

# The Yogi & Vipassana

(Buddhist Meditation: The Sunlun Way)

by

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This famous hall has heard many learned speakers present the subject of vipassana . It has heard the doctrinal approach to the subject. Vipassana is insight, the intuitive knowledge, which realizes the truth of the impermanency, misery and impersonality of all corporeal and mental phenomena of existence. The way to this intuitive knowledge is the way of the seven stages of purity, the purity of morality, the purity of mind, the purity of understanding, the purity of escape from all doubt, the purity by knowledge and vision of what is Path and Not-Path, the purity by knowledge and vision of the path progress, and the purity of knowledge and vision. This hall has also heard a psychological approach to the subject. There have been references to consciousness, mind-functioning, depth psychology, space-time and other such concepts. It has even heard, I believe, a mathematical presentation of vipassana employing the techniques of modern algebra and topology. Since I am no doctrinalist and still less of a trained psychologist or mathematician but only a practitioner of the Vipassana method of Lord Buddha it would be improper of me to overstep the bounds into those fields. I believe that my best of me to overstep the bounds into those fields. I believe that my best contribution to the subject can be only in the field of practice.

Thus I propose to take a practical approach to the subject before you this evening. I shall consider the matter from the point of view of the yogi, his propensities and inclinations, his encounters with the problems and difficulties of execution, his small-concerns and clinging, and his subtle self-deceptions. While doing this I shall attempt to weave in the teachings of the Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw on the practice of vipassana to illustrate my points.

The first essential equipment of the yogi is a concentrated mind. For only a concentrated mind is a cleansed mind. And only the mind which is cleansed of the five elements of sensual lust, ill will, torpor, agitation and doubt can function properly to realize vipassana insight.

For the initiation of the cleansing process the normal, everyday mind requires an object to grasp. These objects can be of two types: external to the corporeal-

mental system of the yogi or belonging to it. Those objects which are external to the yogi belong to the environment, such as kasina discs, corpses, or the food which he eats daily. Those objects which belong to the corporeal-mental organization of the yogi of meditation to establish concentration.

For example, kasina discs can be employed. The yogi takes, let us say, a colored disc or spot and places it at an appropriate distance about the length of a plough-pole. He sits down with legs crossed under him, faces the disc and holding the body erect he gazes on the disc with eyes opened neither too wide nor too narrow. He lets his mind dwell with earnestness on the disc in order to gain fixity of mind. He does this until at last, even with closed eyes he perceives a mental reflex of the disc. This is the acquired image, uggaha-nimitta. As he continues to direct attention to this image there may arise the spotless counter-image, patibhaga nimitta. This counter-image appears together with the mind. If he wills to see it far, he sees it far. If he wills to see it near, to the left, to the right, within, without, above and below, he sees it accordingly. After acquiring the counter image, the yogi protects it with reverence through constant endeavor. Thereby he acquires facility in the practice, and after due practice he gains neighborhood concentration. Fixed meditation, jhana, follows neighborhood concentration. The kasina exercises produce the four stages of fixed meditation.

Likewise he can practice the earth kasina, the water kasina, the fire kasina and so on. One of the benefits acquired through the ardent practice of the earth kasina is that a man, acquiring supernormal power, is able to walk on water just as on earth. If he gains supernormal power through the practice of the water kasina he can bring down rain or cause water to gush from his body. If he gains supernormal power through the practice of the fire kasina he is able to produce smoke and flame. But somehow it is not possible to produce or acquire these powers in our day. Sunlun-,gukyaung Sayadaw once said that the times were no more opportune. One might be able to gain attainment concentration through the practice of the kasina but the super-normal benefits of the practice can hardly, be acquired. Let us say that one practices

the earth kasina exercise. He gains mastery of the signs, the nimitta. Let us say he goes to a pond and seating himself near it he arouses in himself the elements of the earth kasina. Then looking upon the waters of the pond he endeavors to turn them into earth so that he may walk upon them. He will find at the most that the water thickens to a slushy earth which cannot uphold his feet when he attempts to walk upon it. Perhaps yogi in other countries have done better but I believe it may be taken as a general rule that the acquisition of the total benefits of the kasina exercise are difficult to achieve in our time.

Another set of objects of meditation can be the loathsome ones, the corpses, or death, marana-nussati. These exercises are not without their risk as may be recounted in an anecdote of the Sullen-gukyaung Sayadaw and a monk. The monk was in the habit of crossing the creek which separated the monastery from the burial grounds to meditate on corpses. One morning the Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw met him as he was setting out to meditate for the day. The Sunlungukyaung Sayadaw smiled at him and said. "The anapana breathing exercise is free of dangers." The monk did not act on the suggestion, but continued in the practice of gazing on corpses. One evening he returned to his cell. As he opened the door and looked inside he gave a yell of terror. He had seen a corpse lying on the threshold. Actually that corpse was only the acquired image of his object of meditation. When the Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw heard the story he smiled and said: "Anapana is free of dangers."

Meditation may be practiced through the analysis of the four elements. The essence of earth is the nature of hardness, strength, thickness immobility, security and supporting. The essence of water is the nature of oozing, humidity, fluidity, trickling, permeation, increasing, leaping cohesion. The essence of fire is the nature of heating, warmth, evaporation, maturing, consuming, grasping. The essence of air is the nature of supporting, coldness, ingress and egress, easy movement, reaching low and grasping. The yogi grasps the elements briefly and in detail through consideration and reflection. But as will be noticed through a recounting of the essential natures of the four elements they are difficult to distinguish within the body, they are hard to

grasp directly; they have to be approached through indirection, through the repetition by word of mouth of the essential characteristics and a forcing of understanding of their natures. This understanding normally takes place first in the realm of concepts. And a yogi who arrives at such an understanding is often led too much to believe for himself that this is the peak requirement of the practice. This is not true, of course. The understanding that is required is not of the elements as it is made for us but of the elements as they are in their essentiality, as they are in themselves. And this, their nature, is beyond the realm of concept and logical thought.

The postures of the body can be good subjects leading to the proper establishment of concentration. The yogi attempts to be mindful of going, standing, sitting, lying, bending, and urinating. The postures are dynamic, the going-on of the process is unmistakable, and when the postures are really grasped for what they are the mind can be considered to be pretty well cleansed. However, the yogi should consider whether the postures serve better as the primary object of meditation or as a secondary one to be taken up in these moments of comparative relaxation when the primary object is being set aside for a while.

All of these are proper objects of meditation. They are all contained either in the list of forty subjects of kammathana or in the Maha Satipathana Sutta, most of them in both. They all lead the yogi towards the establishment of concentration, some more, some less. The yogi may legitimately employ them to gain the concentration he needs. But perhaps it would be a wise approach for the yogi to seek to employ and practice that exercise which will lead him all the way to the final goal he seeks. That goal is liberating vipassana insight knowledge.

Now, there are two forms of the practice of mental culture, bhavana. Samatha leads to calm and tranquility and vipassana leads to intuitive knowledge of the true nature of phenomena and consequent liberation. Samatha is concerned with the universe 'as it is for us; vipassana is concerned with the universe as it is in itself. Since the realm of samatha is the universe as it is for us the objects of meditation which lead to samatha are accordingly those objects which we have made for

ourselves. The kasina disc is something we have made for ourselves. The thought of the loathsomeness is something we have brought up in ourselves. The stability of earth, the cohesion of water, the maturing of fire, the interception of air are qualities of the four elements which have been conceptualized by us to help us in grasping them. Even the thought of walking in the fact of walking, the thought of bending in the fact of bending, the thought of touching in the fact of touching are ideas which we have created in our minds so that we can the better get at the actualities, the postures as they are, We hope.

But whatever makes the universe for us leads to samatha; whatever artifact we construct, whatever idea, image, thought or concept we create leads to samatha. There is nothing wrong in samatha in itself. The practice of samatha is legitimate, there are many reasons why it should even be recommended. Only samatha is not vipassana. Therefore he who would gather the fruits of samatha may practice samatha but he who desires to gather the fruits of vipassana will have to practice vipassana. This he will have to do sooner or later, either after the practice of samatha or directly by selecting an exercise which sets him up at once on the high road to vipassana. Whether he wishes to practice samatha now to switch to vipassana later or alternatively to take up the practice of vipassana immediately is a matter personal choice. And I as a practitioner of vipassana should not be too eager to prompt him on that choice. Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw once said: "Man does what he likes to do, and the doing of what he likes does not bother him."

Questions arise: If we normally conceptualize the four elements to grasp them, if we commonly make thoughts about walking, bending and touching to help us get at them better, if our minds are ever so prone to create images and ideas can we possibly attempt to get at processes as they are in themselves? Is it not necessary that we handle the processes with the gloves of concepts and ideas? This is the answer: If it were true that it is necessary to handle the processes with the gloves of concepts and thoughts, that processes can never be got at directly, then there can be no path to freedom and no liberating knowledge. But because it is possible to get at processes directly as they are in themselves there is vipassana and

the winning of intuitive liberating knowledge.

Let us take an exercise, in-breathing and out-breathing, anapana. It is said to be a suitable exercise for all types of personalities. If a man practices mindfulness of respiration he attains to the peaceful life. He causes evil and non-meritorious states to be overcome. His body and mind do not tremble. He fulfils the four foundations of mindfulness, the seven enlightenment factors and realizes wisdom and freedom. Anapana has been practiced by the Blessed One, Lord Buddha. Furthermore, anapana is said to be unadulterated, not requiring additic(*sic*) to make it complete.

This exercise may be practiced in the samatha way or performed so as to realize vipassana. Breathe in and out. As the breath goes in and out it will touch the nostril tip or upper lip or some other place within that region. Fixing the mind on that point of touch count the in-going and out-going breaths. This is one method. Breathe in and out again. Fix the mind on the point of touch of breath. Thus fixing the mind know a short breath to be short and a long breath to be long. This the second method. Breathe in and out again. Fixing the mind on the point of touch of breath follow the breath in and out. In doing this the breath should not be followed into the pit of the stomach or out into the beyond. The breath body should be experienced going in and out. It is like a saw. The teeth of the saw are always at one point of contact with the wood but that point of wood experiences the whole length of the saw because the whole length of the saw passes across that point. This is the third method. Notice that in all three methods the yogi looks for the in-breaths and out-breaths nowhere else than at the point of touch. This is true also for the fourth method. Breathe in and out. Fix the mind on the point of touch of breath. Be aware of the touch. Do not count, do not know the degree of length, do not follow the breath in and out.

