

COMMEMORATIVE BIOGRAPHY OF THE SHWE OO MIN SAYADAW BHADDANTA KOSALLA MAHĀ THERA

EARLY YEARS

Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw was born at 7.45am on Monday, September 15th, 1913 (Myanmar Era 1275, 1st waning moon day of the month of Tawthalin). His parents, U Han and Daw Thine Chone, from Mukkhamu Village, Kyaik Hto Township in Mon State on the coast east of Yangon gave him the name Maung Chit Nyunt. He was the eldest of 5 children.

At the age of 9, with the support of his parents, he became a novice at the Hman Kyaung monastery in his native village. His preceptor, Bhaddanta Nandiya Thera, gave him the name Shin Kosalla.

At 7.40am Wednesday, April 5th, 1933 (M.E. 1294, 11th waxing moon day of the month of Degoo) the young sāmanera entered monkhood under the preceptorship of Bhaddanta Ariya (Aggamahāpandita) of the Nyaung Lay Bin Town, Tawyagyi monastery in Bago Division. He was supported by his parents as well as U Tha Nyunt, Daw Shwe Chein, Daw Htay and Daw Thinn from the Ywama district of Nyaung Lay Bin Town.

PARIYATTI (Education) AND PATIPATTI (Meditation)

Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw did his Pariyatti which involves learning the Pāli language, studying the Tipiṭaka (Discourses, Discipline and Abhidhammā) as well as the Commentaries (Aṅṅhakathā) and Subcommentaries (Ṭīkā), under the tutelage of the following esteemed teachers:

- ❖ Bhaddanta Nandiya, the Sayadaw of the Hman Kyaung monastery in Mukkhamu Village, Kyaik Hto Township in Mon State
- ❖ Bhaddanta Āṅāra, Aggamahāpandita, the Sayadaw of Kyauk Kone Tawya Medini monastery in Yangon
- ❖ Bhaddanta Kesara, the Sayadaw of Inn Waing Tawya monastery in Nyaung Lay Bin Town, Bago Division
- ❖ Bhaddanta Paññinda, the Sayadaw of the branch of Nyaung Lay Bin Tawya monastery in Thehton Town, Mon State.

He also spent time learning meditation with Bhaddanta Sobhita, a highly venerated monk of over one hundred years, the Sayadaw of Pacchimarāma monastery in Kyait Latt Town, Ayyawaddy Division. Little is known of his early years of meditation, but even as a young monk he combined the practice of meditation with his study of the scriptures.

Later, he went to the Mahāsi Sāsana meditation centre in Yangon where he furthered his practice of Vipassanā meditation under the guidance of the Venerable Mahāsi Sayadaw, Bhaddanta Sobhana.

In 1951, Mahāsi Sayadaw conferred upon him the responsibility of Meditation Teacher. He fulfilled this duty successfully for 10 years.

From an early age, Sayadaw displayed perseverance, dedication and great effort in the practice of meditation. In order to deepen his practice, he would regularly retreat to forest monasteries and he continued to do so until his late eighties at the following places:

In Bago Division:

- ❖ Padānikārāma Tawya in Khe Ywe Village, Shwe Kyin Township
- ❖ Sinpon Tawya near Wanbae Inn Village, Bago Township
- ❖ Mahābodhi Tawya near Kyauktann Village, Bago Township
- ❖ Nārani Tawya near Phaya Thounzu Village, Bago Township

In Yangon Division:

- ❖ Nyaung Kokkine Tawya of Kawmhu Gyaung Village, Kawmhu Township

In Mon State:

- ❖ Mon Sein Tawya near Asin Village, Yayy Township
- ❖ Kyauk Aing Dhammasukha Tawya near Banbwegoun Village, Paung Township

He also practised meditation at:

- ❖ Kathik Waing meditation centre near Abya Village, Waw Township, Bago Division
- ❖ Bodhi Koun monastery, Bahan Township, Yangon
- ❖ Pawdawmu monastery in Winka Village, Beelin Township, Mon State

SERVICE TO THE SĀSANA

Sayadaw was given a small parcel of land in Pe Ywek Seik Kone Quarter in North Okkalapa Township and it was here in 1960 (M.E. 1322) that he established his own monastery. He gave it the name Shwe Oo Min Tawya (Golden Cave Hermitage). The following year on the full moon day of July (Myanmar month of Waso), he left the Mahāsi centre and Shwe Oo Min Tawya became his base for the next forty years.

