

# Maha Sivali Thera

## (Shin Thi Wa Li Thera)

**Introduction** – Maha Sivali (*Shin Ti Wa Li Thera*) to many households in Myanmar is pretty popular because he was the foremost in receiving the most requisites among the Buddha disciples. In most of the house hold shrines, they have a tiny statue of Shin Ti Wa Li so family will be enriched with all the necessary requisites in a household. Parents used to tell their children revere this statue you will always be blessed with all the household requisites – wealth and riches..

Buddha must make sure that Maha Sivali accompany the group of monks when journeying through the uninhabited forest, because even the Devas will be happy to provide the Thera with all the requisites. Many Bhikkhu;s will relied on him for necessary requisites when they journey through uninhabited terrains. His statue (image) is seldom seen in public places but *we will see them in most of shrines in households as a symbol of abundance of food and prosperity.*

Sivali Thera made his aspiration some 100,000 world cycle ago before the **Buddha Padumuttara** and again before the **Buddha Vipassi**, to be the foremost in receiving the most requisites. He had made great merits to realize his aspiration as predicted by Buddha Padumuttara. He attained the Arahantship at the age of seven as Samanera (*Tha Ma Ne Ko Yin Ba Wa*).

## Maha Sivali Thera

At the time of the Buddha Gotama there reigned a righteous King and Queen named *Koliya* and *Suppavasa*. After some time Queen Suppavasa conceived a child. The unborn child brought great fortune to the kingdom. Not only did the queen receive many gifts from friends and relatives, but the whole kingdom became prosperous. Crops grew in abundance and everyone was well-fed and healthy.

The queen grew heavy with child but when the natural time for the birth arrived, she failed to deliver the baby. She grew uneasy as time passed by with still no signs of the birth, and asked the King to invite the Buddha and His retinue of monks for a meal. After the meal the Buddha blessed the queen by saying:

*"May Suppavasa, daughter of the Koliya clan,  
Be happy and healthy and give birth to a healthy son."*

After the Buddha left, the queen gave birth to a beautiful, healthy son. As a mark of respect for the Buddha, who had eased the queen's heavy burden with His blessings, He and His retinue were invited to receive alms at the palace for seven days. The prince was named **Sivali**, as from the time of his conception; the people's hardships were alleviated through an abundance of rich crops.

One day when Shariputra was on his alms round he visited the prince and informed him of the suffering that he and his mother had undergone because of the delayed pregnancy. *Shariputra then went on to explain to the prince the unwholesome action that his mother and he had performed and the resulting effects of their actions.*

In a previous birth Sivali had been born as the King of Benares and had waged war on a neighboring kingdom. He had surrounded the kingdom and told the citizens to surrender or fight back. When they refused to surrender, in collaboration with his consort, his present mother, he had decided to surround the city and hold them hostage until they did so. The citizens, who did not want to fight back or live under the rule of such a king, had not surrendered. As a result they had suffered greatly without food for a very long period. Many of the sick and the elderly had died but the arrogant king and his queen had not given in. Many months later the King had withdrawn his troops and released his hostages but he had paid dearly for the suffering he had caused. At death he was reborn in Avichi hell. The delayed pregnancy and the suffering he and his mother had undergone resulting from the delay were the residual effects of this action.

After illustrating the Noble Truth of suffering, Shariputra asked the prince if he would like to join the Noble Order so that he could seek the path to end all suffering. The prince was overjoyed at this invitation and agreed to join the order with his mother's permission.

The queen, who was a devoted follower of the Buddha, agreed. She escorted Prince Sivali in procession to the monastery to be ordained. On the day of ordination when his hair was shaved, **Shariputra advised Sivali to meditate on the impurities of the body. Sivali, who was**

spiritually advanced resulting from previous wholesome actions, focused his mind as instructed. Before the completion of the shaving of his hair, Sivali attained the supreme wisdom of Nibbána.

The monks soon noticed a strange phenomenon when they were with Sivali. Sivali always seemed to have an abundance of rich, fragrant food and the other requisites (robes, shelter and medicine). Monks who were with him also had the opportunity to share in the bounty. Wherever Sivali went people flocked around to prepare food for him. Sivali was indeed blessed with all the requisites of a monk.