Of these four methods of anapana the first three are samatha type exercises while the fourth is a vipassana exercise. In the first method there is counting. Numbers are concepts. In the second method the form of the breath is noted. Form is an image. In the third method the going in and out of the breath is noted. This is

achieved through the creation of an idea. Concepts, images and ideas belong to the universe as it is for us and therefore are concerned with samatha. Only the fourth method where the touch alone is taken in its bareness performs the vipassana practice. Yet even this practice can be adulterated with samatha. If instead of guarding this awareness with mindfulness the yogi makes a mental note of it, then for that moment he has slipped into the old habit of forming a concept or an idea and therefore he practices samatha instead of the intended vipassana.

Mental noting tends to take place at a much slower pace than the actual processes of phenomena. Thus instead of being able to take these processes as they are it tends to keep slipping into a past where the processes are reconstructed by an intervening reasoning mind. To be able to keep up with the natural processes the yogi need only be mindful. This is not difficult to perform. The initial requirement is awareness. Be aware of the touch or sensation or mental phenomenon. Then ward and watch this awareness with mindfulness. When the awareness is guarded with mindfulness thoughts are locked out, they cannot intrude. No opportunity is offered for the formation of concepts, images or ideas. Thereby the processes are got at directly in the very moment of occurrence, as they are in themselves without the distortion of thought. This is true vipassana practice.

Thoughts always tend to intrude. Ideas and images stand just beyond the threshold, ready to enter at the least weakening of mindfulness. The only way to keep up with the processes, to be mindful of them, is to exercise vigilance through a rigor of effort. That is why in a motto the Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw said: "Be rigorously mindful of the awareness of touch." May I introduce here a brief biography of the Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw.

The Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw was so named because he came from the cave monasteries of Sulun Village near Myingyan in middle Burma. He was born in 1878 and was named Maung Kyaw Din. He was sent to a monastery school but he did not learn verse of the Maha Mangala Sutta which was taught in the lowest form at school. At the age of 15 he entered employment as an office boy in the district commissioner's office at Myingyan. He married Ma Shwe Yi of the same village.

At the age of thirty he resigned from his post and returned to his native village to become a farmer. He found that his fields prospered while other fields failed. In 1919 there was an epidemic. U Kyaw Din's fields were still prospering. There is a belief among Burmese village people that if one's worldly possessions rose rapidly then one would die soon. Anxious because of his rising prosperity U Kyaw Din consulted an astrologer. He was told that a two legged being would soon leave his house. This was tantamount to saying that he would die. In great fear U Kyaw Din decided to accomplish one great act of charity. He erected a pavilion in front of his house and invited people to meals for three days. On the third day a mail clerk named U Ba San turned up uninvited at the feast. He began to converse about the practice of vipassana. On hearing these words U Kyaw Din become greatly affected. He could not sleep that night. He felt that he wanted to undertake the practice but was afraid to mention his wish because of his lack of knowledge of scriptural texts.

The next day he asked U Ba San whether a man ignorant of the texts could undertake the practice. U Ba San replied that the practice of vipassana did not require doctrinal knowledge but only deep interest and assiduity. He told U Kyaw Din to practice inbreathing and outbreathing. So from that day, whenever he could find the time U-Kyaw Din would breathe in and breathe out. One day he met a friend, U Shwe Loke, who told him that breathing in and out alone was not sufficient; he had also to be aware of the touch of breath on nostril tip.

U Kyaw Din practiced awareness of the touch of breath. Then as his practice became more intense he tried to be aware not only of the touch of breath but also of the touch of his hand on the handle of the knife as he chopped corn cobs, the touch, of rope on the hand as he drew water, the touch of his feet on the ground as he walked. He tried to be aware of touch in everything he did. As he tended his cattle he would sit under a tree and practice mindfulness of breathing. During the practice he began to see colored lights and geometrical patterns. He did not know what they were but felt that they were-the fruit of practice. This greatly encouraged him and he began to practice more assiduously. With more intensive practice sensations were sometimes intensely unpleasant. But they did not deter him. He believed that they

were the fruit of the practice and that if he desired to win greater fruit he would have to overcome and get beyond them. Therefore he generated more energy and developed a more rigorous mindfulness until he overcame the unpleasant sensations and passed beyond to the higher stages of the practice.

Endeavoring in this zealous manner U Kyaw-Din attained the stage of sotapanna in mid-1920. The next month he won the second stage of sakadagami. In the third month he won the third stage of anagami, the Non-Returner. Weary of motley wear he asked permission of his wife to let him become a monk. After much resistance the wife agreed. But even then she asked him to sow a final crop of peas before he left. U Kyaw Din set out for the fields. But even as he was broadcasting the seeds he felt the great urge to renounce the world. So setting his cattle free he put the yoke up against tree and, going to the village monastery he begged the monk there to accept him as a novice in the Order. He next betook himself to the caves nearby, and practiced diligently until in October, 1920, he attained the final stage of the arahat. His achievement became known, among the monks and many came to test him. Though he was a barely literate man his answers satisfied even the most learned monks. Very often they disagreed with his replies but when his answers were checked against the books they found many important passages in the canon to support his statements. Many learned monks from various parts of the country went to practice mindfulness under him, and one very learned monk, the Nyaunglun Sayadaw, also became an arahat after intense practice.

When Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw's achievement became known many distinguished persons visited and worshipped him. The Venerable U Lokanatha, visited him and later declared: "I have visited at Myingyan in Middle Burma and worshipped the Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw: His teachings and his replies to my many questions, his disposition and deportment leave me with no doubt that he is truly what he is known to be, that is, an arahat."

Sunlun-gukyaung Sayaclaw performed the act of parinibbana in 1952. His remains did not decompose but remained intact and exuded a most pleasant odor.

To this day they may be seen and worshipped in Myingyan Town.

Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw was an intrinsically honest man, laconic and precise in speech, and possessed of great strength and determination. Photographs show him to be a sturdily built man. They reveal his steady gaze, clear eyes and firmly set jaws. Above all, one can see in these photographs that he possessed great daring, a quality which is a concomitant attribute of the true arahat. "Be rigorously mindful," Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw said. He emphasized rigorousness as an essential element because he understood the yogi. The yogi is much inclined to sit loosely and to meditate in a relaxed, leisurely way. He tends to be reflective and considerate. Reflective is in the sense of reflecting and thinking about the task to be done rather than doing it. Considerate is in the sense of sympathizing with himself, taking great care to see that he is neither exerted nor hurt. The yogi has a great love for himself and therefore prefers to let his thoughts run away with him, to drift rather than to pull himself together. To pull himself together needs exertion and that is anathema of the yogi. That is why when he is told to breathe harder he is ready to quote chapter and verse to prove that he does not need to exert himself. Perhaps he takes a few lines from the Vimuttimagga and says: "The-yogi should not essay too strenuously. If he essays too strenuously he will become restless."

This statement is true. The yogi who essays too strenuously will become restless. But why does he become restless? It is because instead of being mindful of touch or sensation the yogi has his mind on the effort he is making. The effort should not be allowed to draw the attention away from the object of meditation. To keep the attention on the object and yet to generate effort the yogi should first make, sure that the attention is fixed on the object. When the object has been grasped with full awareness and this awareness guarded with mindfulness the yogi should step up the effort. When he proceeds in this manner he will find that the generated effort serves to fix the attention more on the object instead of distracting it away onto the effort itself. Furthermore, a greater intentness of the mind has been developed by the increased effort.

The full text of the above quotation from the Vimuttimagga in fact reads thus:  
"He, the yogi, should be mindful and should not let the mind be distracted. He should not essay too strenuously nor too laxly. If he essays too laxly he will fall into rigidity and torpor. If he essays too strenuously he will become restless." This means then that the effort should be just enough for the purpose of mindfulness and knowledge. But how much is enough? I think it was William Blake who said this, "One never knows what is enough until one knows what is more than enough." And a measure of what is enough may perhaps be supplied by the words of Lord Buddha when he spoke on how a monk should endeavor. "Monks, if his turban or hair were on fire he would make an intense desire, effort, endeavor, exertion, struggle, mindfulness and attentiveness to extinguish the fire. Even so, an intense desire, effort, endeavor, exertion, struggle, mindfulness and attentiveness is to be made by him so as to give up every evil and wrong state." Because he knew how much effort was required, because he was familiar with the propensity to slackness on the part of the yogi the Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw instructed: "Be rigorously mindful." To be mindful rigorously is to mobilize all of one's resources and to grasp the processes as they are without thinking or reflecting. Rigorousness; calls forth the element of viriya. It is sama vayamo, right effort.

Another inclination of the yogi is to fidget. He likes to scratch, to shift, or if he is breathing he likes to stop, then start and stop again. These are signs of distraction. These indicate ' that mindfulness has not been thoroughly established. To remind the yogi that the distraction is to be avoided and the agitation stilled. Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw instructed: "Do not scratch when itched, nor shift when cramped, nor pause when tired." He required the yogi who feels the itch, cramp or tiredness to breathe harder if he is breathing or to plunge the mind deeper into the sensation if he is watching the sensation, and thereby, with increased attention to the performance of the task, to develop more intense mindfulness. Visuddhimagga says that by getting up and so disturbing the posture, the meditation has to be started anew. The yogi who sits down to meditate, then an hour later gets up to walk away the sensations of sitting, then another hour later sits down to think away the sensations of

walking keeps disturbing the posture. Whatever sensation arises in the sitting posture has to be watched in the sitting posture until it has phased itself out. Whatever sensation arises in the standing posture has to be watched in the standing posture until it has phased itself out.

Remaining still with attention riveted to the awareness of touch or sensation calls forth the element of Sati, mindfulness. It is samma sati, right mindfulness.

There is a third behavior characteristic of the yogi. After the lower hindrances have been removed lights, colors and geometrical patterns appear to the yogi. On the one hand there is the fascination of the yogi for these things which have never appeared to him like this before. On the other hand these lights, colors and patterns are attractive. Because of these two forces the yogi begins to turn his attention to the lights and patterns, he gazes on them, he dwells in them. And with this turning away from the object of meditation he abandons his original purpose.

In like manner, after a period of practice, when the yogi has cleansed his mind somewhat, he will begin to experience a measure of calm and tranquility. Since he has never before experienced such peace of mind he thinks that this is the best fruit of the practice. Because of this appreciation of the experience and because the calm and tranquility attained is attractive in itself the yogi begins to dwell in it, to savor the calmness to the full. He likes to sink in the sense of peace and hates to put forth the necessary effort to get back again onto the right path. Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw illustrated thus with a local simile. Mytngyan river beach is a stretch of sand a mile wide. A traveler to the river finds the sand exceedingly hot beneath his feet under the raging noonday sun. On the way he comes to a tree. He decides to rest in its shade for a moment. But when that moment has passed he finds that he cannot urge himself to get up to move but of that cool shade into the heat which rages above and beneath him. So he continues to dwell in the shade. But will this ever help him to reach the riverside? The destination can be reached only if he steps out again into the heat and urges his body forward. That is why the meditation masters warn

the vipassana yogi not to let himself be drawn by the minor calm and tranquility he finds along the way. There was once a yogi who habitually drifted into this area of tranquility and would not budge out of it. The Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw said of him: "This man keeps lifting up the tail and patting the behind of the little iguana he has caught.." I hope the distinguished yogis will not be satisfied with a mere iguana.

