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THE VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW'S BIOGRAPHY

FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

Among the world-famous personalities in the field of Buddhist religion, only a few could be found at the present time who are able to disseminate more widely than ever the real essence of the Teachings (*Sāsana*) of Lord Buddha which would enable every one to cultivate in his own self the virtues of Morality, Concentration and Wisdom (*Sīla, Samādhi* and *Paññā*) by which one can, through his own effort, reach on to the Right Path that leads from the world of appearances to ultimate Reality.

To propagate the Teachings of the Exalted One and to expound its true concepts particularly on the practical aspect-*paṭipatti*- it is far more difficult. Buddhism itself is essentially a practical path. To lead people on to the right track, the preacher must also be a teacher as well, competent in both *pariyatti* and *paṭipatti*. Furthermore, a good knowledge of oriental languages particularly *pāli* and *Sanskrit* as well as English which being a universal language, is highly essential. If there is a handicap in imparting religious lessons in English this can be remedied by the assistance of disciples who know the language and who possess a fairly adequate knowledge of the profound *dhamma*. The Venerable

Mahāsī Sayādaw is fortunate in this respect in that he has a handful of close disciples, his own products, who are well acquainted with English while he himself reads and understands English. This is one of the factors which brings success in propagating *paṭipatti Sāsana* in foreign countries.

The Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw with his intuition, talent and the power of spiritual awareness attained through his own individual effort and by the guidance of his eminent spiritual teachers in his early years, is one of the brilliant stars among the galaxy of intellectuals in the hierarchy of Buddhist priests. Apart from being learned, it may perhaps be due to his *paramitas* that he has been able to propound the most complex and intricate portions of the highly philosophical *dhamma* for the benefit of mankind in the field of *pariyatti*. In the field of *paṭipatti*, at the present day, he is pre-eminent. His persevering nature, enthusiasm, compassion and his outstanding spiritual attainments are revealed in this biography.

The compiler of this memoirs of the Sayādaw's career, *Ashin Sīlānandābhivamsa* (now promoting *Sāsana* in the United States) is an adept at the art of presenting in clear terms the contemporary allusions and known facts that would make all of us believe that the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw is a prominent figure who stands out above many others at the present day, and who will leave a history behind which time can never be dimmed. The author's brilliance and depth of scriptural

knowledge is obvious and his comprehension of the Sayādaw's life and his style of expression will surely give an interesting and wonderful reading. Just as Mahāsī Sayādaw has become a great and interesting figure in the history of *Buddha Sāsana*, the writer himself with his versatility, wit and penetrating mind will undoubtedly become, in due course of time, a remarkable figure in the world of Buddhist literature. The biography though concise, being factually written, is fairly comprehensive and includes an account and analysis of the work and achievements of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw.

Buddhism was from the very outset a missionary religion. To be able to inherit the Wisdom which the Blessed One had offered to mankind, one should endeavour to know and follow the method of *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditation which is being stressed by Mahāsī Sayādaw at home and in the course of his religious missions abroad. Following the footsteps of the *Buddha* to make available to all men the universal principles of Truth and to offer to all the knowledge of the Path, Mahāsī Sayādaw has diligently preformed his noble task according to the famous exhortation of the Exalted One which says: "Go ye forth, O *Bhikkhus* and wander forth, for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, in compassion for the world, for the gain, for the welfare of gods and men, Proclaim, O *Bhikkhus*, the Doctrine glorious, preach ye a life of holiness, perfect and pure."

I have dedicated myself to the work of translating this interesting biography with my unshaken faith in *Buddha, Dhamma* and *Saṅgha*, and particularly with my utmost reverence to the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw and also in harmony with the following remarkable maxim contained in *Dhammapada* (v. 354).

"The gift of the Dhamma is greater than all other gifts."

May all beings be able to seek for the light of *Dhamma* and find peace and happiness.

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