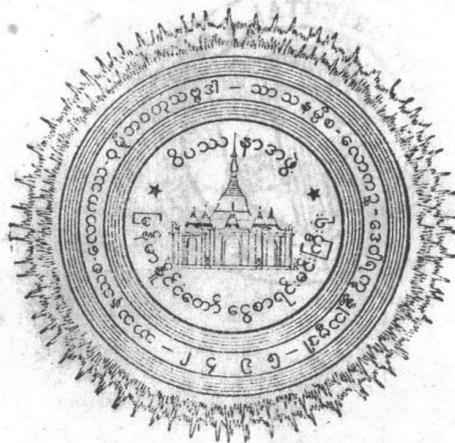


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International Meditation Centre
Inya-Myaing
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RANGOON



Personal Experiences of Candidates
(Buddhists and non-Buddhists)

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867 Larmon Road
Onalaska, Washington 98570 USA
360.978.4998
www.pariyatti.org

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- illuminating the meditator's path.

PRACTICAL BUDDHIST MEDITATION

Statement of

Mr. J. Van AMERSFOORT

President of the Netherlands Buddhist Association,

38, Adelheidstraat, The Hague, Holland.

Experience of a state of purity of Mind (Samādhi) and of Vipassanā under the leading and with the help of my Guru Sithu U Ba Khin, Accountant General of Burma.

Being a Buddhist for about 18 years, having been a member of the Saṅgha (Buddhist Monks) during one year in Mongolia and Tibet, where I practised many meditations (so-called White Magic), I must and wish to state with all my heart, that I never experienced or even heard about the meditation as is being done under the direction of Guru Sithu U Ba Khin. I came to Rangoon on a business trip for seven days only, but managed with the help of said Guru to reach the Samādhi and Vipassanā in this short time, which I myself (and nobody else) would have believed possible.

After only two preliminary meditation lessons of half an hour each, I saw the light clearly within me: meaning, that the Mind becomes powerful and bright, freed from disturbances, pure and serene. The technique is rather simple, concentration on the breath leading to one-pointedness; but the Guru can better inform you about that. After some developed meditation on Saturday night (20th December 1952), Vipassanā was started at 10 o'clock in the morning of Sunday, 21st December 1952. I concentrated on the burning in my body—concentrated with other words in Dukkha (Suffering)—felt the burning inside till I felt myself almost burning like steam on the surface of water. Then I had to concentrate the total heat, total suffering, on the central part of my body until the suffering grew even unbearable. At the last moment when I felt myself about dying, it was as if my heart was pulled out of my body and at the same moment—wanting eagerly to be freed from Dukkha—with a sudden but a small flash of light, I was out of it and felt a refreshing coolness and delight, which words cannot describe. It is an escape and a refuge from all daily troubles, too great to be understood, when not experienced. And the great bliss is that every one can achieve this state; provided he has a pure mind at least for the time of concentration, has the right intentions, attentiveness and concentration, and anyhow tries to live as pure as possible.

Another necessity is, that he has no fear whatsoever and a complete faith in his Guru. I hope with all my heart that Guru U Ba Khin will have many followers and disciples in the near future, who can be helped by him as much as I have been.

Rangoon, 22nd December 1952. Sd/— (J.V. Amersfoort)

Explanatory remarks of Sithu U Ba Khin on the statement of Mr. J. Van Amersfoort dated 22-12-52.

1. Mr. Amersfoort and myself had a preliminary discussion as to the method to be followed for practical Buddhist Meditation and he agrees with me that the best course towards progressive realisation of the Truth is to follow strictly and diligently the three indisputable steps of Sīla, Samādhi and Paññā of the Eightfold Noble Path laid down by Buddha in the Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta.

- Step I. Raise the standard of Morality to the prescribed minimum (Sīla);
- Step II. Develop the power of concentration to one-pointedness of Mind (Samādhi)
- Step III. Gain insight into the ultimate realities of nature within one's own self (Panna).

