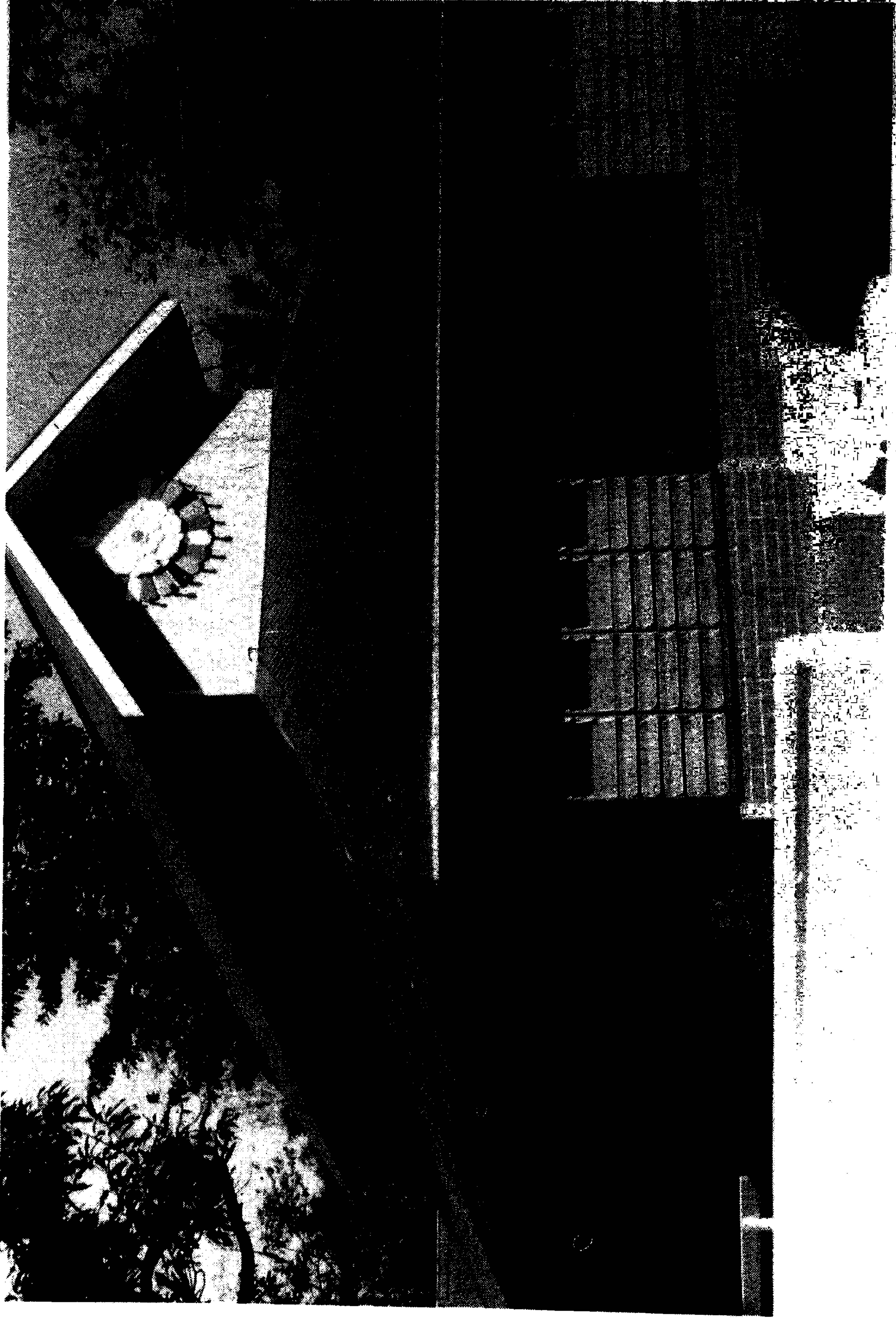
These anecdotes will be of interest to the many students of Buddhist Meditation in the **Tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin** and will serve as an inspiration to them to keep striving for the goal of **Nibbanic Peace** within.

Knowing very well the greatness of the Pāramī of the coming Buddha, **Ariya Metteyya**, who will be able to quench the fires of hell, Sayagyi assuredly taught **Knowing Anicca: The Way to Nibbāna** and has also shown us the way to encounter **Buddha Ariya Metteyya** by diligently practising the **Eightfol Noble Path** as taught by **Buddha Gotama**. Sayagyi conveyed this Path to us in its pristine purity.

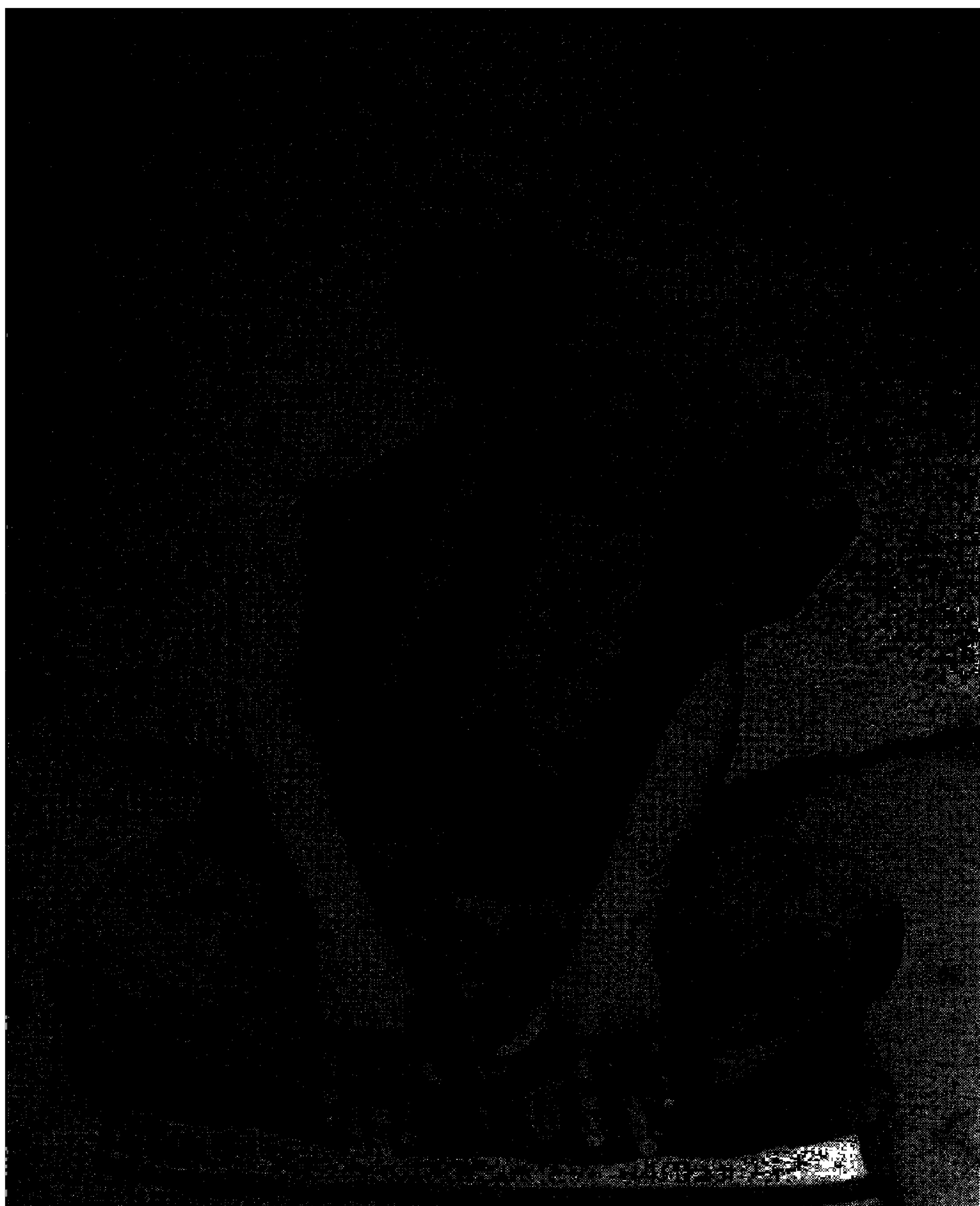
May Peace prevail in the world!

Truth Must Triumph!

Saya U Chit Tin



The Dhamma Hall at IMC-Rangoon, Burma, after renovation in 1983



**Sayagyi U Ba Khin meditating
when ordained as a monk**



**Venerable Ledi Sayadaw
(1846-1923)**

VENERABLE LEDI SAYADAW (1846-1923)

Saya U Tint Yee

Ven. Ledi Sayadaw was born in 1846,¹ in Saingpyin village, Dipeyin Township in the Shwebo district, which is to the north of Mandalay. At that time, Upper Burma was still under the rule of the Burmese kings. His father's name was U Tun Tha and his mother was Daw Kyone. He was given the name of U Tet Khaung.²

When Ven. Ledi Sayadaw was born, one of the central posts in the house supporting the ridgepole suddenly lighted up. Light went up from the ground to the top of the roof and continued out to the sky. This event was seen by everyone in the house. This was reported to a well-known learned man, Sayagyi U Kyaw Hla, who was versed in astrology and physiognomy, was consulted concerning what to name the boy. When he scrutinized the handsome boy, he gave the name "Maung Tet Khaung" ("Maung" is the equivalent to "Master" as a title for young men; "Tet" means "climbing upwards"; "Khaung" means "summit" or "roof"). True to his name, Ven. Ledi

1. He was born on Tuesday, the 13th day of the waxing moon of the month of Nattuw in the year 1208 of the Burmese Era.

2. Although he did not remain a layman long enough to use the respectful title "U," it is considered appropriate to speak of him using this title due to his later achievements. He was the eldest of five children: 1. U Tet Khaung (Ledi Sayadaw U Nāṇa [Ashin Nāṇa-dhaja]), 2. U Tet Swar (layman), 3. U Tet Pwar (U Kumara, who died when still young), 4. U Tet Htwar (also known as U San Htwar and well known as U Kitti), 5. Daw Ma Lay (laywoman).

Sayadaw succeeded to the highest degree in his learning.

He received a traditional education. In the villages, this meant going to the monastery school where the bhikkhus (monks) taught the children the alphabet and how to read and write. They also learned to recite many Pāli texts. They would memorize the Maṅgala Sutta, for example. Then the language and literature they studied were based on the Buddha's Teachings. At that time, the level of literacy was higher in Burma than in Western countries. When the British took over Burma as a colony, they were very impressed by the level of education in the country.

Ven. Ledi Sayadaw began studying under Sayadaw U Nanda-dhaja at the age of eight. When he was fifteen, he ordained as a sāmaṇera (novice) under the same Sayadaw and took the name Ñāṇa-dhaja ("the banner of knowledge"). As a sāmaṇera, he studied Pāli grammar and the Buddhist texts including the Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha, a commentary which serves as a general introduction to the Abhidhamma section of the canon. He then went on to study the Abhidhamma texts themselves.

In those days, before the introduction of electrical lights, the sāmaṇeras and bhikkhus studied the written texts during the day and recited from memory after dark. Working in this way, Ven. Ledi Sayadaw mastered such texts as the Dhātukathā (Discourse on Elements), the Paṭṭhāna (Conditional Relations), and the Yamaka (Pairs).

At the age of 18, as Shin Ñāṇa-dhaja, he grew dissatisfied with life as a sāmaṇera because he was only learning Buddhist texts (the Tipiṭakas). So he disrobed and became a layman. His first teacher, Ahphyaukpin Sayadaw U Ñanda-dhaja, and Myinhtin Sayadaw U Dhammasāra sent for him one day after the rains retreat and tried to explain the disadvan-

tages in being a layman and the advantages of being a sāmaṇera. They tried their best to persuade him to take robes again, but he would not. Myinhtin Sayadaw told the young Maung Tet Khaun that he would not give him orders, but he would like to propose that the young man continue his studies. Maung Tet Khaung was very intelligent and had already learned much of the Tipiṭaka as a sāmaṇera. By continuing his studies, he would be able to earn a good living and had a comfortable life as a layman. The young man agreed immediately, saying he would never hesitate when it came to learning.

"Would you be interested in learning the Vedas first?" the Ven. Myinhtin Sayadaw asked.

"Yes, venerable sir," answered Maung Tet Khaung.

"But you must become a sāmaṇera," the Sayadaw said, "otherwise, Sayadaw U Gandhamā of Yehtut Village will not take you as his student."

"I will become a sāmaṇera, reverend sir," Maung Tet Khaung agreed. In this way, he ordained again as a sāmaṇera.

By that time, Sayagyi U Kyaw Hla had died, so he was entrusted to the care of Sayadaw U Gandhamā, who taught him not only the Vedas but also explained the merits to be gained by being a monk and promoting the Buddha-Sāsana. The young sāmaṇera was happy learning the Vedas with this teacher, and after completing his studies, he returned to his former teacher, Ahphyaukpin Sayadaw. He had spent six months as a layman at home, and it took him eight months to learn the Vedas. Now that he had learned the Vedas and was well versed in the Tipiṭakas, he was very happy to remain in robes. He was to spend the rest of his life in the Sāsana. One day, he told his story to his immediate disciple, Ledi Paṇḍita Saya U Mayng Gyi. "At first I was hoping to earn a living with the knowledge of the Vedas by telling people's fortunes," he said. "But I was more

fortunate in that I became a sāmaṇera again. My teachers were very wise, and with their boundless love and compassion, they saved me."

The brilliant Sāmaṇera Shin Ṇāṇa-dhaja now arrived at the age of 19. Not only had he learned the Vedas and the Tipiṭaka, he was also well versed in poetry and had written many verses on the Vedas, Jātaka tales, and Pāli grammar.

On April 20, 1866, at the age of 20, he took the higher ordination to become a bhikkhu under Ah-phyaukpin Sayadaw U Nanda-dhaja. His aunt, Daw Phone, and her husband, U Kan Sa, were the sponsoring lay disciples. There were twenty Kammavā Sayadaws helping in his ordination. Sayadaw U Nandadhaja was his preceptor.

