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SUNLUN-GU VIPASSANA MEDITATION CENTRE

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## TOUCH AWARENESS MINDFULNESS

## SUNLUN SAYADAW

Sunlun Sayadaw was so named because he came from the cave monasteries of Sunlun Village near Myingyan in middle Myanmar. He was born in 1878 and was named U Kyaw Din. He was sent to a monastery School but learned little. At the age of fifteen he entered employment as an office boy in district commissioner's office at Myingyan.

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## 2 <br> SUNLUN SAYADAW

He married Ma Shwe Yi of the same village. At the age of thirty he resigned from his post and retumed 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 Bamar people that in one's worldly possessions rise rapidly then one will 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 certain mill clerk turned up uninvited at the feast. He began to converse about the practice of Vipassana and, on hearing these words, U Kyaw Din became greatly affected. He could not sleep that
night. He felt 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 the clerk whether a man ignorant of the texts could undertake the practice. The clerk replied that the practice of insight meditation did not require doctrinal knowledge but only deep interest and assiduity. He told U Kyaw Din to practice in-breathing and out-breathing. So from that day, whenever he could find the time, U Kyaw Din would direct breath in and breath out. One day be met a friend who told him that directing breathing in and out alone was not sufficient; he had also to be aware of the touch of breath at the 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

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the hand as he drew water, the touch 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 stream entry,

## JACK KORNFIELD

the first taste of nirvana, in mid-1920. The next month he won the second stage of liberation. In the third month he won the third stage. 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. Setting his cattle free, he put the yoke up against a tree, went to the village monastery, and 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 freedom, arahatship. 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 texts they
found many important passages in the scriptures to support his statements. Many learned monks from various parts of the world went to practice mindfulness under him, including one very learned monk, the Nyaung Lunt Sayadaw, who also became fully enlightened after intense practice. Sunlun Sayadaw performed the act of leaving the body (parinirvana) ${ }^{1}$ in 1952.

Sunlun Sayadaw was an intrinsically honest man, laconic and precise in speech, and possessed of great strength and determination. Photographs of him reveal a sturdily built man with a steady gaze, clear eyes, and a firmly set jaw. One senses in these photographs a quality of great courage, the attribute of the truly enlightened man.

Currently there are a number of meditation masters teaching the practices of Sunlun Sayadaw throughout Myanmar, and several Sunlun centers can be found in and around Yangon. One of the largest, the Sunlun

Monastery of Thingangyun has two resident Sayadaw, U Tiloka and U Thondera, both senior disciples of Sunlun. Only twenty monks or so reside here, for the large compound of cottages and halls is more oriented toward serving lay people. Group sittings take place four and five times daily, after a fiery and inspirational talk by the Sayadaw." You are lucky to be born a human and even luckier to hear the Dharma. Take advantage of this special opportunity to really practice, be diligent, and work hard to win liberation.

The huge, mirrored hall is often filled with several hundred meditators of every age. The sittings can last two or more hours. During the first forty-five minutes the entire hall is engaged in intensely practicing the heavy breathing concentration exercise. On the Sayadaw's instruction, the yogis then turn to mindfulness of sensation in the body, continuing to sit motionless until the end of a two-or three-hour period.

Although the teachers of Sunlun Sayadaw's meditation recognize other ways of practice as possible, they emphasize that theirs is the clearest, most simple and direct path. They would find the natural method of Achaan Chaa and Buddhadasa too slow and indirect, and criticize other techniques such as Mahasi Sayadáw and Taungpulu Sayadaw as developing concentration through concepts but not direct insight.

Special emphasis on intense effort, concentrated on direct perception of sensation (especially pain), is the key to Sunlun practice. Walking into a hall full of heavily breathing Sunlun meditators is like finding oneself in the middle of a steam calliope. This enormous effort made to concentrate the mind by watching heavy breathing is then deepened in insight practice while sitting rigid, motionless, fully experiencing the pains of the body. The use of sensation especially pain, is what most characterizes Sunlun practice. It is strongly goal-oriented,

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directing total effort in each sitting to the development of concentration and insight that will lead to nirvana liberation. There is emphasis on long, motionless sitting. While practicing as a monk at the Sundun center, I was given a beautiful set of Myanmar beads. The devout lay supporter offered them to me along with the fervent wish that I might soon be sitting all night without moving, and thereby sooner realize nirvana.

