

(Ashin Silanandabhivamsa - Agga Maha Pandita)

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## **Family**

Sayadaw U Silananda was born in Mandalay, Burma (now known as Myanmar) on Friday, December 16, 1927 (the 8th Waning of the month of Nadaw in Burmese Era 1289) of parents *Wunna Kyaw Htin*

Saya Saing and Daw Mone. Saya Saing was a renowned Burmese architect. (See "Work of Saya Saing") and had to his credit many religious buildings throughout the country. He was a very religious man and a meditator as well. He was awarded the title "Wunna Kyaw Htin" by the Government of Burma for his outstanding achievements in Burmese architecture and religious activities.

Two brothers of Sayadaw are also prominent Burmese architects. His two nephews are graduate architects of RIT. His brother U Ngwe Hlaing was the chief designer and his nephew U Than Tun is co-designer of the "Karaweik" in *Kandawgyi* (Royal Lake), Rangoon.

Sayadaw also comes from a highly religious family. His sister is Daw Thandasari, Chief Nun of " *Shwe-se-di Sar-thin-daik* " of " *Sasanapala Choung* " in Sagaing Hills.

## **Samanera**

At the age of 16, on April 14, 1943 (on the 10th Waxing of the month of Tagu in Burmese Era 1305, also the third day of the Water Festival) during the Japanese occupation, U Silananda became a novice at *Mahavijjodaya Chaung* monastery in Sagaing Hills under the preceptorship of Sayadaw U Pannavata, a very famous and popular preacher. He was then given the religious name "Shin Silananda".

## Monkhood

With the consent of his parents, on Wednesday July 2, 1947 (on the Full Moon day of Waso in Burmese Era 1309) he became a full-fledged monk at the same monastery with the same preceptor. Four days later re-ordination ceremony was held in his honor at *Payagyi Taik* monastery in Mandalay by U Ba Than and Daw Tin (his aunt), dealers in religious artifacts. Again in 1950 (Burmese Era 1311) a second re-ordination ceremony was held in his honor at *Kyaungdawya Shwegyin* Taik, Rangoon (now Yangon) by rice merchants U Ba Thein and Daw Ngwe Saw.

## Education

He received his early years' education at Kelly High School, an American Baptist Mission School for boys, in Mandalay. He had his religious education in *Tipitaka* (Buddhist Scriptures) under the guidance of his preceptor and many other renowned Sayadaws both in Sagaing Hills and in Mandalay.

He took the religious examinations held by the Government of Burma (now Myanmar) and passed the *Phatamange* (1st Grade) in 1946, *Phatamalat* (2nd Grade) in 1947, and *Phatamagy* (3rd Grade) in 1948. He attained the 1st position in the 2nd Grade in the whole of Burma and 2nd position in the 3rd Grade. He got the degree of *Dhammacariya*, Master of Dhamma, in 1950 and was awarded the title *Sasanadhaja Siripavara Dhammacariya*. In 1954 he attained another degree when he passed the examination held by *Pariyattisasanahita* Association in Mandalay which was renowned to be the most difficult examination in Burma. He duly got to add to his name the word "*abhivamsa*", hence his full name and title: U Silanandabhivamsa, *Sasanadhaja Siripavara Dhammacariya and Pariyattisasanahita Dhammacariya*.

He went to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 1954 and while there passed the GCE Advanced Level

Examination (General Certificate of Education Examination held by the University of London in Ceylon) with distinctions in Pali and Sanskrit.

While he was in Ceylon he made a brief return to Burma and during that trip he practiced Vipassana meditation in Mahasi Sayadaw's tradition.

## **Positions**

He taught as a lecturer at *Atothokdayone* Pali University in Sagaing Hills, Buddhist Scriptures, Pali, Sanskrit and Prakrit languages at *Abhayarama Shwegu Taik* monastery, Mandalay and was an External Examiner at the Department of Oriental Studies, Arts and Science University, Mandalay for Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

Sayadaw U Silananda was the Chief Compiler of the Tipitaka Pali-Burmese Dictionary and was one of the distinguished editors of the Pali Canon and the associated Commentaries at the Sixth Buddhist Council held at the *Kaba Aye Hlaing Gu* (World Peace Cave) in Rangoon (Yangon) from 1954 to 1956. Sayadaw U Silananda had a golden opportunity to work for Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw and Venerable Mingun Tipitaka Sayadaw.

In 1960 he inherited the *Mahavijjodaya Chaung* monastery after the passing away of his preceptor and became the Abbot of that monastery. He moved to *Abhyarama Shwegu Taik* monastery, Mandalay in 1968, and in 1969 was appointed the Vice Abbot of that monastery. He is currently the Chief Abbot of that monastery.

He was also appointed a member of the Executive Committee of *Shwegyin* Sect, and in 1993 became a Senior Member of that Sect. He participated at the meeting of Cleaning-up of the Sasana held at *Hmawbi* (50 miles from Yangon).

In 1993, he was appointed a Member of the Advisory Board of Meditation Teachers of *Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha* in Yangon.

