

## **LOTUS ROBE OF INNLAY REGION**

Khin Htay Yu\*

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to know the importance of saffron robe for the Buddhist monks who are the disciples of Lord Buddha, to know the great benefits derived from the offering of robe, to study the inventive mind of women from Kyaing Kham (East) village in Innlay region of southern Shan state who produced robe woven from natural fiber of Paduma lotus plant in dedication to offer the Lord Buddha, and to acquire more foreign exchange (FE) from the sale of robe and fabric of Paduma lotus to the Buddhist countries of Japan and Korea etc.

### **Introduction**

The most fundamental requirement of all human beings are food to eat, clothing to wear and dwelling place to live. Because of these causes, the people will meet a variety of sufferings. Out of the three causes of food, cloth and dwelling, the Lord Buddha foresaw that robe would be the most fundamental thing necessary for his disciples the Sangha for the prosperity of Buddhism in future. It is also found the ability of women from East Kyaing Khan village of Innlay region who can weave the fibres of lotus plants into robe. Robe as garment is important for the Sangha who are performing the perpetuity and prosperity of Buddha's religion. The distinctive features of the Paduma lotus fabric is its sweet fragrance and its warmth when it is worn in winter and its coolness when it is worn in summer.

### **Finding Results**

The Lord Buddha foresaw that robe would be the most fundamental thing necessary for his disciples the Sangha for the prosperity of Buddhism in future. The Lord Buddha paid attention to get clothing (robe) for Sangha in delivering sermon.

It is also found the ability of women from Innlay region who can weave the fibres of lotus plants into robe. Visitors within the country and tourists came to study the work of weaving lotus robe.

---

\*. Dr, Associate Professor, Department of History, Monywa University

By making contact with the Buddhist countries attempts are made to get foreign exchange by selling lotus robe and fabric.

Nowadays, as lotus plants are getting scarce in Innlay region, attempts should be made not to disappear natural genes and to get more foreign exchange and it will contribute to the continuous production of lotus robes.

### **Lotus Robe of Innlay Region**

As long as not free from physical appearance, soul and body, the most fundamental requirement of all human beings are food to eat, clothing to wear and dwelling place to live. Because of these causes, the people will meet a variety of sufferings. Therefore, in dedication to be free from existence of body and soul, the Lord Buddha indicated his disciples the ways of having food, clothing and living place which can ensure safety, freedom and pleasure of life.

For getting food-Sangha had to go round on one's own foot to accept offering of food with a begging bowl.

For getting clothing-Sangha had to collect pieces of cloth deserted at rubbish heaps and cemetery and then these cloths were washed away and sewn up into fabric.<sup>1</sup> *Dukote Thin-gan* (mantle-like, double layered vestment of a Buddhist monk) which the Lord Buddha had always worn is the sample of robe. It was the robe made of the cloth wrapping the corpse of a female slave and the Lord Buddha himself took the cloth to wear himself as robe.

Out of the three causes of food, cloth and dwelling, the Lord Buddha foresaw that robe would be the most fundamental thing necessary for his disciples the Sangha for the prosperity of Buddhism in future. As the Mijjima desa and its adjacent areas where the religion of Lord Buddha would be flourished in future were the places where majority of poor people were living and however difficult it would be to get food in such places, at least the Sangha could get a spoonful of food<sup>2</sup> at least from a donor if the Sangha went

---

<sup>1</sup> Ngwe U Daung (U Kyee Maung), *Buddha Sar Pan Chi*, Volume I, Yangon, Stars Empire Printing Service, 2006, p. 150 (Henceforth: Ngwe U Daung, 2006)

<sup>2</sup> Ngwe U Daung, 2006, 151-152

round village or town to accept offering of food as there were abundant forests and hills, as well as donated monastery and buildings.

But in regard with the garment, it would not be easy for the Sangha to get a robe from the poor people. Therefore, the Lord Buddha paid attention to get clothing (robe) for Sangha in delivering sermon.<sup>3</sup>

### **Robe woven of cloth is the noblest**

In regard with the robe, the Lord Buddha delivered sermon as follows:

The Lord Buddha held high regard for robe made of discarded cloths.

The successive Lord Buddha who get enlightenment in the past, at present and in future, as well as the *Pis-sei-ka Buddha* (Lesser Buddha), *Agga Thar-wa-ka Maha Thar-wa-ka* (The two chief disciples of Buddha) and *Arahats* had adorned the robe and attained *Arahatta Magga*. By wearing the robe, they were free from *ki-lay-thar* (Passion and Impurity).<sup>4</sup>

The robe was praised as the banner of victory of *Arahatta Daja*, *Arahatta Magga* (Forth and final stage in following the Eightfold Path to Nirvana) and *Arahatta Pho*.