Total effort to overcome pain and distraction is the way of Sunlun Sayadaw. The power of the concentrated heavy breathing and the pain that follows is suitable for overcoming many of the hindrances that normally distract a meditator. No matter how sleepy you feel, a session of hard breathing concentrating only on sensations at the nostrils will wake you right up. The technique is equally valuable for quieting an agitated, distracted mind, for in the face of the enormous effort in hard breathing, most thoughts are blasted away like clouds before
a wind.
Sunlun practice clears the mind of sleepiness and distraction, leaving the meditator clear and concentrated. Further mindfulness of pain and changing sensations strengthens the mindful, observing quality of mind. In a short time with this practice one may experience the power of a calm, concentrated mind which, when applied to observing the mind-body process, leads to clear insight, wisdom, and liberation.

This Sunlun center of Thingangyun is very receptive to Western meditators. Here as elsewhere in Myanmar, the hospitality and support for visiting yogis is overwhelming. Although the Sayadaws do not speak English, there are a number of articulate and fluent English speaking disciples who are able to translate for visitors. The Sayadaw are available for questions but the emphasis is primarily on strong sustained practice, the only way really to answer Dharma doubts.

The following chapter is a talk given in Yangon several years ago by one of the chief teaching disciples of Sunlun Sayadaw.

## The Yogi and Insight Meditation

as taught by Sunlun Sayadaw

I propose to take practical approach to meditation for 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 clingings, and his subtle self-deceptions. While doing this I shall attempt to weave in the teachings of the Sunlun 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

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the mind which is cleansed of the five elements of sensual lust, ill witl, sloth, agitation, and doubt can function properly to realize Vipassana insight.

For the initiation of the cleansing process, the normal, everyday mind requires an opject to grasp. This object can be one 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 color discs, corpses, or the food which he eats daily. Those objects which belong to the corporeal-mental organization of the yogi are his body and his thoughts. Any of these can be taken as an object of meditation to establish concentration.

For example, color discs can be employed. The yogi takes, let us say, a colored disc or spot and places it at an appropfiate distance, about three yards. 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 dise in order to gain fixity of mind. He does this until at last, even with closed eyes, he perceives a mental reflex image of the disc. This is the acquired sign or image. As he continues to direct attention to this image there may arise a clearer counter-image. This counter-image appears together with the concentrated mend. 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 high and controlled concentration. Fixed meditation absarption follows. These exercises can produce all stages of fixed meditatign.

Likewise he can practice the earth element meditation, the water meditation, the

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fire meditation, and so on. One of the benefits acquired through the ardent practice of the earth meditation 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 meditation he can bring down rain or cause water to gush from his body. If he gains supernormal power through the practice of the fire meditation he is able to produce smoke and flame. But somehow it is not possible easily to acquire these powers in our day: Sunlun Sayadaw once said that the times were no more opportune. One might be able to gain absorption level concentration through such practices, but the supernormal benefits of the practices can hardly be acquired. Let us say that one practices the earth element exercise. He gains mastery of the signs. Let us say he goes to a pond and, seating himself near it, he arouses in himself the elements of the earth meditation. 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 yogis in other countries have done better but I believe it may be taken as general rule that the acquisition of the total benefits of the element and color exercises are difficult to achieve in our time.

Another set of objects of meditation can be the loathsome ones, the corpses, or death. These exercises are not without their risk, as may be recounted in an anecdote of the Sunlun 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 Sayadaw met him as he was setting out to meditate for the day. The Sunlun Sayadaw smiled at him and said: "The anapana breathing exercise is free of dangers". The monk did not act on the

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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 Sayadaw heard the story he smiled and said: "Meditation on breath 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, and flowing cohesion. The essence of fire is the nature of heating, warmth, evaporation, maturing, cotisuming, and 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 no true, of course. The understanding that is required is not of the elements as they are 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, tanding, sitting, lying,

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bending, stretching, eating, drinking, chewing, savoring, defecating, 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 those moments of comparative relaxation when the primary object is being set aside for a while.

