

The Sacred Relics of Arahants



Buddha Hairs Relics given to Sapussa and Balika (Enshrined in Shwedagon Pagoda at Theiguttara Hill)

Introduction – Buddha taught one very important lesson to his monks and the lay Disciples that:

1. **There are only four classes of persons worthy of a stupa.** They are: **(a) the Buddhas** (Tathagatas) who are homage-worthy and perfectly self-enlightened, **(b) the Paccekabuddhas**, **(c) the Ariya disciples**, and **(d) the Universal Monarchs**.
2. There are only **three types of stupas** erected in honor of these four classes of persons. The stupas where corporeal relics are enshrined are known as **Sariradhatu cetiya**; (**Darthu Ceti**)
3. the stupas and figures made in the likeness of the above four personages are known as **Uddissa cetiya**; (**Uddissa Ceti**)and
4. the stupas where personal effects like robes, bowls, etc. of those revered personages are enshrined are known as **Paribhoga cetiya**. The **Bodhi tree** is also included in the Paribhoga cetiya. (**Paribhoga Ceti**)

There will come a time, some where about Sasana year 5,000, when people will no longer revere the stupas where the Buddha's relics are enshrined. The relics then will be moved to where they would be revered and honored. There are so many stupas erected in Myanmar that it is very hard to know which one of the stupas has **Arahant's relics enshrined**? It is hopeful that the one you revered to is not just a pile of bricks? (**Te Pon Cedi**). If we are uncertain about the authenticity of a Relic, or original relics are unavailable, it is better that we erect a Udissa Ceti.

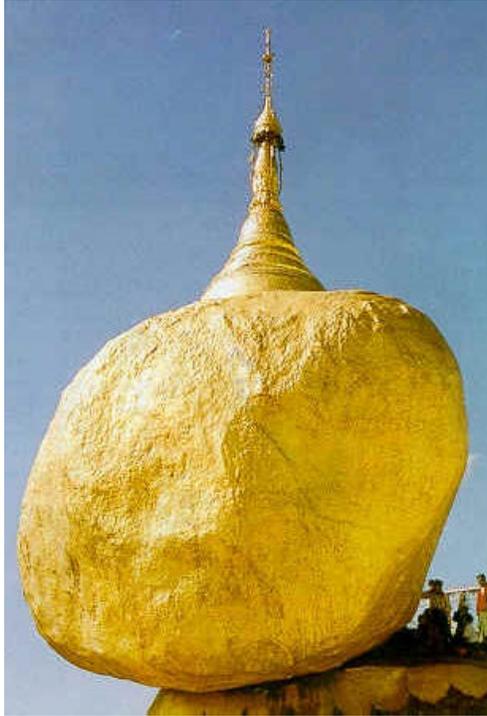


Maha Bodhi (India)

Buddha Relics Enshrined in some of the Stupas in Myanmar



Buddha Hair Relics Enshrined in Shwedagon Pagoda



Buddha Relics Enshrined in Kyaikhtiyo Cedi



Shwesandaw in Pyay

In these three cedi's we know that there are Devas taken guard duty for the safety of the relics. **Sakka**, the king of Devas, *Thar Ta Nar Pala* - on Shwedagon Pagoda; *Bwe lu Wa Nat Ta* at Kyaikhtiyo cedi; and *We Ta Gyon Nat Ta* on Shwesandaw Cedi.

Buddha's Instruction On How to Revere the Relics of an Arahant

Dhammapada Verses 195 and 196

The Story of the Golden Stupa of Kassapa Buddha

While traveling from Savatthi to Baranasi, the Buddha uttered Verses (195) and (196), with reference to a brahmin and the golden stupa of Kassapa Buddha.