The robe dyed with the color derived from the bark of trees shall be revered and worshiped.

The garment adorned by Buddhist monks is noble and revered.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Pan-tha-ku Thin-gan* (Robe made of discarded pieces of cloth)**

The Sangha had to wear *Pan-tha-ku Thin-gan*, bearing in mind the mental attitude of being less desirous and humble. It was not easy for the Sangha at that time to get robe. At the entrance of cemetery or from the rubbish heaps at the junctions of the roads, torn pieces of discarded clothing were to be picked up one by one and torn pieces of cloth were patched together into fabric and sewn into garment. At the time when population of Sangha was not so much, it would be easy to get torn pieces of discarded

---

<sup>3</sup> Ngwe U Daung, 2006, 152

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Nanda Marlar Bivansa's Sermon, 4-9-2017, Maha Bodhi Channel, MRTV

<sup>5</sup> Ngwe U Daung, 2006, 46

cloth. But with the growth of Sangha population, it would not be easy to get discarded pieces of cloth.<sup>6</sup>

In sewing the robe, Ashin Maha Kassapa held by hand the bottom part of the robe, while Ashin Maha Thari Puttara took responsibility at middle part and the Lord Buddha's cousin Ashin Ananda had to hold the topmost part of the robe. Ashin Maha Moggalan had to take and give necessary needle and threads, while other monks were twisting the threads. Whenever a thread ended, it was the Lord Buddha who put another thread into the hole of needle. It was the extraordinary event of sewing robe.

Pieces of cloth in the measurement of one *htwa* (9 inches) or one *taung* (18 inches) were to be sewn together into fabric and therefore, the robe was not in a right angle. The Lord Buddha made a journey from the town of Yazagyo to the small obscure village of Dek-khi-na-gi-ri. Along the journey, there were plots of paddy field owned by the peasants of Magadha kingdom. The plots of paddy field were square in shape with straight line of *Kan-thin* (paddy dykes) at both length and width. Some plots of paddy field had overlapped *kanthin* and some paddy fields were demarcated by *Kan-thin* both in length and width. The intersection between two plots of paddy field in interior part looks like a cross. The Lord of Buddha asked his cousin Shin Ananda to make design the robe as the pattern of paddy fields which were systematically made by the peasants of Magadha kingdom. At the end of the journey when they came back to Yazagyo, they laid out the pattern of robe for all the Sangha.<sup>7</sup> As the plots of paddy field had *Kan-thin* in its surrounding, the robe had fringes in both length and width. As the plots of paddy field were demarcated by *Kan-thin*, small lines of threads were designed into column on the robe. Like the demarcation in the pattern of *Kan-thin*, big and small columns were patterned on the robe.

At the places in touch with the neck or calf of the leg, robe can be rubbed and torn. Therefore, an extra fabric was sewn double layers over at these places. After having prepared systematically, the robe became substial.

---

<sup>6</sup> Wunna Thiri, *Nyi-daw Ananda ei Ta-thet-tar Hmat-tan* (Lifelong record of the Lord Buddha's cousin Ananda), Volume I, Yangon, Sarpay Loka Press, 2012, p. 339 (Henceforth: Wunna Thiri, 2012)

<sup>7</sup> Wunna Thiri, 2012, 341

When this pattern came into settled, the robes sewn in later period were designed in this pattern. This pattern would be suitable for the monks as it was different from the design of lay person's garment. As the cloth is cut into pieces and sewn into garment, thieves and robbers will not appreciate it.

The robe was donated to the Lord Buddha by Maha Pajapati Gawdami.

Gawdami chose the best quality of cotton, gin cotton. She used funnel-shaped basket in dressing cotton.

Slim and smooth threads were spin and woven by herself.

Then the cloth was dyed yellow color and the robe was offered to Lord Buddha who delivered sermon as follows:

“Gawdami, donate the robe to Sangha and it will be similar with donation to me (Lord Buddha)”.

