

## **The Legend of Gottama Buddha's Image Captured on a Photograph at Bodhgaya**

The following image is an alleged portrait of Gottama Buddha while he was alive. It was taken by a female Yogi from the West many decades ago when digital photography was not yet invented. She is a convert who has studied Buddhist literature in depth before practicing Buddhism and meditation enthusiastically for twenty years at the foot of the Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya in India, the place when the present Buddha got enlightened over 2500 years ago.

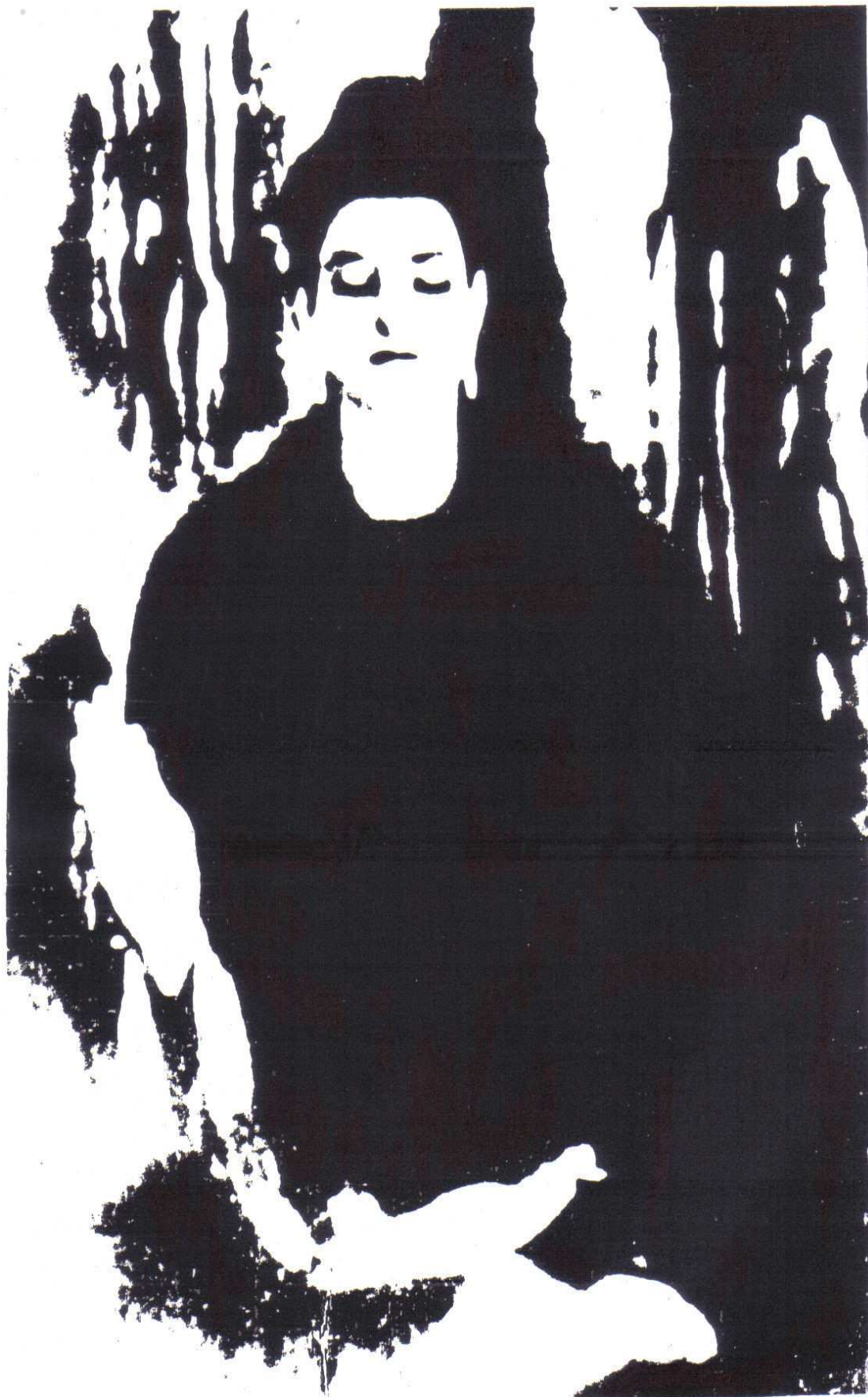
When she visited Bodhgaya she developed a strong desire to visualize the real Buddha in person, which she knew it was a pipe dream since the Gottama Buddha had passed away many years ago and was no longer in existence anywhere in the Samsara, unlike the God of other faiths, and she knew it very well since she has studied Buddhist philosophy thoroughly. However, she has come across in the Buddhist literature that 'nothing is not impossible' if a righteous person aspired with a good intention, and has put enough effort and energy to fulfill it. She knew that even a Buddha-hood is possible if the aspiration is made at the right time and by a right person.

She then decided to make an aspiration which may be unrealistic, but not totally impossible. She made a vow that she would meditate for twenty long years under this Bodhi tree to be able to visualize the Buddha's real image, after she developed intense faith in the Buddha.

