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## PARIYATTI

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Pariyatti is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enriching the world by

- disseminating the words of the Buddha,
- providing sustenance for the seeker's journey, and
- illuminating the meditator's path.

*Dr Leon Wright was an American working as a Cultural Attaché in the American Embassy in Yangon. He was brought to the International Meditation Centre by a friend to learn to meditate under the guidance of Sayagyi U Ba Khin and Mother Sayamagyi in April 1957. After he returned to America he corresponded with Sayagyi. Extracts from their first exchange of letters is given below.*

Dr Wright wrote to Sayagyi U Ba Khin on 19 July 1958:

Dear Gurugyi,<sup>1</sup>

I make haste to write to you realising just how thoughtless my silence has been. The simple fact remains, however, that I have failed to experience any separation from my Gurugyi and those closest to the Meditation Centre since I have been almost continuously with Anicca and as often as I have such an experience, I feel instinctively in your midst.

It has been most strange: whether walking or privately meditating I call readily into being the purifying flux and warmth of change – of Anicca. Gurugyi, I owe this all to you. I am grateful to you as often as I command the state. I would have hoped that you have all felt my presence as strongly as I feel yours. So far as I am concerned the contact has never been broken, nor can it ever be. I was sent to Burma for the primary purpose of meeting you and of knowing the power of Anicca for my life. I most deeply feel this to have been a destined encounter with a power which will, I believe, prove itself to be indispensable to accomplishing the responsibilities of my life.

Surely you will recall your constant warning to me of the eternal conflict of forces. Indeed, quite apart from the constant needling and throat-cutting calculated to thwart my meditation in Burma, clear to America, according to the letter of your prediction, even unto now I have struggled against – but have never failed to recognise – the opposition of conflicting forces whose purpose is to defeat positive spiritual endeavour. You have given me the clearest awareness of this I've ever had. Upon arriving in America in December, we ran into a hurricane – the kind of extreme physical disturbance you predicted I would meet. From that point on, it has been a matter of an almost constant succession of reverses, conflicts, disappointments; the evil forces have sought to break me.

The result: I am spiritually stronger and more lucid than I've ever been in my life. I have been constantly engaged in gathering little groups – teaching and meditating with them.

Gurugyi, I am firmly convinced that you were destined to show me the intimacies of Buddhist meditation at its very best. If I brought something to the encounter in terms of P<sup>a</sup>ramī you gave it direction and most meaningful engagement in your inspirationally challenging and genuinely productive method. I shall be with Anicca as long as I live and, as often as I do, my spirit shall gratefully acknowledge the Gurugyi who made it possible. You are that Gurugyi and you have always my deepest respect and my purest love.

U Kyaw, Sayamagyi, Daw Mya Sein and all the rest are ever before me. As you meditate on Sunday, I shall try to synchronise my efforts on Monday to tune in with you, whom I can never forget nor cease to love. There is therefore, continuous contact. I should nevertheless welcome most gratefully any communication you may have time to send as well as the other kindred spirits of the Meditation Centre.

Respectfully yours and with continuing gratitude,  
Leon E. Wright

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<sup>1</sup> Gurugyi is another word for Sayagyi, respected teacher

Sayagyi replied on 24 August 1958:

My dear Dr Wright,

Your letter of July 19, 1958, was to hand last week. I noticed from your letter that you have instinctively understood the nature of communication between the Teacher and the disciple. This reminds me of the story of Vaggali, a monk in the Buddha's days who was so very much attached to the personality of the Buddha that he was unable to follow the deeper meanings of the Dhamma. To him, the Buddha said: "He who is with the Dhamma, even though he may be a hundred *yojanas* (leagues) away, is with me, but he who is not with the Dhamma, even though he may be closer at hand, is not with me."

For so long as you are continuously with Anicca you are in our midst; as your thought forces are reflected here you can very well assume that we also feel your presence here. There are three channels of contact — namely by thought, words and deeds. Contact by words, as in speech or letter is more forceful than contact by thought. Similarly, contact by deed is more forceful than contact by words. You would feel this as you are going through this letter.

I noticed that you had, on arriving in America, a succession of reverses, conflicts and disappointments. That was anticipated. I must congratulate you on the strength of will which keeps you in good stead and enables you to break through all the barriers. If you can only keep up the awareness of Anicca as you now do, I have no doubt that you will have a great future.

When you were here you could not take advantage of my lectures to the Burmese disciples owing to language difficulty. As you might remember, my lectures were effective in that I brought into play the nature of Nibbānic rays which play such an important role in true Buddhist meditation. In point of fact, I am intending to let you have a gist of these lectures so that you can also understand and make use of the technique according to your capacity.

With loving kindness  
Ba Khin