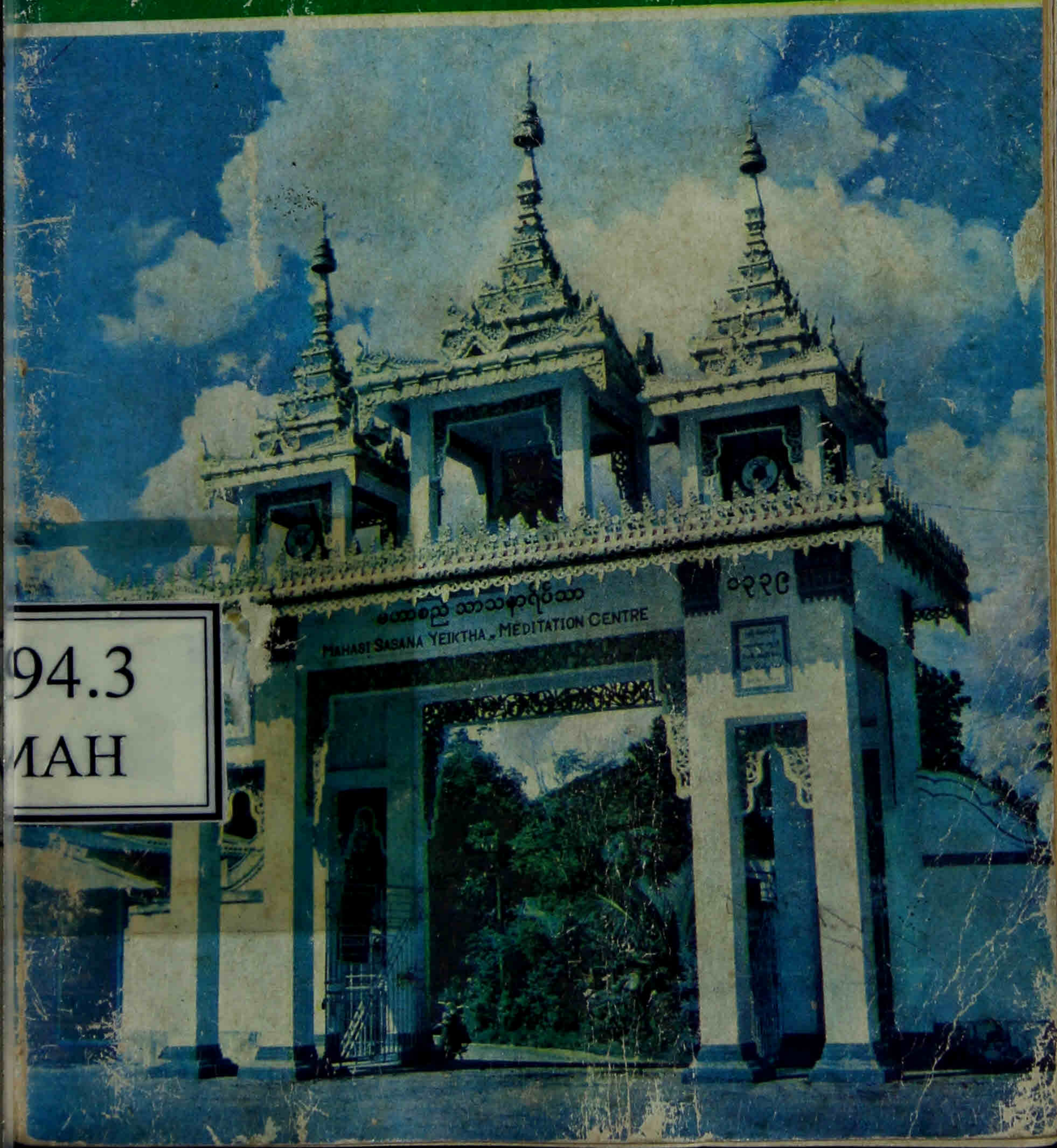


PRACTICAL VIPASSANĀ MEDITATIONAL EXERCISES

BY
MAHASI SAYADAW



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by

**Ven Mahāsī Sayādaw
Agga Mahāpandita U Sobhana**

**Buddhasāsanānuggaha Association,
Rangoon.**

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Ven Mahāsi Sayādaw
Agga Mahāpandita U Sobhana

THE VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

A Biographical Sketch

The Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw was born in the year 1904 at Seikkhun, a large prosperous village of pleasing appearance lying about seven miles to the west of historic Shwebo town in Upper Burma. His parents, peasant proprietors by occupation, were U Kan Taw and Daw Oke. At the age of six the Sayādaw was sent to receive his early monastic education under U Ādicca, presiding monk of Pyinmana monastery at Seikkhun. Six years later, he was initiated into the monastic Order as a *sāmanera* under the same teacher and given the novice's name of Shin Sobhana (which means Auspicious), a name that befitted his stalwart, impressive features and his dignified, serene behaviour. He proved to be an apt and bright pupil, making quick, remarkable progress in his scriptural studies. When U Ādicca left the Order, Shin Sobhana continued his studies under Sayādaw U Parama of Thugyikyaung monastery, Ingyintaw-taik, till he attained the age of nineteen when he had to make a fateful decision in his young life--whether to

continue in the Order and devote the rest of his life to the service of the *Buddha Sāsana* or to return to lay life. Shin Sobhana knew where his heart lay and unhesitatingly chose the first course. With due and solemn ceremony, he was ordained a full-fledged *bhikkhu* on the 26th day of November 1923, Sumedhā Sayādaw Ashin Nimmala acting as his spiritual preceptor. Within four years of his ordination, the future Mahāsī Sayādaw, now Ashin Sobhana, took in his stride all the three grades (lower, middle and higher) of the Pali scriptural examinations conducted by Government.