All of the methods mentioned are traditional Buddhist objects of meditation. They are all contained either in the list of forty subjects for concentration or in the Great Discourse on Awareness (Maha Satipatthana Sutta), mest of them in both. They all lead the yogi toward 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. These are known as Samatha, or concentration practice, and Vipassana, or insight practice. 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 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 con-

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Ceptualized by us to help us in grasping thetth: Even the thought of walking in the fact of walking, the thought of bending in the fict of bending, the thought of touching in the fact of touching are ideas which we heve created in our minds so that we can better get at the actualities, the postures as they are. 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. But concentration is not insight. Therefore he who would gather the fruits of concentration may practice concentration, but he who desires to gather the fruits of insight will have to practice insight. This he will have to do sooner or later, either after the practice of concentration or directly by selecting an exercise which sets him at once on the high road to insight. Whether he

## JACK KOKNHELD

Wishes to practice concentration now only to switeh to Vipassana later, of alternatively to take up the practice of Vipassana immediately, is a matter of pefsottal choice. And I as a practitionief of Vipassatia should not be too eager to prompt him on that choice. Sunlun Sayadaw ontee 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 proeesses with the gloves of concepts and thoughts, that processes can never be got at direotly, then there could be no path to

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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, awareness of inbreathing and out breathing. It is said to be a suitable exercise for all types of personalities, If a man practices mindfulness of respiration, he attains the peaceful life. He cause evil and unwholesome states to be overcome. His body and mind do not tremble. He fulfills the four foundations of mindfulness ${ }^{2}$ and the seven enlightenment factor ${ }^{3}$ and realizes wisdom and freedom. Mindfulness of breathing was practiced by the Buddha. Furthermore, watching the breath is said to be unadulterated, not requiring any addition to make it complete.

This exercise may be practiced in the simple concentration (Samatha) way or performed so as to realize insight (Vipassana).

Breathe in and out. As the breath goes in and out it will touch the nostril tip or upper lip or some other places 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 long. This is 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, you should not follow the breath 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. Breath 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 miadfulness of breathing, the first three are simple concen-tration-type exercises while the fourth is an insight 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 thifd 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. Oniy the fourth method, where the touch alone is taken in its bareness, performs the insight practice. Yet even this practice can be adulterated with coneentration. If instead of being aware of the touch in its bare actuality,
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 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. Then ward and watch this owareness with mindfulness. When the awareness is guarded with mindfumess, thoughts are loeked out, they cannot intrude. No opperfunity is offered for the formation of concepts, images, of ideas: Thereby the processes afe got at directly in the very

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moment of occurrence, as they are in themselves without the distortion of thought. This is true insight practice.

Thoughts always tend to intrudc. 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 Sayadaw said. "Be rigorously mindful of the awareness of touch."

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 in the sense of reflecting and thinking about the task to be done rather than doing it. Considerate in the sense of sympathizing with himself, taking great care to see that the is neither overexerted nor hurt. The yogi has 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 to 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 famous meditation manual, the Visuddhi Magga, 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

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object has been grasped with full awareness and this 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 into the effort itself. Furthermore, a greater intentness of the mind will have been developed by the increased effort.

The full text of the above quotation from the Visuddhi Magga 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 the 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, endeaver, 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 Sayadaw instructed: "Be rigorously mindful." To be mindful rigorously is to mobilize all of one's resources, to grasp the processes as they are without thinking or reflecting. Rigorousness calls forth the element of energy or right effort.

Another inclination of the yogi is to

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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 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. The Visuddhi Magga meditation manual says that by getting up and so disturbing the posture, the meditator has to start the meditation anew. The yogi who sits down to mediate, 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,

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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 mindfulness. It is the essential element in practice, 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

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with this turning away from the object of meditation, he abandons his original purposé.

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 measure of 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 Sayadaw illustrated this with a local simile. Myingyan 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 get up to move out 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 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 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 extrasensual things. It is not the true divine sight and

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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 away, 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 but 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 there is the intense unpleasantness of the sensation; the next moment it is gone, snuffed out, and in its place there is a deep sense of calm and quiet. The yogi often likes to believe that this is the postmental functioning of the enlightenment knowledge. And he notches for himself one stage of the four enlightened stages.

