

Sacred Relics of Gotama Buddha



All sacred relics of Gotama Buddha are tightly guarded by Devas for its safety and its preservation of it's sacred. When one is dedicated to a place, like one willed (Byardeik taw) by Buddha himself to be enshrined at Okkalapa Hill, now *Shwedagon*, the relic hairs can never be relocated; even the king of Devas, Sakka, with his divine power can change its location unless it has been willed and predetermined by Buddha in his prediction (*Byar deik*). Take for example, the sacred hair relics of Shwedagon Pagoda.

All Eight strands of hair relics were given and willed by Buddha to be enshrined at *Theinguttara Hill* in a Stupa, as *Sariradhatu cetiya*. To be in compliance with Buddha's will, *Sakka* facilitated Buddha's will and helps to recover all the deficit four strands of hairs from the *King of Ajetta* and the *King of Nagas* and brought them to the rightful location. *Sakka*, the king of Devas, assumed the responsibility and accountability of all the Buddha sacred relics.

If we examined the replica of Shwedagon Pagoda, the *Mahawezaya Cedi*, we would find that this Stupa, supposedly to be a replica of Shwedagon, lacks the required sacred relics and cannot be called a replica. Some said, relics can be multiplied by its divine power and the reproduced secondary relics (*Dattaw Pwar*) can be considered as equally sacred. Here we are considering only the Buddha Relics and not the relics of an *Arahant (Yahanda)* which by its own power reproduces secondary relics (*Dattaw Pwar*); however, as far as Buddha relics are concerned, it cannot be multiplied.

Let us look at how the sacred relics of Shwedagon were brought from India by *Tapussa* and *Ballika* brothers. The genuine sacred Buddha

relics by its divine power must perform miracles and that associated Devas must stand in guard to the sacred relics. **The legend as written in this - <http://www.myanmar.com/shwedagon/hist.htm>**

Legend of Shwedagon Pagoda (*Sariradhatu cetiya*)

Legend has it that *Tapussa* and *Bhallika* brought the original sacred hairs of Buddha from India across the ocean. On their way to Myanmar, the two brothers were relieved of 2 hairs by the King of *Ajetta*, and 2 more were robbed by the King of *Nagas*, who transformed himself into the likeness of a human being and boarded the ship at night.

On arrival in Myanmar, a great festival was celebrated in honor of the sacred hairs for several days. *Sakka, Lord of the Heaven*, came down to earth and assisted in the selection of the site; but he had to invoke the aid of the 4 spirits: *Sule, Amyitha, Yawhani, and Dakkhina*.

Personal effect '*Paribhoga*' of the 3 preceding Buddha's were excavated under their direction in one spot, and were buried there again along with the sacred hairs brought by the 2 brothers. Before placing them in the vault dug on the hill, King *Okkalapa* opened the casket containing the hairs, instead of 4, 8 hairs flew up to the height of seven palm trees *emitting rays of multicolored hues with such a dazzle that the dumb could speak, the deaf could hear, and the lame could walk, and a rain of jewels fell knee-deep*. A golden stone slab was placed on top of the vault by *Sakka* and on it was erected a golden pagoda enclosed within silver, tin, copper, lead, marble, and iron brick pagodas up to a height of 66 feet.

A divine intervention is required to relocate any genuine sacred relics from one place to another, as pre-willed by Buddha. For that reason, *Mahawezaya Cedi*, the replica of Shwedagon, could never be consecrated as *Sariradhatu cetiya of Gotama Buddha for lack of genuine sacred relics*.



Cedi – Stupa of Gotama Buddha

As Buddhist we should understand when and where and for whom we can build Stupa - Cedi to commemorate in reverence to that particular person.

Buddha instructed to us that STUPA – Cedi - built in public places for all to pay obeisance must belongs to either of – the four classes of people – worthy of veneration

- (a) self-enlightened Buddha,**
- (b) the Paccekabuddhas,**
- (c) the Ariya disciples, and**
- (d) the Universal Monarchs.**

Dhammapada Verse 195 and 196 give us this instruction to follow

Verses 195 and 196

The Story of the Golden Stupa of Kassapa Buddha

(as translated by Daw Mya Tin – Tipitaka Association – Dhamma Dana through Nibbana.com)

While traveling from Savatthi to Baranasi, the Buddha uttered Verses (195) and (196) of this book, 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 supernatural 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.

Per this instruction, Stupa (Cedi) should be built to honor only to four classes of people -

- (a) self-enlightened Buddha,
- (b) the Paccekabuddhas,
- (c) the Ariya disciples, and

(d) the Universal Monarchs.



With Ananta Metta

Maung Paw