Ashin Sobhana next went to the city of Mandalay, noted for its pre-eminence in Buddhist learning, to pursue advanced study of the scriptures under Sayādaws well-known for their learning. His stay at Khinmakan West monastery for this purpose was, however, cut short after little more than a year when he was called to Moulmein by the head of the Taik-kyaung monastery, Taungwainggale (who came from the same village as Ashin Sobhana) to assist him with the teaching of his pupils. While teaching at Taungwainggale, Ashin Sobhana went on with his own studies of the scriptures, being specially interested in and making a thorough study of the *Mahāsa-tipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. His deepening interest in the *satipaṭṭhāna* method of *vipassanā* meditation.

took him then to neighbouring Thaton where the well-known Mingun Jetawan Sayādaw was teaching it. Under the Mingun Jetawan Sayādaw's instructions, Ven Sobhana took up intensive practice of *vipassanā* meditation for four months with such good results that he was in turn able to teach it properly to his first three disciples at Seikkhun while he was on a visit there in 1938. After his return from Thaton to Taungwaingale (owing to the grave illness and subsequent death of the aged Taik-kyaung Sayādaw) to resume his teaching work and 'to take charge of the monastery, Ven Sobhana sat for and passed with flying colours the Government-held *Dham mācariya* (Teacher of the Dhamma) examination in June 1941.

On the eve of the Japanese invasion of Burma, Mahāsī Sayādaw had to leave Taungwaingale and return to his native Seikkhun. This was a welcome opportunity for the Sayādaw to devote himself wholeheartedly to his own practice of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* meditation and to teaching it to a growing number of disciples at Mahāsī monastery, Ingyintaw-taik (whence the Sayādaw came to be known as Mahāsī Sayādaw) at Seikkhun which fortunately remained free from the horror and disruption of war. It was during this wartime period that the Sayādaw was prevailed upon by his disci-

ples to write his monumental Manual of *Vipassanā* Meditation, an authoritative and comprehensive work expounding both the doctrinal and practical aspects of *satipaṭṭhāna* method of meditation.

It was not long before Mahāsī Sayādaw's reputation as an able teacher of *vipassanā* meditation spread far and wide in the Shwebo-Sagaing region and came to attract the attention of a devout and well-to-do Buddhist in the person of Sir U Thwin who wanted to promote the *Buddha Sāsana* by setting up a meditation centre to be directed by a meditation teacher of proven virtue and ability. After listening to a discourse on *vipassanā* meditation given by the Sayādaw and observing the Sayādaw's serene and noble demeanour, Sir U Thwin had no difficulty in making up his mind that Mahāsī Sayādaw was the ideal meditation master he had been looking for.

Eventually, on the 13th of November, 1947, the Buddhasāsanānuggaha Association was founded at Rangoon with Sir U Thwin as its first President and scriptural learning and practice of the *Dhamma* as its object. Sir U Thwin donated to the Association a plot of land in Hermitage Road, Kokine, Rangoon, measuring over five acres for erection of the proposed meditation centre. Today, in 1978, the Centre occupies an area of 19.6 acres, on

which a vast complex of buildings and other structures has sprung up. Sir U Thwin told the Association that he had found a reliable meditation teacher and proposed that the then Prime Minister of Burma invite Mahāsī Sayādaw to the Centre.

After the end of the Second World War the Sayādaw alternated his residence between his native Seikkhun and Taungwainggale in Moulmein. In the meantime Burma had regained her independence on 4th January 1948. In May 1949, during one of his sojourns at Seikkhun, the Sayādaw completed a new *nissaya* translation of *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. This work excels the average *nissaya* translation of this Sutta which is of great importance for those who wish to practise *vipassanā* meditation but need guidance.

In November of that year, on the personal invitation of the former Prime Minister, Mahāsī Sayādaw came down from Shwebo and Sagaing to the Sāsana Yeikthā (Meditation Centre) at Rangoon, accompanied by two senior Sayādaws. Thus began twenty-nine years ago, Mahasi Sayādaw's spiritual headship and direction of the Sāsana Yeikthā at Rangoon (then in its initial stage of development without the many appurtenances that grace it today). On 4th December 1949 Mahāsī Sayādaw personally inducted the very first batch of 25 *yogīs* into the practice

of *vipassanā* meditation. As the yogis grew in numbers later on, it became too strenuous for the Sayādaw himself to give the whole of the initiation talk. From July 1951 the talk was tape-recorded and played back to each new batch of yogīs with a few introductory words by the Sayādaw. Within a few years of the establishment of the principal Sāsana Yeikthā at Rangoon, similar meditation centres sprang up in many parts of the country with Mahāsī-trained members of the Sangha as meditation teachers. These centres were not confined to Burma alone, but extended to neighbouring Theravāda countries like Thailand and Sri Lanka. A few such centres also grew up in Cambodia and India. According to a 1972 census, the total number of yogīs trained at all these centres (both in Burma and abroad) had passed the figure of seven hundred thousand. In recognition of his distinguished scholarship and spiritual attainments, Mahāsī Sayādaw was honoured in 1952 by the then President of the Union of Burma with the prestigious title of *Agga Mahā-Pandita* (the Exaltedly Wise One).