On June 6, 1867, just before the rains retreat, the future Ledi Sayadaw took leave of his Preceptor and the Kammavā Sayadaw. After paying them due respects, he left for Mandalay to continue his studies. Mandalay was the most important centre of learning in Burma. There, he studied under several of the leading Sayadaws and some of the leading lay scholars. He studied in the Maṅgala monastery under Ven. San-kyaung Sayadaw.

At this period, King Mindon (ruled 1853-1878) organized the Fifth Buddhist Council, which was held in Mandalay in 1871. The main purpose of this Council was to edit the Buddhist texts. These texts were carved on 729 marble slabs that stand today at the foot of Mandalay Hill, surrounding the Kathodaw Pagoda. Ven. Ledi Sayadaw helped with editing and translating parts of the Abhidhamma.

During his studies, Ven. San-kyaung Sayadaw gave an exam of twenty questions for two thousand students. Only Ven. Ledi Sayadaw was able to answer them satisfactorily. His answers were published later (in 1880) under the title Pāramī-dīpanī ("The Manual of the Perfections"). This was the first of many

books to be published in Pāli and Burmese by Ven. Ledi Sayadaw.

Under the last Burmese king, Thibaw (ruled 1878-1885), Ven. Ledi Sayadaw became a Pāli teacher at the Mahā-Jotikārama monastery in Mandalay. (This monastery is known in Burmese as "San-kyaung." Ven. San-kyaung Sayadaw was the leading monk in this monastery.) Ven. Ledi Sayadaw had passed all his exams after only eight years as a bhikkhu, and was therefore qualified as a beginning teacher. Even after he began teaching, he continued to study under other Sayadaws. He also discussed the Doctrine with well-known lay scholars who were very learned in the Pāli texts, and he learned from them as well. In 1882, he went to Monywa, a city on the Chindwin River to the north-west of Mandalay. This was to become his permanent residence. There, he taught the sāmaṇeras and bhikkhus the Pāli canon.

In 1885, the British conquered Upper Burma, and King Thibaw was sent in exile to India. A year later, Ven. Ledi Sayadaw went into retreat in a forest to the north of Monywa. The forest was named Ledi forest. After a time, many bhikkhus came, requesting that he teach them. A monastery was founded and named Ledi-tawya monastery. He took the title by which he is best known in the West from this monastery: Ledi Sayadaw ("the venerable teacher of Ledi").³

3. His full title in Pali was: Ledi Araññā-vihāra vāsī Mahā-thera ("the Great Elder dwelling in the monastery in Ledi forest"). The title "Sayadaw" ("venerable teacher") was originally accorded to important Theras ("Elders"--a title given to bhikkhus ten years after their ordination) who taught the king. The term was later given to highly respected bhikkhus in general.

It was later, in 1897, that his main works began to be published. In that year, his "Manual of Ultimate Truth" (Paramattha-dīpanī) was published in Pāli. This was a commentary on the Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha. In this work, Ven. Ledi Sayadaw corrects some mistakes he found in the existing commentary on that work (Abhidhammattha-vibhāvani). This led to some controversy, as the older commentary was used by many of the bhikkhus in studying the Abhidhamma, but eventually, Ven. Ledi Sayadaw's corrections were accepted.

Ven. Ledi Sayadaw's second book (Nirodhi Dīpanī) was on Pāli grammar. Both of his first texts are very difficult and show his mastery of his subjects. Through them, he became famous as one of the most learned of the bhikkhus in Burma. Later Ven. Ledi Sayadaw began to publish books in Burmese, including his own translation of his "Manual of Ultimate Meaning." He wrote his Burmese texts in a simple language that made it easy for lay people to understand them. He said that he wished to write in such a way that a farmer could read his works. Before that time, very few books on Buddhist subjects were written so that lay people could understand them. Even when teaching, the bhikkhus would often recite long passages in Pāli, then translate them word for word, and it was difficult for the listeners to follow.

Ven. Ledi Sayadaw also wrote many works in verse, as this made it easier for lay people to memorize them. In answering questions sent him by Mrs Rhys Davids of the Pali Text Society, Ven. Ledi Sayadaw said, "I have written a book called Paramattha-saṅkhepa (a Burmese translation of the Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha in verse form) that even young girls can learn easily in four or five months. Another book, Sadda-saṅkhepa, also in verse, helps a beginner to learn Pāli in five or six months. My Vinaya-

saṅkhepa, again in verse, helps the bhikkhus to learn the rules and duties of a bhikkhu in two-months' time." ⁴

In **The Manuals of Buddhism**, seventy-six manuals, commentaries, essays, and letters written by Ven. Ledi Sayadaw are listed. His texts were all based on the Pāli texts. He never went beyond what is contained in the Teachings of the Buddha as approved by the Theravāda Buddhist Councils.

Ven. Ledi Sayadaw was also influential in the West. A discussion of the Yamaka book of the Abhidhamma, which he wrote in Pāli, was published in an appendix to the Pali Text Society edition in 1913. A partial translation of his text was published in the Journal of the Pali Text Society (1913-1914) under the title "Some Points in Buddhist Doctrine." As so many of his texts, it was written in answer to questions sent to him. In answering Mrs Rhys Davids' questions, he uses a pun on her name in addressing her as "the London Devī of the texts" (Landana-pāli-devī). A discussion of the Paṭṭhāna, entitled "On the Philosophy of Relations," was also published in the same journal (1915-1916). U Shwe Zan Aung, who collaborated with Mrs Rhys Davids on the translation of the Kathā-vatthu (**Points of Controversy**, first published in 1915), referred many questions to Ven. Ledi Sayadaw.

Finally, the Niyāma-dīpanī ("The Manual of Cosmic Order") was first published in partial translation in **The Buddhist Review** (1915-1916). This text, written especially for Westerners, is included in **The Manuals of Buddhism**, with the parts left out of the first edition included. Ven. Ledi Sayadaw was aided in his contacts with the West by the Society for Promoting Buddhism in Foreign Countries, which was

4. This letter, dated 1917, is in the Pali Text Society archives.

founded in Burma in 1913. Some of the English-speaking members were helpful in translating the texts Ven. Ledi Sayadaw wrote in Burmese.

Ven. Ledi Sayadaw was honoured for his contributions to Buddhism. In 1911, the British Government of India, which rules over Burma, awarded him the highest honour given under them to bhikkhus: Agga-mahā-paṇḍita ("a scholar of the highest order"). Today, this sort of title is conferred on bhikkhus by the Burmese government. Such titles are usually given to bhikkhus who are over sixty years old and who have done research on the Pāli texts and published books which are useful to the bhikkhus and the lay community. Later, he was given an honorary doctorate (D.Litt.) by the Governor General in a ceremony held at Rangoon University.

Ven. Ledi Sayadaw travelled to India to Bodhagaya to visit the place where the Buddha was Awakened. A poem written in Burmese about the important events in the life of the Buddha as related to the seven days of the week is still well known and learned by Burmese children. Meditators in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin are familiar with this poem as it is recited by Mother Sayagyi at the end of group sittings. An English translation is given in **Anecdotes I.**

He gave many classes in studying the texts and in meditation on trips throughout Burma. Several meditation centres founded by him are still functioning in Burma.

Towards the end of his life, Ven. Ledi Sayadaw had trouble with his eyesight due to the poor lighting he had had for many years when reading and writing. At the age of seventy-three he went blind. It was when he was blind that he devoted all his time to teaching and practising meditation. He died in 1923, at the age of seventy-eight, after spending fifty-eight years as a bhikkhu.

SAYA THET GYI (1873-1945)

Saya U Tint Yee

Saya Thet Gyi¹ was born in 1873 in a farming family in the village of Pyawbwegyi, which is across the Rangoon River from the city of Rangoon. He was a devout Buddhist even as a child. He went to school for only six years, as he needed to work to help support his family. He worked for a time driving bullock carts and then in a rice mill counting the bags of paddy loaded in the boats. He only made six kyats a month, but the kyat was worth much then. The equivalent today would be approximately three or four thousand kyats. At that time he began to practise meditation in a casual way under a lay teacher named Saya Nyunt.

He married and had a son and daughter, but one year there was an outbreak of cholera and Saya Thet Gyi lost five members of his family, including his two children. His daughter, who was about fourteen, was very close to one of her first cousins, and this niece died in Saya Thet Gyi's arms. When they were preparing for the niece's funeral, his daughter began to complain about a stomach ache. She came down with cholera and also died in her father's arms. These great losses led Saya Thet Gyi to go to many of the Sayadaws and lay teachers, seeking a way out of suffering and death.

1. "Saya" means "teacher" and the "Gyi" added to his name might be translated "the great Thet." He would be addressed in this way only after becoming a meditation teacher himself, but for the sake of consistency, we have referred to him at all periods of his life with the same title. His name as a young man was Maung ("master") Po Thet.

Around 1903, he followed the example of his first meditation teacher, U Nyunt, and went to Monywa to practise meditation under Ven. Ledi Sayadaw. He was around thirty years old then. He was accompanied in his search by a companion. While he was away, his wife and sister-in-law looked after his rice fields and sent money to support him. He was away for thirteen years. The first year or two, he would return to the village to see his wife and friends, but after that, he worked without pause.

His family sent him about one thousand kyats a year to support him. At times the only food they had to eat was dehydrated cooked rice, which they would add water to to reconstitute it. They would eat this with a little dried fish.

Ven. Ledi Sayadaw taught Saya Thet Gyi Ānāpāna meditation and explained about Vipassanā. He learned the basics about the four essential elements of material phenomena, about consciousness and the mental factors. But the main practice was concentration of the in-breath and out-breath.

After working for thirteen years, he decided to return to his native town. When he took leave of Ven. Ledi Sayadaw, his teacher told him, "You should continue practising and strengthen your concentration (Samādhi). When concentration comes, the factor of wisdom (Paññā) will come too. Once the factor of wisdom comes, you will be able to spread the Teaching (Dhamma)."

At that time, Saya Thet Gyi was not very satisfied with the results he had obtained. He knew his concentration was strong, but he had not reached his goal.

Before returning to his native village, he wanted to see his former teacher, Saya Nyunt. He crossed the Chindwin River, which has a very swift current, and he searched for a week in the forest there, but without success. So he returned to his native village.



**Saya Thet Gyi
(1873-1945)**

Back in his native town, he and his companion stayed at his own Dhamma Hall. Saya Thet Gyi did not even go to see his wife, but continued to meditate. His wife and sister-in-law would not go to see him because they thought he should have come to see them first.

There was a lady staying near the Dhamma Hall, so Saya Thet Gyi and his companion asked her to provide their meals, and they paid her to do this.

Just a week before they came there, the villagers had decided to fix up the pagoda and Dhamma Hall, which had been allowed to fall in disrepair. When Saya Thet Gyi and his companion arrived, everything had been cleaned up.

Saya Thet Gyi continued meditating for a year. The people in the village saw that he and his companion had come back but did not go to their house. They found this peculiar, and some of the people said they may have become mentally deranged.

Saya Thet Gyi and his companion continued to meditate--especially Saya Thet Gyi. He worked continually and his concentration kept improving. He got sensations throughout his entire body, but he was not able to penetrate further. His concentration was too broad, rather than being narrow and strong enough. He remembered Ven. Ledi Sayadaw's instructions, however, and continued to work.

Suddenly, one day, he felt a sensation in only one small spot--a sensation that arose on its own. He watched that sensation very carefully, and suddenly he gained insight into what might be called "the nature of phenomena." He knew he had made significant progress in his work. He could not consult Ledi Sayadaw directly, but he knew that the books written by his teacher were at his home. He was yearning to consult these texts, for he was experiencing something new, and he wanted to compare his

experience with what his teacher had said in his manuals. So he decided to go back to his house.

When his sister-in-law saw him coming, she said to her sister, "There comes your husband. Don't speak to him. You've been saying you want to divorce him." Both the sisters had been laying plans to divide the property between themselves and Saya Thet Gyi.

The sister-in-law went down from the house, as she planned to leave the compound before Saya Thet Gyi arrived at the house. But somehow she found she could not leave, and instead, she walked up and down in the compound. When Saya Thet Gyi entered the gate, she suddenly had a change of heart and greeted him very politely. "Why have you come?" she asked. "How are you? How is your health?"

Saya Thet Gyi's assistant was with him. He had been watching his friend's progress in his meditation, and he was convinced that it was the power of Saya Thet Gyi's loving kindness (Mettā) that had brought about this change in the sister-in-law.

They went upstairs to the house, and the sister-in-law said to her sister, "Here's your husband. Go and prepare some tea and bring some pickled tea leaves [la-phet]."

Saya Thet Gyi just greeted the women normally and then went straight to the cupboard with books and took out Ven. Ledi Sayadaw's manuals. While he began to study the texts, the women prepared a meal and sent for the neighbours to come. Everything ran very smoothly.

Saya Thet Gyi explained to his wife that he would not be living a household life now, and that she should consider him like a brother. She and her sister invited him to come to the house for his meals in the mornings, as he was keeping eight precepts and not eating after noon.

Saya Thet Gyi was very indebted to his wife and sister-in-law for all they had done for him--sending money to support him while he meditated, etc. He told them that the only way he could repay them would be to give them the Dhamma.

For a time Saya Thet Gyi went to his house for his meals. But then he said that he would have more time for meditation if he took his meals at the Dhamma Hall, so they arranged to send his meals to him.

Slowly people came to know about Saya Thet Gyi and to have respect for him. They had not thought very highly of him at first, but the way he behaved and talked showed that he lived according to the Teachings of the Buddha.

The first meditation course was arranged with about fifteen students. Saya Thet Gyi was about forty-three when he began teaching in 1913 or 1914.

Saya Thet Gyi continued to teach at the Dhamma Hall, supported by his wife and sister-in-law. He was able to provide the food for the meditators, and he even paid workers for the wages they missed while they meditated. He was able to do this through the financial aid he received from his wife and sister-in-law.

After teaching for one year, Saya Thet Gyi wanted to go see Ven. Ledi Sayadaw again. He went back, accompanied by his wife, sister-in-law and some other relatives. Saya Thet Gyi told Ven. Ledi Sayadaw about his experiences and the meditation courses. Ven. Ledi Sayadaw was very happy, and indicated his approval, saying "Sādhu, sādhu, sādhu."