By seeing this factor, it was found that the Lord Buddha paid high regard to the convenience of gaining garment for Sangha who were endeavoring for perpetuation of the Buddha's Sasana (Teachings) for long time.<sup>8</sup>

Robe can be classified into *Pan-tha-ku thin-gan*, *Waso thin-gan* and *Ka-thi-na thin-gan*. In donating Ka-thi-na robe, a monastic establishment can accept only once the offering of robe and robe must be distributed to the Sangha who had little garment. The Abbot has no right to take the robe. In other words, the Buddha intended to prevail *parahita* (Philanthropic mind) among the Sangha who are the disciples of the Buddha. The Vinaya discoursed by Lord Buddha was the code of rules and regulations to be followed by the Sangha and its intention was to perpetuate the Sangha society for longer period.<sup>9</sup> In regard with the right to donate Kathina robe, it was known as follows:

---

<sup>8</sup> Wunna Thiri, 2012, 342

<sup>9</sup> Baddanta Mala Linkara, “Pay-yway Ma-kon Hlu-yway Ma-khan” (So many properties to distribute or to donate) Buddha's Sermon, 3 January 2017, broadcasted on Maha Bodhi Channel, MRTV

## Kathina Robe

On their journey from *Taw-kyaung* (Monastery located far away from dwelling places of lay persons) of Pava kingdom to Jetawan monastery of Thawutti kingdom to pay obeisance to the Lord Buddha, thirty Badda Waggy monks encountered storm and heavy rain and lost their robe. The Lord Buddha had passion on these monks and allowed the lay persons to donate robe. This robe is called “kathina robe”.

The lay persons are allowed to offer Kathina robe within the duration of one month from 1<sup>st</sup> Waning day of Thadingyut to the full moon day of Tazaungmone in only one monastery at one time.

The monastery which accepted offering of Kathina robe had to distribute the robes among its Sangha within the day and so it is called “Ma Thoe” Thingan. It is known that the Lord Buddha had allowed to offer robe woven with the various cotton, silk or velvet.<sup>10</sup> So it was the robe which appeared for the first time in Buddha’s religion.

After gaining enlightenment, the Lord Buddha delivered the first sermons to Pyin-sa-wag-gi (Five ascetics), of whom Ashin Kaundinya gained distinct ascetic practice. There is no evidence in religious treatises about what was the robe design of Ashin Kaudinya who became the first disciple of Lord Buddha.<sup>11</sup>

There are four kinds of robe as follows:

1. Waso Thin-gan-the robe donated in the month of Thadingyut to the Sangha who resided the monastery to which someone paid homage. Nowadays, the robe is used to be offered before the Buddhist Lent or on the full moon day of Waso.
2. Kathina Thin-gan-the robe donated during the period of one month from 1<sup>st</sup> Waning day of Thadingyat to the full moon day of Tazaungmone to the Sangha who sojourned during the Buddhist Lent (Purima Wa).

---

<sup>10</sup> Ashin Pandita, Volume II, p. 16

<sup>11</sup> Ashin Pandita, Volume II, p. 83

3. Ei-sei-ka Ci-wa-ra-the robe donated hurriedly at the time just before going travelling or when someone is not healthy. The robe is donated with no arrangement in advance.
4. Sad-da Thin-gan-the robe donated during the period of eleven months beginning from 1<sup>st</sup> Waning day of Tazaungmone to the month of Thidingyut next year. The robe is donated for any special reason, but only with good will.

Waso thin-gan is the robe donated to the Sangha who sojourned during the Buddhist Lent at the monastery which someone has worshipped.

At the present time, the robe donated on the full moon day of Waso (July) is called “Waso Thin-gan”.<sup>12</sup>

Waso (Karakat-Cancer) is the month when the Sangha had to go into monsoon retreat. It is the month when the Lord Buddha came into a new existence in his mother’s womb. It is the time when the Lord Buddha retired to the jungle as a recluse. It is the month when the Lord Buddha delivered his first sermons to Pyin-sa-wag-gi (Five Ascetics), and it is the month when flowers like Myit-zu and Pon-nyet etc. are blooming. It is the month when Ya-han-khan (Ceremony of receiving ordination as a Buddhist monk) was held in ancient time. It is the month when Waso robe and Waso flowers are offering. In this month, Myanmar traditional ceremony of offering Waso robe or Waso flowers is held and it is a good custom which should be maintained without fail every year.<sup>13</sup>

Waso Thingan is the robe donated to be convenient for the garment of Buddhist monks and it was arranged by the lay persons.

In ancient time, Waso robe could be donated by single lay person.

Kathina Thin-gan is the robe first donated with the permission of Lord Buddha.

---

<sup>12</sup> Shwe Myaing Ashin Pandita Bivansa, *Waso Sai-yar Haw-pyaw-kwet Ta-ya Paung-choke* (Collections sermons on the Buddhist Lent), Volume One, Yangon, Aung Zabu press, 2005, pp. 152-153 (Henceforth: Ashin Pandita Bivansa, 2005)

<sup>13</sup> *Buddha Dhamma Journal*, Volume 30, No. 4, p. 84, Ashin Ardissa (Shwe Kan Thar, Pakkoku)

Waso robe is donated to the Sangha who sojourned during the Buddhist Lent to be convenient for their garment.