With a further increase in the clarity and purity of the mind the yogi sometimes becomes more perceptive to extra sensual things. It is not the true divine sight and divine hearing that he attains but it is a power somewhat similar to these. Because of this power the yogi can see what others cannot see, he can hear what others cannot hear. People come to consult him and his predictions come true. He becomes a sort of shaman. Thus has he degenerated from a vipassana yogi to a shaman. But after some time, as the distractions of the new vocation grow more varied and the practice of meditation becomes less intense the answers turn out to be less and less accurate, and gradually the clients go a-way never to return. The yogi is left with an interrupted practice.

Many are the occasions in which the yogi indulges in self deception. Though he should practice intensively he deceives himself that the goal of liberation can be won in a leisurely manner. Though he should sit still he deceives himself that a slight shift or movement can do no harm. Perhaps he is right for the initial crude moments of the practice for the peak in each phase of practice the smallest wavering of mindfulness can bring down the structure of meditation and the edifice will need to be set up again. Since he can deceive himself in these matters of the body how much more so can he do it in the subtle mental matters. A strong inclination for the yogi is to take the first signs of progress on the path to be signs indicating the higher stages. For instance unpleasant sensation can snap abruptly. For one moment deep sense of calm and quiet. The yogi often likes to believe that this is maggaphala, the post mental functioning of the enlightenment knowledge. And he notches for himself one stage of the four ariya stages.

The wrong assignment of the phases of practice can be, made also because the meditation master himself is not thoroughly versed in such matters or because his

instructions and the teachings in the books are not understood well. However it is, the yogi likes to classify himself as having attained at least one or two of the ariya stages. And with this thought in mind he goes about seeking confirmation of gently and indirectly, makes his failings known to him. Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw would never pass judgement on anyone, whether or not that yogi had really attained the said phase or stage. His only remark would be: "If it is so, it is so," In any case, a true attainment would need no confirmation from another source. The yogi would know it himself. Like wise a wrong sense of attainment would not need debunking: the yogi would realize it for himself.

The main danger of this form of self-deception is the wrong sense of achievement that it would give to the yogi. Satisfied with what he thinks has been his progress he might lay off the practice and thus be stranded on the path without having gained any progress of real value.

There is one pet hate of the yogi, and that is unpleasant sensation. Let him face slight feelings of cramp, heat or muscular tension and he will try to be mindful of it for some time. But give him the pain within the narrow of the bone, the burning sensation, the sharp excruciating pain along the limbs and he will abandon them in a few minutes. As usual he is ready with his excuses and the quotation of chapter and verse. Who says one must employ unpleasant sensation as an object of meditation, he wants to know. Cannot a yogi attain whatever is to be attained by working on pleasant sensation? Who says one should suffer so much? Is this not self-mortification?

The answer is that if a yogi is so well blessed with parami to be a sukha-patipada, one who treads the pleasant path, one who can gain ariya knowledge without undergoing overwhelming majority of us, as may be observed, there is no choice but to tread the path of unpleasant sensation, for we are dukkha-patipada.

Actually there should be no cause for regret. Unpleasant sensation is an efficacious object of meditation which takes the yogi steadily up the path to the attainment of the final goal. The very fact that the yogi does not normally like unpleasant sensation can be employed by him to establish a deeper and more intense

mindfulness. Made to work- with an object he does not like he will remember to arouse the necessary zeal to overcome the unpleasant sensation. It is different with pleasant sensation. Because he likes it he will tend to sink in it to suffuse, himself with its pleasantness without trying to be mindful of it. When he does that, the greed and lust that is latent in pleasant sensation will overwhelm him. The yogi will not be able to hold on to sensation as sensation but sensation will carry him forward to originate the next link of desire, tanha, in the chain leading to further births.

It is as though a swimmer in a strong current were, asked to grasp the bunch of flowers at the winning post. If he is swimming with the current and stretches out his hand to grasp the flowers and he misses, he will be carried beyond the point by the force of the current. If he is swimming against the current and misses when stretching out his hand to grasp the flowers he will still be below them and will thus have an opportunity to try again consciously and deliberately. The swimmer with the current is like the yogi who employs pleasant sensation. If he is unable to be mindful of pleasant sensation he will be carried beyond it into lobha. The swimmer against the current is like the yogi who employs unpleasant sensation. If he is unable to be mindful of unpleasant sensation as it is in itself he will still be conscious of it and will be able to summon up the energy and mindfulness to accomplish his mission.

Pleasant sensation is like a hidden enemy; it catches the yogi unawares. Unpleasant sensation is like a conspicuous foe; the yogi can recognize it and take corrective action so that anger which is latent in unpleasant sensation does not get an opportunity to rise. Between natural dislike of unpleasant sensation and a zealous effort to establish mindfulness the yogi will neither immerse himself in it nor flinch from it. He will be able to detach himself completely from the unpleasant sensation, dwelling within the sensation, watching the sensation, without thinking any thought connected with the sensation. Unpleasant sensation serves as a firm hitch(ing) post for the mind which inclines to wander. An unpleasant sensation will never deceive, the yogi about the true nature of phenomena - unpleasantness, dukkha.

Also, there should be no cause for fear of unpleasant sensation. There are techniques-to arouse a sufficient depth and intensity of mindfulness to overcome the infliction and hurt of unpleasant sensation. This infliction is due to the identification of the yogi with the area of pain and the effect of unpleasant sensation. But when mindfulness' has been established sufficiently to penetrate the sensation and eliminate the identification with the notion of a personality, an "I", which can be hurt then unpleasant sensation becomes only an unpleasant sensation and no more a source of pain.

The ultimate purpose of meditation is to eliminate the Illusive notion of "I." A yogi has to chip at the notion of, " I" again and again in these struggles with unpleasant sensation. Let us say the unpleasant sensation rises. The yogi keeps mindful of it until the unpleasant sensation is consumed. 'thereby, the cause is killed in the effect. He does it again and again until with perfect proficiency, he finally manages to kill the cause in the cause, to end the cause in the cause, anuppada - nirodha, so that it can never again give rise to an effect which will only turn out to be another cause in the endless chain. This killing of the cause in the cause is megga. And it is because of this quality of efficacy in eliminating the false notion of "I." Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw stated: "The un ' comfortable truly is the norm; the comfortable will set you all adrift on the currents of samsara. "Unpleasant sensation is the yogi's internal enemy. Once the internal enemy can be overcome, the external sources of dukkha cannot touch him any more.

After a period of ardent practice there comes a moment when the true liberating knowledge is offered to the yogi. These moments come only to the very few. They arrive at this moment the yogi must have completely perfected the establishment. of mindfulness of the body, kayanupassana. He must have completely perfected the establishment of the foundation of mindfulness of the sensations, vedananupassana. This means that he must have perfectly overcome the unpleasant sensation. The unpleasant sensations are the greatest obstacles confronting the yogi in his progress along the path. This is where he keeps falling back. To overcome then he needs to possess unflinching energy, resolve and intentness as well as the right technique. But unpleasant sensations can be both a

road-block as well as a stepping-stone; they can be a trap as well as a gold mine. They can equip the yogi with sufficient powers of concentration and mindfulness to deal with the subtle processes of the next phase, the establishment of mindfulness of consciousness, *citta-nupassana*. When mindfulness of consciousness has been completed perfectly he will be offered the task of establishing the foundations of mindfulness of mental objects and fundamental principles, *dhamanupassana*. Here comes that awful moment of truth. If the yogi is not perfectly establishing mindfulness of the principles, then when liberating knowledge is offered to him he will shy away from it, he will fail to grasp it. But if he has fully perfected the establishment of the four foundations of mindfulness, and he has fully acquired the seven factors of enlightenment, then in that very moment of perfecting and acquiring these seven there will arise in him the true liberating knowledge, *magga-nana*.

The above behavior characteristics are typical of the yogi. He is disinclined to endeavor ardently, is quick to fidget, eager to follow after lights and colors, prone to rest in areas of calm, ready to exaggerate minor successes, willing to misuse subsidiary power, liable to give himself the benefit of the doubt, afraid of unpleasant sensation, and terrified and clumsy when the real moment of truth is offered. We do not need to search for this yogi elsewhere; we are the prototype. It is we who would like to reap the benefits of meditation but are unwilling to sow the good seed; it is we who wish to gather the returns but who do not wish to pay down the investment. We wish to talk ourselves to a goal which can only be reached by high endeavor; we wish to deceive ourselves into a situation which will permit the entry of only the perfectly truthful.

Does this mean then that the goal will forever be beyond our reach? That is not so. Where Sunlun-gukyaung Sayada has trodden we too can tread. We need only to follow his instructions faithfully. Sunlun gukyaung Sayadaw instructed us: "Be rigorously mindful of the awareness of touch."

We should be rigorously, ardently, intensively mindful.

"Don not rest when tired, scratch when itched, nor shift when cramped."

We should keep our bodies and minds absolutely still and strive-till the end.

"The uncomfortable truly is the norm; the comfortable will set us all adrift on the currents of samsara."

We should penetrate unpleasant sensation; only he who has penetrated sensation will see processes as they are.

We should generate a willing suspension of disbelief, exert that extra ounce of effort, and be rigorously mindful. Have saddha, viriya and sati to purify ourselves, to overcome pain and grief, to reach the right path, to win Nibbana.

## **The Sunlun Way of Mindfulness**

In this age the objects of desire and aversion impinge upon the senses with increasing force and growing variety. There is a greater urge and opportunity for the gratification of the senses. The accelerating pace of living and the increasing pressure creates stresses leading to anxiety and neurosis. City life is becoming noisier and noise is a thorn in the flesh of jhana. At the same time the people do not have enough leisure for a long and sustained practice of any way of mindfulness. The result is an increasing diversion of the attention and diffusion of mental powers with less and less time even for minimum corrective action. To cap it all, people who are born in these latter days of the Buddha dispensation are of sluggish intuition rather than of quick intuition. Therefore there is an urgent need for a way of mindfulness which takes into account the growing urges and commodities for sense-gratification, increasing noise and direction, lack of time and the meditator's own sluggish intuition.

Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw's way of mindfulness provides a technique to quickly overcome sloth and desires of the senses. It raises the threshold over which noise and distraction must pass to divert the attention of the meditator. For the man of sluggish intuition it provides an amazingly sure and rapid method for the complete and perfect establishment of the four foundations of mindfulness. It is not a method fashioned out of the elements available in the books. It is a method forged in the struggle against self-love and ignorance. Sunlungukyaung Sayadaw was a barely literate man and was thus blessed by not being sicklied with the pale cast of thought. With earnestness, courage and perseverance he became an arahat in 1920. Sulunshin U Vinaya has made the technique available to the city man who is without the overwhelming courage and perseverance of the Sunlunguk-yaung Sayadaw. What follows is a very brief sketch of the method.

### **Posture**

Assume a meditative posture which can be maintained for some time without change. Do not lie in bed nor recline in a chair. The posture should be one which

posture should be one which will permit the gathering together and assumption of all of one's resources. The posture should be one designed for hard work and not relaxation. A suitable posture is to sit with legs crossed. The back should be straight. The arms should be held close against the side of the body. The right fist should be held in the left hand. This is to facilitate the clenching of the fist as the meditator summons his strength to combat unpleasant sensation which may arise later. Do not mesh the fingers of the hands nor hold them lightly with each thumb against the other. Let the head be slightly bowed. Do not sit loosely. Assume a tight posture where the body provides a firm base, its circuit is closed and the meditator is alert.

Select a spot where the meditation session can be concluded without disturbance. It is better to select a quiet place out of the wind but that is not essential. Meditation may be done individually or in a group. No elaborate preparation of the place is required nor should it be made a ritual.

There are no set periods for meditation. Time should be arranged to suit the meditator's convenience. But he should take care that the meditation hour or two is not sacrificed to some other purpose. Western books suggest that the beginner should start with a session of two or three minutes a day, the period to be gradually extended. Sunlun's experience is that an intensive initial session of an hour or so produces more beneficial results. A normal session should not be less than an hour or two. Those practicing intensively sit through the whole day or night.

After the posture has been selected and assumed it should not be changed or altered in any way. It will have to be kept up till the end of the session. Sunlungkyaung Sayadaw has said: "If cramped, don't move, if itchy don't scratch, if fatigued don't rest."

### **Breathing**

Commence by inhaling. It will be noticed that the breath touches the nostril tip or upper lip. Be keenly mindful of the touch of breath. With mindfulness vigilantly maintained breathe strongly, firmly and rapidly. Strong, hard, and rapid

breathing wards off external noises, helps to control the mind, quickly removes the hindrances, rapidly establishes concentration and enables the meditator to cope with the unpleasant sensation which may arise later.

Strong, hard and rapid breathing will cause inhaled and exhaled breath to touch with increased friction against the tips of the nostril holes, the upper lip or some other part of the body in that region. Be mindful of that touch of breath.

"When the breath touches the nostril tip or upper lip you will be aware of it. Be mindful of that awareness," said the Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw. Let not a single touch pass without awareness. Be aware of every single touch.

"Be rigorously mindful of touch and awareness of touch," said the Sunlungukyaung Sayadaw. Mindfulness should be rigorous. It should not be relaxed. This means that there should be putting forth of energy, that the meditator should be ardent and zealous.

Do not let the awareness be of the breath-body. Do not follow it in and out of the body. Do not count its entrances and exits. Do not take note of the area of touch of breath whether it be the nostril-tip, or upper tip. Let awareness be only of the sensation of touch of breath. Be mindful only- of the sensation of touch.

Breathe in air attentively and fully as though water were being drawn into a syringe. Exhale sharply. Full and hard drawing-in of breath helps to establish concentration rapidly. It helps the sensations to arise. It provides strength in the coming struggle with unpleasant sensation. Since most people have stronger exhalation it is necessary to pay greater attention to inhalation to realize a balance between inhalation and exhalation. When these two are balanced then the touch will be continuous like the touch of saw against wood which simile is mentioned in the Pah Texts. When they are balanced, the meditator will have reached the stage of smooth, effortless, self-compelled rhythmic breathing.

Breathe without shaking the head and body. This will obtain concentration quickly. If the meditator practices this exercise not so much for its vipassana rewards but for health then he may breathe with a shaking motion of the head and body.

Fatigue may- set in at the early stages of strong, hard, rapid breathing, but he should neither stop nor reduce the strength and rapidity of breathing. "Don't rest when fatigued," said the Sunlungukyaung Sayadaw. The fatigue is probably due to either insufficient strength of inhalation or to excessive blowing on exhalation. The remedy is to increase the strength of inhalation. When inhalation and exhalation strengths are balanced at a high level the fatigue will disappear. He will then have broken out of the zone of difficult breathing into the zone of smooth, effortless, self-compelled rhythmic breathing. Attention can then be addressed wholly to mindfulness of touch of breath. There are three levels of breathing high (very strong, hard, rapid, breathing), medium (strong, hard, rapid); low (weak, soft, slow breathing; the common way of breathing). Since man is not a machine he will flag and falter some time. It is necessary to reach the high level early so that later when the pace falls the meditator will reach the balanced medium level of respiration and be able to maintain it.

Do not alter the posture when tired nor scratch an itch. The remedy here again is stronger, firmer, more rapid inhalation and balanced exhalation.

Be mindful of touch of breath upon nostril tip or upper lip. Do not follow the breath-body nor keep the mind on the top of the head, the tip of the nose, the movement of the abdomen of the solar plexus.

Do not present the time for breathing. On firm, rapid breathing unpleasant sensations will rise within oneself. These unpleasant sensations may assume the forms of pain, cramp, ache, numbness, heat or cold or some other sensation. Continue the breathing until there is a sufficient magnitude of unpleasant sensation for the next stage of the practice of mindfulness. It sometimes happens that about a third of the unpleasant sensation subsides when the breathing is stopped. This should be taken into account. When the meditator feels that there has arisen sufficient, sensation he may stop the strong respiration. Here sensation is the clock to time the period of respiration. Alternatively, he may preset the time for breathing, say three-quarters of an hour or an hour and have an arrangement for intimation of the completion of that period. But this is not as proper as the first method

When it is about time to stop strong respiration fifty or a hundred strokes of

breath should be made, this time with all the strength at his command. Meanwhile mindfulness of touch of breath should be relentless. Then respiration should be stopped suddenly on the inhaled breath and collecting one's self together, the whole body should be watched internally.

### **Sensation**

Respiration should be stopped completely and suddenly on inhaled breath. The body should be stilled, gathered together and watched rigorously. Sensations of pain, cramp, ache, numbness, heat or cold would have arisen in the body. Be mindful of the most pronounced sensation. Do not let it go. Do not switch the attention to the navel, the solar plexus nor any other region. It is natural for the most pronounced sensation to demand one's attention. Turning to the other regions which do not have the most pronounced sensation makes one lose grasp of the immediate present.

"If the sensation is weak, know the fact of its weakness. If the sensation is strong know the fact of its strength," said the Sunlungukyaung Sayadaw. Know neither less nor more. Know it only as it is. Know whatever arises, as it arises, when it arises, in the bare fact of its arising. Be mindful of just this. Let no thoughts of "me" and "mine" interfere. Do not think that this is one's foot or one's body or one's hand. Do not reflect that this is rupa and this nama. Do not consider that this is anicca, this dukkha and this anatta. All thinking, reflection and consideration are conceptual. They are not vipassana.

Sunlun makes direct, immediate contact with reality. It cannot afford the time and effort required first to build a conceptual bridge to approach reality. Confronted with the elephant of its search it does not follow the footprints backwards and then retrace them again to the elephant. When there arises an ache it immediately catches hold of the fact of the ache; it does not formulate the concept "aching, aching" and then return to the fact of the ache. Therefore it tells the meditator: avoid name-calling; do not conceptualize reality.

Neither reach towards the sensation nor reach after it. Be mindful of the sensation in the immediacy of its arising or vanishing which is in the present time,

the now. In the struggle with unpleasant sensation which may rage with extreme force and virulence the meditator takes care that he does not reach beyond the sensation. This is to say that the effort exerted should not exceed that which is necessary to maintain firm attention. When there is an excess of energy it was as though the meditator had placed his effort before the unpleasant sensation with the result that the attention slips from the unpleasant sensation and there remains in the consciousness of the meditator, only the violence of his effort. This violence is none other than patigha, anger. And anger is one of the forces which turn the wheel of samsara.

The meditator takes care on the other hand that he does not fall short of the sensation. This is to say that the effort exerted should not fall short of that which is necessary to maintain firm attention. When the effort is inadequate the meditator slips back into torpor and sloth or is overwhelmed by the unpleasant sensation if the sensation is intense. Severe unpleasant sensation which is not held with mindfulness gives rise to fear, anxiety, anger which are all aspects of patigha and constitute a force which turns the wheel of samsara. Torpor and sloth are the basis of ignorance, yet another force which conditions birth in samsara.

Therefore, the meditator takes great care not to reach beyond nor fall short of the sensation. He exerts that forceful and vigilant attention necessary for knowledge and mindfulness. The arising of the attention is made to take place simultaneously with the rising of the sensation. If the attention rises before the sensation it reaches beyond the sensation. If it rises after the sensation, it falls short of the sensation. When the attention arises before sensation there is no sensation to be aware of. When the attention arises after sensation it is too late for mindful awareness. The reality has slipped away. However immediate may be the reaction of the attention. to the arising of the sensation it is belated because it is a reaction whereas it ought to be an independent action. The time relation of attention to sensation should not be one of future or past but of the simple immediate present. And this is realized when instead of being passively attentive to the arising of the sensation and to its disintegrating future the meditator tends actively to perceive the very birth of the sensation.

It is important to collect together the sensation. If sensations arise simultaneously in the head, the arms, the body and the legs and the meditator's mind should run helter-skelter after them there will be no mindfulness of them right here and now, vipassana will not be practiced and the only result will be personal distress and suffering. To avoid this there should be mindfulness of the most pronounced sensation. Vigorous- awareness of it should be aroused and this awareness vigilantly watched by mindfulness. The meditator should be able to penetrate into the sensation to realize its nature. Effort is required to do this. The simile is of a nail being driven into wood. The wood is sensation, the nail is the mind, the finger which holds the nail straight is mindfulness, and the hammer is effort.

When the mind has penetrated into the sensation the meditator will no longer feel the form of his foot, or arm or body; he will no longer feel that "I" am suffering. These conceptual notions will be replaced by a simple, clear awareness of sensation alone. And because the idea of an "I" which suffers has been removed the meditator will not feel the discomfort of the unpleasant sensation. The sensation which a few moments ago was felt as pain or burning will now be felt by the meditator only as an intense sensation without the element of infliction.