On one occasion, while the Buddha and his followers were on a journey to Baranasi they came to a field where there was a spirit-shrine. Not far from the shrine, a brahmin was ploughing the field; seeing the brahmin the Buddha sent for him. When he arrived, the brahmin made obeisance to the shrine but not to the Buddha. To him the Buddha said, "Brahmin, by paying respect to the shrine you are doing a meritorious deed." That made the brahmin happy. After thus putting him in a favorable frame of mind, the Buddha, by his supernormal power, brought forth the golden stupa of Kassapa Buddha and let it remain visible in the sky. The Buddha then explained to the brahmin and the other bhikkhus that there were **four classes of persons worthy of a stupa**. They are: the Buddhas (Tathagatas) who are homage-worthy and perfectly self-enlightened, the Paccekabuddhas, the Ariya disciples, and the Universal Monarchs. He also told them about the **three types of stupas** erected in honor of these four classes of persons. The stupas where corporeal relics are enshrined are known as *Sariradhatu cetiya*; the stupas and figures made in the likeness of the above four personages are known as *Uddissa cetiya*; and the stupas where personal effects like robes, bowls, etc. of those revered personages are enshrined are known as *Paribhoga cetiya*. The Bodhi tree is also included in the Paribhoga cetiya. The Buddha then stressed the importance of paying homage to those who are worthy of veneration.

Then the Buddha spoke in verse as follows:

Verse 195. *He pays homage to those who are worthy of veneration, whether they are the Buddhas or their disciples who have overcome obstacles (to Insight Development) and have rid themselves of sorrow and lamentation.*

Verse 196. *The merit gained by such a person who pays homage to those who have been freed from moral defilements and have nothing to fear, cannot be measured by anyone, as this much or that much.*

At the end of the discourse the brahmin attained Sotapatti Fruition. The stupa of Kassapa Buddha remained visible for seven more days, and people kept on coming to the stupa to pay homage and obeisance. At the end of seven days, as willed by the Buddha, the stupa disappeared, and in the place of the shrine erected to the spirits, there appeared miraculously, a big stone stupa.

The Sacred Relics of Arahants

Like the Relics of the **Buddha**, the **Arahant's** Relics can be venerated in this **Buddha's Sasana** . When the remain of an **Arahant** is cremated , the flesh and blood are gone to ashes but the bones are left as **Relics** . Their colors and form, however, are not mentioned in **Pitaka** scriptures .

It is said that if an **Arahant** makes a resolution about his **Relics** to be left after cremation, they are left as he wishes; but if not they are gone to ashes.

In the *Khaggavisana Sutta* commentary it is said that when **Pacceka Buddha's** attain the parinibbana the **bone-Relics** are left after cremation;

When **Ven-Ananda** attains parinibbana, his body sitting cross-legged in the sky, owing to his resolution, broke into two parts and fell down to the ground for both sides of his lay-devotees; in the similar way,

Ven-Dabba attained parinibbana in the sky but due to his resolution there was no **Relics** left to be venerated; nevertheless,

Ven-Bakula , When cremated after the parinibbana, due to his resolution left his **Relics** as they were. In this way many commentaries such as **Apadana Theragatha, Anguttara** ...etc state the peculiar events of the **Arahants Relics** .

Most of the Arahant's in Myanmar: Led a secluded life in forest and they were very reluctant to be know as **Arahant's**. Only when they passed away, their Relics proved to be an **Arahant's** and people know the true event.

Vimana Vatthu Pali Text said: If a person pays due respect to a living **Buddha** or his Sacred Relics or Relics Cetis (**Relics stupa**) they are enshrined with the same motive or the same attitude toward them, he will achieve the same benefit and attain the ultimate goal of Nibbanic peace .

The fact that differentiates **Arahant's** Relics from Buddha's is that the former is bigger than the latter. The forms of **Arahant's** Relics are like a small seeds; their color is conch-shell-white, brownish blue and light yellow .

Image of some Arahant's Relics are shown::



Shin Moggalan Relics

Size:	3 mm ~ 5 mm.
Form:	Irregular orb form
Colors:	Deep-black-coffee color (Near to black)



Shin Sivali Relics

Size:	3 mm ~ 5 mm.
Form:	The form of the round ball

Colors: Cream-colored (The surface of the Relics has the obvious black point)



Shin Ananda Relics

Size: 3 mm ~ 4.5 mm.

Form: Irregular solid form

Colors: Cream-colored.



Shin Nagsena Relics

Size: 4 mm ~ 16 mm.

Form: Long form/ the form of the oval body

Colors: Yellow coffee color of thin rice



Shin Anuruddha Relics

Size: 3 mm ~ 4.5 mm.