### **Reason for donating Waso robe**

At the time when the Lord Buddha was alive, robe was very scarce for the Sangha that each monk had only a set of three robes called “Dukutta Thingan” or San-gha-ti (Over garment), “Uttarasanga” (A-ka-thi) (Upper garment), and “Antaravasaka” (Thin-paing) (Under wear or loin-cloth). As robe was scarce, if the robe became wet with rain water, the monk would be in great trouble. In ancient time, robe donated to the monk was not a ready-made like the present time. Cotton cloth in pieces of one *htwa* one or two *taung* were donated to the Sangha and the Sangha had to sew the pieces of cloth into garment by using needle and threads. If there was not enough pieces of cotton cloth, the Sangha went to cemetery and took the cloth wrapped on the corpse. The pieces of cloth were then washed and dyed and patched together into garment. So it would be very difficult for Sangha at that time to get robe.

*Kyaung A-ma* (Female donor of monastery) Wi Thar Khar once sent a female slave to monastery to invite Sangha for having food at her house. Being afraid of getting wet their robe, the Sangha were having bath unclothed at that time.<sup>14</sup> The female slave saw them and told Wi Thar Khar what she had seen at the monastery. However, Wi Thar Khar knew that the persons getting bath unclothed were the Sangha. The Lord Buddha and Sangha came while rain was falling and Lord Buddha vowed not to fall a drop of rain water so that the robe of Sangha would not be wet. After having food, Wi Thar Khar requested the Lord Buddha to let her to donate robe to the Sangha. It was the first time that the Lord Buddha allowed to make donation of robe to the Sangha.<sup>15</sup>

*Kyaung A-ma* Wi Thar Khar made request to the Lord Buddha as follows:

“At the time after the Lord Buddha passed away, Sangha will not take and wear the cloth wrapped on the corpse and

---

<sup>14</sup> Ngwe U Daung, 2006, 80

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 81



Buddha's teachings can be disappeared with the Sangha.<sup>16</sup> If the Sangha have enough garments, the Buddha's teachings will be perpetuated for more than five thousand years. In order that the Buddha's religion lasted for more than five thousand years, permission is asked to donate Waso robe to the Sangha."

The Lord Buddha uttered "Sadu" (Well done) three times with pleasure and the earth was trembled. The Lord Buddha said:

"My beloved daughter Wi Thar Khar, this kind of donation will contribute to the prosperity of Buddha's religion and it will make the Buddha's teachings lasted for more than five thousand years."

It was because of Wi Thar Khar's request to get permission for donation of robe, the Sangha can still be seen up to the present time. Because of her request, Wi Thar Khar became reputed with the title "Sasana Mae-daw" (Mother of Sasana).<sup>17</sup>

The donation of robe can make a person beautiful in every life. During the time of the Lord Buddha Kassappa, a woman donated the loin-cloth made of flowers to the Lord of Buddha and she became a beauty queen with the title "Ohn Mar Dan Di" in the time of the Lord Buddha Kassappa. She enjoyed as human being and as celestial god and after that , she became female Arahats with the title "Upala Wan Hte-yi" and attained Nirvana.<sup>18</sup>

Because of the donation of robe which was the banner of *Arahats*, eight kinds of benefits could be gained.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, donation of robe had been made since the time of ancient kings in Myanmar.

During the reign of King Badon (Bodawpaya), donations of robe to the Sangha were found as follows:

---

<sup>16</sup> Ngwe U Daung, 2006, 82

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 90

<sup>19</sup> Ashin Pandita, Volume I, 13

- Order: (1) Display the Kathina robes for royal inspection on 14 Waxing day of Tazaungmone, 1149 M.E. (24 October 1787).
- (2) Hold a festival at the pagoda of Sin Gyo Shwe Gu in the evening on 24 October 1787.
- (3) Send the Kathina robes together with other offerings to monasteries on the full moon day of Tazaungmone (25 October 1787).
- (4) Offerings shall include Matho Thingan (A monk's robe made all at once).<sup>20</sup>

It was also found the ability of women from East Kyaing Khan village of Innlay region who can weave the fibres of lotus plants into robe. Robe as garment is important for the Sangha who are performing the perpetuity and prosperity of Buddha's religion. The distinctive features of the Paduma lotus fabric is its sweet fragrance and its warmth when it is worn in winter and its coolness when it is worn in summer.