2. I have no reason to doubt the moral qualities of Mr. Amersfoort who has impressed me very much on first contact. Accordingly, I put him straight away on a course of Ānāpāna Sati. He did very well in the initial course. And in just a few hours of solid work he was able to develop his power of concentration to one-pointedness (Samādhi). In fact by the time I needed him for the change of the course of training to Vipassanā, he could keep the Light (Patibhāga-Nimitta) before his Mind's eye for quite a long time and had begun to play with it. I should say he is a man of no small Paramī.

3. We know from science that everything that exists in the Universe is composed of electrons, all in a state of perpetual change or flux. The Karaja Kāyathe—the Coarse body—of our own selves cannot therefore be an exception to the rule. Mr. Amersfoort knows this. He knows, too, what Nāma, Rūpa and the Kalāpas are, together with their composition, characteristics and tendencies. With the powerful lens of Samādhi which he has developed, he should now be fit for the introspective and analytical study of the true nature of Rūpa and Nāma.

4. Just at the right moment, soon after 10 o'clock on Sunday, the 21st December 1952, Mr. Amersfoort was called upon to focus his whole attention searchingly into his own self, from point to point, to examine and to feel the changing process—the radiation, the vibration and the friction—caused by the whirling movement of an infinite number of kalāpas (electronic units). The human body, as it were, is a sum total of innumerable millions into millions of kalāpas, each breaking down simultaneously as it arises. A kalāpa is akin to—but infinitely smaller than a visible spark. In reality, the human body is nothing but atomic energy, conditioned by forces of one's own deeds, words or thoughts. Thanks to all the Devas who have guided us in our work, Mr. Amersfoort got the thread of it almost instantaneously and in a few minutes he began to have a sharp sense of feeling of the radiation, then of vibration and then again of the friction of electronic Units within, which spread like wild fire to all parts of the body in the course of just one half of an hour. He was encouraged not to relax but to keep on feeling with greater intensity and to keep on knowing with a clearer sense of perception. He knew also that, feeling (Vedanā, perception (Saññā), Volitional energies (Sankhāra) and Consciousness (Viññāna) —the four Nāmakkhanda—are also fleeting, passing away and dying out along with Rūpa. He was then advised to make an analytical survey of the whole being both in respect of Nāma and Rūpa in terms of the doctrines of Anicca (Impermanence), Dukkha (Suffering) and Anattā (Absence of Ego-centralism). Lest he entertained any doubt as to what was happening, he was asked to examine the body temperature of his own self and others nearby which were just normal. The fact is that as he proceeded with the meditation, he had a better and better telescopic view of the Ultimate Realities (Paramattha Dhātu). Meanwhile he was explained how the predominating factor of tejo (radiation) in a kalāpa is responsible for the burning sensation, how the non-stop replacement of wasting kalāpas by a continuous influx of food property (nutrient) creates vibration, how the breakdown and replacement of these kalāpas (electronic units), individually and collectively, causes friction and how a telescopic view of the true nature of these things can be obtained by one who owns powerful lens of Samādhi.

Samādhim bhikkhave bhāvetha.

Samāhito Yathabhutam pajanati

Oh Monks! Develop the power of Concentration.

He who has the power of concentration can see things in their true state.

5. Just before noon, Mr. Amersfoort was feeling intensely the heat of radiation, Not only that, he was also seeing sparks of light emitting from all over the body.

“Yes. Mr. Amersfoort, are you quite convinced now that human body is composed of electrons, all changing fast and yet never coming to an end, and that there is no such thing as substantiality in it?”, I remarked. “I am quite convinced of that.”, was the reply.

“In that case”, I said “Fix your attention to these sparks of light and think that they are also impermanent and subject to the law of Anicca.”