And so it was that wherever Sivali traveled he was well taken care of. He and his retinue of 500 monks were in an uninhabited forest for seven days, but they were not short of food. **The Devas made sure that all their requirements were met.** Similarly when Sivali was traveling through the desert his requisites were provided. The Buddha, seeing that Sivali was fulfilling a previous aspiration in His reign, declared that he was **foremost among the monks in obtaining requisites.** He also instructed monks who were traveling on long, tedious journeys through uninhabited terrain to be accompanied by Sivali, as with him by their side they would be ensured of the requisites. In fact, on one occasion when the Buddha and His retinue of 30,000 monks were traveling to visit the monk Khadhiravaniya Revata (Shariputra's younger brother) they had to cross an uninhabited forest. Ánanda, fearing that they would not be able to obtain food in the jungle for such a large number of monks, questioned the Buddha about the logistics of the journey. The Buddha assured Ánanda that they had nothing to worry about as Sivali was with them. *With Sivali present there would be no shortage of food because even the Devas reveled in taking care of his requirements.*

**In general the effects of one's wholesome and unwholesome intentional actions are reaped only by the doer.** However, there are instances, as with Sivali, that others too benefit from unusually strong actions of another. This overflow of the results of the effect of a person's strong kamma on others is known as nissandha pala (overflowing results of kamma). While vipaka pala (results of kamma) are reaped only by the doer nissandha pala are experienced by others who happen to be with you. Nissandha pala could be both wholesome and unwholesome in accordance with the deed performed. For instance Shariputra did not

obtain alms in one instance resulting from the nissandha pala of Losaka's strong unwholesome deeds.

To seek the cause of this strange phenomenon we need to go back many aeons to the time of the **Buddha Padumuttara (App. A)**. Sivali, who had been born as a poor man, had the opportunity to see the Buddha Padumuttara confer on another monk the honor of being foremost among monks who obtain the requisites. Fascinated by the way everyone desired to provide alms and robes to this monk, Sivali had decided that he too would like to hold a similar position in a future birth. He had then performed many acts of generosity to the Buddha Padumuttara and His retinue and made an aspiration.

The Buddha Padumuttara, foreseeing that Sivali's aspiration would be fulfilled, had **prophesied that at the time of the Gotama Buddha he would be foremost among the monks who obtained requisites**. From this point onwards, Sivali had started in earnest to work toward his aspiration. At death he was reborn in a heavenly realm where he enjoyed many years of heavenly bliss.

The next documented birth story took place at the time of the Buddha **Vipassi, (App. A)** 91 world cycles before our Gotama Buddha. Sivali was born as a merchant in the City of Bandhumati. The City was preparing a great alms giving for the Buddha Vipassi and His retinue of monks, when they realized that they were short of curd and honey, a delicacy that was often served after the noonday meal. Messages were sent all over the city to obtain the required delicacy. Unable to obtain the quota required, the king's men raised the price of the curd and honey from one gold coin to 100 coins.

In the meantime Sivali, a merchant who sold curd and honey, was approached and offered 100 gold coins for his merchandise. Sivali was surprised at the unusually high offer and asked for whose consumption they were buying the curd. On being told that it was for the Buddha Vipassi and His retinue of monks, Sivali asked permission to donate his wares to the Buddha. He then renewed his aspiration to be foremost among the monks who received requisites. The Buddha Vipassi, seeing that Sivali's aspiration would be fulfilled, blessed him by saying, "May your aspiration be fulfilled." Sivali then became a devotee of the Vipassi Buddha and practiced His Dhamma.

*Resulting from this strong aspiration and the meritorious deeds and efforts performed in previous births, Sivali fulfilled his aspiration to be foremost among the monks who obtained requisites at the time of the Gotama Buddha.* To date, Buddhists venerate the Arahant Sivali, and often keep a picture or a discourse known as the c in their home as a symbol of abundance of food and prosperity.

This was what Dr Htin Aung wrote in the book titled –  
“The Ari Monks and the Introduction of Buddhism “

### Shin Thiwali

**Shinthiwali** was the son of a king's daughter, and he had to remain in his mother's womb for seven long years because of a sin <sup>7</sup> in a past existence. Then for one whole week the mother could not give birth, and on the seventh day she said to her father, the king, 'Let me offer some gifts to the Buddha before I die.' The gifts were made and the Buddha blessed her. Her suffering ceased and she gave birth to Thiwali, who at once spoke and behaved like an adult. The Buddha's Chief Disciple, Shin Sariputtra, arrived on the scene and, receiving permission from the parents admitted Thiwali to the Order. He attained *Arahatship* the same day. Because of his meritorious deeds in the past he was always receiving gifts of food and robes, and was declared by the Buddha to be the foremost recipient of gifts among his disciples. The Burmese believe that he is still living, that he can be invoked to come by a prayer of special formula and that **his mere invisible presence will bring them prosperity and good fortune.** Therefore, a tiny image of him, carrying a staff in one hand and a fan in the other, as if ready for travel, is kept for worship in many Burmese households.