### **Kyar Thin-gan (Lotus robe)**

Since the beginning of the world, five lotus buds had appeared at the place where sacred Bodi tree was grown and the Lord Buddha gained enlightenment. Five branches appeared from a single plant and from these branches appeared the five buds of lotus. Each bud of lotus had a set of fragrant Thin-gan (robe) and *Pa-reik-ka-ya* (Prescribed articles for use by Buddhist monks). With pleasure, the Brahmas took a set of lotus robe and *Pa-reik-ka-ya* each to their place where "Ariyas" (Holy persons) lived and offered the sweet-scented lotus robes to them. As the omen of lotus appeared, the Brahmas prophesied that the five Buddhas would appear in this present world who would show the Path to Liberation.

According to the Hinduism and Buddhism, lotus is regarded as the plant that grew first on earth. Lotus is considered as the noblest and the most

---

<sup>20</sup> *The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598-1885*, Collected & Edited by Dr. Than Tun, Part IV, A.D. 1782-1787, Kyoto, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1986, p. 627 (Henceforth: *ROB*, IV)

sacred of flowers in Buddhist and Hindu lores. Moreover, although lotus plant is grown in mud, it can climb up to the surface of water.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, it is pure and sweet-scented. *Kyar pa-lin* (Lotus throne) is used to be made for the Lord Buddha and Guardian spirits. In India and Southeast Asian countries, king was regarded as the God on earth (Human world) and Kyar pa-lin was made for him.<sup>22</sup>

Among the traditions of Innlay region included a variety of matters concerning with lotus. Especially, their belief, calculation of auspicious time for building house, way of compounding medicines, and songs and poems of Innlay rural areas are mostly concerned with the stalk of lotus, lotus petal, lotus leaf, lotus flower, and lotus seed.<sup>23</sup>

About 90 years ago, Daw Sar U (alias) Daw Kyar U, 50 years old, who was skillful in handicraft, from Kyaing Khan East village of Innay village-tract in southern Shan state, began weaving of lotus robe. At the time when Daw Kyar U began weaving lotus robe, Sayadaw of Shwe U Daung hill located to the northwest of Innlay lake was well-known throughout Myanmar. Daw Kyar U donated the lotus robe which she had woven to the Shwe Daung Taung Sayadaw for the first time. Lotus robes were also donated to the Innlay Phaungdawoo Buddha statue which was taken from place to place for worship in Innlay region. Daw Kyar U had earned her living by weaving lotus robe and after her death, industry of weaving lotus robe was almost extinct. Then, U Tun Yi and Daw Ohn Kyi family restarted the work of weaving Paduma lotus robe which was almost disappeared.<sup>24</sup>

Lotus fibre that can be woven into lotus fabric is included in *Nymphaea rubra*. In Biological term, it is the plant which blooms flowers and

---

<sup>21</sup> Dr. Than Tun, "Ta-seik La-kha-na Yi-nyoon-chet" (Symbols of medals), *Kalyar Magazine*, 1996 October issue, p. 21

<sup>22</sup> (a) Maung Maung Lwin, *Yin-kyay-hmu hnit Shay-haung Thu-te-tha-na Sar-dan-mya* (Culture and Archeological papers), Yangon, San Thit Press, 2014, p. 125 (Henceforth: Maung Maung Lwin, 2014)

(b) Sayagi Taik Soe, *Buddha Bar-thar A-nu-pyin-nya Ni-dan* (Introductory to the Buddhist Arts), Yangon, Quality Publishing House, 2002, p. 110

<sup>23</sup> *Collections of Saya L. Ba Oo*, M.A., History, Haya-Ywama-Innlay (2005)

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Captain Aung Naing Oo (Retired) and Daw Sanda Moe, Kyaing Khan East village, 18.8.2017

floats on the water surface. A variety of lotus can be seen in many places of Innlay region. The stem of lotus plant is submerged under water and a lotus flower arose from each lotus stem. Its roots are puffy and can grasp the mud. It can also absorb minerals. At the stem of lotus has hollow cylinder through which air can pass and fibres. The colors of lotus can be varied depending on the species of lotus. People of Innlay region in ancient time supposed Paduma lotus to be the most beautiful. Lotus flowers are blown mostly at dawn in Innlay lake and lotus flowers transformed into buds at sunset. Lotus flower in red color is mostly bloom in evening and flower blooms for only three days. The lotus plants mostly found in Innlay region are Kyar Ni (Red lotus), Kyar Phyu (White lotus) and Kyar Nyo (Brown lotus). White lotus is *Nymphaea alba* in botanical term. Yellow lotus is rarely found.<sup>25</sup>