He did so and those sparks of light were suppressed and eliminated. I explained later these were ‘Obasa’, one of the ten Upakkilesa (Defilements) and that if they were allowed to remain long, piti would creep in and the course of meditation would be diverted.

6. But for a break of about half-an-hour for lunch in the room adjacent to the Meditation Chamber, Mr. Amersfoort was on the course again; for he was already engrossed in it and he knew that “continuity of practice is the secret of success” As he proceeded with the meditation, he could think of nothing but Dukkha in all its variety. At times, it seemed as though he were struggling, with words of “Dukkha, Dukkha” or “Suffering” in a low tone. After an elaborate explanation of what he was experiencing with reference to the teachings of Buddhas, I said:

“It is the realisation of the Truth of Suffering by actual experience—the real and not the imaginative—which will lead you to the Extinction of Suffering (Dukkha-Nirodha)”.

“The attachment to Self has been so strong that you will not discard it unless the ‘Suffering Within’ which you feel is stronger”

“If you get out of Dukkha, you also get out of Nāma and Rūpa. If you can get out of Nāma and Rūpa, you will surely get out of the Samsarā”.

“Suffering arises from Kilesā, the origin of Dukkha. Kilesā is just like fire, it burns. There will be burning within, for so long as there is fuel of Kilesā to burn. Burn it all by a contemplative meditation of Anicca, Dukkha and Anattā, without relaxation, and you will surely come to the end of Kilesā”.

“It is really an endurance feat. Forbear it until you are firmly convinced of this Truth of Suffering and until you become truly afraid of, disgusted with, and disinclined to Nāma and Rūpa which are identified with Dukkha”.

“Think, then, of Dukkha-Nirodha, the end of Suffering. Long for it. Just transmit your thought to it. Mind you, the escape is from the centre”.

(Such were my instructions. The words used might not be the same but the sense is there.)

7. It was already 4 o’clock in the afternoon. Some of my disciples had also turned up for meditation. Mr. Amersfoort was at that time in a lying posture. I advised him to sit down with his legs crossed at one corner of the room and encouraged him to go ahead, ever mindful of Dukkha and eager to get out of it.

All was quiet in the meditation room, The silence was however broken by Mr. Amersfoort at 16 minutes past four.

He gave me to understand he was suddenly relieved of the burning heat by a stream of coolness which was most refreshing. He felt as if he was re-born.

I was really very glad, called, ‘Sadhu three times and congratulated him on his success.

After a spell of 5 minutes or so, I said: “Well, Mr. Amers, please come forward, let us have another try.”

He came forward and was seated just in front of me. With instructions suitable to the occasion, I asked him to collect himself again and to go into the fruition state (Phala) with a vow to rise up just after 5 minutes. He did so without any difficulty, There was no such burning as was experienced by him throughout the day. Just a radiation to remind him of the true nature of things inside, i.e., Anicca, Dukkha & Anattā.

I was not satisfied with that as yet. I wanted to be doubly sure. So I made him go into that State again for another 15 minutes. I am glad to say that he got through this test also quite successfully.

8. We had achieved our objective. Mr. Amersfoort was really very pleased and grateful. He had still plenty of work to do in Rangoon. I should not therefore detain him any longer. He must have rest for the

remainder of the day. I therefore sent him back to his hotel with instructions to see me the next day at 6 o'clock in the afternoon.

When we met again on the following day, we had a quiet discussion on certain aspects of the Dhamma as well as on matters personal. As desired by me, he joined with my other disciples in meditation and went into the state of “Nibbānic Peace Within” for 15 minutes. He rose up just in time.

To my mind, Mr. Amersfoort has fulfilled the requirements of the Eight-fold Noble Path.

Sīla During the course of training, there was no occasion for him to break the three fundamental requirements of Sīla, viz., Samma Vācā, Samma Kammanta & Samma Ājīva.

Samādhi By Samma Vāyama and Samma Sati, he has acquired “Upacāra Samādhi” (Neighbourhood concentration). He was able to keep the Patibhāga Nimitta for a length of time.