Soon after attainment of Independence, the Government of Burma began planning to hold a Sixth Buddhist Council (*Sangāyanā*) in Burma, with four other Theravāda Buddhist countries (Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos) participating. For prior consultations for this pur-

pose, Government despatched a mission to Thailand and Cambodia, composed of Nyaungyan and Mahāsī Sayādaws and two laymen. The mission discussed the plan with the *Thāthanābaings* (Primates of the Buddhist Church) of these two countries.

At the historic Sixth Buddhist Council which was inaugurated with every pomp and ceremony on 17 th May 1954, Mahāsī Sayādaw played an eminent role, performing the exacting and onerous tasks of *Osāna* (Final Editor) and *Pucchaka* (Questioner) Sayādaw. A unique feature of this Council was the redaction not only of the Pali Canon (canonical texts) but also of the *aṭṭhakathās* (commentaries) and *īṭkās* (sub-commentaries). In the redaction of this commentarial literature, Mahāsī Sayādaw was responsible for his part for making a critical analysis, sound interpretation and skilful reconciliation of several crucial and divergent passages in these commentarial works.

A significant result of the Sixth Buddhist Council was the revival of interest in Theravāda Buddhism among Mahayāna Buddhists. In the year 1955 while the Council was in progress, twelve Japanese monks and a Japanese laywoman arrived in Burma to study Theravāda Buddhism. The monks were initiated into the Theravāda Buddhist Sangha as *sāmaneras* (novitiates) while the laywoman was made a Bud-

dhist nun. Next, in July 1957, at the instance of the Buddhist Association of Moji on the island of Kyushu in Japan, the Buddha Sasana Council of Burma sent a Theravāda Buddhist mission in which Mahāsī Sayādaw was one of the leading representatives of the Burmese Sangha.

In the same year (1957) Mahāsī Sayādaw was assigned the task of writing in Pali an introduction to the *Visuddhi-magga Aṭṭhakathā*, one that would in particular refute certain misrepresentations and misstatements concerning the gifted and noble author of this *aṭṭhakathā*, Ven Buddhaghosa. The Sayādaw completed this difficult task in 1960, his work bearing every mark of distinctive learning and depth of understanding. By then the Sayādaw had also completed two volumes (out of four) of his Burmese translation of this famous commentary and classic work on Buddhist meditation.

At the request of the Government of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), a special mission headed by Sayādaw U Sujāta, a senior lieutenant of Mahāsī Sayādaw, was sent to Ceylon in July 1955 for the express purpose of promoting *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* meditation. The mission stayed in Ceylon for over a year doing good work, setting up 12 permanent and 17 temporary meditation centres. Following completion of a specially constructed central meditation centre

on a site granted by the Ceylonese Government, a larger mission led by Mahāsī Sayādaw himself left on 6th January 1959 for Ceylon *via* India. The mission was in India for about three weeks, in the course of which its members visited several holy places associated with the life and work of Lord Buddha, gave religious talks on suitable occasions and had interviews with Prime Minister Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, President of India Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Vice-President Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. A specially interesting feature of the visit was the warm welcome accorded to the mission by members of the depressed classes who had embraced the Buddhist faith under the guidance of their late leader Dr. Ambedkar.

The mission emplaned at Madras for Ceylon on 29th January 1959 and arrived at Colombo the same day. On Sunday the 1st February, at the opening ceremony of the permanent central meditation centre named Bhāvanā Maj-jhāṭhāna, Mahāsī Sayādaw delivered an address in Pali after Prime Minister Bandaranāyake and some others had spoken. Led by Mahāsī Sayādaw, the members of the mission next went on an extended tour of the island, visiting several meditation centres where Mahāsī Sayādaw gave suitable discourses on *vipassanā* meditation and worshipping at various places of Buddhist pilgrimage like Polonnāruwa, Anurādhapūra and

Kandy. This historic visit of the Burmese mission under the wise and inspiring leadership of Mahāsi Sayādaw was symbolic of the close and mutually beneficial ties (dating from ancient times) of spiritual kinship between these two Theravāda Buddhist countries. Its positive contribution to the welfare of the Buddhist movement in Sri Lanka was a steady revival of interest and activity in Buddhist meditational discipline which seemed to have declined in this fraternal land of ours.

In February 1954, a visitor to the Sāsana Yeikthā would be struck by the spectacle of a young Chinese practising *vipassanā* meditation. The yogi in question was a young Chinese Buddhist teacher from Indonesia by the name of Bung An who had become interested in this kind of Buddhist meditation. Under the guidance and instructions of Mahāsi Sayādaw and of the late Sayādaw U Ñānuttara, Mr. Bung An made such excellent progress in about a month's time that Mahāsi Sayādaw himself gave him a detailed talk on the progress of insight. Later he was ordained a *bhikkhu* and named Ashin Jinarakkhita. Mahāsi Sayādaw himself acted as his spiritual preceptor. After his return as a Buddhist monk to his native Indonesia to launch a Theravāda Buddhist movement in that country a request was received by the Buddha Sāsana Council to send a Burmese Buddhist monk to

promote further missionary work in Indonesia. It was decided that Mahāsī Sayādaw himself, as the preceptor and mentor of Ashin Jinarakkhita; should go. Along with 13 other monks from other Theravāda countries, Mahāsī Sayādaw undertook such essential missionary activities as consecrating *sīmā's* (ordination boundary), ordaining *bhikkhus*, initiating *sāmaneras* (novices in the Buddhist Sangha) and giving discourses on Buddha-dhamma, particularly talks on *vipassanā* meditation.