Daw Kyar U first bought lotus plants. When people went to pick up lotus plants, propitiation is made to the concerning guardian spirits. Permission is asked by offering of coconut and banana to the *Nats* (Spirits) with flowers and candle lights. Daw Kyar U made the people to pluck lotus stem only after they had made cleaning their body. In plucking up the lotus stalks, experience is important. Lotus leaf at the top of lotus plant must be in position of bud, it will be easy to pluck off the lotus stem. Position of lotus spiral must be known skillfully so that it will be easy to pluck off the lotus stalk.<sup>26</sup>

Firstly, Daw Kyar U bought the lotus. Labor charge of plucking lotus fibre is paid per day. Lotus plant six to eight feet in length is submerged about six to eight feet in water. The part of lotus submerged in mud is red brownish in color. The part submerged in mud must be cut off so that it does not bring mud. As lotus stalk has thorns, it is to be brushed with coarse cloth. About 2,500 lotus plants can get one tical of lotus fibre. At the present time, people themselves pulled lotus fibre. One tical of lotus fibre can get from pulling 150 lotus plants. All lotus fibres from hollow cylinder of lotus are to be pulled as much as possible. When Daw Kyar U died, business of weaving lotus robe

---

<sup>25</sup> Collections of L. Ba Oo (2005)

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Captain Aung Naing Oo (Retired) and Daw Sanda Moe, 5.10.2017

also disappeared. It was in later period that Daw Ohn Kyi continued the industry of weaving lotus robe.<sup>27</sup>

Nowadays, Daw Ohn Kyi do not buy lotus plants. Instead, she buys lotus fibre in measurement of weight from Innlay region. At the bazaars like Nan-man Zay, Ywa-ma Yay-paw Zay, Kyauk-taing Zay and Wa-taw Zay which opened every five day, lotus fibre which people came to sell from the surrounding areas are bought. She also went round the villages in the Innlay region to buy lotus fibres. As it is private business, the good quality of lotus fibre can produce the good quality of lotus fabric. In other words, the quality of lotus fabric depends on the quality of lotus fibres. There are a variety of people who sold lotus fibres which is bought in measurement of weight. Price of lotus fibre can be varied depending on its quality. As lotus fibre is bought in measurement of weight, people came to sell damp lotus fibre to get more weight. Lotus fibre still in damp cannot be twisted into thread. It became mouldy and decayed. Pulling fibre from lotus stem is made on table with water in a bucket. Pulling fibre in water bucket mixing with earth will increase the weight of lotus fibre. Some people pulled fibre by adding glue to get more weight. Some persons tried to make unjust way by adding nylon fibre. It is known that the entrepreneur who happened to buy such impure lotus fibre added with nylon fibre had lost many lakhs.<sup>28</sup>

Daw Ohn Kyi made herself the buying of lotus fibre. She wove lotus fabric with pure lotus fibre so that her goods will be standard in foreign markets. She said that she was not worry for her lotus fabric not to be sold.<sup>29</sup>

In regard with the process of producing Paduma lotus robe step by setp, lotus plants grown in Innlay lake are firstly plucked. Then the lotus stalks are washed and cut into pieces and fibres can be extracted from these stalks. About 50,000 lotus stalks are required to weave a robe. Lotus fibres are collected and twisted yarn into lotus threads. The dried lotus fibres are to be steamed to become damp and twisted into lotus threads. In twisting threads, it is important to be skillful and exact for the person who twisted threads. It needs to be the same for all threads that have been twisted.

---

<sup>27</sup> *Collections of L. Ba Oo* (2005)

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Daw Sanda Moe, 10-1-2017

<sup>29</sup> *Collections of L. Ba Oo*, 6 (2005)

Powder of soap must be used when the twisted threads are washed in water. It was known that in ancient times, the people of Innlay region used Nwa-pa-ti fruit in washing instead of soap.<sup>30</sup> Lotus threads are transferred from yarn to a bobbin by using large reel. Then lotus yarns are treated in glue. Lotus yarns are put in Hta-ma-yay (Congee or surplus water that is drained off while rice is being cooked) and then treated in glue liquid. As the industry of weaving lotus fabric is the sacred work, lotus yarns are treated with glue by hand for many hours.