Ven. Ledi Sayadaw told him he had reached a very good stage in his meditation, but he cautioned him not to say anything about having reached a particular stage. He should observe his mind, watching the play of his mind for eight years. In that way he could see whether the negative qualities were really

rooted out and not just being held in abeyance for the time being.

"You can now teach meditation on my behalf," Ven. Ledi Sayadaw told him. "As a first step you must teach some of my bhikkhus, and you must spread the practical aspects of Vipassanā meditation to at least six thousand people."

Ven. Ledi Sayadaw called the bhikkhus who were his pupils and asked them for volunteers to meditate under the guidance of Saya Thet Gyi. Over thirty of them volunteered.

When Saya Thet Gyi went back home, he thought of travelling around Burma because Ven. Ledi Sayadaw had told him to teach six thousand people. But his sister-in-law said, "You have a Dhamma Hall here, and we can support you in your work. We can prepare the food for you and the students. So why not stay here and give courses. There are many people willing to follow Vipassanā meditation courses under your guidance." So he decided to stay there.

There was one man in the village who was well versed in the Dhamma texts. He had a friend who was also very knowledgeable in the Dhamma texts--especially the Abhidhamma. This friend wanted to meditate under Saya Thet Gyi's guidance, but the first man said, "Why should you go and meditate under this Maung Po Thet? He doesn't even know any of the Pāli texts. He doesn't know Pāli."

Nevertheless, the friend decided to go. He had practised meditation under the guidance of a bhikkhu, but he could not make progress in his concentration.

Saya Thet Gyi had to guide this man in a different way because he was a student of Abhidhamma and was well versed in the texts. When he did Ānāpāna, images appeared and he would fix his attention on them. As soon as he fixed his attention on them, they disappeared. So he spent all his time trying to

get back the image. Two or three days passed, and when Saya Thet Gyi checked on his progress, he said to him, "I think as a student of Abhidhamma you have been told that when you do Ānāpāna you are practising Samatha-bhāvanā [development of calm]. In Samatha-bhāvanā the idea is to go into the Jhānas, and that image is important for going into a Jhāna state. When the image came up, you must have tried to fix your attention on it. And then, when the image disappeared, you have been wanting that image to come back, and there has been frustration in your attempt, because it didn't come up again."

"Yes, that's true," the man said.

Then Saya Thet Gyi said to him, "Ignore this image. Concentrate on the in-breath and out-breath and the touch that arises at the moment of the in-breath and out-breath. Concentrate and be aware only of this. In theory, the books say you may count the number of breaths, or else you may count the start, the middle, and the end of the breath. You will know all this just by being aware of the touch. This is because the start, the middle, and the end of each breath is included in the awareness of the touch of the breath--the consciousness of the touch that arises with the in-breath and the awareness of the touch arising with the out-breath. Do not worry about the image. Just be aware of the touch."

This man had to do Ānāpāna for a week before Saya Thet Gyi taught him Vipassanā.

After his meditation course, the man saw the bhikkhu under whom he had meditated before. The bhikkhu said to him, "You have meditated under Saya Thet. What is the difference with when you meditated with me? How do you feel?"

The man knew that the bhikkhu wanted him to say that meditating under his guidance was better, so he answered in a non-committal way, "Oh, it's just Ānāpāna. It's all the same."

The bhikkhu was not satisfied with this answer. He said, "No, I want to know the difference between the meditation you did under me and the meditation you are doing under Saya Thet."

The man knew he could not escape, so he said frankly, "Sir, when I was meditating with you, I could not get proper concentration, even after working a long time. When I meditated with Saya Thet, I got good concentration within a week. I knew for myself that the meditation was better. My Samādhī was strong, and I could feel the Anicca arising throughout my body--the arising and falling aspects."

The bhikkhu never went back to see that man after that.

The man who had tried to prevent his friend from meditating with Saya Thet Gyi disliked Saya Thet Gyi. One day, when Saya Thet Gyi walked by his house, the man began to abuse him. Saya Thet Gyi was not disturbed. There was no change in his facial expression or in his attitude. He just kept walking. Then he said to the man, "Are you calling me? I have to go to such-and-such a place. When I return, I'll come to visit you."

But the man said, "Don't come to visit my place! I was just trying to say you are of no use."

Another man was walking along behind Saya Thet Gyi, and he thought the first man was abusing him as well. "Are you insulting me?" he asked.

"No," the first man replied, "I'm talking to Saya Thet."

"What has Saya Thet done to you for you to abuse him so?" the second man said. "You are trying to accuse him of being what he is not and for no reason." So the second man took up the quarrel, and the two men came to blows.

Saya Thet Gyi, however, went on his way. And he said to the second man later, "If I should return that

man's challenge, he will just make more unwholesome acts. That is why I try to avoid that."

Another incident in which Saya Thet Gyi had to confront difficulties happened later in his life. He had a nephew, U San Thein, who looked after his rice fields. The usual arrangement was to have attendants who worked on the rice fields, and these attendants hired labourers. They paid the labourers according to the amount of rice produced each year. A portion was agreed for Saya Thet Gyi, and this was delivered to Saya Thet Gyi's place each year by the attendants and labourers. But Saya Thet Ghi did not deal with any of this directly.

One year, after delivering the rice, the labourers lodged a complaint, saying that Saya Thet Gyi had taken all the rice. In other words, they accused him of theft. Some of Saya Thet Gyi's disciples (including Sayagyi U Ba Khin) told him that since he had not done anything wrong--neither verbally nor physically--the labourers were bound to lose the case. They offered to take up the case for him.

Saya Thet Gyi told them, "If the case goes on, there will be more unwholesome acts done by them. If we refute their accusation, they will become angry and bring up more that is unwholesome."

So Saya Thet Gyi went to the labourers and settled the case out of court, paying for the damages. So we can see that Saya Thet Gyi always did his best to minimize any negative feelings that others might feel towards him.

By 1945, when he was over seventy years old, Saya Thet Gyi had taught many students, and several of these had started meditation centres of their own. Saya Thet Gyi called together his nephews and nieces to distribute all his possessions among them. He set aside fifty acres of his rice fields for the maintenance of the Dhamma Hall he had had constructed.

There were twenty water buffaloes to be distributed. Three of them were old, so he sent them to a farm set up by an Indian foundation where they would be maintained without working for the rest of their lives. The other water buffaloes were distributed to people whom he knew would not mistreat them. Before sending them away, he went to them and said, "As far as I am concerned, you are free from your work. You have been my benefactors. Thanks to you the paddy has been grown, and I have benefited from your work. I hope that you will be released from this kind of life for a better existence." In this way, he took leave of them.

By this time Saya Thet Gyi's wife had died. His sister-in-law was paralysed, and he himself suffered from poor health. So he went to Rangoon in order to receive treatment and to see his students there. He never returned to his native village.

In Rangoon, he stayed in a place on the northern slopes of the Shwedagon Pagoda. He used a bomb shelter that had been built there as his meditation cave. At night, he stayed in a meditation centre that one of his assistant teachers had set up.

His condition slowly deteriorated. Before his death, he said, "I have no money, but I don't want to be a burden on you when I die, so I will be cremated in a place not usually used for cremation."

He died at the age of seventy-two, surrounded by many of his pupils. Sayagyi U Ba Khin was not able to be present. He had had an operation on an eye, and it had become infected, so he was at the General Hospital on the day Saya Thet Gyi died.

Saya Thet Gyi was cremated where he died, on the northern slopes of the Shwedagon Pagoda. And Sayagyi U Ba Khin decided to build a small pagoda there. Sayagyi had his disciples contribute ten kyats each towards the construction of this pagoda so they could share in the merit of building it. Everything

connected with that pagoda was done in multiples of ten.

Unfortunately, the land was public land, and a bhikkhu started building four large statues of the Buddha around that pagoda. As it was public land, there was no way to prevent it. The statues are so large that you cannot see the little pagoda now. This is one reason why Sayagyi set up the International Meditation Centre in Rangoon on private land.

Saya Thet Gyi carried out his mission. When he died in 1945, he could be confident he had followed Ven. Ledi Sayadaw's instructions to him. Even though he was not learned in the Pāli texts, through his own experience, and with the aid of the manuals written by Ven. Ledi Sayadaw, he had been able to teach the Dhamma to many. He had thoroughly mastered the texts written by Ven. Ledi Sayadaw and almost knew them by heart. By comparing his own experiences with what was written in them, he had been able to see how he was progressing and teach himself.

SAYAGYI U BA KHIN (1899-1971)¹

Saya U Chit Tin

Sayagyi U Ba Khin was born in the Pyoncho quarter, Upper Pazundaung, in East Rangoon, on March 6, 1899. He was the son of U Paw and Daw Saw May. He had one older sister. His father was a rice broker and his mother earned money for the family by selling merchandise.

The neighbourhood in which he lived was one of factories, rice warehouses, and sawmills. It was not an area where he would come to know well-educated people--especially those speaking English. A knowledge of English was very important during the English occupation of Burma, as any hope of job advancement depended on it.

After a short stay at a monastic school, U Ba Khin entered the Burmese Methodist Middle School at the age of eight with the help of an elderly man from the match factory, U Bar Bi. U Ba Khin had a great gift in his ability to remember what he had read. He could commit to memory all his lessons. He learned the English grammar book from cover to cover. He stood first in every class and gained a Middle School Scholarship to continue his education. He went on to Saint Paul's Institution and studied in the High School. There, too, he stood at the head of his class every year. Before he came to that school,

1. This biography is based in part on my article, "The Tenth Anniversary in Memory of Thray Sithu Sayagyi U Ba Khin (1981)," **The Maha Bodhi**, Vol. 89, n^os 1-3 (1981), pp. 49-55. U Ba Khin was given the title of "Sithu" when Burma gained independence on Jan. 4, 1948. The Burmese government conferred the title "Thray Sithu" on him on Jan. 4, 1956.



Sayagyi U Ba Khin
(1899-1971)

a student who became a close friend of his had always led the class, but after U Ba Khin's arrival, that student was second.

In March 1917, he passed the English High School Final Examination, winning the Seewan gold medal of his school and a collegiate scholarship. His school was one of the best, for six students in his class were presented with collegiate scholarships that year out of twenty such scholarships for the entire country.

U Ba Khin was not able to attend university, however, due to the death of his mother and his father's age and poor health. Instead, he worked for a Burmese newspaper, **The Sun**.

Later he became a clerk in the Accountant General's Office of Burma, an office in which there were very few Burmese. His ability to memorize the rules (service rules, account code rules) and all the complicated applications of the rules (past decisions, opinions, footnotes, etc.) made him an unusually competent accountant. He was very thoroughly trained and passed the departmental examinations, including the Subordinate Accounts Service Examination held by the Provincial Government of India in November 1926.

His superiors in the office thought very highly of him. He was very thorough, and his reputation among the authorities (who were Europeans for the most part) was very high. This led to his being made the first Special Office Superintendent in 1937, when Burma was separated from India and the Auditor General's Office was opened in Burma.

U Ba Khin first learned about Buddhist meditation from a friend named U Aye Maung, who was a school teacher. U Aye Maung went to do a course with Saya Thet Gyi in December 1936. When he came back, U Ba Khin went to see him, on Jan. 1, 1937. U Aye Maung explained that he had done



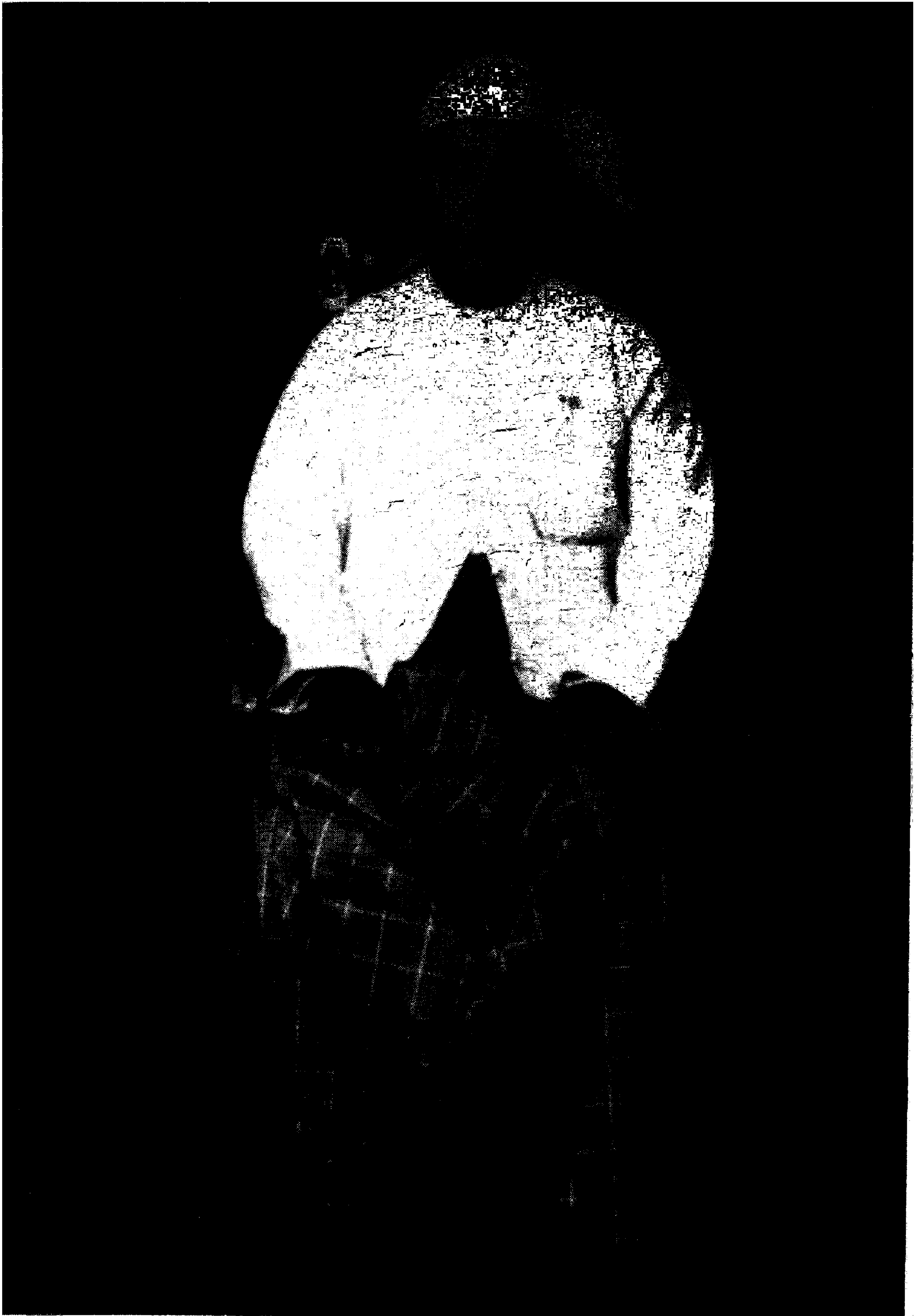
"What is your aspiration?" asked Webu Sayadaw.
"My aspiration is to attain Nibbāna, Sir," replied
U Ba Khin.