Considering these auspicious and fruitful activities in the interests of initiating, promoting and strengthening the Buddhist movements in Indonesia and Sri Lanka respectively, Mahāsī Sayādaw's missions to these countries may well be described as "Dhamma-vijaya" (victory of the Dhamma) journeys.

As early as the year 1952, Mahāsī Sayādaw at the request of the Minister in charge of Sangha Affairs of Thailand, had sent Sayādaws U Āsabha and U Indavaṃsa to promote the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* meditation in that country. Thanks to the efforts of these two Sayādaws, Mahāsī Sayādaw's method of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* meditation gained wide currency in Thailand where many meditation centres had come into existence by about the year 1960 and the number of trained *yogīs* had exceeded the hundred thousandth mark.

On the exhortation of Abhidhammahāraṭṭhaguru Masoeyein Sayādaw who headed the Sanghanāyaka Executive Board at the Sixth Buddhist Council, Mahasi Sayadaw had undertaken to teach regularly Ven. Buddhaghosa's Visuddhi-magga Atṭhakathā and Ven. Dhammapāla's Visuddhi-magga Mahāṭīkā to his Sangha associates at the Sāsana Yeikthā. These two commentarial works of the Theravāda School deal in the main with Buddhist meditational theory and practice, though they also offer useful explanation of important doctrinal points in Buddha-vāda. They are thus of the utmost importance for those who are going to be meditation teachers. In pursuance of his undertaking, Mahāsī Sayādaw began teaching these two works on 2nd February 1961 and for one and one-half to two hours a day. On the basis of notes of his lectures taken by his pupils, Mahāsī Sayādaw started writing his *nissaya* translation of Visuddhi-magga Mahāṭīkā and completed it on 4th February 1966. The production of this *nissaya* translation was an exceptional performance on the part of Mahāsī Sayādaw. The section on *samayantara* (differing views held by other religions or faiths) formed the most exacting part of the Sayādaw's task in producing this work. For tackling this part, the Sayādaw had to, among other things, familiarize himself with ancient Hindu philosophical doctrines and terminology by studying

all available references, including works in Sanskrit and English.

Mahāsī Sayādaw has to his credit up till now 67 volumes of Burmese Buddhist literature. Space does not permit us to list them all here, but a complete up-to-date list of them is appended to the Sayādaw's latest publication namely, A Discourse on Sakkapañha Sutta (published in October 1978).

At one time, Mahāsī Sayādaw was subjected to severe criticism in certain quarters for his advocacy of the allegedly unorthodox method of noting the rising and falling of the abdomen in *vipassanā* meditation. It was mistakenly assumed that this method was an innovation of the Sayādaw on his own, whereas the truth is that it had been approved several years before Mahāsī Sayādaw adopted it, by no less an authority than the *mūla* (original) Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw, and that it is in no way contrary to the Buddha's teaching on the subject. The reason for Mahāsī Sayādaw's preference for this method is that the average yogī finds it easier to note this manifestation of *vayo-dhātu* (element of motion). It is not, however, imposed as an obligatory technique upon any yogī who comes and practises meditation at any of the Mahāsī yeikthās (meditation centres). Such a yogī may, if he likes and if he finds that he is better accustomed to

the *ānāpāna* way (observing the inbreath and outbreath), meditate in this latter mode. Mahāsi Sayādaw himself refrained from joining issue with his critics on this point, but two learned Sayādaws brought out a book each in defence of Mahāsi Sayādaw's method, thus enabling those who are interested in the controversy to weigh and judge for themselves. This controversy was not confined to Burma alone, but arose in Ceylon also where some members of the indigenous Sangha, inexperienced and unknowledgeable in practical meditational work, publicly assailed Mahāsi Sayādaw's method in newspapers and journalistic articles. Since this criticism was voiced in the English language with its world-wide coverage, silence could no longer be maintained and the late Sayadaw U Nānuttara of Kabā-aye (World Peace Pagoda campus) forcefully responded to the criticisms in the pages of the Ceylonese Buddhist periodical "World Buddhism".