Paññā By Samma Saṅkappa, he has understood the true nature of things and has realised the Truth.

9. In practical Buddhism what really counts is the realisation of the Truth. Whatever may be the Kamathāna method adopted, it must be in the order of Sīla, Samādhi Paññā of the Eight-fold Noble path. Go step by step along this path and you will still be in the confines of any Kamathāna system, because the real essential feature in Buddhist Meditation is to get to the origination and dissolution of Mind and Matter in his body. For instance, the course followed by Mr. Amersfoort is in accord with the fundamental requirements of Ānāpāna Sati Sutta or of Ānāpāna section of the Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta. It also accords with the treatise in the Parājikan Athakathā for the realisation of the Truth by an analysis of the “Kalāpas” in the body with the lens of Samādhi obtained through Ānāpāna Sati. Let us now see also how it fits in with the seven stages of Purity (Visuddhi) in the Visuddhi Magga (the Path of Purity).

1. Sīla Visuddhi (Purity of Morality): Mr. Amersfoort can be said to have complied with it during the course of meditation.

2. Citta Visuddhi (Purity of Mind): He has developed his concentration to one-pointedness (Citta-Ekaggata).

3. Dīṭṭhi Visuddhi (Purity of Understanding): There is every evidence from the course of meditation that he has known by experience the true nature of Nāma & Rūpa.

4. Kankhāvitarāṇa Visuddhi (Purity of escape from doubt): Realising that Nāma & Rūpa are in a state of perpetual change, he is freed from all doubts as to Self-entity whether of the past, present or future.

5. Maggāmagga-ñānadassana Visuddhi (Purity of knowledge as to which is the right or wrong Path): When defilements appear, he is able to overcome them, i.e., he can differentiate between right & wrong Path.

6. Patipada-ñānadassana Visuddhi (Purity of knowledge of the right Course): He has no doubt, for what he has succeeded, as to the prospect of reaching the goal and that it is now just a question of time.

7. Ñānadassana-Visuddhi (Purity of the Eye & Wisdom): He knows for himself what a change has occurred when passed through the stream of Sotāpana.

10. Ketam Samāpajjanti Ariya pana sabbe pi Samāpajjanti. Who can go into states of Peace Within? All Ariyas can go into states of (Nibbānic) Peace Within. (Visuddhi Magga)

Therefore the real test to whether one has become an Ariya lies in his ability to go into the fruition state (Phala) as he may like. While in that state, he is oblivious of any feeling through the five organs of senses. At the same time, his body posture (Iriyapatha) becomes firm and tightened in the same way as one who goes into a Jhanic trance. As between Jhana and Phala there are great variations in the mode of entry and exit. An experienced teacher alone will be able to differentiate between the two to the satisfaction of a disciple. Mr. Amersfoort has satisfied these requirements. Shall we call him an Ariya?

(Sd/-BA KHIN)

12-1-53.

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Our motto is

TRUTH MUST TRIUMPH

Our principle is

WORK MORE AND TALK LESS

Our aim is

NIBBĀNIC PEACE TO ALL

PRACTICAL BUDDHIST MEDITATION

AT THE INTERNATIONAL MEDITATION

CENTRE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

SITHU U BA KHIN

MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

(H. L. B. RAJAPAKSA, STATION MASTER, MAHO JN;)

CEYLON GOVERNMENT RAILWAY.

I left Ceylon on 10.11.54 with a party of 5 others and arrived Rangoon at 10 A.M., 14.11.54 We were put up in house occupied by U Pu at No. 272 Prome Road for a couple of days. We all visited Shwedagon pagoda and other Buddhist Shrines round about Rangoon on 15th November '54.