Of the three sensations, unpleasant, pleasant and neutral the last is most subtle and not normally suitable for ordinary people as an initial object for the establishment of mindfulness. When it arises in the succeeding stages of development the meditator will have to be mindful of it as it arises and when it arises. But by then the meditator should have developed the power to grasp subtle neutral sensation.

In pleasant sensation there lies latent lobha. When the meditator comes up against pleasant sensation he likes it since he has always liked it throughout samsara. Because of this he is unable to keep his awareness of pleasant sensation as it is in the here and now. Latent lobha rears its head and then overwhelms him. He is unable to hold on to sensation; as sensation; sensation moves forward to originate the thirst of tanha (desire).

In unpleasant sensation there lies latent anger. When the meditator comes up against unpleasant sensation he does not like it since he has never liked unpleasant sensation through out samsara. However since the object of the practice is to endeavor to be mindful of the sensation the meditator can summon up zeal and try to be mindful of unpleasant sensation as it arises in the here and now.

It is as though a swimmer in a strong current were asked to grasp the bunch of flowers at the winning post. If he is swimming with the current and stretches out his hand to grasp the flowers and misses, he will be carried beyond the point by the force of the current. If he is swimming against the current and misses when stretching out to grasp the flowers he will still be below them and will thus have an opportunity to try again. The swimmer with the current is like the meditator who employs pleasant sensation as an object of meditation. If he is unable to be mindful of pleasant sensation as it is he will be carried beyond it into lobha. The swimmer against the current is like the meditator who employs unpleasant sensation as an object; if he is unable to be mindful of unpleasant sensation as it is he will still be able to summon up energy and mindfulness to accomplish his mission.

Pleasant sensation is like a hidden enemy; it catches the meditator unawares. Unpleasant sensation is like a conspicuous foe; the meditator can recognize it for what it is and take corrective action should latent anger rear its head. There will be no danger of the meditator immersing himself in unpleasant sensation as he might should he attempt to be aware of pleasant sensation. Between natural dislike of unpleasant sensation and a zealous effort to be mindful of it the meditator will neither immerse himself in it nor flinch from it. He will be able to detach himself completely from the unpleasant sensation, dwelling within the sensation, watching the sensation, without thinking, any thought connected with the sensation. Unpleasant sensation serves as a firm hitch-post for the mind which inclines to wander. An unpleasant sensation will never deceive the meditator about the true nature of reality – its unpleasantness, dukkha.

This may not apply to people with quick intuitions but for –most people who are born in these latter days of the Buddha dispensation and possess a sluggish

intuition the encounter with unpleasant sensation is inevitable. And if when the meditator comes up against unpleasant sensation he is unable to overcome it he will soon develop into a meditator with his vipassana back broken or he will be tossed and rolled by it like a plum in a wicker tray. Unpleasant sensation is the greatest obstacle on the road of vipassana. Only when the meditator is able to overcome that obstacle can he forge forward to attain the rewards beyond unpleasant sensation.

And it is possible to overcome unpleasant sensation. Since unpleasant sensation too is subject to the law of impermanence it must come to an end some time. This end can occur in various ways. Its intensity can subside; but this would not be a true ending. Some measure of unpleasant sensation would remain. The real overcoming of unpleasant sensation takes place when the meditator dwells in the sensation watching the sensation without thinking any thought connected with the sensation, and it is consumed, it ends, it snaps, it is shed, or extinguished. It is said to be consumed when it gradually subsides till there is no remainder. It ends when the meditator follows it till there is no more of it like a road followed to the end, like a length of string felt along the whole length till not more is felt. It snaps when it breaks off suddenly as when a taut rope is snapped. It is light which has used up its oil and wick.

Pain is unpleasant, ache is unpleasant, heat is unpleasant, cold is unpleasant. Within the unpleasantness of all these there is an element of discomfort. It is this element of discomfort which is the basis of all composite things. The meditator who feels fatigue in his limbs and wishes to alter his position or whose mind being confined to the narrow point of touch wishes to be let loose among sensual objects desires escape from the discomfort of his posture and confined mind. But how can one attain magga-nana and escape from samsara by hankering after the delights and comforts of the senses? "The uncomfortable truly is the norm; the comfortable will set you all adrift on the current of samsara" said Sunlungukyaung Sayadaw. He was referring to the efficacy of dukkha to overcome dukkha.

How should one be mindful of unpleasant sensation in order to consume it,

end it, snap it, shed it, extinguish it? The only answer is that the meditator should be rigorously mindful of unpleasant sensation as it arises, when it arises, in the here and now. But, how does one hold steadfast the mind which flinches from unpleasant sensation? How does one catch unpleasant sensation in the very moment of its arising in the very manner of its arising? How can one successfully accomplish mindfulness of unpleasant sensation in the here and now? The meditator knows what is to be done but how does he accomplish it in the face of uncomfortable, unliked, unpleasant sensation? These are important questions and success or failure in meditation depends upon the answers.

Usually the meditator is told what he should be but not how he should become. He is usually given a picture of what he should be at the end state of his development. He is not told what he should do to initiate that development and how to carry it forward till the goal is reached. For instance, he is told to eliminate the notion of "I" and be detached but how that notion is to be eliminated if he is to become detached is not enunciated. To make it more tragic the end and means are often confused and it is not realized that a statement of ends is in itself insufficient and that the means to attain those ends should also be provided. It is most encouraging for the common meditator that Sunlun offers a practical solution to the problem, that it offers precise methods and a *modus operandi*.

In being mindful of unpleasant sensation collect the body and mind together and keep both perfectly still. Watch the unpleasant sensation with bated breath. Hold the breath as long as the meditator can normally hold it. This is not an exercise in breath retention. It is just the normal practice effected in carrying out the common duties of life. Whenever something is done with great attention the breath is naturally held back. For example in putting a thread through a needle hole the operator normally holds his breath till the task is accomplished. In like manner the meditator should watch unpleasant sensation with bated breath. This will enable him to exercise greater awareness and more rigorous mindfulness.

If the unpleasant sensation is too intense for proper attention with bated breath the meditator should stiffen himself against it.

He tenses his hold body against the sensation to support the work of-the mind. He holds his arms tighter against the sides of his body, he closes his fists, he stiffens his back, and clenches his teeth. He puts forth energy as he would in a physical struggle against a strong opponent. All the time he keeps rigorously mindful of the sensation.

If the unpleasant sensation is excruciating and cannot be overcome by endeavor with bated breath and tensed body the meditator should brace his mind against it. Just as in breathing he had respired strongly and firmly so also in applying his mind to unpleasant sensation he should do it strongly and firmly.

If with all these the meditator is unable to be rigorously mindful of unpleasant sensation to its final consumption, its end, its snapping, its shedding and its extinguishing then he should pit the resources of his breath, his body and his mind against the sensation. With bated breath, tense body and fortified mind he should exert pressure against the pressure of the sensation until he is able to penetrate it, to dwell in it, watching it, without thinking any thought connected with it till finally the sensation is completely consumed or ended

It will be noticed that the important element in the technique is intentness. The meditator should put forth unflinching energy; he should be ardent, zealous, earnest, and energetic. He should be all that the Buddha required of his disciples. Escape from samsara is not achieved through reflective, considerate, relaxed effort. It is achieved only through the most powerful and sustained thrust of all the physical and mental, capabilities at the meditator's command. Sunlun calls for just this.

It will not be necessary to stir up physical force in being mindful of cetasikavedana (emotional feeling). However, it will still be necessary to stir up zeal and earnestness for unremitting mindfulness. For the meditator whose training with unpleasant sensation has helped him to develop those qualities the practice of mindfulness of cetasikavedana should not be difficult. Moreover, since cetasikavedana is usually accompanied by unpleasant physical sensations the meditator may turn his attention to those physical sensations and thus overcome cetasikavedana through the conquest of unpleasant physical sensation.

## **Beyond Sensation**

When the meditator perfectly dwells in sensation, watching the sensation without thinking any thought connected with the sensation and the sensation snaps or is completely extinguished the meditator's mind becomes cleansed, purged, firm and serviceable. He becomes full of loving-kindness for all living things and he is able to suffuse them with true loving-kindness, which is not mere repetition of words, which is without craving and self-identification, and which is without differentiation between a person whom the meditator hates, one whom he likes and one to whom he is indifferent. '

With cleansed, purged, firm and serviceable mind he contemplates consciousness in consciousness. He knows consciousness with lust as with lust; he knows consciousness without lust as without lust; he knows consciousness with hate as with hate; he knows consciousness without hate as without hate. He knows when lust and hate have arisen and keeps mindful of them so that they may not be the cause to further originate lust and hate and thus give another turn to the wheel of samsara. This is killing the causative force in the effect. When he comes into contact with an object which could arouse lust or hate he keeps rigorously mindful of it so that lust or hate cannot arise. This is killing the cause in and as cause.

With this last act of mindfulness he perfectly practices what the Pali texts instruct: "In what is seen there should be only the seen; in what is heard only the heard; in what is sensed only the sensed, in what is thought only the thought." He is able to do this because he has cleansed his mind and made it firm and serviceable through ardent mindfulness of unpleasant sensation. For the common meditator, with sluggish intuition, trying to see only the seen in what is seen is extremely difficult if practiced as the initial exercise in mindfulness. This is because consciousness is a subtle object of contemplation and not readily grasped or held with the impure, weak and unmanageable mind. But when the mind of the meditator has been strengthened through mindfulness of unpleasant sensation he is able to hold the seen as the seen, the heard as the heard, the thought as the thought.

It has been suggested that if, during the practice of mindfulness distractions should arise the mind should follow after them to take note of them. Theoretically it should be possible to follow each distraction to grasp it mindfully. However, in practice, it is extremely difficult for the distracted mind to be mindful of whatever had distracted it. If it had been powerfully concentrated it would not at all have been distracted away from its originally selected object of meditation. Moreover in taking note of the distraction the meditator often runs the risk of believing that he is being mindful of the distraction whereas he is being drawn along by it. Therefore the safest and most effective method is to generate additional zeal to be more mindful of the initial object of meditation, say touch or sensation.

With respect of the contemplation on mental elements these are yet more subtle than consciousness. The meditator of elements cannot obtain direct access to them. Contemplation on mental elements may be said to be a practice consequential to the ardent mindfulness of sensation. During the period of energetic mindfulness of sensation the five hindrances will arise and then disappear. When sensation has been consumed or ended the factor of enlightenment may appear. The meditator will have to be mindful of these elements as and when they arise and disappear. If the hindrance of anger arises the meditator does not make a mental note that it is "anger"; he merely keeps vigilantly aware of the fact of anger. If the detachment factor of enlightenment arises the meditator keeps vigilantly aware of the fact of detachment. Here again the meditator will be able to accomplish his mission well because he has developed a powerful concentration and a clear and firm mind from the practice of mindfulness of sensation.