This 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

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understood well. However it is, the yogi likes to classify himself as having attained at least one or two of the enlightenment stages. And with this thought in mind he goes about seeking confirmation of his belief. And woe to the meditation master who, however gently and indirectly, makes his failings known to him. Sunlun Sayadaw would never pass judgment 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. Likewise, a wrong sense of attainment would not need debunking; the yogi would realize it. for himself.

The main danger of this form of selfdeception is the wrong sense of achievement that it gives to the yogi. Satisfied with what he thinks has been his progress, he relaxes his practice and is thus 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 marrow 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 karma to be one who can tread the pleasant path, one who can gain wisdom without undergoing pain, then he can work on pleasant sensation. But for the overwhelming majority of us, as may be observed, there is no choice but to tread the

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path of unpleasant sensation, for we are not blessed with such karma.

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 are 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 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 were swimming with the current and stretched out his hand to grasp the flowers and missed, he would be carried beyond the point by the force of the current. If he were swimming against the current and missed when he stretched out his hand to grasp the flowers, he would still be below them and 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 by clinging to it. 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 not 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 hitching post for the mind which inclines to wander. An unpleasant sensation will never deceive the yogi about the true nature of phenomena-unpleasantness.

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 an 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 T 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, 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

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the cause is enlightenment. And it is because of this quality of efficiency in eliminating the false notion of I', Sunlun Sayadaw stated: "The uncomfortable 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 suffering cannot touch him arymore.

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. To arrive at this moment, the yogi must have completely perfected the establishment of mindfulness of the body. He must have completely perfected the establishment of the foundation of mindfulness of the sensations. This means that he must have perfectly overcome the unpleasant sensation. Unpleasant sensations are the greatest obstacles confronting the yogi in his progress along
the path. This is where he keeps falling back. To overcome them, he needs to possess unflinching energy, resolve, and intentness, as well as the right technique. Then these sensations 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. 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. Here comes that awful moment of truth. If the yogi is not perfectly establishing mindfulness of the principles, 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 aspects of awareness, ${ }^{5}$ and he has fully developed the seven factors of enlightenment, then in that very moment of perfecting and acquiring these seven there will arise in him

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the true liberating knowledge.
Unfortunately, less than perfect 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 us who would like to reap the benefits of meditation but are unwilling to sow the good seed; it is us who wish to gather the returns but who do not wish to lay 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 Sayadaw has trodden, we too can tread. We need only to follow his instructions faithfully. Sunlun Sayadaw instructed us:

> Be rigorously mindful of the awareness of touch

We should be rigorously, ardently; intensively mindful. Do 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 adrift on the current of illusion.
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 faith, en-

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ergy, and awareness to purify ourselves, to overcome pain and grief, to reach the right path, to win nirvana.

## DEVELOPING 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 create stresses leading to anxiety and neurosis. City life is becoming noisier and noise is a thorn in the flesh of concentration. At the same time the people do not have enough leisure for a long and sustained practice 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 days long after the Buddha
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 distraction, lack of time, and the mediator's own sluggish intuition.

Sunlun Sayadaw's way of mindfulness provides a technique to quickly overcome sloth and desires of the sense. It raise 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 selflove and ignorance. Sunlun Sayadaw was a barely literate man and was thus blessed by not being sicklied with the pale cast of thought. With earnestness, courage, and

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perseverance he became liberated in 1920. The technique is now available to the city man who is without the overwhelming courage and perseverance of the Sunlun Sayadaw. What follows is a very brief sketch of the method.

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

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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 until the end of the session. Sunlun 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 Sayadaw. Let not a single touch pass without awareness. Be aware of every single touch. 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 breathbody. 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 lip. 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 draw-ing-in of breath helps to establish concen-

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tration 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 in inhalation to realize a balance between inhalation and exhalation. When these two are balanced, the touch will be continuous. When they are balanced, the meditator will have reached the stage of smooth, effortless, selfcompelled rhythmic breathing. Breathe without shaking the head and body. This will obtain concentration quickly.

Fatigue may set in at the early stages of strong, hard, rapid breathing but the meditator should neither stop nor reduce the strength and rapidity of breathing. "Don't rest when fatigued," said the Sunlun 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 bal-
anced at a high level, the fatigue will disappear. The meditator will then have broken out of the zone of difficult breathing into the zone of smooth, effortless, selfcompelled 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); and low (weak, soft, slow, or the common way of breathing). Since man is not a machine he will sometimes flag and falter. 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 preset 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

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some other sensation. Continue the breathing until there is sufficient sensation to stop the strong respiration. Here sensation is the clock to time the period of respiration. Alternatively; the meditator may preset the time for breathing, say three-quarters of an hour or an hour, at which time he will proceed to the second part of the meditation. But this is not as preferable as the first method.