Mahāsi Sayādaw's international reputation and standing in the field of Buddhist meditation has attracted numerous visitors and yogīs from abroad, some seeking enlightenment for their religious problems and perplexities and others intent on practising *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* meditation under the Sayādaw's personal guidance and instructions. Among the earliest of such yogīs was former British Rear Admiral E.H.Shattock who came on leave from Singapore

and practised meditation at the Sāsana Yeikthā in 1952. On his return home to England he published a book entitled "An Experiment in Mindfulness" in which he related his experiences in generally appreciative terms. Another such practitioner was Mr. Robert Duvo, a French-born American from California. He came and practised meditation at the Centre, first as a lay yogi and later as an ordained *bhikkhu*. He has subsequently published a book in France about his experiences and the *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* method of meditation. Particular mention should be made of Anāgārika Shri Munindra of Buddha Gayā in India, who became an *antevāsika* (close) disciple of Mahasi Sayādaw, spending several years with the Sayādaw learning the Buddhist scriptures and practising *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* (insight) meditation. He now directs an international meditation centre at Buddha Gayā where many people from the West have come and practised meditation. Among these yogīs was a young American, Joseph Goldstein, who has recently written a perceptive book on insight meditation under the name "The Experience of Insight: A Natural Unfolding".

Some of Sayādaw's works have been published abroad, such as "The Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā Meditation" and "Practical Insight Meditation" by the Unity Press, San Francisco, Cali-

fornia, U.S.A., and the "Progress of Insight" by the Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka. Selfless and able assistance was rendered by U Pe Thin (now deceased) and Myanaung U Tin in Sayādaw's dealings with his visitors and yogīs from abroad and in the translation into English of some of Sayadaw's discourses on *vipassanā* meditation. Both of them were accomplished yogīs.

The Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw is profoundly revered by countless numbers of grateful disciples at home in Burma and abroad. Today the Sayādaw is already in the seventy-fifth year of his life and has no longer the strength and vigour of youth and middle age. But like a true son of the Buddha, he carries on valiantly, spreading the word of the Master throughout the world and helping unnumbered thousands and tens of thousands on to the Path of Enlightenment and Deliverance. May the revered Sayādaw live long and continue to shower the blessings of the Buddha-dhamma on all and sundry for many many years to come!

U Nyi Nyi

Mahāsī Disciple and Yōgī
Member of the Executive Committee
Buddhasāsanānuggaha Association

Rangoon

The 18th day of October 1978

Practical Vipassanā Meditational Exercises

[The following is a talk by the Ven Mahāsī Sayādaw Agga Mahā Pandita U Sobhana given to his disciples on their induction into Vipassanā Meditation at Sāsana Yeikthā Meditation Centre, Rangoon, Burma. It was translated from the Burmese by U Nyi Nyi]

The practice of Vipassanā or Insight Meditation is the effort made by the meditator to understand correctly the nature of the psycho-physical phenomena taking place in his own body. Physical phenomena are the things or objects which one clearly perceives around one. The whole of one's body that one clearly perceives constitutes a group of material qualities (rūpa). Psychical or mental phenomena are acts of consciousness or awareness (nāma). These (nāma-rūpas) are clearly perceived to be happening whenever they are seen, heard, smelt, tasted, touched, or thought of. We must make ourselves aware of them by observing them and noting thus: 'Seeing, seeing', 'hearing, hearing', 'smelling smelling', 'tasting, tasting', 'touching, touching', or 'thinking, thinking.'

Every time one sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches, or thinks, one should make a note of the fact. But in the beginning of one's practice, one cannot make a note of every one of these happenings. One should, therefore, begin with noting those happenings which are conspicuous and easily perceivable.

With every act of breathing, the abdomen rises and falls, which movement is always evident. This is the material quality known as *vāyodhātu* (the element of motion). One should begin by noting this movement, which may be done by the mind intently observing the abdomen. You will find the abdomen rising when you breathe in, and falling when you breathe out. The rising should be noted mentally as 'rising', and the falling as 'falling'. If the movement is not evident by just noting it mentally, keep touching the abdomen with the palm of your hand. Do not alter the manner of your breathing. Neither slow it down, nor make it faster. Do not breathe too vigorously, either. You will tire if you change the manner of your breathing. Breathe steadily as usual and note the rising and falling of the abdomen as they occur. Note it mentally, not verbally.

In *vipassanā* meditation, what you name or say doesn't matter. What really matters is to know or perceive. While noting the

rising of the abdomen, do so from the beginning to the end of the movement just as if you are seeing it with your eyes. Do the same with the falling movement. Note the rising movement in such a way that your awareness of it is concurrent with the movement itself. The movement and the mental awareness of it should coincide in the same way as a stone thrown hits the target. Similarly with the falling movement.

Your mind may wander elsewhere while you are noting the abdominal movement. This must also be noted by mentally saying 'wandering, wandering.' When this has been noted once or twice, the mind stops wandering, in which case you go back to noting the rising and falling of the abdomen. If the mind reaches somewhere, note as 'reaching, reaching.' Then go back to the rising and falling of the abdomen. If you imagine meeting somebody, note as 'meeting, meeting.' Then back to the rising and falling. If you imagine meeting and talking to somebody, note as 'talking, talking.'

In short, whatever thought or reflection occurs should be noted. If you imagine, note as 'imagining'. If you think, 'thinking'. If you plan, 'planning'. If you perceive, 'perceiving'. If you reflect, 'reflecting'. If you feel happy, 'happy'. If you feel bored,

bored'. If you feel glad, 'glad'. If you feel disheartened, 'disheartened'. Noting all these acts of consciousness is called *cittānupassanā*.

Because we fail to note these acts of consciousness, we tend to identify them with a person or individual. We tend to think that it is 'I' who is imagining, thinking, planning, knowing (or perceiving). We think that there is a person who from childhood onwards has been living and thinking. Actually, no such person exists. There are instead only these continuing and successive acts of consciousness. That is why we have to note these acts of consciousness and know them for what they are. That is why we have to note each and every act of consciousness as it arises. When so noted, it tends to disappear. We then go back to noting the rising and falling of the abdomen.