In fact the four stations of mindfulness - body, sensation, consciousness and mental elements do not arise independently of each other. They arise together in association. When the meditator is being mindful of the awareness of touch there is in it the station of the body, the station of sensation, the station of consciousness and the station of the mental constituents. Being mindful of one the meditator is mindful of all the others. It is as in a glass of sherbet the four elements of water, lemon, sugar and salt are present together in association.

And when one element is dominant the sherbet is called respectively watery, sour, sweet or salt. When sensation is dominant it is called veclananupassana: when consciousness is dominant it is called cittanupassana and so on.

When mindfulness of the four stations are completed and perfected the meditator acquires the seven factors of enlightenment. When the seven factors of enlightenment are completely and perfectly acquired the meditator attains megga-nana. However this is an effect-result and further consideration to this matter need not be given in this brief sketch of the Sunlun way of mindfulness. If a mango seed is sown a mango tree will sprout. A man should give all his attention to sowing well the best mango seed he can obtain. The result will take care of itself.

### **Conclusion**

The Sunlun way of mindfulness is practiced by an ardent monk or layman throughout the day and night. For the less ardent meditator the centers offer five to seven sessions a day, each session lasting from one to three hours. The man who is too busy with affairs of work or business should be able to practice it twice a day. Meanwhile the mind should not be left unguarded in the hours between sessions. The meditator should endeavor to be continually mindful. He accomplishes this by being mindful of the sense of touch. At no moment of the day will his body not be in contact with an object. If he is sitting his body will be in touch with the chair. If he is lying his head will be in touch with the pillow. If he is walking, his feet will touch the ground on each step. If he is handling a tool or an object his fingers will touch them. The meditator should be mindful of touch of body against chair, of head against pillow, of feet against the ground, of fingers against the tool or object. He should if possible be mindful of touch of visual object against the eye, of sound against ear, of taste against tongue, of smell against nose. "Be rigorously mindful of these and awareness of touch." said the Sunlungukyaung Sayaclaw.

Sunlun is a simple system; it is as simple as drawing a line or writing an 0. Even the child's first attempts with paper and pencil are drawing lines or circles.

But to draw a perfectly straight line and a perfectly round circle are extremely difficult. Yet when one practices it with sufficient earnestness and zeal quick results can be obtained. Most other methods are difficult to describe, easy to perform but results come slow. Sunlun is easy to describe. Literature on Sunlun is almost non-existent. There are in Burmese pamphlets describing the method and a small book on the life of the Sunlungkyauung Sayadaw. Since it is easy to describe and there is very little theorizing there has not been much use for books. Sunlun is difficult to perform. By this is not meant that the sequence of operations are complex; they are simple. This means only that it is not a relaxed comfortable method. It calls for courage to face the discomfort of strong breathing and unpleasant sensation, zeal to pass beyond them, and unremitting mindfulness to accomplish the purpose. But when this is done well, and it can be done well, the results are rapidly gained because Sunlun makes immediate and direct contact with reality and also stirs up the meditator's zeal to help him move forward at an intense pace.

For the lazy man of today who has little time to spare for anything whatsoever, who with his conceptualization, logicalism and rationalism is moving further away from the root source of reality and knowledge, Sunlun offers so much. It makes him throw away his thought-systems to grasp directly and immediately the actuality of things. It pulls out, mobilizes and uses his great physical and mental reserves. It gives him the means and strength to withstand the vicissitudes of life. It strikes at the heart of that deceptive, self-loving illusive notion of "I" which is the cause of all the misery and unsatisfactoriness. Sunlun is an intense, resolute, zealous method to establish the four foundations of mindfulness for "the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and misery, for the destruction of pain and grief, for teaching the right path, for the attainment of Nibbana."

"Be rigorously mindful of the awareness of touch."

"The uncomfortable truly is the norm."

## **Explanatory Notes for Beginners and Those Proceeding Along the Sunlun Way of Vipassana**

If you are one of those who are interested in steadfastly practicing the Sunlun way of meditation in order to reach Nirvana ultimately, and for the present, to reach the stage of Sottapanna, the following questions are some which will occur along the way. If you are not fortunate enough to have someone to guide you and answer your questions, these explanatory notes may be of some relevance to you. However, at the outset, it should be made quite clear that the Karma of each person is different from that of any other person; even those of identical twins are to some extent different, and Karma definitely can be changed by means of meditation.

Therefore, if you are a beginner or one who -has not yet started Vipassana, do not be alarmed by some of the questions which seem to indicate that the Sunlun way is full of pain. It is not the Sunlun method that causes the pain, it is the bad Karma of the meditator which causes pain to arise in him or her. In other words, there are broadly two classes of meditators - firstly those who are fortunate to have the kind of good Karma which leads to Thukha. Padipada Easy Padipada (Easy Path) and secondly, those who are unfortunate to have the kind of bad Karma that leads to Dukkha Padipada (Difficult or Painful Path). The majority belongs to the second class.

Both classes of meditators can surely and successfully reach the stage of Sottapanna in a "short" time though what is meant by "short" in turn depends upon his or her Karma. Some have been successful within a period of just ten days of full-time meditation but we must remember that they were lucky enough to have performed ninety percent or more of the necessary Paramis previously, either in this life or in previous lives. Those who have not yet fulfilled the Ten Paramis (which are required in order to attain Sottapanna and later stages up to Nirvana) will, of course, have to fulfill these requirements and thus would require more time.

Irrespective of whether a person takes a long time or a short time to reach Nirvana, there is also the difference in how easy or how painful the path will be, as pointed out above, depending on that person's good and bad deeds. For example, persons who have caused great pain and many deaths to other creatures or beings (including human beings and animals) in this and previous lives will normally have to tread the Dukkha Padipada path. It does not matter what system of meditation they follow, they will have to suffer, according to the universal law of cause and effect, the same pain that they caused to others. Until these karmic sins have been eliminated, they cannot pass-over to the stage of Sottapanna or pass-over to the other side of the stream (which is what Sottapanna means). The reason for this is that once a person has become a Sottapan, that person will no longer be born in the Four Woeful States. For this to happen, the pre-requisite is that the karmic sins which would normally send one to these Four Woeful States must all be eliminated.

The Sunlun way seems to be more painful than others, only because it is a quicker way than the others, of attaining the stage of Sottapana and hence the pain arises more quickly and intensively in order that the cleansing of karmic sins can take place more expeditiously.

One of the questions which may arise in one's mind as one practices Vipassana (not while actually meditating because one is not supposed to "be thinking about extraneous things" at that time, but during the off-hours) is what are the important factors that are responsible for reducing and finally eliminating the bad Karma due to past misdeeds?

Of course, all the ten Paramis are involved to some extent but the question is which of these Ten (Dana, Sila, Neikkhama, Pinnya, Wiriya, Khanti, Adeikhtan, Thissa, Metta, Upyekha) are the most responsible.

The answer is somewhat as follows. For persons whose bad Karma lies in the area of Dosa (Anger, ill will, frustration, enmity, pride, cruelty, causing pain and mental suffering to others) and Moha (Ignorance, lack of knowledge regarding the true way to Nirvana sloth, torpor, inattention to persons to whom respect is due)

the important Paramis are Pinnya, Wiriya, Khanti and Adeikhtan. Out of them Khanti (Forbearance, Patience, bearing the onslaught of painful sensations that arise upon prolonged maintenance of the same sitting posture during the many continuous hours of proper meditation) is probably the factor most responsible, especially if carried out with true equanimity. That is why, in Burma it is said that "Khanti leads to Nirvanas."

Here another question may arise. What is meant by true equanimity? Especially for Westerners, the word equanimity may be unfamiliar and certainly the practice of equanimity will be strange.

Equanimity, in this context, means that as the meditator experiences painful or extremely painful (excruciating) sensations emanating from various parts of the body, one should bear them without any thoughts of anger or frustration. One should try to remain calm and detached. If the pain becomes overpowering so that one is unable to remain unaffected, then one should concentrate the mind on the painful sensation, as already described in the text. The amount of effort to do this should match the amount of pain so that the pain no longer overpowers the mind and taking care also that the effort does not completely overpower the pain. The correct method is for the mind to be a little more powerful than the pain. Without the pain disappearing altogether. In this way, the mind will be able to concentrate very effectively and gradually one will only be aware of the Dukkha Thissa aspect of one's body without thinking of which part of the body the painful sensations are coming from.

The reason why one should avoid thinking of the sensations as coming from say, one's ankle or one's knee or one's shinbone; etc. Is that there is the risk of the illusion of Atta arising, whereas in reality, through meditation one should be arriving at the concept of Anatta, which is the true characteristic of the body, the world and of life. Equanimity, in the opposite context to the above, that is in the context of pleasurable sensations, means that as the person experiences pleasant or enjoyable sensations then he or she should not delight in them, one should not hanker after them

otherwise one would get ensnared in Tanha or Yaga (attachment or desire or lust) which belong to the area of Lobha. As you may know Lobha, Dosa and Mawha are the three categories of all bad deeds. Thus equanimity, in short, prevents all bad deeds from arising.

The ultimate goal of all meditations is to attain Nirvana. Exactly what is Nirvana like? This is a question which may assail a meditator, sooner or later on the path. To be truthful, an exact answer cannot be given except to say that Nirvana is not fully describable in mere words. Only by experience can one know Nirvana and that experience will come only upon achieving the stage of Sottapana. So if one really wants to know about Nirvana, one should steadfastly strive to reach the stage of Sottapananna.

Do not be misled by the pain which usually accompanies true meditation for those of us not blessed with the good Karma of Thukha Padipada, that Nirvana will also be painful. We have the word of the Buddha and of the Arahats to assure us that "Nirvana is; bliss and peace.

An analogy may help in this instance. Suppose that a man is travelling on foot through a hot and sandy desert. He will be -subject to great pain and thirst due to the torrid heat. But he knows that at the end of he day he will arrive at a cool and shady oasis. Though the heat and rigors of the desert are real and immediate to him, he would understand that the oasis at the end of his path will be cool and pleasant. In the same way, the yogi will have to understand that though the path to Sottapanna has to pass through the painful experiences associated with the elimination of one's past bad Karma, the oasis of Sottapanna will however not be like the desert.

Some yogis may feel aching sensations in the back of the neck very soon after sitting for vipassana and commencing strenuous breathing. This may be due to an incorrect sitting posture. If so, the aching pain may be relieved by sitting more upright, trying to keep the back as straight as possible and inclining the head either up or down so as to lessen the pain.

However, in other cases, the yogi will find that no amount of adjusting the

posture will remove the ache. In such cases, the cause may be due to extraneous evil influence. If, so, the yogi should recite the following Prayer and Parigan before starting each meditation session.