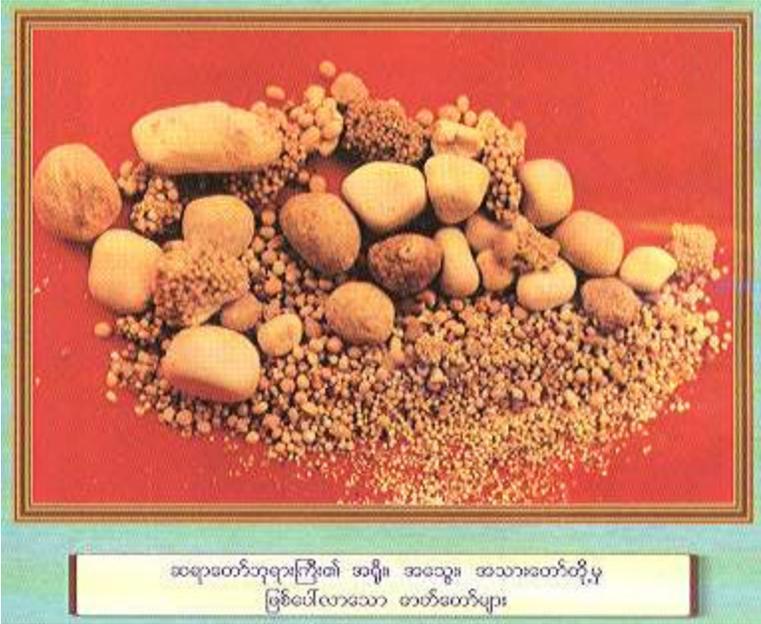
Form: The form of the round ball.

Colors: Off-white color (The surface of the Relics contains the thin coffee color point)

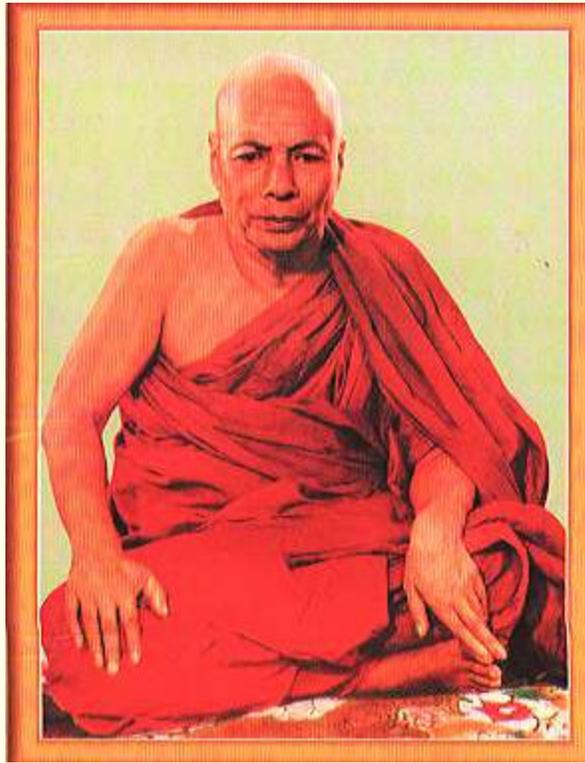


Arahants Relics	
Arahant Name:	Unknown waiting to find out.
Size:	4 mm ~ 8 mm.
Form:	Irregular and ellipsoidal form
Colors:	Off-white color (The surface of the Relics has luster)

<http://www.tienzin.idv.tw/tienzin-english/tienzin-08-arahats%20relics.htm>



Mogok Sayadaw Relics



MOGOK SAYADAW (1900-1962)

Holy Relics

U Thet Shay, 1998



**International Theravada
Buddhist Missionary
University**

Assigned to the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University at the most unexpected time, my job often requires me to stay late at office, or sometimes to sleep there. My nights at the office find me fresh and ready in the morning. After paying homage to the Tooth Relic pagoda, just across the road, I would start each day with an hour of meditation. Walking round the pagoda premises at dawn, around the lake, beside groves of young trees, inhaling fresh air, I would be grateful for this unexpected change of my career.

While the Tooth Relic pagoda was still under construction, my family had donated Holy Relics to be enshrined in the pagoda. Remembering that donation, I would feel peaceful as I stroll in the pagoda compound.

Having joined the Defense Services Academy at the age of fifteen, I became an officer at twenty - young, boisterous, callous and carefree. Religion would have no special meaning for me. I was a Buddhist only because my ancestors had been, and because my parents had trained me to be one.