When you have sat meditating for long, sensations of stiffness and heat will arise in your body. These are to be noted carefully too. Similarly with sensations of pain and tiredness. All of these sensations are *dukkhavedanā* (feeling of unsatisfactoriness) and noting them is *vedanānupassanā*. Failure or omission to note these sensations makes you think, "I am stiff, I am feeling hot,

I am in pain. I was all right a moment ago. Now I am uneasy with these unpleasant sensations." The identification of these sensations with the ego is mistaken. There is really no 'I' involved, only a succession of one new unpleasant sensation after another.

It is just like a continuous succession of new electrical impulses that light up electric lamps. Every time unpleasant contacts are encountered in the body, unpleasant sensations arise one after another. These sensations should be carefully and intently noted, whether they are sensations of stiffness, of heat or of pain. In the beginning of the yogī's meditational practice, these sensations may tend to increase and lead to a desire to change his posture. This desire should be noted, after which the yogī should go back to noting the sensations of stiffness, heat, etc.

‘Patience leads to Nibbāna,’ as the saying goes. This saying is most relevant in meditational effort. One must be patient in meditation. If one shifts or changes one's posture too often because one cannot be patient with the sensation of stiffness or heat that arises, *samādhi* (good concentration) cannot develop. If *samādhi* cannot develop, insight cannot result and there can be no attainment of *magga* (the path that leads to *Nibbāna*), *phala* (the fruit of that path) and *Nibbāna*. That is why patience is

needed in meditation. It is patience mostly with unpleasant sensations in the body like stiffness, sensations of heat and pain, and other sensations that are hard to bear. One should not immediately give up one's meditation on the appearance of such sensations and change one's meditational posture. One should go on patiently, just noting as 'stiffness, stiffness' or 'hot, hot'. Moderate sensations of these kinds will disappear if one goes on noting them patiently. When concentration is good and strong, even intense sensations tend to disappear. One then reverts to noting the rising and falling of the abdomen.

One will of course have to change one's posture if the sensations do not disappear even after one has noted them for a long time, and if on the other hand they become unbearable. One should then begin noting as 'wishing to change, wishing to change.' If the arm rises, note as 'rising, rising.' If it moves, note as 'moving, moving'. This change should be made gently and noted as 'rising, rising,' 'moving, moving' and 'touching, touching.'

If the body sways, 'swaying, swaying.' If the foot rises, 'rising, rising'. If it moves, 'moving, moving.' If it drops, 'dropping, dropping.' If there is no change, but only static rest, go back to noting the rising and falling of the abdomen. There must be no intermission in between, only contiguity between a preceding act of noting

and a succeeding one, between a preceding *samā-dhi* (state of concentration) and a succeeding one, between a preceding act of intelligence and a succeeding one. Only then will there be successive and ascending stages of maturity in the yogī's state of intelligence. *Magga* and *Phala ñāṇa* (knowledge of the path and its fruition) are attained only when there is this kind of gathering momentum. The meditative process is like that of producing fire by energetically and unremittingly rubbing two sticks of wood together so as to attain the necessary intensity of heat (when the flame arises).

In the same way, the noting in *vipassanā* meditation should be continual and unremitting, without any resting interval between acts of noting whatever phenomena may arise. For instance, if a sensation of itchiness intervenes and the yogī desires to scratch because it is hard to bear, both the sensation and the desire to get rid of it should be noted, without immediately getting rid of the sensation by scratching.

If one goes on perseveringly noting thus, the itchiness generally disappears, in which case one reverts to noting the rising and falling of the abdomen. If the itchiness does not in fact disappear, one has of course to eliminate it by scratching. But first, the desire to do so should be noted. All the movements involved in the process of eliminating this sensation should be

noted, especially the touching, pulling and pushing, and scratching movements, with an eventual reversion to noting the rising and falling of the abdomen.

Every time you make a change of posture, you begin with noting your intention or desire to make the change, and go on to noting every movement closely, such as rising from the sitting posture, raising the arm, moving and stretching it. You should make the change at the same time as noting the movements involved. As your body sways forward, note it. As you rise, the body becomes light and rises. Concentrating your mind on this, you should gently note as 'rising, rising.'

The yogī should behave as if he were a weak invalid. People in normal health rise easily and quickly or abruptly. Not so with feeble invalids, who do so slowly and gently. The same is the case with people suffering from 'back-ache' who rise gently lest the back hurt and cause pain.

So also with meditating yogīs. They have to make their changes of posture gradually and gently; only then will mindfulness, concentration and insight be good. Begin therefore with gentle and gradual movements. When rising, the yogī must do so gently like an invalid, at the same time noting as 'rising, rising.' Not only this: though the eye sees, the yogī must

act as if he does not see. Similarly when the ear hears. While meditating, the yogī's concern is only to note. What he sees and hears are not his concern. So whatever strange or striking things he may see or hear, he must behave as if he does not see or hear them, merely noting carefully.