Ānāpāna and Vipassanā meditation. U Ba Khin wanted to try also, so U Aye Maung explained the technique for Ānāpāna. U Ba Khin tried it, and he immediately saw a light which came up before him and expanded. Both he and U Aye Maung were surprised by this. As a result, U Ba Khin was very anxious to try a full course. So on Jan. 8, 1937, he took leave from his office with great difficulty. It took great courage to leave before written permission granting him leave came through. He had never been ambitious for personal advancement, however, and he went, even though he was risking his job and perhaps his career.

Saya Thet Gyi's place was due south of Rangoon, across the Rangoon River and the paddy fields. It was only eight miles, but over muddy fields, that was a long way to go. In February, after the harvest, it would have been possible to go by bus, but U Ba Khin had to go in a sampan boat. It was low tide, which meant that he could only travel up to Phyarsu village in the sampan--only half the distance along the tributary which ran from Pyaw-bwegyi. At Pharsu he climbed out of the boat, carrying his bed roll and a few provisions, and climbed up the river bank, his legs sinking down in the mud up to his knees. The remaining distance across the fields he covered on foot with his legs caked in mud.

On the night he arrived, U Ba Khin was given Ānāpāna. His progress was so rapid, Saya Thet Gyi had him begin Vipassanā on the second day. Usually, Saya Thet Gyi had his students do Ānāpāna for a week. A Bhikkhu named Inmagyithein Tawya Sayadaw (U Yukandāra) was meditating under Saya Thet Gyi's guidance along with U Ba Khin. U Ba Khin's progress was very rapid, and he was able to become well established in the practice during his first course. He had gone to Saya Thet Gyi's thinking he would stay

Thray Sithu Sayagyi U Ba Khin



. . . in his national dress, including gaung-baung

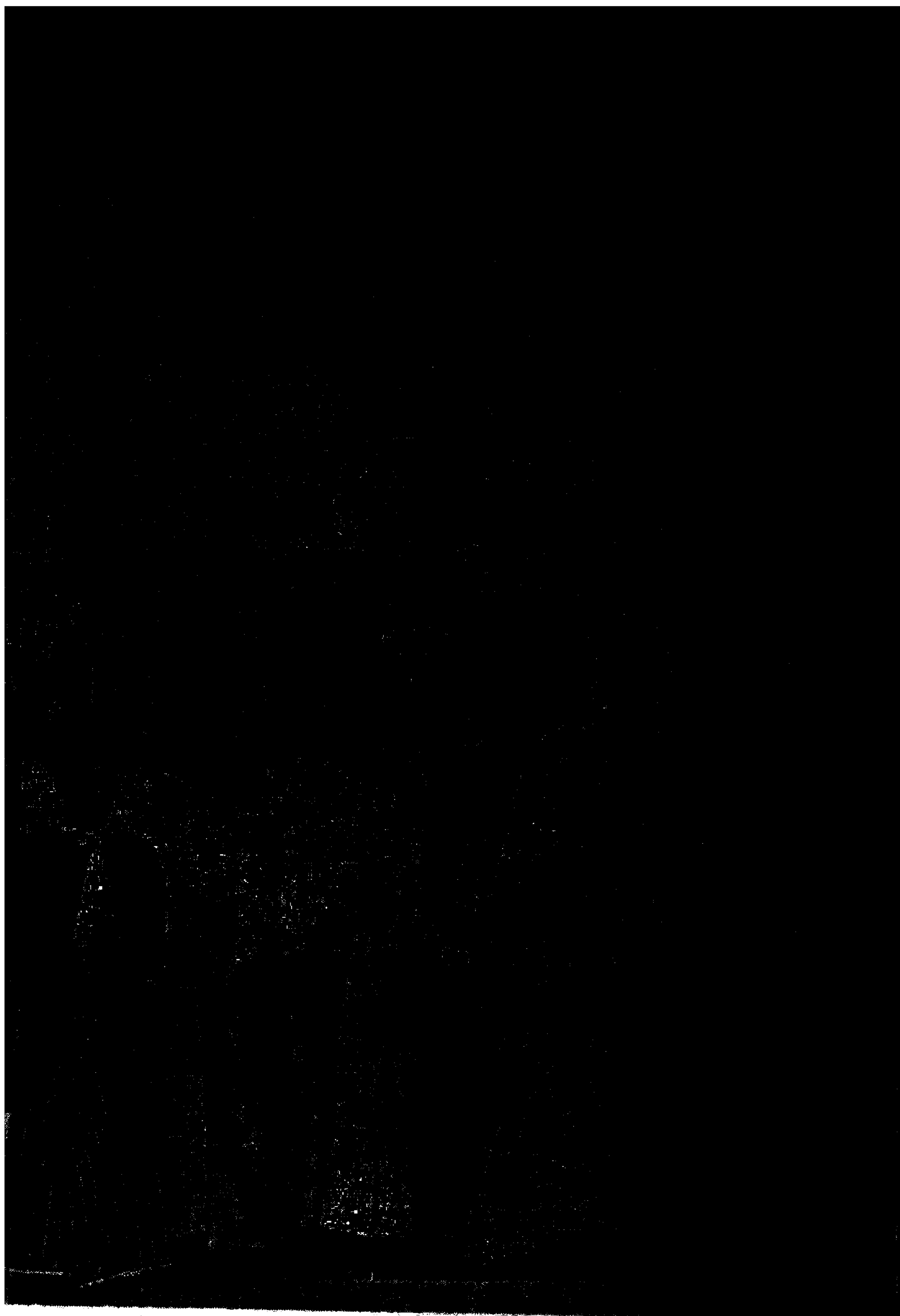
only a few days, but Saya Thet Gyi persuaded him to meditate for seven days.

When U Ba Khin returned to his office, he was worried that he might find an order of dismissal. He found an envelope on his desk, but when he opened it, he was surprised to find he had been promoted. Up to that time, Burma had been a province of India in the British Empire, but the two countries were separated administratively in 1937. A separate Auditor General's Office of Burma was established. Previously, the heads of departments were English and most of the officers and staff were Indians, but now, a search was made to find qualified Burmese to take positions of responsibility. So U Ba Khin was chosen for the post of Special Office Superintendent.

Between 1937 and 1948, when Burma gained independence, U Ba Khin held several different posts:

1. Accounts Officer, Burma Railways, 1941;
2. Director of Accounts and Audit, 1942-1945;
3. Assistant Accountant General, 1945;
4. Deputy Account General, 1947;
5. Chief Accounts Officer, Civil Supplies Management Board, 1947.

U Ba Khin continued his meditation, and in 1941, he was made aware of his mission as a teacher of meditation. When he was promoted to the position of Accounts Officer for the Burma Railways Board in February 1941, he had to travel on the Rangoon-Mandalay line to audit the accounts for the local railway stations. One day in July of that year, he had some free time when he was in the town of Kyaukse, forty miles south of Mandalay. He decided



Sayagyi U Ba Khin and the executive members of the Vipassanā Association at IMC-Rangoon, 1953-54 (missing member: Saya U Tint Yee).

to have a look around the Shwetharyaung Hills, and set out with the local stationmaster. They could see in the distance, from the top of a hill, a cluster of buildings which they recognized as the monastery of Webu Sayadaw. The stationmaster knew the countryside, so they decided to go there and arrived around 3:00 P.M.

They found an old nun who was pounding chillies and beans and asked her if they could pay respects to Webu Sayadaw.

"This is not the time to see the revered Sayadaw," she said. "He is meditating and will come out of his hut at about six o'clock."

U Ba Khin explained that he was a visitor from Rangoon and that he did not have much time. He would very much like to meet the Sayadaw. Would it not be possible to pay respects outside the hut?

The nun pointed out a small hut and the men approached it together. U Ba Khin squatted on the ground outside and said, "I come from Lower Burma, Rangoon, and I wish to pay my respects to the Sayadaw."

Soon, the door opened and a cloud of mosquitoes emerged followed by Webu Sayadaw.

Keeping his attention in the body and with awareness of Anicca (impermanence), U Ba Khin paid his respects.

"What is your aspiration?" asked Webu Sayadaw.

"My aspiration is to attain Nibbāna, Sir," replied U Ba Khin.

"How are you going to attain Nibbāna?"

"By meditation and through knowing Anicca, Sir," was the reply.

"Where did you learn to be aware of this Anicca?" asked Webu Sayadaw.

U Ba Khin explained that he had been studying and practising meditation with Saya Thet Gyi for four years.

"Oh," the Sayadaw said, "I thought you must have been practising this Dhamma for many years, and in the forest. You have acquired good Pāramī (perfections) and you must teach the Dhamma to others. You should not wait. Start teaching immediately. Do not let people who meet you miss the benefits of receiving this teaching."

So Sayagyi U Ba Khin had no choice but to teach, and the stationmaster became his first student. That same night, back at the railway station, Sayagyi taught him Ānāpāna meditation in the bogie (railway carriage) in which he travelled, using the two tables of the dining compartment as their seats. This was the beginning of Sayagyi U Ba Khin's long career as a meditation teacher.

Saya Thet Gyi also encouraged Sayagyi U Ba Khin to teach meditation. Sayagyi took some Burmese government officials with him to meditate with Saya Thet Gyi during the Japanese occupation. One of these officials had Saya Thet Gyi visit him in Rangoon from time to time. But Saya Thet Gyi told them, "I can see you only in the evenings and mornings, but U Ba Khin will always be available. So, whenever problems arise, you should ask him. I am like the doctor, and he is like the nurse. The doctor can only see you occasionally, but the nurse can see you all the time."

In this way, Saya Thet Gyi made Sayagyi U Ba Khin's status clear to those who were his superiors in his work.

Sayagyi arranged meditation classes in his residence in Budd Road, Rangoon, during the Japanese occupation. Those who participated included the former Prime Minister of Burma, the owner of **The New Light of Burma** (a Burmese newspaper), and the then president of the Shwedagon Pagoda Trust.

Burma gained independence from the British on January 4, 1948. U Ba Khin was appointed as the

Accountant General. His career in lay life from that time on was very busy. When he retired from the post of Accountant General on March 26, 1953, he was immediately re-employed by the government, and held various high-ranking posts until October 22, 1964. During most of that period, he held two or more separate posts which were equivalent to Heads of Department. At one time, he held three separate posts for three years. On another occasion, he held four such posts simultaneously for a year. The posts included:

- Officer on Special Duty (O.S.D.);
- Auditor General's Office;
- Chairman of the Special Enquiry Committee, State Agricultural Marketing Board (S.A.M.B.);
- Director of Commercial Audit;
- O.S.D., Ministry of Trade Development;
- Chairman, S.A.M.B.;
- Deputy Chief Executive, S.A.M.B.;
- Principal, Government Institute for Training in Accounts and Audit.

Even though he worked at what amounted to several full-time jobs, Sayagyi was also able to teach meditation. Sayagyi considered Jan. 4, 1948, to be not only the Independence Day for Burma, but also the Independence Day for the Buddha-Sāsana (the Buddha's Dispensation). As we shall see, the 1950s were important years in the revival of the practice of the Buddha's Teachings.

The government encouraged the organization of Buddhist Associations in October 1950. Sayagyi formed an association known at the Buddha-Sāsana Akyo-saung Athin (Association to Promote and Propagate the Buddha's Teachings) for members of his

office. The opening ceremony took place on January 1, 1951.² Soon after, a room was set aside in the office for meditation, and Sayagyi conducted the first course in April 1951, during the Water Festival holidays.

This led to the forming of a Vipassanā Research Group, made up of some of his more serious and advanced meditators.

The meditation room in his office became so crowded, it was decided to open a centre in Rangoon. Around the same time, the Buddhist Associations connected with the Auditor General of Burma were amalgamated into one (known as the Audit Department Buddhist Association) and the group formed earlier was dissolved.

Sayagyi then established the Accountant General Vipassanā Association, dedicated solely to the practice of Vipassanā Meditation.

The site for a centre was selected by Sayagyi on January 15, 1952. A pagoda was built that same year, the Light of the Dhamma Pagoda.

During these same years, the Sixth Buddhist Council (Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana) was being planned. The Burmese government set up two organizations to do the planning: The Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Association and the Tharthana Yeiktha of Rangoon. They were founded by a group of conscientious, responsible Burmese laymen: Sir U Thwin, the President of the Shwedagon Pagoda Trust; Sao Shwe Thaik, the first President of Burma; U Nu, the Prime Minister; Myanma-Alin U Tin, the Finance Minister; U Ba Khin, the Accountant General; and U San Thein, the Commissioner of Income-tax.

2. For more details, see Saya U Ba Pho's article, "How the International Meditation Centre, Rangoon, Was Founded and Developed," **The Anecdotes of Sayagyi U Ba Khin** (1982), pp. 29-37.

The association served as the basis for The Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council (UBSC), which was subsequently formed in August 1950. Sayagyi U Ba Khin was made chairman of the Committee for Paṭipatti (Practical Buddhist Meditation). He was elected by the government to a second term of office of three years, along with the other eight members, including the Religious Affairs Minister from the Cabinet. This Executive Committee was composed of twenty-nine members. In addition to the above nine, eighteen members represented the more than fifty district members from all around Burma who in turn represented the religious associations in their own Divisions or States.

Sayagyi was also very active in planning for that momentous occasion as an Executive Member of the UBSC and as the Honorary Auditor of the Council right from the beginning. He was responsible for supervising and maintaining the accounts of the Sixth Buddhist Council, thus being in charge of receipts and expenditures running into millions of kyats.

