

Buddha Gaya Myanmar Vihara

Contributed by Dr U Than Sein
 Saturday, 22 December 2007
 Last Updated Wednesday, 02 January 2008

Buddha Gaya Myanmar Buddhist Vihara (Estd. 1934) Present day- Myanmar Buddhist Vihara at Buddha Gaya (Bodh Gaya) is situated on the old road to Gaya, north of the Mahabodhi temple, near the Gaya police station and just beyond the Mahant's palace. In Myanmar Era 1296 (CE 1934), Ashin Nandamalar and Ashin Dhammissara, both from Myanmar, were able to buy a piece of land near Bodh Gaya village, and built Myanmar Temple, since they are not able to get access to the Myanmar Temple, built by emissary of King Mindon, which was taken over by Mahants. Before a small temple of single story was completed, Sayadaw Nandamalar died. His successor Venerable U Uttama tried to continue build and maintain the Temple.

The third Sayadaw U Tilawka, sent by Myanmar Government as part of international Buddhist Missionary, took over as Chief Abbot in 1966. U Thein Maung and Family, who were natives from Taung-ngu of Myanmar and who did business of forest products in Andaman island, also donated the Sangha ordination Hall around same period. Sayadaw U Tilawka had went through difficult times of not much support from local people as well as Myanmar pilgrims, and planned to go back to Myanmar.

Sayadaw U Nyaneinda joined Taungtan-sasana Mission School at Kaba-aye, Yangon in 1963. After completing the course in same year, Sayadaw was assigned by the Myanmar Government to stay in Pansan village, Ladu, Dibagu District, Assam, India to work as Chief Abbot and to spread Buddhism. Sayadaw stayed there for next 13 years. Sayadaw U Tilawka called U Nyaneinda from Assam in 1975, to come and help him since he was not healthy and planning to go back to Yangon. The Temple was later handed over to Sayadaw U Nyaneinda who became fourth Chief Abbot in 1976. During the next 10-15 years, Sayadaw had tried to maintain and expand the Myanmar Temple, making it 2-storied with enlarged kitchen, with some success. There were a few meditation cells built around the temple to accommodate the foreign visitors who were visiting to Bodh Gaya for getting training on Mahayana Buddhist studies and meditation. In those days, there is no electricity or even a taxi car in the Bodh Gaya village. Pilgrims had to use rickshaws (tri-cycles) or scooters to come from Gaya Station and guest houses were not yet readily available. Around mid-1980s, Nayakas of Myanmar Buddhist Temple in India had decided to use the funds collected from the sale of one of the Myanmar Monasteries in Varanasi, for building a three-storied Guest House, within the compound of Bodh Gaya Myanmar Temple. It took 3 years to build it. The building had been used mainly for international visitors, especially a few who wanted to stayed longer period in Bodh Gaya. A nominal fees had been charged as donation for use for maintenance. Myanmar Government started, in early 1990s, opening up for Myanmar people to visit Buddhist Places, in batches, and also helped in donating expansion of buildings in many Myanmar Buddhist Temples around Mijhimadesa. Since then, a series of new buildings have been added in Bodh Gaya Myanmar Vihara. In place of a single storied ordination building originally donated by U Thein Maung and Family of Andaman Island, a new 2-storied consecrated Sima (ordination hall) where the monks (sangas) can be ordained as per Theravada tradition was replaced. It was built in Myanmar Architectural style and thus, it could be seen from far place as a totally different and distinct structure. One 4-storied Guest House was built near the main road and another at the corner of the compound behind the Ordination building. Original Temple with 2-stories was also renovated and kitchen and dinning places were expanded to cater for large number of pilgrims. One small hall was also built to be used as dinning and lecture purpose. Water and electricity supply to the temple were also improved. In order to accommodate more number of pilgrims from Myanmar and visitors from within India (Assam/Manipur/Tripura and Arunchal Pradesh) and also from other countries, Sayadaw is trying to get extra land space (about 2 acres) adjacent to the Temple. One of the old treasure housed in the Ordination Hall was a series of oil mural paintings, depicting important events in the Buddha's life by famous Myanmar Artist, U Ba Kyi who had drawn them in early 1960s. ***** Address of Myanmar Buddhist Vihara Venerable U Nyaneinda Chief Abbot Myanmar Buddhist Vihara Old Gaya Road Bodh Gaya, Bihar (Phone: 2400 721)