When making bodily movements, the yogī should do so gradually as if he were a weak invalid, gently moving the arms and legs, bending or stretching them, bending down the head and bringing it up. All these movements should be made gently. When rising from the sitting posture, he should do so gradually, noting as 'rising, rising.' When straightening up and standing, note as 'standing, standing.' When looking here and there, note as 'looking, seeing.' When walking note the steps, whether they are taken with the right or the left foot. You must be aware of all the successive movements involved, from the raising of the foot to the dropping of it. Note each step taken, whether with the right foot or the left foot. This is the manner of noting when one walks fast.

It will be enough if you note thus when walking fast and walking some distance. When walking slowly or doing the *cankama* walk (walking up and down), three move-

ments should be noted in each step: when the foot is raised, when it is pushed forward, and when it is dropped. Begin with noting the raising and dropping movements. One must be properly aware of the raising of the foot. Similarly, when the foot is dropped, one should be properly aware of the 'heavy' falling of the foot.

One must walk, noting as 'raising, dropping' with each step. This noting will become easier after about two days. Then go on to noting the three movements as described above, as 'raising, pushing forward, dropping.' In the beginning, it will suffice to note one or two movements only, thus 'right step, left step' when walking fast and 'raising, dropping' when walking slowly. If when walking thus, you want to sit down, note as 'wanting to sit down, wanting to sit down.' When actually sitting down, note concentratedly the 'heavy' falling of your body.

When you are seated, note the movements involved in arranging your legs and arms. When there are no such movements, but just a stillness (static rest) of the body, note the rising and falling of the abdomen. While noting thus and if stiffness of your limbs and sensation of heat in any part of your body arise, go on to note them. Then

back to 'rising, falling'. While noting thus and if a desire to lie down arises, note it and the movements of your legs and arms as you lie down. The raising of the arm, the moving of it, the resting of the elbow on the floor, the swaying of the body, the stretching of legs, the listing of the body as one slowly prepares to lie down, all these movements should be noted.

To note as you lie down thus is important. In the course of this movement (that is, lying down), you can gain a distinctive knowledge (that is, *magga-ñāṇa* and *phala-ñāṇa*= the knowledge of the path and its fruition). When *samādhi* (concentration) and *ñāṇa* (insight) are strong, the distinctive knowledge can come at any moment. It can come in a single 'bend' of the arm or in a single 'stretch' of the arm. Thus it was that the Venerable *Ānanda* became an arahat.

The Ven. *Ānanda* was trying strenuously to attain *Arahatship* overnight on the eve of the first Buddhist council. He was practising the whole night the form of *vipassanā* meditation known as *kāyagatāsati*, noting his steps, right and left, raising, pushing forward and dropping of the feet; noting, happening by happening, the mental desire to

It is not difficult to fall asleep; in fact, it is easy. If you meditate in the lying posture, you gradually become drowsy and eventually fall asleep. That is why the beginner in meditation should not meditate too much in the lying posture. He should meditate much more in the sitting and walking postures of the body. But as it grows late and becomes time for sleep, he should meditate in the lying position, noting the rising and falling movements of the abdomen. He will then naturally (automatically) fall asleep.

The time he is asleep is the resting time for the yogī. But for the really serious yogī, he should limit his sleeping time to about four hours. This is the 'midnight time' permitted by the Buddha. Four hours' sleep is quite enough. If the beginner in meditation thinks that four hours' sleep is not enough for health, he may extend it to five or six hours. Six hours' sleep is clearly enough for health.

When the yogī awakens, he should at once resume noting. The yogī who is really bent on attaining *magga* and *phala ñāṇa*, should rest from meditational effort only when he is asleep. At other times, in his waking moments, he should be noting continually and without rest. That is why, as soon as he awakens, he should note the

awakening state of his mind as 'awakening, awakening.' If he cannot yet make himself aware of this, he should begin noting the rising and falling of the abdomen.

If he intends to get up from bed, he should note as 'intending to get up, intending to get up.' He should then go on to note the changing movements he makes as he arranges his arms and legs. When he raises his head and rises, note as 'rising, rising'. When he is seated, note as 'siting, sitting.' If he makes any changing movements as he arranges his arms and legs, all of these movements should also be noted. If there are no such changes, but only a sitting quietly, he should revert to noting the rising and falling movements of the abdomen.

One should also note when one washes one's face and when one takes a bath. As the movements involved in these acts are rather quick, as many of them should be noted as possible. There are then acts of dressing, of tidying up the bed, of opening and closing the door; all these should also be noted as closely as possible.

When the yogī has his meal and looks at the meal-table, he should note as 'looking, seeing, looking, seeing.' When he extends his arm towards the food, touches it, collects

and arranges it, handles it and brings it to the mouth, bends his head and puts the morsel of food into his mouth, drops his arm and raises his head again, all these movements should be duly noted.

(This way of noting is in accordance with the Burmese way of taking a meal. Those who use fork and spoon or chopsticks should note the movements in an appropriate manner.)

When he chews the food, he should note as 'chewing, chewing.' When he comes to know the taste of the food, he should note as 'knowing, knowing.' As he relishes the food and swallows it, as the food goes down his throat, he should note all these happenings. This is how the yogī should note as he takes one morsel after another of his food. As he takes his soup, all the movements involved such as extending of the arm, handling of the spoon and scooping with it and so on, all these should be noted. To note thus at meal-time is rather difficult as there are so many things to observe and note. The beginning yogī is likely to miss several things which he should note, but he should resolve to note all. He cannot of course help it if he overlooks and misses some, but as his *samādhi* (concentration) becomes strong, he will be able to note closely all these happenings.