More than 170 acres of land were acquisitioned--the owners being reimbursed. A very large man-made, rock cave, with temporary timber buildings surrounding the west wing, was built to house approximately 5,000 Bhikkhus (monks) and ten to fifteen thousand laymen and laywomen in the Great Cave. There were temporary sheds built for the observers.

On the opening day of the Council, Rangoon was crowded with pilgrims from abroad and from all over Burma. The monasteries and hotels were all full. There were so many people they had to take turns in going to what came to be known as the Kaba Aye Thiri Maṅgalar Hill, seven miles from Rangoon. Holding the Council itself took two years (2498-2500 Buddhist Era [1954-1956 A.D.]).

The following buildings were constructed for the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana in order to accommodate the large number of members of the Saṅgha and lay people who attended--as many as a quarter of a million at a time:

- The Great Cave (Mahā-Pāsānaguḥā),
- The library and museum,
- The Great Sīma (for official acts of the Saṅgha),
- The Saṅgha Hospital,
- Four hostels: Jambudīpa, Pabbavidaha, Uttarakuru, and Aparagoyāṇa,
- A refectory with modern equipment for cooking and a laundry building,
- The Administration Block,
- The printing press for publication of the Buddhist canon (Tipiṭaka),
- Living quarters for the office staff and officers.

Over forty million kyats were spent by the government on this project, and several million more were collected from foreign and local lay disciples. Preparations were made in record time: the Great Cave was built in thirteen months, thanks to the effort put forth by those working on it, much of the labour being voluntary. The other buildings were put up in those same thirteen months and were ready just in time for the opening of the Council on the full-moon day of May 1954.

Sayagyi U Ba Khin was fully occupied with these preparations. He was responsible for drawing up and arranging the accounts and for the system established for collecting the money given in Dāna by the people. Money was sent in from all over the country, being collected by the treasuries of the cities and towns. These, of course, were under the

charge of the Accountant General's Office. Special columns were entered in the books of the district and township treasuries to account for the Dāna money paid in by those who were responsible for collecting it. The treasuries transferred the money to the headquarters in Rangoon for deposit in the UBSC bank account.

Sayagyi devised a system for the collection of contributions by use of printed coloured receipt books. Different books were printed for different denominations ranging from one kyat to ten, twenty, and so forth up to one-hundred kyats. For donations of more than one hundred kyats, a receipt book which was especially designed for that purpose was used and only selected people in higher posts or with higher responsibility handled that money. The system worked, avoiding any suggestion of mishandling of funds.

Sayagyi served as a member of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Executive Committee which was responsible for conducting the entire council, including inviting eminent scholarly Bhikkhus from the five Theravāda countries: Burma, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. These monks, working in groups prepared the texts of the Pāli canon for publication. They worked at the Kaba Aye Siri Maṅgalar Hill, comparing and correcting the texts, referring to the Singhalese and Cambodian editions and to the Roman-script edition of the Pali Text Society in England. The Pāli texts were published there by the UBSC and were recited in the Great Cave. All this was concluded on the full-moon day of Kason, May 24, 1956--Buddha Jayanti Day. The commentaries and sub-commentaries are still being published.

Sayagyi was also a member of the following sub-committees:

The editorial board, **The Light of the Dhamma** (English),

The editorial board, **The Light of the Sāsana** (Burmese),

The Sub-committee for Propagating the Buddha-Dhamma (in Burma and abroad),

The Sub-committee for the Hills Tract Mission (in Burma and Assam).

He began a second term as a member of the Executive Committee in 1954, but once the major projects of the Sixth Buddhist Council were complete and everything was running smoothly, he resigned from the UBSC. In 1962, he was reappointed by the Revolutionary government to a Special Enquiry Committee created to inspect the affairs of the UBSC. When the chairman, U Lun Baw, died, Sayagyi served as acting chairman, until January 1967.

As can be seen from these records of his career in lay life and in connection with Buddhist affairs, the government gave him more and more important assignments from 1955 to October 22, 1964.

The 1950s were also important because of the number of Western students who meditated under Sayagyi's guidance. Foreign intellectuals and organisations first became acquainted with Sayagyi (popularly known to foreigners as Guruji--both titles meaning "great teacher") through a series of lectures which he gave in September 1951. These lectures were called **What Buddhism Is**. They were given at the request of a Religious Study Group made up of members of the Special Technical and Economic Mission of the U.S.A. and their families. The group met in the English Methodist Church, Signal Pagoda Road, Rangoon. The Vipassanā Research Association published the lectures in a booklet which soon found

its way to various Burmese Embassies abroad and to Buddhist organisations all over the world.

Many of the Western people who came to Burma for the Sixth Buddhist Council were interested in the practical side of Buddhism. At that time, the monks in Burma were not fluent in English. So when the Westerners made enquiries, they were referred to Sayagyi, as he was the only English-speaking teacher of Vipassanā. Sayagyi also met foreigners at official receptions and he would invite those who expressed an interest in meditation to come to the Centre and try.

Sayagyi's Western students ranged from senior citizens to school boys, and they came from all walks of life: professors, lecturers, doctors, nurses, teachers, students, businessmen, politicians, administrators, and religious men, etc. They are from various religions, races, countries, and cultures. They came with an open mind and the necessary sincerity and willingness to follow the instructions given by Sayagyi, and so they all responded well and greatly benefited.³

The Dhamma-dūta activities that Sayagyi was unreservedly devoted to can be divided into two categories:

1. The maintenance of the purity of the Buddha's Teachings in Burma and abroad;
2. The revival of the Sāsana (Teachings) in its land of origin and the spread of the Dhamma to lands where it had only been seen as a glimmer before.

3. For more details concerning his teaching of Western students, see the introduction to **Dhamma Texts** (1985), pp. xvi-xxi.

It would be impossible to recount all his achievements that come under the first category, which was his main objective from the time he took up his Dhamma-dūta work. With the help of the Vipassanā Research Association members and his eminent Assistant Teacher, Sayama Daw Mya Thwin, he was able to conduct one ten-day meditation course every month at the International Meditation Centre, Rangoon.

In Burma, the range of students varied from the president of the country to an ordinary office boy--and they were all treated equally and given equal attention in the training. Just as a high-ranking official who has the potential to reach the highest stage of spiritual attainments will reach that state if he is taught correctly and works correctly, so too, an office boy with the same potential will also reach that stage if the same conditions are met. In fact, one of Sayagyi's outstanding students was an office boy, and the highest ranking official to work under his guidance could go into deep meditation at will for an hour and a half.

Starting in 1951, Sayagyi submitted his experiences in Vipassanā meditation to several venerable Sayadaws for verification. These included such well-known bhikkhus as Ven. Abhidhaja-mahāraṭṭhaguru Ma-Soe-Yein Sayadaw (President of the Sixth Buddhist Council), Ven. Veluwun Sayadaw of Bahan (President of the Hill Tracts Buddhist Mission, Buddha Sāsana Council), Ven. Nha-kyeik-shitsu Sayadaw of Tha-yet-taw monastery (President of the All Burma Mahā-Saṅgha Abbots Association, Rangoon), and Ven. Webu Sayadaw (Presiding Saṅgha and Meditation Teacher for three meditation centres). All the venerable Sayadaws greatly appreciated his success as a meditation teacher and said "Sādhu, sādhu, sādhu" (well done) in approving his achievements.

Sayagyi invited Ven. Webu Sayadaw to visit IMC-Rangoon for a week in June 1953, and he came with a retinue of twenty bhikkhus, women devotees keeping ten precepts (usually called "nuns" but not bhikkhunīs), and lay followers. The Sayadaw visited the Centre several times after that first occasion, whenever he visited Lower Burma. Daw Mya Sein (lecturer at Rangoon University) described his second visit, which took place on May 1, 1954:

Sayagyi's students paid their respects to the Sayadaw by entering into deep meditation for thirty-seven minutes. The Sayadaw was very pleased with this evidence of Vipassanā practice. In his simple, gentle way, the Sayadaw expounded the Dhamma and then told us that Sayagyi had put us on the right Path. It was left to us to walk along it steadfastly and diligently towards the Goal. ... We were so elated by the Sayadaw's approval of our practice and our gratitude and respect for Sayagyi knew no bounds. He was a true Ācariya--a Teacher of Dhamma and Vipassanā meditation, ready to advise and help all those who came to the Centre. ... Now and again he invited learned Sayadaws and submitted to them his findings in Vipassanā research and accepted their advice and suggestions. ... Besides the week ends, every time the college closed, I went back for a full course, and so I learnt how to enter into deep meditation. This stood me in good stead when I had to take air journeys. When taking off and when landing, I would go into deep meditation with a vow to wake

up when the plane was safely airborne or when it landed. But it needs constant practice; without it, the ability fades away, as I have discovered to my dismay.

Sayagyi wanted to travel abroad in order to teach Vipassanā meditation. Dr Om Prakash (Consulting Physician, United Nations Organization, Rangoon, and the honorary family physician to Sayagyi) described this as follows:⁴

Sayagyi U Ba Khin had a great desire--a desire which was never fulfilled--to go abroad, especially to the U.S.A., and teach his method of meditation, which he believed--and very correctly so--to be the easiest and most logical way to practise meditation.

Sayagyi was able to lead two successful teaching missions to Upper Burma in 1967--one in January and the other in April. Although he retired from all official assignments in 1965, he still continued on as a member of the Special Enquiry Committee of the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council. The affairs of the Council, whose members had been disbanded in 1962, were conducted by Sayagyi, its president, and two other members. When the president of the Enquiry Commission died, Sayagyi had to take charge and continued to conduct its affairs until January 1967, when he finally had to request permission to resign due to poor health. As soon as his health improved, he led two missions to Mandalay and Maymyo to teach Vipassanā to the local students. He

4. *The Maha Bodhi*, Vol. 80, n° 4 (1972), p. 104.

was assisted on these two missions by his Assistant Teacher, Sayama Daw Mya Thwin, by me, and by Mr S.N. Goenka and his wife, Mrs Illaichi. These trips were the forerunners of teaching missions outside IMC-Rangoon, both at home and abroad.

In 1963, Sayagyi travelled to the United Kingdom, France, and the Federal Republic of Germany on a mission led by Brigadier Aung Byi in connection with the Burma Pharmaceutical Institute, Rangoon. He wore his own national dress, even though he was warned that autumn in Europe could be rather cold for someone from Southeast Asia. He came back smiling, still in national dress, and bringing with him some cuttings from the daily newspapers with reports of the unusual heat wave that had occurred in Europe and which had enable him to wear the national dress he loved so much.

By the time Sayagyi retired from official assignments in 1965, he had laid a firm foundation for his second objective to revive Buddhism in India and spread it to other countries. He had thoroughly coached his Assistant Teacher and trained the members of the Vipassanā Research Association to teach meditation. He also commissioned the following foreign disciples and entrusted them with the Dhamma-dūta work in their respective countries:

Authorized by a letter dated April 23, 1969:

1. Dr Leon E. Wright, Ph.D., Professor of Religion, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.
2. Mr Robert H. Hover, La Mirada, California, U.S.A.
3. Mrs Ruth Denison, Hollywood, California, U.S.A. (to teach women only).
4. Mrs Forella Landie, British Columbia, Canada (to teach women only).

5. Mr John E. Coleman, Maidenhead, Berk., U.K.

6. Mr J. Van Amersfoort, The Hague, The Netherlands.

Authorized separately in July 1967, when a ten-day meditation course was conducted with guidance coming from Sayagyi in Rangoon:

7. Mr S.N. Goenka, Bombay, India.

In Burma, the ten members of the Vipassanā Research Association assisted Sayagyi in his teaching, and in particular, Sayama Daw Mya Thwin, me, U Tint Yee, U Ba Pho, and U Boon Shain. When he taught members of the Indian community in Burma, especially the Hindus, his disciple Mr S.N. Goenka helped him by translating for several years.

In June 1965, Sayagyi ordained for ten days as a bhikkhu under Ven. Webu Sayadaw at Ingyinbintawya Meditation Centre, Shwebo District, Upper Burma, along with his disciple U Ko Lay. Ven. U Kusala was Sayagyi's name as a bhikkhu.

Ven. Webu Sayadaw visited the International Meditation Centre, Rangoon, several times over the years. He would give short Dhamma talks to Sayagyi's students after his two daily meals. "This is the place from which we have to start our work and our mission," he remarked on one occasion. "When we first visited, this place was like a jungle, but what progress has been made within these years! It is like the time of the Buddha when so many benefited. Can one imagine how many enjoyed the fruits of the Dhamma in a single moment then? Can one count the number? They were innumerable!"

Sayagyi U Ba Khin continued to teach Vipassanā meditation at the centre he had established until his

demise in 1971. Some days before his passing, he recalled with Mettā all those who had assisted him in his life--the old man who got him started in school, the Burmese scholar who helped him to enter Saint Paul's Institution, and many, many others. He found in the local newspaper a notice of the seventy-second birthday of an old friend with whom he had lost contact forty years earlier. With the help of one of his disciples, he dictated a letter to his old friend, and to some of his foreign students and disciples. The next day, Monday, the 18th of January, the letters were dispatched, and Sayagyi suddenly became ill. When his old friend received his letter on the 20th, he was shocked to read as well the announcement of Sayagyi U Ba Khin's demise on January 19, 1971.

About a week before his death, Sayagyi had been sitting on a bench outside the Dhamma hall at the Centre. Sayama, the lady disciple who had been assisting him in teaching for many years, was with him, standing nearby.

"I'm thinking of leaving for good," Sayagyi said all of a sudden.

"Well go," Sayama replied quite casually, assuming that he meant to go abroad to teach. "I'll look after the affairs here."

A few days later, on January 19th, he was gone.

After Sayagyi's death, Webu Sayadaw visited Rangoon and about twenty-five meditation students from the Centre went for a private interview with him. When I reported that Sayagyi had died, the Sayadaw replied, "Your Sayagyi did not die. A person like your Sayagyi will not die. You may not see him now, but his teaching lives on--unlike some persons who, even though they are alive, are as if dead, who serve no purpose and who benefit none."