When it is about time to stop strong respiration, 50 or 100 strokes of breath should be made-this time with all the strength at the meditator's command. Meanwhile, mindfulness of touch of breath should be relentless. Then respiration should be stopped suddenly on the inhaled breath and, collecting oneself, the whole body should be watched internally.
Sensation Respiration should be stopped completely and suddenly on inhaled breath. The body should be stilled, gathered to-
gether, and watched rigorously. Sensations of pain, cramp, ache, numbness, or heat or cold will arise 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 Sunlun 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. Bë 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 "this is body and mind." Do not consider "this is impermanence, this sufferingness, and this

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non-self." All thinking, reflection, and consideration are conceptual. They are not insight practice.

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' and then return to the fact of the ache. Therefore it tells the meditator: "Avoid name-calling; do not conceptualize reality."

Neither reach toward 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 is as though the meditator had placed his effort before the unpleasant sensation, with the result that the attention slips from the sensation itself and all that remains is the violence of his effort. This violence is none other than anger. And anger is one of the forces which turn the wheel of samsara.

The meditator should take 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, and anger, which all constitute a force which turns the wheel of samsara.

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Torpor and sloth are the basis of ignorance, yet another force which conditions rebirth and delusion.

Therefore the meditator must take great care not to reach beyond nor fall short of the sensation. He must exert that forceful and vigilant attention necessary for knowledge and mindfulness. This means that the time relation of attention to sensation should not be one of future or past but of the simple, immediate present. 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.

When dealing with the arising of many sensations simultaneously, such as in the head, the arm, the body, and the legs, the unguided meditator's mind will run helterskelter after them and there will be no mindfulness of them right here and now. The result will be personal distress and suffering. To avoid this there should be mindfulness

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of only 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, arm, or body; he will no longer feel that T ' am suffering. These conceptual notions will be replaced by a simple, clear awareness of sensation alone. Because the idea of an T which suffers has been removed, the meditator will no feel the discomfort of the unpleasant sensation. The sensation which a few moments ago was felt as pain or buming will now be felt by the meditator only as an intense sensation without the element of infliction.

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Of the three sensation-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.

As we have noted, unpleasant sensation is the greatest obstacle on the road of Vipassana. Only when the meditator is able to over come that obstacle can be forge forward to attain the rewards beyond unpleasant sensation. It is possible to completely overcome and learn from 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.

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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 until there is no remainder. It ends when the meditator follows it until there is no more of it, like a road followed to the end, like a length of string felt along the whole length till no more is felt. It snaps when it breaks off suddenly, as when a taut rope is snapped. It is shed like the skin of a snake. It is extinguished like a 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 underlying element of discomfort which is basic to all our experience. The meditator who feels

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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 enlightenment and escape from the pain of this mind-body process 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 Sunlun Sayadaw. He was referring to the efficacy of suffering to overcome suffering.

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?

First, 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 you can easily 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 whole body against the sen-

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sation 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 neck 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 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. He should pit the resources of his breath, his body, and his mind against the sensation. With bated breath, tensed 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, watch it without thinking any thought connected with it, until 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 delusion 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.

Though intentness is called for in regard to mental objects of meditation, it will not be necessary also to stir up physical force in being mindful of 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 emotional feelings should not be difficult. Moreover, since emotional feeling is usually

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accompanied by unpleasant physical sensations, the meditator may turn his attention to those physical sensations and thus overcome attachment to emotions 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 selfidentification, 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 cause.

With this last act of mindfulness he perfectly practices what the scriptures 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

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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 in fact 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, the touch or sensation.