Well, I have mentioned so many things for the yogī to note. But to summarize, there are only a few things to note. When walking fast, note as 'right step,' 'left step,' and as 'raising, dropping' when walking slowly. When sitting quietly, just note the rising and falling of the abdomen. Note the same when you are lying, if there is nothing particular to note. While noting thus and if the mind wanders, note the acts of consciousness that arise. Then back to the rising and falling of the abdomen. Note also the sensations of stiffness, pain and ache, and itchiness as they arise. Then back to the rising and falling of the abdomen. Note also, as they arise, the bending and stretching and moving of the limbs, bending and raising of the head, swaying and straightening of the body. Then back to the rising and falling of the abdomen.

As the yogī goes on noting thus, he will be able to note more and more of these happenings. In the beginning, as his mind wanders here and there, the yogī may miss noting many things. But he should not be disheartened. Every beginner in meditation encounters the same difficulty, but as he becomes more practised, he becomes aware of every act of mind-wandering till eventually the mind does not wander any more. The mind is then riveted on the object of its attention, the act of mindfulness becoming almost simultaneous with the object of its attention such as the rising and falling of the abdomen. (In other words the rising of the

abdomen becomes concurrent with the act of noting it, and similarly with the falling of the abdomen.)

The physical object of attention and the mental act of noting are occurring as a pair. There is in this occurrence no person or individual involved, only this physical object of attention and the mental act of noting occurring as a pair. The yogī will in time actually and personally experience these occurrences. While noting the rising and falling of the abdomen he will come to distinguish the rising of the abdomen as physical phenomenon and the mental act of noting of it as psychical phenomenon; similarly with the falling of the abdomen. Thus the yogī will distinctly come to realize the simultaneous occurrence in pair of these psycho-physical phenomena.

Thus, with every act of noting, the yogī will come to know for himself clearly that there are only this material quality which is the object of awareness or attention and the mental quality that makes a note of it. This discriminating knowledge is called *nāmarūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*, the beginning of the *vipassanā-ñāṇa*. It is important to gain this knowledge correctly. This will be succeeded, as the yogī goes on, by the knowledge that distinguishes between the cause and its effect, which knowledge is called *paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*.

As the yogī goes on noting, he will see for himself that what arises passes away after

a short while. Ordinary people assume that both the material and mental phenomena go on lasting throughout life, that is, from youth to adulthood. In fact, that is not so. There is no phenomenon that lasts for ever. All phenomena arise and pass away so rapidly that they do not last even for the twinkling of an eye. The yogī will come to know this for himself as he goes on noting. He will then become convinced of the impermanency of all such phenomena. Such conviction is called *aniccānupassanā-ñāṇa*.

This knowledge will be succeeded by *dukkhānupassanā-ñāṇa*, which realizes that all this impermanency is suffering. The yogī is also likely to encounter all kinds of hardship in his body, which is just an aggregate of sufferings. This is also *dukkhānupassanā-ñāṇa*. Next, the yogī will become convinced that all these psycho-physical phenomena are occurring of their own accord, following nobody's will and subject to nobody's control. They constitute no individual or ego-entity. This realization is *anattānupassanā-ñāṇa*.

When, as he goes on meditating, the yogī comes to realize firmly that all these phenomena are *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*, he will attain *Nibbāna*. All the former *Buddhas*, *Arahats* and *Āryas* realized *Nibbāna* following this very path. All meditating yogīs should recognize that they themselves are now on this *sati-paṭṭhāna* path, in fulfilment of their wish for attainment of *magga-ñāṇa* (knowledge of the path), *phala-ñāṇa* (knowledge of the

fruition of the path) and *Nibbāna-dhamma*, and following the ripening of their *pārami* (perfection of virtue). They should feel glad at this and at the prospect of experiencing the noble kind of *samādhī* (tranquillity of mind brought about by concentration) and *ñāṇa* (supramundane knowledge or wisdom) experienced by the *Buddhas*, *Arahats* and *Āryas* and which they themselves have never experienced before.

It will not be long before they will experience for themselves the *magga-ñāṇa*, *phala-ñāṇa* and *Nibbāna-dhamma* experienced by the *Buddhas*, *Arahats* and *Āryas*. As a matter of fact, these may be experienced in the space of a month or of twenty or fifteen days of their meditational practice. Those whose *pāramī* is exceptional may experience these *dhammas* even within seven days.

The *yogī* should therefore rest content in the faith that he will attain these *dhammas* in the time specified above, that he will be freed of *sakkāya-ditthi* (ego-belief) and *vicikicchā* (doubt or uncertainty) and saved from the danger of rebirth in the nether worlds. He should go on with his meditational practice in this faith.

May you all be able to practise meditation well and quickly attain that *Nibbāna* which the *Buddhas*, *Arahats* and *Āryas* have experienced!

Sādhu (well done)! Sādhu! Sādhu!

**Front Cover Photo—Gateway of Māhasi
Sasana Yeiktha (Meditation Centre),
Hermitage Road, Kokine, Rangoon,
Burma.**

Buddhasasana – Nuggaha Association Rangoon.