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhassa

(Repeat Namō Sammasambuddhassa three times)

Its meaning is: Homage to the Buddha who is revered by divas and mankind and who has achieved Supreme Enlightenment.

If I have committed any evil physical deeds (large or small), any evil verbal deeds (large or small), any evil mental deeds (large or small), against the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, (Monks) , my parents, teachers and all sentient beings from the beginning of Samsara (round of rebirths) up to the present moment, then I bow down and pray for forgiveness for having done even one shall evil deed against any living being.

Exalted Buddha-during the duration of this meditation session I donate my Five Khandhas for the purpose of attaining Nirvana.

Venerable Sunlungukyaung Sayadaw-during the duration of this meditation session I donate my Five Khandhas for the purpose of attaining Nirvana.

May all beings who are subject to rebirth in the 31 States of Samsara be happy (Repeat this three times).

I share this merit with all the beings in the 31 States. Please share in my merit by calling Sudhu (Well done)

I wish to share in all the meritorious deeds done by good beings-Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu!

A yogi who recites the above prayers and Parigan will be at peace with all beings and he/she will be able to mediate without disturbance (in the majority of cases). For those who find that they cannot get concentration of mind please refer to the case of Ms. B. which is described a few pages later.

A question may arise such as "How much time should, one devote to vipassana meditation per day if one is really interested in achieving some significant results?"

The answer to this question depends upon the questioner.

If he or she can find the time, the ideal would be to spend all of one's walking hours to vipassana. During the Buddha's time some Arahats even did seven or eight days and nights of continuous vipassana in order to reach their goal. But nowadays that would be unbelievable.

For someone who has to work for a living, finding even one or two hours everyday for vipassana according to the Sunlun method may be quite difficult and would necessitate good planning and a sincere desire to make progress.

An analogy may be useful in this case. Suppose that a man wished to fill up a tank having a capacity of one hundred gallons with a precious and volatile liquid whose rate of evaporation we will assume (for argument's sake) is a half gallon per 24 hours. Now if he could collect and put in a quarter of a gallon of this liquid only per day then the tank would never be filled because the quarter gallon would all have evaporated (during the past 24 hours) when he put in the next quarter gallon.

On the other hand if he were able to collect and put into the tank say ten gallons per day of the liquid, then the next day there would still be  $9\frac{1}{2}$  gallons left in the tank (allowing for  $\frac{1}{2}$  gallon of evaporation loss). Thus in about eleven consecutive days, the man could fill up the tank to its hundred gallon capacity.

Now if he could not quite afford to collect that much liquid per day but could collect say one gallon per day then every day a net input of half gallon per day would remain in the tank and after 200 days or so, the tank would become filled.

So also, if a person were to devote ten hours per day for vipassana meditation then in a short time he/she would achieve a significant result. Whereas if that person were to devote only half an hour per day, he/she may not achieve anything even after a fairly long period. The reason is that like in the above analogy where the volatile liquid evaporates away during the day, the Samadi (power of mental concentration and will power) attained during the intensive meditation period "evaporates away" (or in other words, partially lost) during the rest of the day due to extraneous distractions and improper thoughts and lack of true mindfulness.

Suppose that another person has practiced vipassana according to his or her own interpretation of the Sunlun way for an hour per day regularly for one hundred consecutive days *i.e.* a little over three months and he/she feels that he/she has not achieved any significant results. At this time, or later, he/she begins to feel also doubts about the efficacy of his/her meditation and doubts may creep in whether it is any use continuing to do his/her meditation exercises every day.

There are three aspects to this situation described in the above paragraph. The first concerns the term " significant results." For the above person (let us call her Ms. X. because the majority of yogis are of the female sex) who belongs to the category of "Dukkha Padipada." The only results that she can hope for with only just one hour per day of meditation will be to get the first level of Samadi *viz* that as she concentrated her mind on the sensation of touch of the breath as she practices Anapana with her eyes closed, she will "see" bright or colored lights and geometrical patterns. These will be moving about but if she focuses her attention on them, they will gradually become still. However, by focusing her attention on these lights or patterns, she is actually diverting her path from Vipassana to Samatha. As only Vipassana can take one to Nirvana, she should not practice samatha. It is like a traveler who wants to go to Mandalay by train from Rangoon. This traveler should get on the train bound for Mandalay at the Rangoon railway station and not get on the train bound for say Prome or Moulmein if he/she wishes to reach Mandalay.

To get back to our friend Ms. A mentioned in the preceding paragraph. If she has followed the Sunlun way correctly then with the amount of time that she devotes to meditation (and assuming that she really puts in enough efforts to be mindful during the whole hour on the sensations that arise) then she can hope for only the first level of Samadi as described above as her significant result. In addition, if her past bad Karma is not too large or evil, by about one hundred hours, a lot of the pain that she originally experienced during her hour of vipassana will have been reduced significantly. For example, Ms. A, if she is with average good Karma, will find that after three months of regular practice that during the first half-hour of strenuous, breathing, she is not aware of any painful sensations at all from her body because her

mind is completely concentrated only on the sensation of touch of her breath at the tip of her nostril or upper lip.

In such a situation Ms. A should not feel disheartened. She, should realize that with the amount of time and effort she is putting into Vipassana and true mindfulness (compared to the 23 hours of each day and night when she is unmindful) that is about all the significant results that can be expected. If she feels discontented. With only this much of results, then she should strive to devote more hours per day to mindfulness of touch while carrying out other tasks. Better results would be achieved, of course, if more hours of Vipassana meditation itself could be carried out everyday strictly in accordance with the Sunlun way.

Next let us examine the second aspect of the matter raised three paragraphs earlier, *viz.* a person has tried to practice the Sunlun method for over one hundred days consecutively with regular sessions of an hour. per day but thinks he/she has not achieved any significant results-not even the first level of Samadi described. under the first aspect of this situation. Let us call this second person Ms. B. Now, in general term Ms. B's problem is very much more serious than in the case of Ms. A because all that Ms. A needs to do to achieve better results is to devote more time to Vipassana every day. Of course, if Ms. A cannot devote any more time (due to pressure of other obligations) then all she has to do is to change her expectations and just be satisfied with the results that she is already achieving Even if Ms. A does not get to the Sottapanna stage right away, she can feel happy that she is accumulating the essential merits (or Paramis) everyday, which later will take her to Nirvana. More over, Ms. A will find that her health will improve and that any diseases (due to previous evil Karma) that she is afflicted with, will gradually disappear. In addition, if her motivation is good,, she will find that her luck also becomes because what is called as good luck in the English language is nothing but the resultant of good Karmic deeds. What better Karmic deeds can one do than true Vipassana meditation?

It has been said that keeping sila (abstaining from all evil deeds by keeping the Precepts) is better than Dana (charity) but in turn, Bhavana (meditation) is better than Sila. Now, out of all the meditations, Vipassana is the best type of Bhavana. That is why Vipassana can give immediate results.

After this digression, let us get back to the case of Ms. B. As mentioned earlier, her problem is much more difficult to solve than that of Ms. A. In fact, the only solution to Ms. B's problem is for her to come to the Kaba A ye Sunlungu Monastery at the end of Yarde Road, (off 7th Mile Prome Road, Rangoon, Burma) and get proper personal guidance on how to carry out Vipassana meditation according to the Sunlun method correctly. The reason for advocating such a solution (which may be quite difficult for Ms. B if she happens to reside outside of Burma) is that in addition to Ms. B's wrong method of meditating or mistaken interpretations of the Sunlun method, she may also be the victim of some special previous bad Karma which is seriously hindering her progress on the path to Nirvana. If such is the case, no amount of effort solely by Ms. B is going to improve her results. Only a powerful intervention at the above Sunlun monastery would have a good chance of success.

A yogi who thinks that he/she is in the situation of Ms. B (*i.e.* cannot even achieve concentration of the mind) should not at once consider that the only way open is to come to Rangoon (if he/she is not residing in this town) The yogi should first try to see if better results are obtained by reciting the Prayer and parigan given earlier, each time before starting a Vipassana session. If this does not work, then the yogi should next try out the technique given below under the third aspect (or the case of Mr. C. Mr. C is the name assumed for a person who meets the third aspect of the situation mentioned earlier for Ms. A and Ms. B. In the case of Mr. C., he finds that he suffers from boredom whenever he sits in meditation. He may be a person who has actually received instruction at the Sunlun Monastery so in his case the boredom or lack of results is not due to his not knowing the correct method. His fault

is probably that after three months of practice, he has become lax and/or lazy. He thus has a deficiency of what is called in Pali as Sadha, which is usually but inadequately translated as faith. Sadha is actually much more than faith in the Buddha and his teachings and in his monks. It is also a profound realization of the law of Karma or the law of cause and effect in the universe. It is even more: it is an enthusiasm to do good deeds just for the sake of doing good and in the case of Mr. C it means that he must generate sufficient enthusiasm, or zeal and effort, to continue to practice vipassana with ardor or in other words "to be rigorously mindful of the awareness of touch" It means that instead of just breathing in and out mechanically and lazily he should breathe in and out strictly as described in the foregoing text on the Sunlun way of Mindfulness.

The reason that Mr. C. feels bored while sitting cross legged for one hour or more in meditation is that he has come to regard this meditation session as a task to be done as one of his routines and naturally his attitude degenerates into that of say, a school boy who is required to sit one hour everyday at his desk to do his lessons. The school boy is only interested to finish his chore and then wants to run away and play. So also Mr. C's mind, which all through the millions of years of Samsara, has taken delight in wandering from pleasure to pleasure, feels bored at having to stay still at the tip of his nostril or fixed at the sensation of touch. Mr. C's mind finds the minutes and seconds during meditation seem to be as long as days and hours due to his lack of interest.

What should Mr. C do before starting his daily session of Vipassana? Mr. C should seriously consider his own case. Is he really still interested to get to Nirvana? Is he still striving to get to the Sottapanna stage? If he analyses himself candidly he will probably find that either he is not so interested as when he started out in Vipassana or that due to distractions; he has simply lost his ardent resolve to put forth unflinching energy to achieve Sottapanna. The person who found himself or herself in a case similar to Ms. B above, also should carry out such a self-analysis.

If the verdict of such - a self analysis for Mr. C is that he has lost his ardor,

then the solution is to revive it. Mr. C should think back to the day when he decided to start -meditating in earnest for Megga-nana (knowledge of the path to Nirvana). Probably at that time he suddenly realized that living in seeming bliss a purely worldly life without Vipassana was leading him nowhere but to Hell and the other three Woeful Abodes of Peta, Asurake and Animal kingdom (including fishes, birds and insects) after death. Even is he were lucky in the next life to escape being reborn in one of the Four Woeful Abodes nevertheless he would still be ensnared in the never ending round of rebirths called Samsara. The prospect of Nirvana and of Sottapanna (as a first step towards Nirvana) then must have appeared very essential to him as an escape from the dreadfulness of Samsara with its ever attendant Three Characteristics of Anicca, Dukkha and Anatta.