A number of those who were present recollected the lines uttered by Ven. Vappa, the second of the

five ascetics (Pañcavaggi) who heard the Buddha's First Sermon, when he attained Arahatsip. These lines were often recited by Sayagyi in his talks: "He who sees can see who sees and who does not see. He who does not see, sees neither those who see nor those who do not see."

Sayagyi U Ba Khin's teachings, which were in accord with the Buddha's Teachings and with the way in which the Buddha taught, do indeed live on! The Centre in Rangoon has continued to thrive, and two International Meditation Centres have been established outside Burma, one in the United Kingdom and one in Australia. Organisations have also been set up in many other countries, and many meditation courses in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin have been held in these countries over the years.

In October 1978, my wife, Sayama Daw Mya Thwin, and I came out of Burma at the request of the Western students in this tradition. We have been privileged to help carry on Sayagyi U Ba Khin's mission, and especially to help in firmly establishing the Buddha's Teachings in the West.

A particularly momentous occasion was the dedication of a pagoda at IMC-Perth. It follows the same design as the pagoda at IMC-Rangoon, and is named after it: Dhamma Yaung Chi Ceti (The Light of the Dhamma Pagoda). The dedication was held on the full-moon day of Tabaung, 2530 Buddhist Era (March 14, 1987). There are also plans to build a similar pagoda at IMC-UK.

Sayagyi U Ba Khin was convinced that this is a very important period in the Buddha-Sāsana--the Buddha's Dispensation, or, the period during which the Buddha's Teachings are available. This Sāsana is expected to last for five thousand years. We are now midway through the Sāsana, the time when there is a revival of interest in and practice of the Buddha's Teachings.

Sayagyi concluded his last message to his disciples abroad by saying:

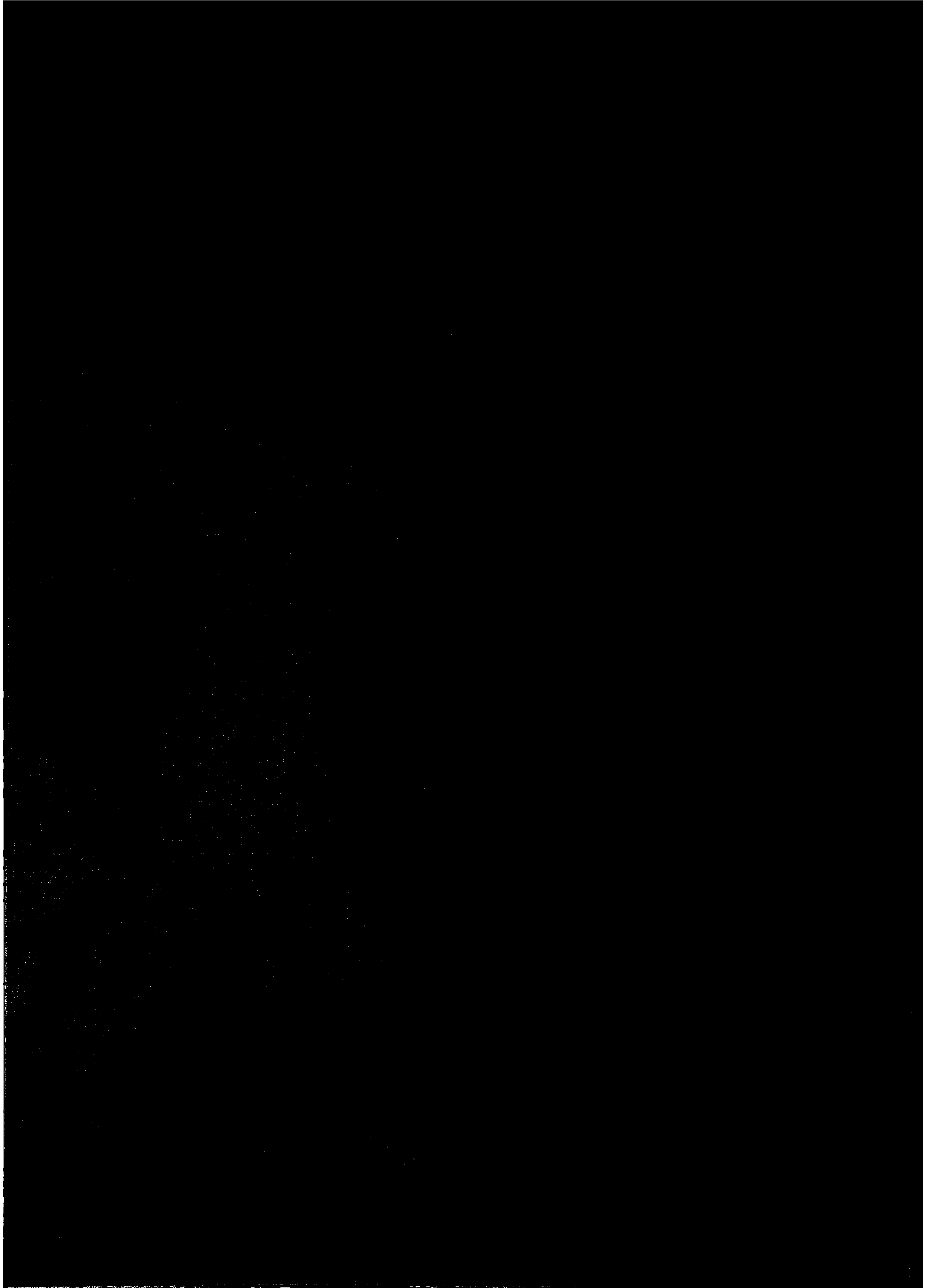
The time clock of Vipassanā is now struck--that is, for the revival of the Buddha-Dhamma, Vipassanā in practice. We have no doubt whatsoever about definite results accruing to those who would with open mind sincerely undergo a course of training under a competent teacher. I mean results which will keep them in good stead in a state of well-being and happiness for the rest of their lives.

As one of Sayagyi's Western students said after Sayagyi's demise, "For him, only a more glorious life could await. Fortunate would be the generation with whom he again takes rebirth."

DHAMMA YAUNG CHI ZEDI

"Meditation Pagoda"

IMC-Rangoon



Sayagyi U Ba Khin & Jocelyn King

THAT EMPOWERING LAUGH

Jocelyn B. King

Several months before my husband and I left Rangoon on March 1, 1960, U Hpe Aung, the director of the International Institute for Advanced Buddhist Studies (I.I.A.B.S.) at Kaba Aye, told us that he would advise us both to take a course in Buddhist meditation¹ because he thought that it would greatly contribute to our better understanding of Buddhism. My husband was working at I.I.A.B.S., both as a teacher and advisor, supported by the Ford Foundation which was funding this project along with the Burmese government as a means for establishing understanding and good relations between East and West. I was learning Burmese and trying to find my way around in a culture which was totally strange to me.

Although I had read books about Buddhism and was interested, I really knew very little about it, and the thought of meditating all by myself in a small cell was disconcerting to say the least, even though the course was to last but ten days. Then when we visited the International Meditation Centre (I.M.C.) in July 1959 to talk with U Ba Khin,² its

1. Her husband, Dr Winston L. King, wrote an account of the ten-day meditation session with Sayagyi U Ba Khin at the International Meditation Centre, Rangoon, Burma, and it was published in the appendix to his book **A Thousand Lives Away** (Cambridge: Harvard, 1965).

2. Dr King has this to say about Sayagyi: "Two impressions of him stand out vividly, as characterizing the 'essential' U Ba Khin: He was thoroughly Burmese and truly Buddhist. As to his

founder and meditation master, I became even more apprehensive; to spend most of ten days in a small room/cell, like those we were shown, was almost more than I could bear to think of. However, I told myself, ten days wouldn't last forever and compared to ten months or ten years they were nothing! So I agreed to go with my husband, at the appointed time in September, for my first ten-day course. Some weeks afterwards, when I told some American friends who were also with the Ford Foundation in Burma about the astounding (to me) experience at the Centre, they exclaimed, "Why you've just had a successful psychotherapeutic treatment!" It had indeed been that but much, much more!

First I must mention some important and interesting things which began to happen almost immediately. When I realized that we were to be in our meditation room-cells by 4:30 a.m. I was shocked, since I was not naturally an early riser (but I became one!). Moreover, we would be spending more than eleven hours daily in those cells and we were not to talk with anyone else but the meditation master unless absolutely necessary. A partial exception was made in our case since we were foreigners and first-time meditators. My husband and I ate our two meals of the day together, though our lodgings were at opposite ends of the compound. I think that Sayagyi U Ba Khin knew it would do us good to talk together and compare what was happening to us. Our

Burmeseness: He loved Burma and felt at home there. In this love of Burma there was no disparagement or disdain for other countries, peoples, or cultures, only a joyful and willing acceptance of his own karmic destiny." **The Maha Bodhi**, "U Ba Khin Memorial Number," Vol. 80, n° 4 (April 1972), p. 105.

evening meal was only liquids of course and we were to kill no living creatures--ants, spiders, mosquitoes for example--but we were furnished with mosquito nets and with a spray insect repellent.

But those **small** room-cells--eight of them! They were each about eight feet long, in the shape of a truncated triangle, six feet tapering to three feet in width, the small end opening into the central shrine room under the pagoda spire and radiating out from it like the spokes of a wheel. There was a Buddha image in the south cell, the one opposite was used as an entrance. The floor of the shrine room was elevated a step above the floor of the cells, each of which had a door opening into the shrine room where the meditation master slept (to be available for emergency calls) as I later observed and from which he talked with the various meditators, one by one, when he wished to. Each of our cells also had a door on its outer end opening onto a walkway around our "meditation pagoda".

On my very first entrance into my cell, I looked apprehensively at the confined space in which I would spend much of the next ten days and felt smothered and penned in. However, that place began to grow; my space awareness changed as I became accustomed to sitting but "becoming accustomed" to sitting did not take place overnight. At first I spent most of my time hurting and feeling sorry for myself. The addition of a few cushions did not help much on the concrete floor covered with thin matting. Yet time began to change too! Some hours would pass as slowly, it seemed to me, as three; others would pass so rapidly--like a few minutes!--that I was surprised.

After the first three or four days, when I concentrated on the in- and out-breathing at the nostrils as we had been instructed, Sayagyi told us that we

were to have an especially good meal late that afternoon to give us extra strength. When the evening meditation hour came, my husband and I sat together in my cell while Sayagyi sat right inside its open door in the shrine room. He instructed us in the Vipassanā meditation on the fiery-furnace nature of the body: we were told to first meditate concentratedly on the top of the head and when we had a sense of heat there, to extend it down the body to the soles of our feet and back up to the head again. I was soon burning away at a great rate.

My feelings of great dissatisfaction, kept over the years, with my parents and rebellious antagonism towards them, kept over the years but which I had refused to allow in my conscious mind, began to burn away. Likewise, my unacknowledged desire to manage the lives of our three children, especially our two sons, also began to burn away. After a time my wrong feelings towards parents and children simply left! As this was occurring I began to realize that there were many other impurities that needed to be dealt with. How surprised I was when Sayagyi told me that impatience was a form of **anger**! Yes, I began to see that it was, and I determined to do something about it--to recognize it, be conscious of its appearance in my thoughts, words and actions, and to burn it up with the fires of Vipassanā.

On the sixth or seventh day of our ten-day course, my heart began to beat with an alarmed, almost audible thump every time I sat down to meditate. Sayama,³ assistant to Sayagyi, came into

3. For details concerning Sayama, see Saya U Tint Yee, "What I Know About Sayagyi U Ba Khin" (**The Anecdotes of Sayagyi U Ba Khin**, SUBKMT, 1982), pp. 41ff. See also p. 431 of U Ko Lay's biography, **Sayagyi U Ba Khin** (Rangoon, 1980).

my cell and sat down in front of me, while Sayagyi sat in the open doorway of the shrine room. She could speak no English, but she didn't need to: her gestures, the expression of her face gave me a feeling of comfort and hope, even though my heart continued to beat somewhat unnaturally--and did so for most of the remaining three or four days.

Now I come to Sayagyi's astonishing--to me--reaction to a dream I had in the early morning of the last day of the course. My father had died the year before, when we had been in Burma only five months. Ever since then, I had felt sad and depressed whenever I thought of him because I had not been at his side during his last days and had been unable to help or comfort my mother in her loneliness. The night before we were to go to I.M.C. for the meditation course, I had a strange dream in which I seemed to be coming to the end of the road on which I saw myself travelling.

Then ten days later, in the early morning of our last day at the Centre, I dreamed again; this time I was standing over **my own** dead body, seeing its greenish look of decay, smelling the odours of decay and feeling my repulsively cold and unresponsive flesh. It was frightful to me; so frightful that I arose from my bed, dressed quickly and was in my room-cell at four instead of four-thirty. The door of my cell was open into the shrine room and Sayagyi was there fast asleep. I called to him in the agony of my fright at having come face to face with my own sure-to-come death and decay. Though I did not know it at the time, I had begun now to realize that my grief over my father's death was really and mostly a grief over my own inescapable death and decay.

Sayagyi awoke immediately and sat up to hear me while I told him about my dream. Then he began to laugh! Incredible! (He had a marvellous, deep-

throated laugh--indescribably rich and full.) He continued to laugh for some time while I sat there astounded. Then I began to feel a strange comfort. Now I know that I had directly confronted impermanence (Anicca), **my** impermanence, for the very first time and had seen it for what it is. Almost imperceptibly my heart stopped its wild beating.

That wonderful laugh is still going on for me! No words could have done what it is still doing.

... Sayagyi sitting in the Teacher's chair



The Dhamma Hall: a large "open air" room under a roof with three sides open.

". . . I adapted to the situation and sat down on the floor in front of him."

THE TEACHER FOUND

Jocelyn B. King

Very soon after my first eventful meditation experience, Sayagyi U Ba Khin left for England on a government mission.¹ I have forgotten how long it was before he returned to Rangoon, perhaps two or three weeks. Once or twice I had our driver stop our car at the foot of the I.M.C. hill for me to inquire when he was to return and to find out if there was any news from him.