As aspired she meditated for twenty long years facing many difficulties and on the very day when she had meditated for twenty years as vowed, she went to the Bodhi tree with a camera in hand. Her heart was filled with faith and her thoughts were pristine clear and clean and had nothing in her mind but to see the real Buddha's image. She was very confident in herself and when the film was developed the image as you are now seeing came up in the photograph.

Unfortunately, the authenticity has not been able to check as the lady in question has not been identified and the original negative is not available. However, the source of this information is available for further information and verification should anyone wants to pursue it further.

Yet, another source for checking is also available, which is Saya U Myint Naing, a Yogi of reputable fame and dignity, and moreover, the following dialogue between the former source and Saya U Myint Naing may substantiate the portrait's authenticity in those believers who have already developed a faith in the context. Saya U Myint Naing is a veteran Yogi of Mongtaung Myezin Sayadaw who teaches Vipassana meditation based upon a firm practice of Samatha meditation in Mandalay, Upper Burma.



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An Artist's version of the image



## **An Interview with Saya U Myint Naing by Mr U Saw Myint**

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Mongtaung Myezin Forest Hermitage situates in the old capital of Burmese kingdom in Upper Burma. It's spiritual leader and mediation instructor is the venerable Mongtaung Myezin Sayadaw who is in his eighties but still conducting meditation courses of three to six months or longer durations. The courses are free of charge and have been sponsored by the donations from locals and from the overseas followers. He teaches mediation starting with Samatha or concentration based practice and later switches over to Vipassana in the tradition of the late Kani Shwethein Sayadaw who acquired the technique of ancient Tibetan meditation from one of his pupils from Tibet who came to study Theravada Buddhism many years ago.

Saya U Myint Naing is a pupil and an instructor Yogi of the Mongtaung Myezin Sayadaw where he has practiced the technique for many years and is still coaching pupils as an assistant to the aging Sayadaw. The interviewer U Saw Myint is one of Saya U Myat Naing's pupils and is practicing the technique currently.

It is well known to the Burmese that the teachers and some of their pupils of this tradition are believed to be capable of telepathy, clairvoyance and have visited remote and un-accessible places, both within the country and out of this world. Some of the accounts that they have described have been verified when it is possible and some accounts have to been taken for granted by most of their followers. They have claimed to have been to the heavens, Brahma worlds, the abode of Naga or spiritual serpents who are believed to dwell in places underwater in deep oceans and lakes, and they have visited even to the Hell.

These extra-ordinary travels are said to have been accomplished by sending a beam of light transmitted when they are in deep trance with Samatha meditation and have developed intense concentration or Samadhi. It is mentioned that they could send their mind following the beam and could transmit to any direction they wish, and thus could visit those places where humans have not been before.

It is believed by their followers that a methodical approach could enable most people to attain such supra-mundane capabilities.

Myint: Saya, could you elaborate on your experience at Mongtaung Myezin Vipassana?

Naing: Sure, it's a practice based upon establishing strong Samadhi and allows the mind to follow the light Nimitta; then, switches over to Vipassana.

Myint: Is the Tavatimsa similar to human world?

Naing: No, absolutely not. All inhabitants of Tavatimsa are young and wear brilliant and shiny clothing. I saw them in bright reds and yellows and all are very happy and gay. There are a lot of festivals. There are only few who have palaces and mansions, but the majority is their consorts.

Myint: Did you meet the King Sakka and also the four Kings of the four cardinal points?

Naing: Yes, King Sakka is quite recognizable by his status and clothes. The four Kings of the four corners each wears in red, yellow, green and blue.

Myint: Where have you been next?

Naing: I have been to the place where the Buddha dispensed the Abhidhamma in Tavatimsa Heaven; Sudhamma hall, Nadavun garden, and the famous Sulamani Pagoda where the Buddha's hair relics are enshrined. The sky of Tavatimsa is pink to purple, and the ground is velvety green.

Myint: Saya, could you tell me about the Buddha's image?

Naing: Oh yes. When I arrived at the Puntukabala stone carpet where the Buddha dispensed the Abhidhamma for the whole three month period of lent I had a strong desire to visualize the Buddha. So, I made the aspiration (adhithana) and saw the Buddha sitting on the slab preaching the gods and goddesses. It was a marvelous and incomparable experience seeing the entire heavenly crowd filling an area which was the size of a football ground. The Buddha was in the middle surrounded by all those deities.

Myint: Can you tell me in detail the appearance of the Buddha?

Naing: Indeed it was exactly as it is in this portrait that you are holding. The neck was as smooth and white as ivory; the ears were touching the shoulders; there was also a coiled tuft of hair on the mid forehead. The hands were slender and long and the feet were smooth. The most extra-ordinary thing that I've noticed was the aura of six colors coming out from shoulders circulating the head. It was a very remarkable scene; most unforgettable!

Myint: Oh, thanks ever so much Saya! Your information is priceless.

Naing: I am very glad to relate what I have experienced. This is without doubt the image of the Buddha. Please distribute it worldwide. I'm sure you'll experience the results! Good luck!