With respect to the contemplation of mental elements these are yet more subtle than consciousness. Contemplation of mental elements may be said to be practice arising out of the ardent mindfulness of sensation. During the period of energetic mindfulness of sensation, the mental elements of the five hindrances ${ }^{6}$ may arise. When sensation has been consumed or ended, the factors of enlightenment7 may appear. The meditator will have to be mindful of these elements as they arise and disappear. If the hindrance of anger arises, the meditator does not make a mental note that it is 'anger'; he merely

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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 mindfulnessbody, 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 elements. 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 salty. When sensation is dominant it is called mindfulness of feeling; when consciousness is dominant it is called mindfulness of consciousness, and so on.

When mindfulness of the four stations are completed and perfected, the meditator develops fully the seven factors of enlightenment. When the seven factors of enlightenment are completely and perfectly developed, the meditator attains enlightenment. However this is future 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

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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 it. The meditator should be mindful of touch of body against chair, of head against pillow, of feet against ground, of fingers against 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

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of the awareness of touch," said the Sunlun Sayadaw.

Sunlun is a simple system; it is as simple as drawing a line or writing an O . 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 is extremely difficult. Yet when one practices it with sufficient earnestness and zeal, quick result can be obtained. Most other methods are difficult to describe, and though easy to perform, the results come slow. Sunlun is easy to describe. Literature on Sunlun is almost non-existent. There is in Myanmar just a pamphlet describing the method and a small book on the life of the Sunlun Sayadaw. Since the method 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.

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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 much. It makes him throw away his thought-system to grasp directly and immediately the actuality of things. It pulls taut, 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, selfloving illusive notion of $T$ which is the cause
of all 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 reaching the right path, for the attainment of nirvana."
"Be rigorously mindful of the awareness of touch."

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Why is it that when we start the deep breathing, for the first few minutes we feel very tired; then when we breathe longer we no longer feel tired?
Answer: We feel tired when our breathing is not balanced; usually the out-breath tends to be stronger than the in-breath. Inhalation should be increased. Once we establish

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proper breathing balance, once our breathing becomes rhythmic, we no longer feel tired and in fact we can go on breathing for a long time.

Q: Why do we stop our breathing with an in-breath?
A: So that we can gather our energies together to grapple with the sensations. If we stop on an out-breath we are likely to be relaxed, which is not good for mindfulness.

Q: When we sit in certain positions we feel strong sensations such as cramps. Do we sit on until the sensations subside, and how long do such sensations last?
$A$ : Yes, we should let all sensations subside. The length of time depends on individuals. Some take only a short time; others may take hours. Any sensation that arises is natural and we should not be afraid but should be
mindful and patient. We should sit and not move, and should keep our mindfulness on the sensations until they disappear completely.

Q: Sometimes after the most pronounced sensation has worn off, there is left some numbness, say in the foot. Should we continue till this too has gone?
$A$ : yes, you should continue until all sensations have gone. You may have to sit a long time for all the sensations to go, but this is necessary. Of course, if you are able to establish rigorous and intense mindfulness it does not take so much time. Intentness is important.

Q: But if we do not have the time to sit so long, can we stop before the numbness disappears entirely?
A: You can, though it is not good; your body may feel heavy and your mind not fully

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purified. If you do not have enough time, you need not breathe for too long to start with. Your sensations may not then be too pronounced, and you may not have to sit for very long for all sensations to disappear. But then you are not really doing what you should and there may arise feelings of dissatisfaction with the practice or with yourself.

Q: I have found that I can make my sensations go by simply stretching my legs for example. Why do I then have to sit till they disappear?
A: The essence of meditation is to grapple with sensations to overcome them. We can of course make the sensations disappear by simply moving our legs, our arms, or our body, but in this way we are not grappling with our sensations. We are trying to escape from them, and in doing so we come up against new sensations. We have to know that we cannot escape from any sensation,
that what we cannot escape from is the suffering inherent in our body, and that the only way is to face up to it and win through to insight, to liberation.

Q: What is meant by mindfulness? Is it, for example, meditation on the cause of the sensation that arises in us?
A: Certainly not. Mindfulness is alert awareness and holding rigorously on to this awareness without any conceptual notion, without any thought whatever.

Q: What is the difference between Samatha meditation and Vipassana meditation?
A; Samatha meditation is concentration on objects, ideas, and images. Vipassana meditation uses the power of concentration primarily on sensations within the body. Samatha makes the mind powerful, while Vipassana purifies the mind to enable it to gain insight. A person who succeeds with pure concen-
tration will for example be very persuasive in arguments, and everybody will be influenced by him, but usually reaction will come later. With Vipassana it is different; a person who succeeds in Vipassana is so clearly full of insight and knowledge that he will be listened to without any doubt appearing either then or later.