**Appendix – A. Twenty Four Buddhas. Starting from the time our Buddisatta received a definite prophecy from Buddha Dipankara.**

1. *Dipankara Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was born as the ascetic *Sumedha* and received the **definite proclamation**

After a period of one Asankheyya there appeared:

2. *Kondanna Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *Cakkavatti King* named *Vijitavi*

After a period of one Asankheyya there appeared:

3. *Mangala Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *Brahmin* named *Suruci*

4. *Sumana Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *Naga king* named *Atula*

5. *Revata Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *Brahmin* named *Atideva*

6. *Sobhita Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *Brahmin* named *Ajita*

After a period of one Asankheyya there appeared:

7. *Anomadassi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was *a leader of demons*

8. *Paduma Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was *a lion*

9. *Narada Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was *an ascetic*

After a period of one Asankheyya there appeared:

10. *Padumuttara Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a man named *Jatila* (This period was 100,000 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

After a period of 70,000 Maha kappa there appeared:

11. *Sumedha Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a young man named *Uttara* (This period was 30,000 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

After a period of 12,000 Maha kappa there appeared:

12. *Sujata Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was *a chakkavatti king* (This period was 18,000 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

13. *Piyadassi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a young *Brahmin* named *Kassapa*

14. *Atthadassi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was an *ascetic* by the name of *Susima*

15. *Dhammadassi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was the *God Sakka*

16. *Siddhatta Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was an ascetic by the name of *Mangala*

17. *Tissa Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a king named *Sujata* who later became an ascetic (This period was 92 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

18. *Phussa Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a king by the name of *Vijitavi* who later became a monk

19. *Vipassi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was the *Naga king, Atula* (This period was 91 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

20. *Sikhi Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a king named *Arindama* (This period was 31 Maha kappas before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

21. *Vessabhu Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was the *king Sudassana* who later became a monk (This period was one Maha kappa before the advent of the Gotama Buddha)

22. *Kakusandha Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a *king named Sema* (This period was in the same Maha kappa as that of the Gotama Buddha)

23. *Konagamana Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a king named *Pabbata* who later became a monk (This period was in the same Maha kappa as that of the Gotama Buddha)

24. *Kassapa Buddha* - The Bodhisatta was a **Brahmin** named *Jotipala* (This period was in the same Maha Kappa as that of the Gotama Buddha)

Reference: Relatives and Disciples of the Buddha - By Radhika Abeysekera

## Appendix – B

### Jataka Story – Shin Ti Va Li

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#### *Asaataruupa Jaataka*

*Once the Bodhisatta was king of Benares. The Kosala king waged war on him, slew him and bore off his queen to make her his own wife. The king's son escaped through a sewer and later came back with a large army to give battle. His mother, hearing of his doings, suggested that he should blockade the city instead. This he did, and the blockade was so close that on the seventh day, the people cut off the head of the king and brought it to the prince. It was this prince who became *Sivali* in the time of the Buddha -- the blockade had been the reason for him remaining seven years in the womb of his mother, and the reason for her being seven days in bringing him forth. The mother was *Suppavasa*, daughter of the Koliya king. The story was related by the Buddha to explain to the monks the reason for *Suppavasa's* long pregnancy.*

## Appendix - C

### Verse 414

### The Story of Thera Sivali

While residing in the Kundadhana forest near the city of Kundakoliya, the Buddha uttered Verse (414), with reference to Thera Sivali.

Princess Suppavasa of Kundakoliya was in pregnancy for seven years and then for seven days she was in labor pains. She kept contemplating the unique qualities of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Samgha and in the end she sent her husband to the Buddha to pay obeisance to him on her behalf and to inform him of her condition. When informed of the condition of the princess, the Buddha said, "*May Suppavasa be free from danger and from sorrow; may she give birth to a healthy noble son in safety.*" As these words were being spoken, Suppavasa gave birth to her son at her house. On that very day, soon after the birth of the child, the Buddha and some bhikkhus were invited to the house. Alms-food was offered there and the newly born child offered filtered water to the Buddha and the bhikkhus. To celebrate the birth of the child, the parents invited the Buddha and the bhikkhus to their house to offer food for seven days.

When the child grew up he was admitted to the Order and as a bhikkhu he was known as Sivali. He attained arahantship as soon as his head was shaved off. Later, he became famous as the bhikkhu who received the largest amount of offerings. As a recipient of offerings he was unsurpassed.

On one occasion, the bhikkhus asked the Buddha why Sivali, with the qualifications to become an arahant, was confined in his mother's womb for seven years. To them the Buddha replied, "Bhikkhus! In a previous existence, Sivali was the son of a king who lost his kingdom to another king. In trying to regain their kingdom he had besieged the city on the advice of his mother. As a result, the people in the city were without food or water for seven days. It was for this evil deed that Sivali was imprisoned in his mother's womb for seven years. But now, Sivali has come to the end of all dukkha; he has realized Nibbana."

Then the Buddha spoke in verse as follows:

**Verse 414.** Him I call a brahmana, who, having traversed this dangerous swamp (of passion), this difficult road (of moral defilements), the ocean of life (samsara) and the darkness of ignorance (moha), and having crossed the fourfold Flood, has reached the other shore (Nibbana); who practices Tranquility and Insight Meditation, who is free from craving and from doubt, who clings to nothing and remains in perfect peace.

Reference –

1. Relatives and Disciples of the Buddha by Radhika Abeysekera
2. Dhammapada Verses and Stories by Daw Mya Tin. -
3. The *Ari* Monks and the Introduction of Buddhism – by Dr Htin Aung.