After treating hank of yarns with glue, threads are wind to reel.<sup>31</sup>

54 threads of yarn will be necessary to get fabric of one inch in width. Equal warp and weft can make the quality of lotus fabric to be smooth.<sup>32</sup> If warp and weft is different in size, fabric is easy to be decayed and it will also be difficult to be dyed. Designs became modernized as warps are dyed with a variety of colors. It is found that lattice fence is erected on both side of axle in front of the loom where lotus fabric is woven. There is also pole of Kyet Shar erected on both side. Its intention is to be safe from a variety of dangers and disturbances.<sup>33</sup>

It is known that about four viss of lotus yarns are necessary to weave lotus robe. A set of robe sewn in accordance with the Vinaya is 2.5 viss in weight. The width of warp must be 27 feet in length. Lotus fabric is to be dyed with chemical dyes with colors of light, medium and dark color of the bark of jackfruit tree. Nowadays, Daw Ohn Kyi used natural color derived from barks of trees.

In order that lotus robe can be produced from Innlay region, Kyaing Kham East village took part in the competition of weaving Ma-thoe Thin-gan held at Yangon in 1985. Lotus plants from Innlay region were taken to Yangon, putting in the bags which were amounted to the length of train. Lotus plants are sparkled with water at every railway station. After weaving a lotus robe in practice, it was donated to a well-known pagoda. As the pagoda trustees had not seen it before, they thought that robe was woven with yarns

---

<sup>30</sup> *Collections of L. Ba Oo*, 7 (2005)

<sup>31</sup> *Taing Chi* (Warp)

<sup>32</sup> *Fok Chi* (Weft)

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Daw Sanda Moe, (Entrepreneur who work weaving lotus yarn), 1.1.2018

produced from Pakkoku and dyed yellow color. As they had not seen lotus robe, pagoda trustees said that lotus robe can be real only when Lord Indra, Brahma and Guardian spirits donated. The weavers made weaving of lotus robe in the sight of the pagoda trustees and only when they believed it as the real lotus robe.<sup>34</sup>

Besides Daw Ohn Kyi, there are also two women namely Daw Tin Shwe and Daw Hla Khin who are living in Kyaing Kham village and they also worked weaving of lotus robe and lotus fabric. Nowadays, Captain Aung Naing Oo (Retired) and Daw Sanda Moe also are engaging weaving lotus robe and fabric.<sup>35</sup> Visitors within the country and tourists came to study the work of weaving lotus robe. Visitors mostly came to study on the days when Taung To Zay (Bazaar) and Kyauk Taing Zay open. The tourists record about the trade of indigenous national races at Taung To Zay and then they entered Kyaing Kham village to study the weaving of lotus robe.

The duration of time when Paduma lotus robe is produced is for six month in a year. It can produce during rainy season from June to November because lotus plants are more growing during the rainy season. As it is the handicraft that can be produced seasonally, it is not sure to get lotus robe at the time someone wished. Lotus robe can be bought by making order in advance.

Daw Tin Tin Yi (alias) Mrs. Ann who is the owner of Shwe Inn Thar Hotel also bought lotus yarns for her industry of weaving lotus fabric. If one viss of lotus yarns are made to be dried, weight reduced to sixty ticals. She is managing the industry of weaving lotus robe with coming up to standard. Japan is the country which bought most numerous lotus fabric from Myanmar. Japan mostly made order to supply pieces of lotus fabric in the measurement of 18×18 inches, in natural color. The Japanese used tower of lotus fabric to wrap rice and curry when they pay obeisance to their ancestors at cemetery. They held high regard on lotus fabrics. When tea ceremony is held in Japan, lotus fabric is bought to use as tea slice to be placed under tea cup.

---

<sup>34</sup> Ma-thoe Thin-gan is the robe woven with lotus yar within day time, Interview with Daw Sanda Moe, 10.1.2017

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Captain Aung Naing Oo and Daw Sanda Moe from Kyaing Khan East village, 18-8-2017

When lotus yarns became out of use, lotus yarns and pieces are washed away and used to be put into pillow. Lotus yarn is used instead of *Hmo* (soft material put in pillow). It is known that lotus pillow is suitable for good health. Pieces of lotus fabric can also be used as glass bag. The Japanese bought the pieces of lotus fabric to be used as canvas on which they painted. The Buddhist paintings of ancient Japanese were drawn on the lotus fabric. In pagoda, *Ta-zaung*, monastery and *Pyat-that* (Tiered roof) which are protected with lotus fabric, when weather is getting cold, lotus fabric became warm and when weather is getting hot, lotus fabric became cool.<sup>36</sup>

From Innlay region which is encircling with mountain ranges and where the people has a strange life style, the women like Daw Sar U, Daw Ohn Kyi and Daw Tin Yi skillfully produced lotus robe and fabric on the basis of Paduma lotus as natural gift. They have tried to make known to the western countries about their skillfulness and handicraft of weaving lotus robe and fabrics and felt them their high standard of handicraft.<sup>37</sup>

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the women from the Kyaing Kham East village of Innlay region are engaged in weaving of lotus robe with lotus plants which are growing naturally in Innlay region. By making contact with the Buddhist countries, especially with Japan and Korea, attempts are made to get foreign exchange by selling lotus robe and fabric to these countries. But nowadays, as lotus plants are getting scarce in Innlay region, attempts should be made not to disappear natural genes and to get more foreign exchange, and it will contribute to the continuous production of lotus robes.