Q: Is it possible for a person practicing Vipassana to go into Samatha?
A: Samatha uses concentration as its main support, while Vipassana uses the two legs of concentration and sensation. One who practices concentration can do so without Vipassana, but one who practices Vipassana uses concentration to some extent, to obtain the instant-to-instant concentration, and trains this concentration on the sensation. As long as you keep on this path you will not go into pure concentration. But if you lean entirely on the leg of concentration you can go into the path of Samatha. You may see
colors, images, etc., and you may become distracted. The trouble is that those who go into Samatha may feel that they are achieving something, whereas in fact their experiences tend to become obstacles in the path of true liberation. It is difficult for a person who is well developed in Samatha to advance in Vipassana. The only way to help such a person is to teach him to lean on the leg of mindfulness as well.

Q; What should we do if the sensations are too intense to bear?
$A$ : Patience, perseverance-these are the qualities required to stand up to sensations however intense they may be, and to overcome them. Be mindful, and sensation will disappear, even the most intense sensations. The more intense the sensation which has been overcome, the clearer will be the resultant mind.

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Q: If firm atiention is maintained on bodily sensations, that is, if we can be aware of the sensations without the mind intervening, how are we to be benefited in our mind?
A: It is not a question of the intervention of the mind, it is a matter of a way of functioning of the mind The mind should continue to function through the operation of awareness. Its thinking function should not interfere; there should be no thinking of thoughts about the sensation. If we are mindful of whatever sensation, when the sensation subsides the mind becomes cleansed and firm; whence arises loving-kindness and calm. Besides, sensations are not only bodily sensations; there are mental sensations as well, but these are better left to a later stage.

Q: How can we mindful in our everyday life?
A: When we walk our feet touch the ground; be mindful of this touch. When we hold an
object, there is the touch on the hand; when we see an object, there is the touch on the eyes; when we hear a sound, there is the touch on the ears; when we smell an odor, there is the touch on the nostrils; when we eat, there is the touch on the tip of the tongue. We can be mindful in these and in many other ways. But it is best to be mindful of touch on any part of the body. This is easier to grasp and hold.

Q: What are the benefits of this form meditation?
A: The benefits of this form of meditation are the purification of oneself, the overcoming of sorrow and misery, the destruction of pain and grief, reaching the right path, and the attainment of nirvana. By purification is meant the cleansing of the mind and the strengthening of the moral sense. The mind is quieted through the removal of the five hindrances, namely, sloth and torpor, sensual
lust, ill will, agitation, and distraction and doubting. The mind is purified-at least for a period-of greed, hatred, and ignorance. The moral sense is strengthened not through the acceptance of the social sanctions but through a greater awareness of what happens when one is immoral. Sorrow, misery, pain, and grief take two forms, physical and mental. Physical misery and pain arise when the body is ill or not functioning properly. Sorrow and grief arise when the mind is disturbed. This form of meditation helps the body to function properly: (I shall here only mention that there are many cases of cure of physical disorders and disease due to meditation but these are minor by-products gained in the pursuit of true liberation.) This form of meditation helps one to attain peace of mind. A peaceful mind is one in which there does not arise either attachment or revulsion and one is thus unaffected by sorrow or joy, grief or anger. It is a mind which refuses to identify itself with anything
whatsoever and thus does not become involved in the suffering and joy around it. Reaching the right path is acquiring the sense of what is and what is not. And one can never truly know this until one has realized what is true in himself. Nirvana can be won only by deep courage and high endeavor.

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*     *         *             *                 * <br> \section*{TOUCH AWARENESS MINDFULNESS}
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THESE ARE THE THREE WORDS WHICH CONSTITUTE THE WHOLE SUNLUN METHOD OF MEDITATION<br>"TOUCH AND AWARENESS<br>BE MINDFUL OF THESE TWO<br>WHEN THERE IS TOUCH<br>THERE'S AWARENESS<br>JUST BE MINDFUL OF THAT AWARENESS" THE SUNLUN WAY OF MEDITATION: THE BASICS OF THE METHOD

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