The purpose of my visit was to meet U Ba Khin, with a desire to do Practical Buddhist Meditation. I met the above-named at his office on 16.11.54. He gave me every encouragement and promised to contact his Assistant Accountant General U Ba Pho and see that I may not go away disappointed. Arrangements were made and I was brought to the Meditation Centre on 19.11.54, by appointment leaving No. 272 Prome Road at 5:10 P.M. On the same day I took a vow to observe "Atta Sīla" and I gave myself to the sublime Dhamma, to the Noble Saṅgha and took refuge in Buddha for shelter and protection and also my personal existence to my Teacher and Guru (U Ba Khin).

From 20.11.54 to 23.11.54, instructions were received from my Guru on "Samatha" Bhāvanā. Not being used to sit cross-legged and due to age I was very slow at the commencement in picking up the meditation experience. I however made every effort with the encouragement given to me by my Guru. His "Metta" and Karuṇā were so great that I stuck to the course.

Having made progress with my Guru's encouragement, I was told to start "Vipassanā" Bhāvanā and on 24.11.54. Sharp to the appointed hour 2 P. M., I met my Guru on the door step of the cave allotted to me at the Shrine (Dhamma Dhatu Ceti). My Guru chanted Gathas and made me offer obeisance to the Exalted One in Pāli which I repeated.

On the three days following, instructions received by me were as to how "Saṃyojana" can and must be removed, to gain tranquility and calm. This is a state when the five-fold sense activities disappear, but my mind remained to a large extent active on other fleeting thoughts. This I consider is a practice to gain Insight Knowledge. This body "Rūpa" is the combination of millions and millions of "Kalāpas" each Kalāpa is consisting of Paṭhavi, Āpo, Tejo, Vāyo (Mahā Bhūta) and four other Subsidiary ones, Vaṇṇa, Gandha, Rasa and Oja, These truths I gathered from my Guru and I leave it at that for further elucidation from my Guru. It would suffice if I say that I entered this Meditation Centre to walk the path "Ariya Aṭṭhaṅgiko Maggo" with all my strength and get away as much as Possible from "Ragā" Dosa and Moha and get closer to Viragā, Adosa and Amoha. I have gone through a number of hours on 25.11.54 with the guidance of my Guru in the Third stage "Paññā"

On 26.11.54 my Guru wanted me to take a Vow "Adistana" to keep seated cross-legged at least for half an hour at a stretch to remove the still remaining impurities within me. He told me that keep this vow and continued meditating on Nāma & Rūpa.

On 27.11.54 I gained a deal of experience on Vipassana Bhāvanā. My Guru kept me engaged for over 3 hours (8 P.M. to 11:30 P.M.) It was a real trial of endurance and I received the last step at 8:40 P.M. Every half hour or so when the cross-legged sitting position became uncomfortable, he made me stretch myself on the mat and lie flat, motionless meditating and concentrating whole time on Anicca Dukkha & Anattā, I heard recitations chanted by my Guru from his room.

To-day 28.11.54, I again entered my cave at 1:30 P.M. and continued meditation till 4 P.M. At this time I was relieved of all Dukkha Vedanā and I was permitted to go back to Ceylon, which I intend doing on 30.11.54 Via Calcutta.

May the “Devas” protect my Guru and his ‘band of cheerful companions and this Centre be an example to the Whole Buddhist World for charitable service on behalf of the Noble Teachings of Buddha and for gaining practical experience.

I have to offer my grateful thanks to U Tum Hla Oung (Editor of the Buddhist World) for directing me to this Centre and my entire stay at the Centre has been very peaceful to mind and body.

May you all enjoy good health and good luck by the grace of Triple Gem.

I remain,

With my respects & adoration to my Guru,

Yours very sincerely,

Sd/(H.L.B. Rajapaksa)

Shrine Room – Accountant-General’s Office,

Rangoon.

28.11.54.

P.S.

On 29.11.54 I was with Mr. Venkataraman a pupil of my Guru. He got into “Samādhi” state and was motionless when in that state. I could not believe my own eyes.