---

<sup>36</sup> *Collections of L. Ba Oo*, 9 (2005)

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 10(2005)



### List of Photographs



(1)



(2)



(3)

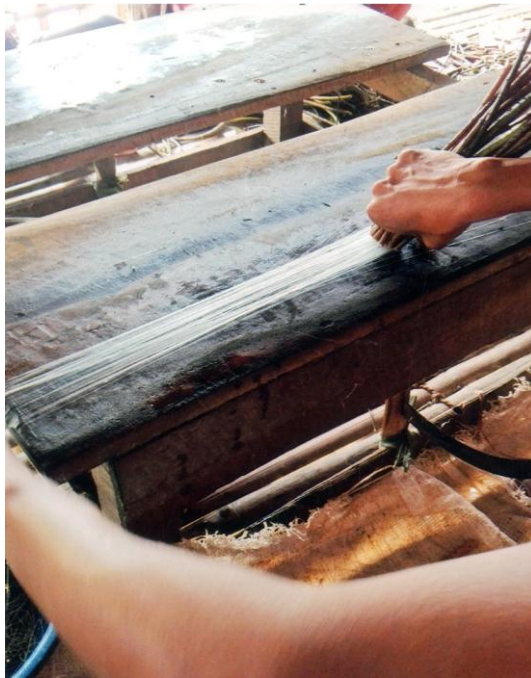


The famous status in the Phaundawoo Pagoda



Person Plucking Lotus Stalks





Person Pulling Lotus Fibres



Person Spinning Lotus Fibres



Person who is buying lotus yarn



Person who is spinnging lotus yarn at reel





Lotus yarns are warping in length to be put on loom



Weaving Lotus Fibre on Loom



Lotus yarns are warping in length to be put on loom





Fabric of Paduma Lotus in Natural Color which Derived from Paduma lotus

## References

- Baddanta Mala Linkara, “Pay-yway Ma-kon Hlu-yway Ma-khan” (So many properties to distribute or to donate) Buddha’s Sermon, 3 January 2017, broadcasted on Maha Bodhi Channel, MRTV
- Buddha Dhamma Journal*, Volume 30, No. 4, p. 84, Ashin Ardissa (Shwe Kan Thar, Pakkoku)
- Collections of Saya L. Ba Oo*, M.A., History, Heya-Ywama-Innlay
- Maung Maung Lwin, *Yin-kyay-hmu hnit Shay-haung Thu-te-tha-na Sar-dan-mya* (Culture and Archeological papers), Yangon, San Thit Press, 2014
- Nanda Marlar Bivansa, Dr., Sermon, 4-9-2017, Maha Bodhi Channel, MRTV
- Ngwe U Daung (U Kyee Maung), *Buddha Sar Pan Chi*, Volume I, Yangon, Stars Empire Printing Service, 2006
- Shwe Myaing Ashin Pandita Bivansa, *Waso Sai-yar Haw-pyaw-kwet Ta-ya Paung-choke* (Collections sermons on the Buddhist Lent), Volume One, Yangon, Aung Zabu press, 2005
- Taik Soe, Sayagyi, *Buddha Bar-thar A-nu-pyin-nya Ni-dan* (Introductory to the Buddhist Arts), Yangon, Quality Publishing House, 2002
- Than Tun, Dr., “Ta-seik La-kha-na Yi-nyoon-chet” (Symbols of medals), *Kalyar Magazine*, 1996 October issue
- The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598-1885*, Collected & Edited by Dr. Than Tun, Part IV, A.D. 1782-1787, Kyoto, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1986
- Wunna Thiri, *Nyi-daw Ananda ei Ta-thet-tar Hmat-tan* (Lifelong record of the Lord Buddha’s cousin Ananda), Volume I, Yangon, Sarpay Loka Press, 2012

## Personal interviews

- Interview with Daw Sanda Moe, 10-1-2017
- Interview with Captain Aung Naing Oo (Retired) and Daw Sanda Moe, Kyaing Khan East village, 18-8-2017
- Interview with Captain Aung Naing Oo (Retired) and Daw Sanda Moe, 5.10.2017
- Interview with Daw Sanda Moe, (Entrepreneur who work weaving lotus yarn), 1.1.2018