In addition, when Mr. C found out that the probability of his becoming a human being in this universe was only about one in ten million (because there are tens of millions of divas, animals, petas and other beings to every single human being in Samsara) and further more, that only a human being with good Karma could practice Vipassana according to the Sunlun Way (because beings in the Four Woeful Abodes do not have the necessary intelligence and also because Brahmans and Divas do not possess the kind of material body to carry out strenuous breathing and awareness of painful sensations) then. Mr. C must have made his ardent resolve to practice Vipassana steadfastly for at least an hour every day. So also, now, months later after his initial resolve, when Mr. C finds himself bored with doing the daily session of Vipassana, he should revive his ardor to the same peak by considering all the alternatives and realizing what a glorious opportunity he is losing every time he does not carry out Vipassana earnestly.

Then after his ardor is revived, he should say his Prayer and Parigan and then start out the Vipassana session by breathing as strenuously as possible, all the time reminding/himself of the glorious opportunity he now has to do strenuous breathing because no other beings except he and a few lucky other human beings can

do this kind of Vipassana. Thus, he will find his enthusiasm returning with each breath and he also will find his Samadi improving due to the enhancement of his Sadha plus the fact that Wiriya and other Paramis will arise as a result of his vigorous efforts. And at the end of the hour, Mr. C will also have found he was not bored at all

There is another possibility for Mr. C. He may find that after about a hundred days of Vipassana meditation with at least an hour devoted to each daily session that no further progress is being made compared to the almost weekly improvement in his Samadi during the earlier days. In this kind of situation, Mr. C. should try a week or ten days of intensive meditation.

What would be an ideal program of intensive meditation? Mr. C should take leave from his daily work and if possible go to the Sunlun monastery. If that is not possible, he should go to some quiet place where he can be free to pursue his meditation exercises as he pleases. If his own home offers such a possibility, he may do his intensive meditation at home, provided he will have no distractions.

Then every morning he should get up as early as is convenient (say at sunrise) and after his toilet and morning breakfast he should take an hour's walk. While walking at his normal pace, he should strive to be mindful of his feet touching the ground and not let his mind wander around.

After walking, Mr. C should go to his place of meditation and sit down for the morning session of Vipassana, lasting at least one and half hours. It is of course better to carry out Vipassana for a longer period during this morning session, preferably until all, the unpleasant sensations have ceased.

Then Mr. C should take some exercise, have a bath and his midday meal. After that he should carry out his second Vipassana session, with the same minimum period of one and half hours. He may find it more convenient to have a longer period for this second session. Then he should take some more walking exercise, striving all the time to be mindful of the sensation of touch. Lastly, after his evening meal, Mr. C should carry out the third Vipassana session, this time at night, lasting one and half hours or longer

With this program of intensive meditation, combined with mindfulness of touch while walking, bathing, eating, etc., carried out for a week or longer, Mr. C will soon notice a great improvement in his Samadi and may even find his ways of life changing. For instance, persons who had habitually slept the whole night through till morning will find themselves sleeping only for a few hours at a time thus needing two or three or more naps before getting up in the morning. Vice versa, persons who had slept two or more naps per night may find themselves sleeping the whole night through. Other more wonderful things or changes may also become manifest to Mr. C as he pursues this program of intensive meditation. Now to return to the three aspects of the situation mentioned earlier, which were illustrated for simplicity, by the cases of Ms. A, Ms. B and Mr. C.

There is however one other eventuality which may arise besides the above three aspects and for this a note of warning should be sounded. Let us illustrate it, by the case of Ms. D. This type of situation was not mentioned earlier under the Three Aspects (the cases of Ms. A, Ms. B and Mr. C because it is different from them and should not be confused with lack of significant results or boredom or stagnation.

In the case of Ms. D who has been doing Vipassana diligently for many months (if she is of Dukka Padipada Karma type) or much shorter period (if she is of Thukha Padipada Karma type) she has already acquired the first significant results of strong Samadi and may be even other results. But then she begins to feel weary, she has no desire for tasty foods or fancy clothes or the other things she used to enjoy. Her outlook on life changes to that of detachment, or she sheds every things as anicca, Dukkha or Anatta. She may also pass through a phase during which she becomes extremely afraid of future lives or of human existence.

To the uninitiated, these may appear as negative results or as being contradictory to what they expect as achievements on the way to Sottapanna. But actually Ms. D should be very happy because these are positive signs that she has achieved significant results from her daily Vipassana sessions and she should in fact,

redouble her efforts in Vipassana because she is nearing the stage of Sottapanna, just as a runner in a competition, puts in an extra burst of speed on nearing the winning post!

One word of caution should be given to Ms. D. Because she is being encouraged to do more meditation and to increase her mindfulness in the periods between the meditation sessions so that she may soon reach the Sottapanna stage, she should not become too obsessed or too desirous of making this achievement. No doubt it is a very worthy idea to become a Sottapan but nevertheless one should not become too desirous for it otherwise-this Desire (a kind of Lobha) being a Akuthala Hetu (Faulty Root) will act as a hindrance and achievement of the Sottapanna stage will not be possible. Therefore Ms. D should strive hard but do her meditation as a kind of duty and not with the attitude of Lobha (Desire)

A question may now be asked, "What are the signs of having achieved Sottapanna?" Unlike the previous questions to which full answers (though in some cases only a brief answer was given) this is a question which should not be answered to one who is not yet a Sottapan, for fear of arousing what could be termed as "auto-suggestion.

Then a person may ask "How then will I know whether or not I have reached the stage of Sottapanna or when I become a Sottapan?" The answer to this question is that (according, to all those who have achieved this result), one will surely know by oneself when one becomes a Sottapan. This is because the stage of Sottapanna is such a landmark stage in this universe and the process of Vipassana is so capable of giving intuitive liberating knowledge that you will know by yourself that you are a Sottapan. Other Sottapanna and those who have achieved even higher stages on the way to Nirvana will also know, without being told, that you are indeed a Sottapan. So do not have any fear on this account.

As an example of the capability of Vipassana to give intuitive knowledge, it will become apparent to anyone practicing Vipassana correctly that he/she will automatically know the answer to question "What precepts should a yogi keep while striving for Sottapanna?"

The answer to this question will be revealed in one of the Vipassana sessions to the yogi by his own mind. The revelation will be as follows: every yogi who really aspires to tread the path to Sotfapanna must faithfully keep the Five Precepts as laid down by the Buddha. These Five Precepts should become so important to the yogi that he/she will intuitively understand that if a choice does arise as to whether one should sacrifice one's life or to break one or more of the Precepts the answer is that one should not break the Precepts.

What are these Five Precepts? They are:

(1) Panatipata Veramani Theikhapadam Sammadhiyami = I will abstain from killing any living beings.

(2) Adeinnadana Veramani Theikhapdam Sam-mad, hiyami = I will abstain from stealing or taking anything which belongs to another without his/her consent.

(3) Kamaythumeiksasara Veramani Theikhapadarn Sammadhiyami = I will abstain from all wrongful sexual conduct *i.e.* causing pain or sorrow to others due to wrongful sexual deeds such as rape, etc.

(4) Musawada Veramani Theikhapadam Sammadhiyami = I will abstain from telling false hoods.

(5) Thuramayraya Mizzapamad. habtana Veramani Theikha padarn Sammad Wyami = I will abstain from all kinds of intoxicants and drugs which affect; the mind.

Finally, these notes will be concluded by asking one of the questions which distinguishes the Sunlun method from most other methods.

This question will arise sometime of the other, to a yogi who is practicing Vipassana all by himself/herself because even those yogi who do meditation under the personal guidance of the Venerable U Vinaya, Abbot of the Kaba Aye Sunlun Monastery, have to be reminded not to "think" while meditating in according with the Sunlun method.

The question may be phrased along the following lines "why should I not think while doing strenuous breathing or while I am be-unmindful of the sensations which arise during Vipassana?"

For instance, while contemplating the painful sensations I may start, to think about how these pains are the confirmations of the Three Characteristics of Anicca, Dukkha and Anatta within my own body. And then I may go on to think how true are the words of the Buddha who said that by realizing Dukkha within one's body one is able to find the way to Nirvana. Now these thoughts are good thoughts -they are not evil, so why should I not think such kinds of thoughts?"

To answer the, above questions, it is best to reply in the words of the Venerable U Vinaya when he gave a lecture on "The Yogi and Vipassana" many years ago because these words are still as true today as at that time.

"The first essential equipment of the yogi is a concentrated mind. For only a concentrated mind is a cleansed mind. And only the mind which is cleansed of the five elements of sensual lust, ill-will, torpor, agitation and doubt can function properly to realize vipassana insight. Therefore while doing strenuous breathing or while being aware of the sensations, the yogi should not "think" for otherwise thoughts of the above five elements will enter.

"Let us take an exercise, in-breathing and out-breathing called in Pali as Anapana... This exercise may be practiced in the samatha way or performed so as to realize Vipassana. For the Vipassana way, breathe in and out. Fix the mind on the point of touch of breath. Be aware only of the touch. Do not count, do not try to know the degree of length of breath, and do not follow the breath into the body or out into the beyond. For the Sunlun way, do this breathing in and out as strenuously as possible. Be aware of the sensation at the point of touch of breath. Then ward and watch this awareness with mindfulness. Do not make a mental note of it. When the awareness is guarded with mindfulness, thoughts are locked out, they cannot intrude. Thus no opportunity is offered for the formation of concepts, images or ideas.

"Our minds are ever so prone to create images and ideas that, can we possibly get at processes as they are in themselves? The answer is that it is possible to do so through Vipassana and the winning of intuitive liberating knowledge by the Sunlun method.

"The yogi tends to be reflective *i.e.* to think about the task –to be done rather than the doing it. Concepts, images and ideas belong to the universe as it is for us and therefore are concerned with samatha. Only the Vipassana method (where the touch alone is taken in its bareness and this awareness guarded with mindfulness), is free from ideas and images. Thereby the processes are got at directly in the very moment of occurrence, as they are in themselves without the distortion of thought,

"Thoughts always tend to intrude. The only way to keep up with the processes, to be mindful of them, is to exercise vigilance through a rigor of effort. That is why in a motto, the Sunlun-gukyaung Sayadaw U Kawi said that we must be rigorously, mindful of the awareness of touch."

Every yogi who aspires to Nirvana should bear this motto in mind.

May all beings be happy.