Sayadaw's kindness and egalitarian attitude to all who came, whether young or old, rich or poor, inspired great generosity. However Sayadaw himself always put matters of the Dhamma first and any material gain was always used to benefit others.

He gave annual support to many Pariyatti monasteries where scriptural studies are the focus.

To hospitals and old age homes he gave quantities of medicines, health food and other essentials.

He sponsored the construction of buildings at the following monasteries:

In Mon State:

- ❖ Ywa Lae Kyaung monastery, Win Sein monastery and Oke Pho monastery, in Mukkhamu Village Kyaik Hto Township.

In Bago Division, Waw Township:

- ❖ Cakkara□sī monastery in Bogadaw Village,
- ❖ Sukhitarama monastery in Tawgyi Village,

In his native village of Mukkhamu in Mon State, he organised the expansion of the village school which had been a Primary school with 1st to 4th grades only. New buildings to accommodate students up to the 8th grade were constructed. School uniforms, books and stationery were also provided by Sayadaw for the village children.

It was Sayadaw's wish that the children of Myanmar receive not only a secular education but also a Dhamma education. To this end, in several different villages he initiated children's retreats which continue to be conducted annually by devotees.

With a view to broadening people's understanding of the wider world, he set up libraries in twenty different villages. He supplied all the furniture, books and cassettes as well as Dhamma material.

In 1988 (M.E. 1350), he set up the Kyauk Aing Tawya Dhammasukha monastery near Banbwegoun Village, Paung Township, Mon State.

In 1998, he started the Shwe Oo Min Dhammasukha Tawya meditation centre in Kon Tala Paung Village, Badamyar New Town, Mingaladon Township in Yangon.

In doing all this, his motivation was to provide the opportunity for people to understand and experience the Dhamma for themselves.

Not only did Sayadaw have a deep love and reverence for the Vinaya and the Dhamma, he was also extremely generous and a person of great vision. However he was never interested in fame or fortune and remained a humble monk right to the very end. Although he was not interested in building a reputation, his renown as a master slowly grew both within Myanmar and eventually abroad. In his final years, a steady stream of international yogis began to come and seek guidance in the Dhamma from Sayadaw.

Because of the high standard of his Sīlā, Samādhi and Paññā, Sayadaw had the respect and admiration of the Myanmar Sanghā. The Shwe Kyin sect to which Sayadaw belonged, one of the principal sects in Myanmar and well-known for its strong adherence to the Vinaya, conferred upon him the title of Rattaññū Mahā Nāyaka Sayadaw. This was in acknowledgement of his life-long service to the values and aspirations of the Shwe Kyin sect, his great age (which is considered a virtue in Myanmar) and the high regard they had for his personal Vinaya.

Sayadaw was elected the Chief Spiritual Advisor to the Executive Committee of the Mahāsi Sāsana meditation centre.

Sayadaw served the Sāsana tirelessly until the age of 90, primarily as a teacher and also by being a fine example of Dāna (generosity), Sīla (morality) and Paññā (wisdom).

HIS PASSING AWAY

He passed away exactly two months after his 89th lunar birthday at Shwe Oo Min Dhammasukha Tawya on Wednesday, November 20th 2002 (M.E. 1364, 1st waning moon day of Dezaungmoun) at 3.30pm.

He had been a monk for seventy vassa.

Sayadaw's practice of Dāna (generosity), Sīla (morality) and Bhāvanā (meditation) was his enduring contribution to the Sāsana. His dignity, integrity and kindness were loved by all.

We the disciples, the devotees, the Sanghā, humbly offer these words in stone for reflection and inspiration about the life and work of Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw for the benefit of generations to come.

We are gathered here to offer this memorial at an auspicious moment,

It is M.E. 1366, November 20th, 2004

The rainy season draws to an end,

The earth is again nurtured,

The air, clear and bright,

The night skies reveal the Kattika constellation,

By day gentle yellow creepers bloom,

The fragrance of the forests, green and fresh,

Welcome in this occasion,

The second anniversary of Sayadaw's passing,

An anniversary in Scorpio,

A golden and honourable moment,

In the eleventh month,

A Saturday.

In memory of his life and legacy,

We leave you this, something to remember him by,

Given from the heart, overflowing with sincerity and gratitude.