When I became a regimental commanding officer, my little officers, the adjutant, the quartermaster, the intelligence officer, would buy me all sorts of religious books. I was attracted by biographies of Arahants-Venerable monks who, after intense practice, had achieved deliverance. It was interesting to read about their insight-their ability to foresee events, to read people's mind, to mentally contact people thousands of miles away from them, to foretell the exact date and time of their death, etc. Then I encountered the luckiest turn of my entire life. I met a monk who did foresee events, who read people's mind, who could mentally contact us when we were hundreds of miles away from him, and best of all, who taught me practical methods to escape from the samsara filled with suffering, ageing, and death. Since then Buddhism has been everything to me.

Time and time again. I have heard of Buddhism being referred to as a religion where its devotees bow to heaps of bricks in the form of pagodas and statues. Buddhism is taken by most as a blind faith of the underdeveloped orient. A pity they don't know the truth and depth of Buddha's Dhamma, how in Buddhism can one find solid answers and solutions to life's otherwise unexplainable puzzles and unfairness.

This saying about Buddhists bowing to heaps of bricks dates back to colonial days when members of invading troops and colonial rule, ignorant of Buddhism, took home their assumption after seeing devotees at pagodas.

A pity again, they don't know of Holy Relics being enshrined in pagodas and statues.

No matter how rich, how learned one may be, no one can argue that one ends up aged and dead, not to mention incurable diseases, unbearable pain, murders, tortures, having to part from loved ones through death or while living.

The Lord Buddha left us Holy Relics, as proof that he had been delivered from further sufferings. Arahants too, after practice, leave behind Holy Relics to prove that they too, have, as the Lord Buddha had, escaped from the samsara of birth, ageing, death, pain, sorrow and rebirth.

When a layman is cremated, it is either burnt to ashes, or if incompletely burnt, it leaves behind skeletal remains.

But when an Arahant's body is cremated, relics with sizes varying from granules to pebble-like forms, are formed. These relics can never be burnt nor cut down. And, if stored, they sometimes multiply by themselves to varying numbers.

There have been thousands of Arahants since Buddha's time who left behind holy relics. Every now and then, these days, we hear about holy relics being formed when bodies of Arahants - the real supermen - are cremated.

In Myanmar, it is well known that the [Venerable Mogok Sayadaw](#), who passed away in 1962, left behind holy relics as well as an eye relic and a tooth relic. An eye, delicate as it is, is one of the first organs that will burn to ashes when cremated. But in Mogok Sayadaw's case, after the body had been totally burnt down, both eye-balls were found to have turned to stone-hard relics, their shape unchanged. Then there was a tooth, a molar, which was found among ashes and relics of various sizes. Some months after the cremation, the molar was found to have stumps growing on all sides.

Among many other Arahants who had left behind holy relics, there was one in **Zee Daw village** in **Pakokku district** who passed away in the early nineties, i.e. about six years ago.

Not knowing that the **Zee Daw Sayadaw** had achieved enlightenment, the villagers did not search for relics in the ashes. That night, and in the nights that followed, villagers saw colorful sparks and haloes arising from the cremation site. So, one morning, they searched through the ashes, and found stone-like particles of various sizes. Curious, they took those stones to the village monk who, after careful examination, verified that they were indeed holy relics.

Only then were the villagers remorse-filled. They were regretful for not having listened more to the Sayadaw's teachings, for not having served the Sayadaw better, for not having stayed closer to him.

In a world filled with material wealth and scientific developments, I am grateful to have been born in a land filled with the teachings of Buddha, and Sanghas, holy monks who show us ways to escape from worldly sufferings.

Arriving back at the ITBMU after a refreshing walk at dawn, each day's work await me, starting with dawn offering of breakfast to residing Sanghas But the work comes as a joy to me. I deem it an honor to be given this opportunity to be part of the work force striving to relay to students from various parts of the world, the Teachings of Lord Buddha the most precious gem indescribably and incomparably more valuable than any of the worldly riches.

Reference –

- 1. Mogok Sayadaw Relics - Nibbana.com -**
- 2. Dhammapada – by Daw Mya Tin**
- 3. YMBA – Illustrative Buddha won**
- 4. Arahant's Relics - <http://www.tienzin.idv.tw/tienzin-english/tienzin-08-arahats%20relics.htm>**