Finally he was back, and I stopped to see him with the thought of thanking him politely for the course and of inquiring about his trip and his impressions both of England and of those parts of Europe he had briefly visited. He had made the entire trip in his Burmese clothing;² he simply did not

1. Dr King wrote about Sayagyi's visit to England: "In this connection I remember a remark of his shortly before he was to visit England (for the first and last time) on government business: 'People keep asking me, "Aren't you excited about seeing England for the first time?" But what is there in England more wonderful than the thirty-one planes of existence that we here in Burma know about?' To be sure he was saying nothing against England nor was he implying that Burma took up all of one plane, or that it was a perfect country (or people). But what he was saying was that he was thankful to have been born in a country where one could encounter the Buddha Dhamma." **The Maha Bodhi**, Vol 80, n° 4, p. 105.

2. When he came back, Sayagyi recounted that he managed on his trip to the U.K., France, and West Germany in his Burmese clothing and that there was a heat wave all over Europe, and

feel comfortable in Western clothing, he had said before leaving. The Dhamma Hall was a large "open air" room:³ under a roof, but with three sides open, separated from the outside only by waist-high partitions, the fourth side opening into various service rooms. Its floor was two or three steps above the surrounding walkway. Slippers or shoes were to be left outside upon entering.

Sayagyi was sitting there in the Teacher's Chair, which was raised a little above the Hall floor. I think that there were two or three Burmese men, who were his disciples, standing nearby. Except for them, he was alone. Things had been different before, I thought. There had always been people around--the other meditators, some visitors perhaps or some of his disciples; he had freely mingled with all of us, talking, laughing and telling stories in his inimitable way. Then in the latter part of the afternoon came his teaching session with meditators and perhaps Burmese visitors who had come to hear his words. All of us had sat around a table with him in Western style.

Now it felt very strange to be standing before him like this, ready to make polite talk. I looked all around the hall for a chair. They had always been

when he was in Bonn the temperature was 80° F. (27° C.). He told Sayama and his disciples at I.M.C. Rangoon that he was happy to be able to comfortably wear his national dress including the traditional Burmese hat (gaung-baung) throughout the whole journey. He also confided that in all his life he had never worn any other style of clothing except traditional Burmese dress--such was the spirit of his "Burmese-ness".

3. The Dhamma Hall at I.M.C. Rangoon was renovated in 1983, and is now enclosed.

provided before, plenty of them, or else we were **all** standing and talking together. Now there were **no** chairs in sight. Almost unconsciously I adapted to the situation and sat down on the floor in front of him. We talked for a few minutes and during that time I said that I would probably be back to visit the Centre again. He was very pleasant and gave me some of his impressions of the places where he had been.

The car was waiting for me in the road below and no doubt there were many disciples waiting to see him, so I got up to go. It was not very long before I realized that something had happened; he had known, and now I knew, that he was my Teacher. If I had sat in a chair in ordinary fashion, I don't know what might have happened to me. Maybe nothing more than something of this sort--"I had such an interesting experience in Burma! But it's so good to be back home again in the United States where things are not so strange and hard to understand."

IN MEMORY OF SAYAGYI U BA KHIN

Jocelyn B. King

In July 1959, when my husband and I made a special trip from our home on Dubern Road to visit the International Meditation Centre to talk with Sayagyi U Ba Khin concerning arrangements for a ten-day meditation course, I little knew how my whole life was to change and that this Burmese gentleman with whom we were talking for the first time was to become my revered teacher and guide in the Way of Vipassanā Meditation, no matter what distance or time should intervene. I assumed that to take such a course as this would simply give me some first-hand knowledge of Burmese Buddhism. It seemed an "interesting thing to do."

However, during the ten days of that first course in September 1959, it was first-hand knowledge of what I really was and of my sticky hold upon what could not be held. That became my strong existential concern. In the small meditation room assigned to me, as I struggled with a protesting body in the attempt to "one point" the attention, time changed its character for me. Space, both in and out of the body, began to seem quite relative.

Then Vipassanā work began and the inner torments and frustrations broke into heat that vanished, leaving elation over the new freedom. I was never allowed to stop at any temporary or false refuge. "No, you must keep working and cleansing every day, every day, till all impurities are gone. First we get rid of the coarse ones. But the fine ones are hard to deal with and take longer."

Before the ten-day course was over, I knew that my most deep-lying fear was that my own body would perish and rot away, forever gone. I could not face death with equanimity. Sayagyi's help was es-

sential in this crisis. Then, instead of being through with the whole thing and regarding it was an "interesting Burmese experience," I found myself coming back for another course while my husband had to be away on business, and then later on for still another before we left Burma to return to the U.S. I did not decide that Sayagyi should be my Teacher. Rather, I discovered that he **was** my Teacher.

Since that time, I have not ever been out of touch with him. He has never failed to help me. And even with his death, I cannot feel out of touch when I remember so well what he taught and was. His healing generosity and compassionate interest in all human beings he learned only from the Enlightened One. He embodied that which he constantly taught to others--the calm centre in the midst of Anicca.

U BA KHIN, THE GURU OF THE INTERNATIONAL MEDITATION CENTRE, BURMA

Dr Om Prakash, M.B.B.S.

His was a fine personality, majestic, sober, noble and impressive. A faint smile and the look of a calm, satisfied mind, he always bore.

Personal Relations. When with him, you felt as if he cared for you and loved you more than anybody else. But strangely enough, everyone felt the same about himself. U Ba Khin's attention, love, Mettā, was the same for all, big or small, rich or poor. In return, he did not want anything but sincerity of purpose and a truthful nature.

Tolerance. He tolerated all religions. He never criticized or ridiculed any faith or belief. But he preached Buddhism, as he understood it, and he understood it well above many, many others. He never asserted anything, never forced any idea on you. He followed what he preached or taught and left it to you to think over and accept his views in part or in full as you wished.

Habits. He did not smoke or take alcohol or any narcotics; took tea and coffee in moderation, liked milk, ovaltine, etc., especially towards the later part of his life. Although he was not a strict vegetarian, his love of "life" was extreme. He would not allow even mosquitoes to be killed in the perimeter. Even the use of pesticides and insecticides was prohibited in the Centre.

Love of nature. He had a great aesthetic and artistic sense; loved flowers very much, took special care about getting rare varieties, had a nice collection

of beautiful flowering plants, which were all over the garden around the Pagoda. He knew all his plants well and would talk about them at length to the visitors.

Humour. He had a good sense of humour, was witty and would enjoy a simple harmless joke heartily. He could laugh well, and would repeat simple, healthy jokes and enjoy them with his listeners.

Human. He kept himself well informed about world politics, and modern advances in science and technology, was a regular listener of radio, read daily local newspapers and foreign periodicals. He was specially fond of **Life** and **Time** magazines.

He had a great desire--a desire which was never fulfilled--to go abroad, specially to the U.S.A., and teach his method of meditation, which he believed--and very correctly so--to be the easiest and most logical way to practice meditation. He had the means to go, had many invitations from foreign disciples, but some technical formalities in obtaining passports, etc., always stood in his way. Excepting this one desire, he had all his desires and wishes in the world fulfilled. He led a full life.

He could bear disease and illness bravely and well, was a very intelligent and co-operative patient. He never took a pessimistic view of life, was always optimistic and took a hopeful view of life. He took suffering and disease as a result of past Karma and said it is the lot of one born in the world. The symptoms of disease also he would minimize and never complain, and put them down to "wind troubles." Even his last illness, which came and took him away from us suddenly, he treated very lightly: "as bleeding piles which will get all right in a day or two." The doctors had to rush him to the hospital as a case of internal haemorrhage.

Previously he had survived three operations on enlarged prostate, with heavy post operation bleeding.

He was a very pious and great soul, with pure mind and body and lovable to everyone.

[Dr Om Prakash, Consulting Physician, United Nations Organisations, Burma, Rangoon, was one of the honorary family physicians for Sayagyi U Ba Khin. He was a friend and also a good disciple of Sayagyi, meditating regularly, though he was engaged in multifarious duties as a leading physician of Rangoon from the pre-war years.]

THRAY SITHU SAYAGYI U BA KHIN

Daw Mya Sein

On May 1, 1954, Venerable Webu Sayadaw honoured the International Meditation Centre with a visit. Sayagyi U Ba Khin's students paid their respects to the Sayadaw by entering into deep meditation for 37 minutes. The Sayadaw was very pleased with this evidence of Vipassanā practice. In his simple, gentle way he expounded the Dhamma and then told us that Sayagyi had put us on the Right Path; it was left to us to walk along it steadfastly and diligently towards the Goal. If we stood and stared at the scenery or strange objects on the way or tried to follow by-paths, of course, it would take a long, long time.

We were so elated by the Sayadaw's approval of our practice, and our gratitude and respect for Sayagyi knew no bounds. He was a true Acariya--a Teacher of Dhamma and Vipassanā meditation, ready to advise and help all those who came to the Centre. He had a clear understanding of the many types of students, their different approaches to the practice of meditation and the latent forces within each one of them. Now and again, he invited learned Sayadaws and submitted to them his findings in Vipassanā research and accepted their advice and suggestions.

It is said that each one has a link from previous existences with a Teacher whose guidance is necessary to put one on the Right Path. I certainly must have had a Pāramitā link with Sayagyi. Before the Second World War, when the whole family went for meditation practice to Saya Thet Gyi, U Ba Khin's guru, I did not have the slightest desire to join them. One Sayadaw had taught me Ānāpāna (breathing-in and breathing-out) concentration soon after my father's death in 1926; during days of stress and

strain and during a serious illness in 1936, I had practised it and gained much benefit and was quite satisfied.

It was only in 1954 that I began to feel the need for further training in spiritual development. No sooner had I heard about U Ba Khin and the International Meditation Centre than I met him for the first time at a tea party given by the Sāsana Council in honour of Western scholars of Pāli. I had been impressed by his lectures at the Methodist Church. Now, his presence filled me with confidence and I asked him for permission to visit the Centre the following Sunday. There I learnt that the next ten-day course would begin on Friday; it coincided with the private study period at the university. So I requested U Ba Khin to accept me as a trainee. Not only did he accede to my request, but he also gave me the Ānāpāna Kammaṭṭhāna [meditation subject based on the in-breath and out-breath] on that very day and told me to practise at home before coming to the Centre.

The eight trainees on the February 1954 course came from different walks of life, yet Sayagyi was able to guide and help each one of us. He was still an active government servant, and although he stayed at the Centre for the ten days, he had to attend to his office and meetings during the day. On his return, he would sit in the centre room [of the Pagoda] and speak to us individually about our experience, our difficulties, our progress, or otherwise. About 6 p.m., after we had cold drinks and had stretched our legs, he would explain the Dhamma or tell appropriate stories from the Suttas to all of us in the main hall or Dhamma-yon. We returned to our cubicles and meditated till 9 p.m.

Sayagyi was patient and painstaking but very strict and stern when he found sloth and torpor in the trainee. Unlike foreign seekers after Truth, the

Burmese trainees felt that they could always go back for another ten-day course; a few felt it was a pleasant and peaceful interlude from their daily cares and worries. The vegetarian food was delicious and wholesome, and in spite of the Sabbath [i.e., not eating after noon], one tended to put on weight. The company was congenial and conversation became general in the off hours. Sayagyi then told us to eat less, keep the vow of silence and remain in the cubicle as much as possible till he returned.

Besides the weekends, every time the college closed, I went back for a full course and so I learnt how to enter into deep meditation. This stood me in good stead when I had to take air journeys. When taking off and when landing, I could go into deep meditation with a vow to wake up when the plane was safely airborne or when it landed. But it needs constant practice. Without it, the ability fades away, as I have discovered to my dismay.

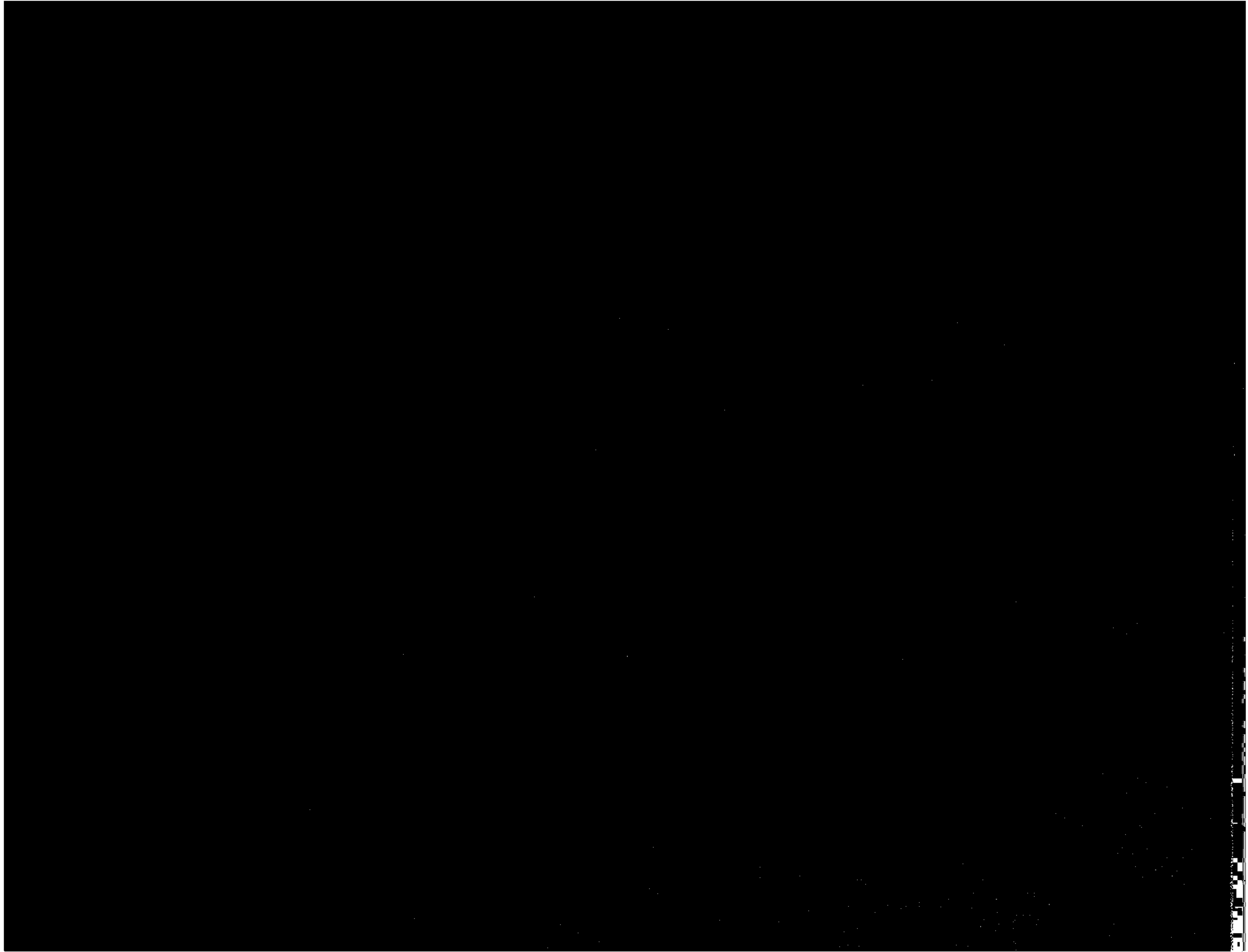
Nearly seventeen years had passed since my first course when I again became a constant visitor to the Centre. Although I had made frequent stays at the Centre in the early days, my journeys abroad and my work and domestic involvements had left little time for more than short visits to pay my respects to Sayagyi. In 1968, however, I went every day for ten days to the Centre because Sayagyi wanted me to keep company with a foreign devotee who was taking a course all alone. But soon after that Sayagyi was back at hospital. So again, I missed the opportunity of his admonition and advice.