Sayadaw was requested to be Rector of the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University of Yangon in Myanmar (which opened in December, 1999).s

### Visits Abroad

He has visited many countries both in Asia and in Europe, and as a member of a party visited the United States in 1959 at the invitation of the U.S. Government.

In April 1979, Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw and his entourage (including Sayadaw U Silananda) visited San Francisco, California, USA with a full program of discourses, meritorious offerings, dhamma talks and meditation sessions. (See "Happy 20th Anniversary TBSA") At a later stage of the visit, Mahasi Sayadaw agreed to leave behind U Silananda and U Kelasa in San Francisco to fulfill the overwhelming request of Burmese community. (Sayadaw U Kelasa later moved to Maryland to become the Abbot of *Mangalarama* monastery.)

### Dhamma Activities in the U.S.

Since then Sayadaw U Silananda has been giving lectures on Buddhism including *Abhidhamma* (Buddhist Psychology) and teaching Buddhist meditation in the country. He is a competent teacher and rarely uses Pali words which are not familiar to lay people in his sermons. As one devotee said, "He teaches from an extraordinary depth of knowledge, communicating in clear and precise English. He is loved by his students and devotees as a skilled, patient and compassionate teacher."

He is the Spiritual Advisor of the Theravada Buddhist Society of America (TBSA) which he helped set up, and the Founder Abbot of the *Dhammananda Vihara* monastery. (See "A Personal Appreciation")

He is also the Spiritual Director of the following (to name a few):

- Dhammachakka Meditation Center in Berkeley, California
- the Bodhi Tree Dhamma Center in Largo, Florida
- the Society for Advancement of Buddhism in Ft. Myers, Florida
- Tathargata Meditation Center in San Jose, California

### **Dhammaduta missions**

Sayadaw has gone on numerous *Dhammaduta* missions to give Dhamma talks and to conduct short term and long term retreats. (See "Sayadaw U Silananda in Jamaica", "Sayadaw U Silananda in Canada", and "Dhamma in a Foreign Land").

Sayadaw has also conducted retreats in Malaysia and Singapore.

### **Selected works of Sayadaw U Silananda**

#### ***Publications***

Despite his busy schedules, Sayadaw has authored the following (in English):

- The Four Foundations of Mindfulness
- An Introduction to the Law of *Kamma*
- Thoughts for the Occasion (Some Sayings of Lord Buddha on Death)
- An Introduction to the Doctrine of Anatta (No-Soul)
- Meditation Instructions
- Protective Verses

Sayadaw has extensively revised and edited a translation of "Abhidhamma in Daily Life" by Sayadaw U Janakabhivamsa.

Sayadaw has also published numerous works in Burmese:

- The First Sermon (a popular exposition of Buddha's First Sermon)
- Sayadaw U Narada of Mandalay (a biography)
- A Course on *Sima* (for monks)
- Mahasi Sayadaw (a biography)
- Burmese Architect - Saya Saing (a biography of his father)
- Comparative Study of Saddaniti Dhatumala and Paniniya Datupatha
- Exposition of Syllogism in Pali
- A New Burmese Translation of Rupasiddhi Tika
- Tipitaka Pali-Burmese Dictionary, as Chief Compiler
- Burmese translations of some short Sanskrit works

### **Courses**

Sayadaw U Silananda lectured to the M.A. (Pali) students at Mandalay University. He was also invited to give guest lectures at University of California at Berkeley and Stanford University.

Sayadaw has conducted the following courses in both English and/or Burmese:

- In depth study of Matika of Abhidhamma
- An Introduction to Abhidhamma, Vissudimagga, Patimokkha and Jataka
- Fundamentals of Buddhism
- Four Foundations of Mindfulness
- Kalyana Buddhist
- Dhammapada
- Sutta
- Vinaya rules
- *Thein-hnote* (ensuring the consecration of *sima* )
- Theory and Practice of *Vipassana*
- Pali Grammar.

Based on Sayadaw U Silananda's lecture notes, U Nandisena has translated a Pali Grammar text into Spanish.

### **Dhamma talks and tapes**

Sayadaw has given numerous Dhamma talks in both English and Burmese. There are over 300 tapes holding Sayadaw's talks. Some tapes (e.g. " *Vassa* ", " *Dana* ") have been distributed freely by TMC to its devotees.

Some talks have been transcribed and printed. They include 'The Meaning of *Tathagarta* ', 'Benefits of Walking Meditation', to name a few.

## **Sasana projects**

With the initial support from TBSA, Sayadaw U Silananda has initiated several projects:

- compilation of a CD-ROM to hold text of the Pali Canon and the associated Commentaries approved at the Sixth Buddhist Council
- compilation of digital pictures of the *kyauk-sa* (stone inscriptions) holding the text of the Pali Canon approved at the Fifth Buddhist Council
- fund to support the propagation of sasana in the Frontier Areas in Myanmar

## **Titles and Awards**

For his outstanding contribution to the *sasana* , Sayadaw U Silananda was conferred on the prestigious titles of *Agga Maha Pandita* in March, 1993 and *Agga Maha Saddhammajotika Dhaja* in March, 1999.

## **Contact**

Sayadaw is observing the current vassa retreat at Tathargata Meditation Centre (TMC), 1215 Lucretia Avenue, San Jose.