Venerable Baddanta U Nyaneinda Chief Resident Monk Myanmar Buddhist Vihara, Bodh Gaya, Bihar, India Venerable Baddanta U Nyaneinda was born in Nagatgyi village, Kyangin Township, Hanzada District, Ayeyawaddy Division, Myanmar, in the month of Tazaungmon of Myanmar era 1297 (1935). He was brought to Sakataung Monastery, Tayokehmaw village, Shwetaung Township, Pyay District, Bago Division, to study basic education and Buddhist study at the age of 8 years, by his parent U Po Gyi and Daw Pu. At the age of 14 years, he became a novice at same Monastery, and studied under the guidance of Venerable Utilawka and U Sasana. On reaching 20th birthday, he was ordained as a full-fledged monk, at Shwemawdaw Monastery, Shwedaung, under the guidance of Sayadaw U Sila. He had studied Buddhist literature first at Zawtikayon Pali University at Pyay, and later moved to Thirizayon Monastery at Myaynigon, Yangon. He also passed matriculation and in 1963 he joined Taungtansasana Mission School at Kaba Aye, Yangon. After completing the course, he was assigned by the Myanmar Government to live in Pansan village, Ladu, Dibagu District, Assam, India to work as Chief Abbot and to spread Buddhism around. Sayadaw stayed there for next 13 years. He also studied at Nalanda Pali University, Bihar, India to attain the Bachelor Degree in Arts with English as speciality and certificate for Pali for higher study. Sayadaw U Nyaneinda moved to Bodh Gaya Myanmar Buddhist Vihara in 1976 to support the ailing Sayadaw U Tilawka, Chief Resident Monk of Bodh Gaya Myanmar Vihara. After the Sayadaw's death in same year, Baddanta U Nyaneinda continued as the Chief Resident Monk of the Myanmar Temple, and strived till date for maintaining and expanding various buildings and catering the pilgrimages from Myanmar and other countries. Several new buildings and renovation of old structures have been carried out, after Myanmar Government's promotion of pilgrimage to Buddha places in 1990s till date. The Government of Myanmar and the pilgrims visiting Bodh Gaya during the last decades have helped the utmost and unfailing sadha and viriya, Sayadaw U Nyaneinda, who is able to expand many new structures mainly rest houses for pilgrims from Myanmar and other countries, two-storied Ordination Hall, housed with a series of mural paintings depicting important events in the Buddha's life by famous Myanmar U Ba Kyi, 2 four-storied buildings with dwellings to cater for pilgrims and students who come every year to study Buddhism, extension of kitchen and dining facility, and also renovated existing structures to reflect the traditional Myanmar architecture, and improvement to have adequate water supply, sanitation, electricity, cooking facility and transportation. Sayadaw also organized short and long course in Vipassana and Buddhism, religious trips, and other religious festivals at various dates of Buddha's auspicious days. Sayadaw U Nyaneinda was appointed as Nayaka of Paradesi Sangha Nayaka of India (The Myanmar Buddhist Society in India, established in 2000), and also helped in maintaining Myanmar Buddhist Viharas/monasteries/temples around India. Sayadaw served as Nayaka Sayadaw of International Buddhist Council, to promote and guide the Buddhist monasteries of various countries established at Bodh Gaya. Sayadaw also served as a member of World Buddhist Federation. Sayadaw U Nyaneinda also helped in establishment of (a) expansion of Myanmar Buddhist Vihara at Bodh Gaya, (b) Junior High School with free education to over 500 students at Bodh Gaya, (c) Mahabodhi Monastery in Sanchaung township, Yangon and (d) the construction of Mahabodhi Cedi at Tayokehmaw village in Shwedaung township. {compiled by U Than Sein, 1 November 2007}