A little more than three months before his demise, at Sayagyi's suggestion, I went every evening to the Centre, meditated for an hour or so, slept there, again meditating in the early morning and returning home about 7 a.m. Sayagyi knew that this was not sufficient to get me back to the previous stage of development. So he asked me to stay for a

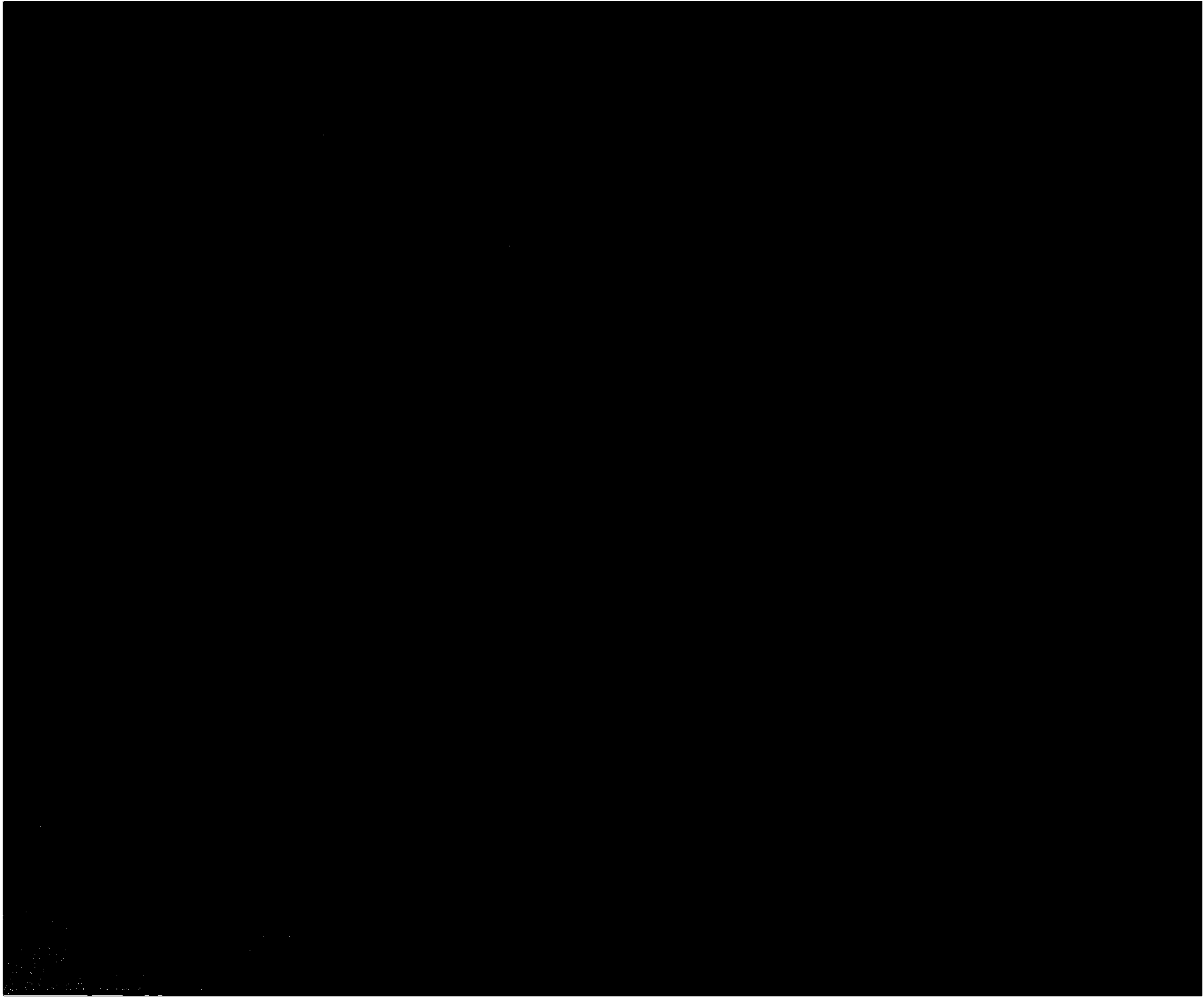
course or at least for three full days; but not realizing that he was nearing the last days of this existence, I postponed my stay till April.

I was aware of the change in him--his deeper understanding, his greater loving kindness towards all and his increased ability to radiate and guide and help even those disciples who were overseas. Then on Thursday, I paid my respects and went home. On Monday, by evening, he had been taken to the hospital, and Tuesday, January 19th, Sayagyi left us. He appeared to be so strong and healthy, yet, "Decay is inherent in all component things, but the truth will remain forever."

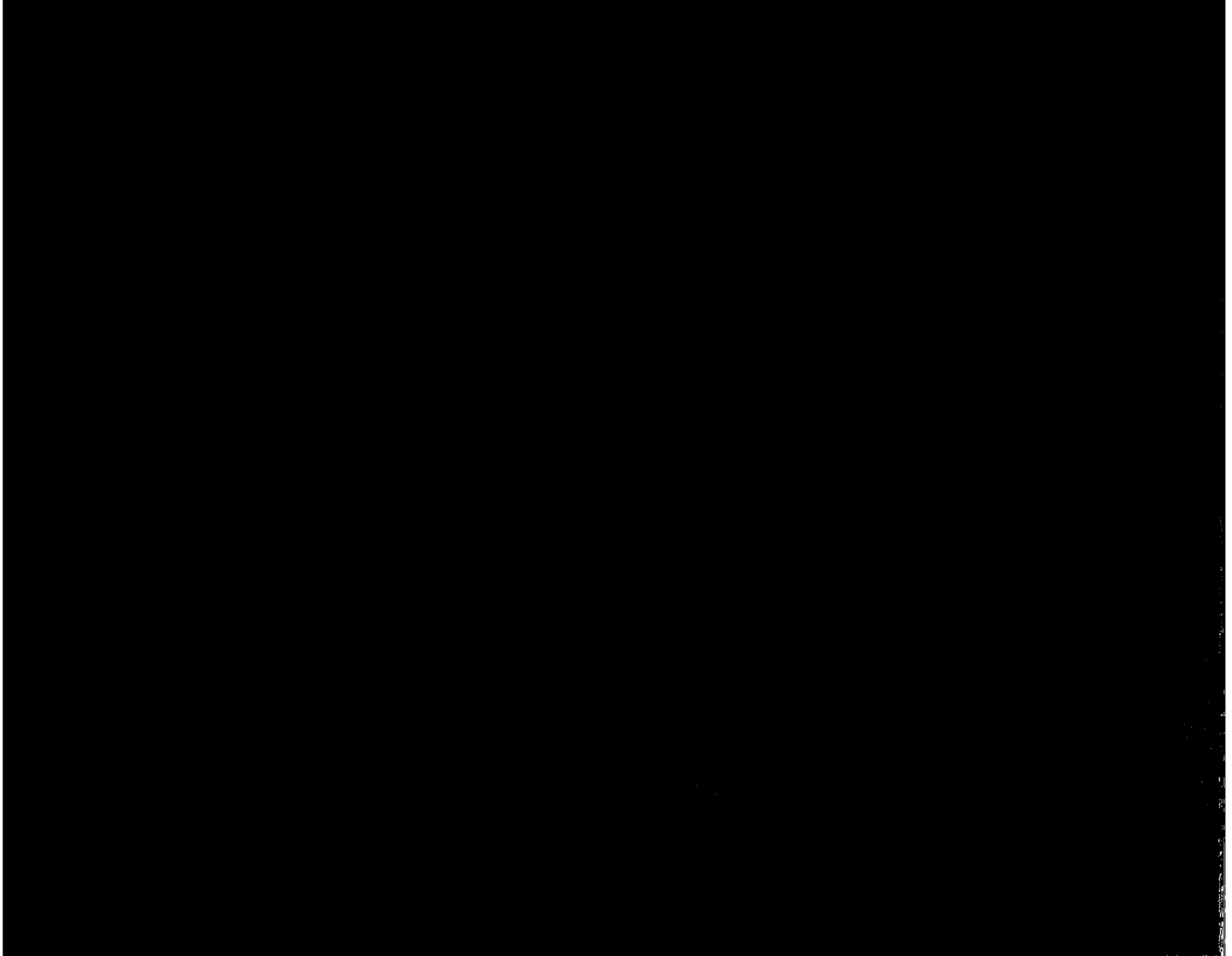
As instructed by him, our duty now is to be vigilant and diligent in our search for Truth and become worthy disciples of Sayagyi U Ba Khin and true followers of the Buddha.



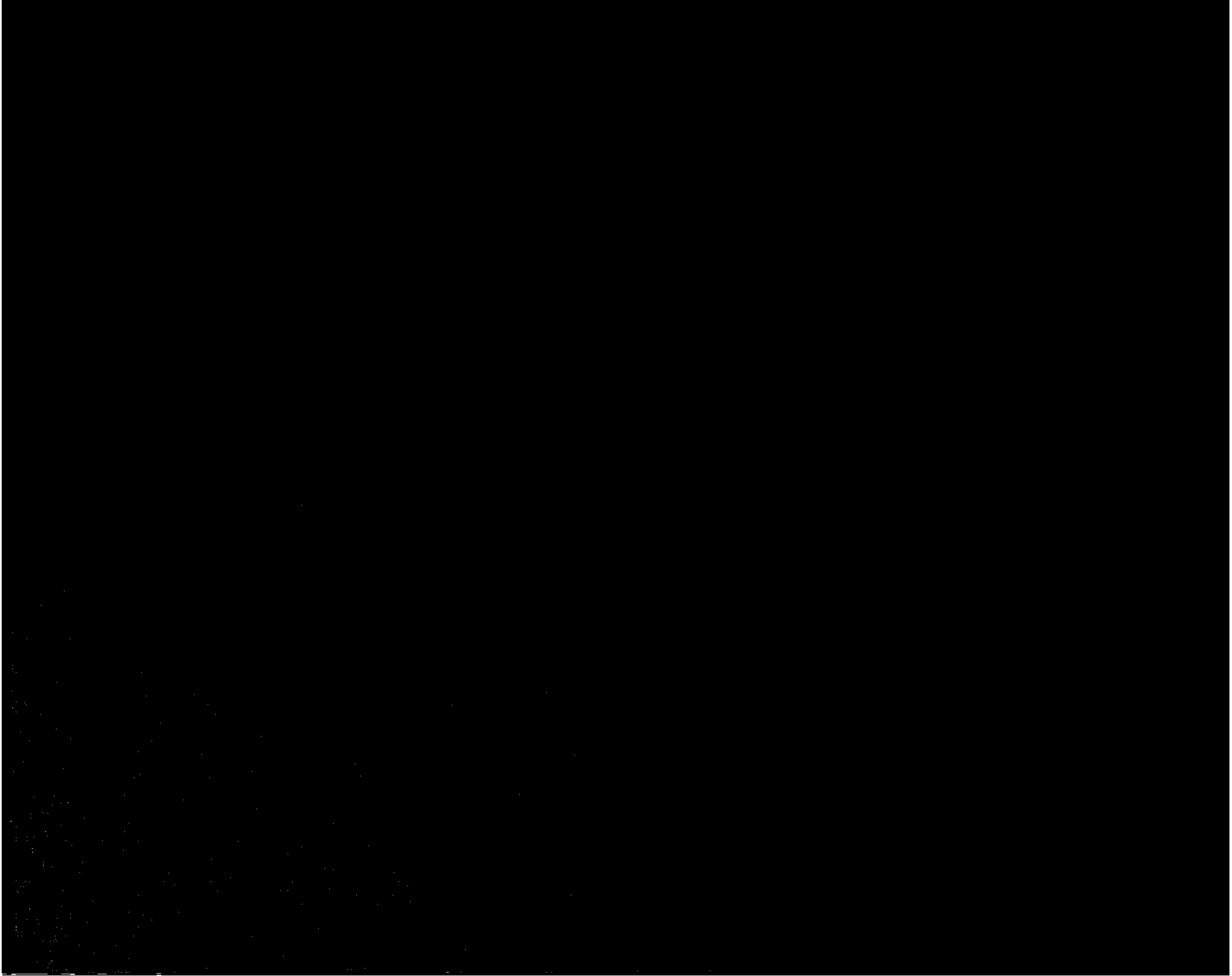
**Sayagyi U Ba Khin and his disciples
paying respects to Ven. Webu Sayadaw**



**Saya Thetgyi's Tazaung (Dhamma Teaching
Hall) at Pyawbwegyi, across the Rangoon
River, eight miles due south of
Shwedagon Pagoda**



**Saya U Chit Tin, Sayagyi,
Saya U Ba Pho & U Boon Shain**



**Sayagyi U Ba Khin
with his disciples on a special day.**

